

Court if they have any, and when they bring these it is all right. We know then exactly how the matter stands. In some instances we may have reason to suspect that there is a deposit in the Savings-Bank, but I have no power to compel the Post Office authorities to let me look into it.

1. *The Chairman.*] Do you suggest that the Magistrate should have the power to get this information from the Post Office, and the Postmaster be compelled to give evidence, if necessary, before granting such a claim?—That is with the view of preventing fraud. There is also another point, and that is in connection with the earnings. For instance, stonemasons, carpenters, shoemakers, &c., sometimes make from £10 to £20 and from £20 to £30 a year, and still draw their full pensions. We should be in a position to compel them to make a statement as to the full amount they have earned during the past year.

2. But they have to state that now?—No; they have only to state their freehold and personal property. I will give you a case in point. A man came in for a pension, and I received notice that he was working as a mason at the new Government Buildings. We got all particulars of his time, and so on, and we found that he had earned about £49. The consequence was he did not get his full pension. He only got £3. I think we should have a form to be filled in by each applicant, to be attested before me or a Justice of the Peace, setting out his earnings, &c., as a true and faithful statement, or some other way of obtaining this information. Of course, it is an easy thing for either the Magistrate or myself to ask this question, but I think we should have a written sworn statement of the whole earnings as well as the personal and freehold property; and also, along with this, I would suggest that he should make a statement of the mortgages, if any, on his property. Sometimes people say they have three or four hundred pounds' worth of property, and we find afterwards that it is "over head and ears" in debt with mortgages. Of course, I could go into the Deeds Office and search the mortgages or title deeds, but this would entail endless labour upon me.

3. Are you present in Court when these claims are made?—Oh, yes, I am always in the Court when the cases are heard. I know the name and number, and when the return is given in how much he has received last year, and where his case was heard.

4. *Mr. Herries.*] Do you speak in Court?—Yes; I am recognised as part of the Court.

5. *The Chairman.*] Do you think it is wise what the Deputy Registrar should attend the Court?—Most decidedly, for the purpose of watching the interests of the Government.

6. *Mr. Herries.*] Do you cross-examine the witnesses?—Anything I like to say the Court recognises. I am considered to be part of the Court.

7. *The Chairman.*] Now, Mr. Taylor, is there any other suggestions you can make? You have suggested that claimants should be subjected to searching examination as to their wages, properties, and mortgages, and you have also suggested that Magistrates should get evidence from the Post Office authorities: have you any other suggestions?—Now in regard to the payment of pensioners: At the start in March, 1899, we first tried it in the ordinary way at the post-office, but the bustle and confusion was wretched, and they sent for me to see what was to be done. I had a consultation with the Postmaster, and we arranged to get the Supreme Court or some other building which would not block the public business. Eventually we got the Colonial Bank buildings, and we paid them there on the 1st of every month for some considerable time. Then we lost it, and after consultation with Mr. Pryde, the secretary of the Education Board, I arranged to get the Board room, and we paid them there for some time.

8. You suggest that the post-office is not a suitable place?—No; it could be improved upon. Of course, we have about ten money-order offices near Dunedin. When we began it first there was such a rush that the place was regularly blocked up, and I have always to go to Mr. Inspector Pardy for police assistance.

9. Are you always present when they are paid?—I have been at every pay. I have to arrange about cleaning the office, and send up an account to the head of the department, and he pays out on it.

10. Is there any other suggestion you can make? You suggest that the post-office is not the best place?—That is in towns. We will have to make some arrangements to be permanent.

11. Is there anything else in the regulations?—Otherwise, I think, they are pretty well workable. There is a good deal of trouble, but we manage to get through. For instance, we have a tremendous lot of work with deaths. Every death has to be investigated and reported upon, and minuted in the minute-book, and a wire sent up to the Registrar at headquarters.

12. Whose duty is it to report to you when a death takes place?—It is provided in the regulations that the Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages has to report to Mr. Mason; but, generally speaking, I know all about it, because I am Deputy Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages.

13. *Mr. Arnold.*] There is one point not been touched upon, and upon which I would like some information. Supposing a man has a certain amount of freehold property: he makes a statement, but do you not compel him to give a valuation of that property?—Well, no; he comes generally without it; and if he would give me the section and block it would be a great convenience to me.

14. Does not the Magistrate expect him to have it ready? Where does he get it from?—He can get it from his deeds, and I make inquiries from the Land Valuation Office. They must have my authority in writing, or that of the Clerk of the Court. I have in my mind one case in which the claim was held over for some period of time until the pensioner got the information from the office. He had to get authority from the Court first.

15. The department is not compelled to give this information?—They are bound to give it to us.

16. Is that in the regulations?—They never object. Provided I see the proper officers, they give it at once; and the same with mortgages, they never charge me anything.