

17. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Do the pensioners come to you first?—They come to me first. They do not go to the Magistrate. Then I give them a paper to get signed by a clergyman or some well-known person certifying as to their life in New Zealand.

18. *Mr. Herries.*] Is there any large percentage of fraud that you are aware of?—We have had several instances, but they generally all ended in smoke when they were gone into.

19. *The Chairman.*] Do you think that there are many cases of fraud?—None we have ever found out.

20. Are there any attempts at fraud?—The cases are always very carefully investigated, and we take all due precautions to prevent fraud.

21. Do you think these cases of attempted fraud are increasing?—No; we have snubbed them very hard. I have a very thorough knowledge of Dunedin, and I may say I compiled the jury roll ever since 1870, so that I can very soon pick any shady cases.

22. There has been a proposal to have all the pensions investigated at the beginning of the year: would that be a good thing?—No; it is better to let them be spread over the year.

23. *Mr. Arnold.*] How many have you in your district?—About a thousand.

24. *Mr. Herries.*] There is one thing I would like to ask. There is a provision in the case of people who are drunken having their pensions paid over to some clergyman or reputable person: is that not so?—We have about a dozen such cases.

25. And do you find it work all right?—Oh, yes; they simply get a warrant signed by the Stipendiary Magistrate authorising them to collect it.

26. And what do you do in the case of such people: do you get reports from the police?—Yes; the police telegraph to Mr. Mason, and, of course, we see the Court proceedings in the papers.

27. You have nothing to do with Maoris?—We have very few. I have to get a certificate signed by some Government officer. I generally have to do it myself. Mr. Mason sends this out to the Native Land Court, and then back to me, and then I proceed in the Court to get the pension. It is a very roundabout way, but we manage all right.

28. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Herries has dealt with two very important points: whether all pensions granted are *bona fide*, and also as to the advisability of paying over the pension of a drunken person to some reputable person—a known man. There is one point I would like to ask you to point out. Do you think it would be wise to give more power to the Magistrate to ascertain from the Registrar as to whether any property had been made over by the applicant within a certain time?—Yes; go back about six years.

The Chairman. Well, within a certain time; perhaps six years would be too long. Certainly that should be done.

29. *Mr. Herries.*] And do you think it happens?—I have no instances in my district. I would deal with it as we do with husband and wife, and I do not see that there would be any injustice where we could prove that parents have handed over property to their children.

30. *The Chairman.*] There is another point. The question has arisen as to whether it is advisable to publish the names of pensioners: what practice do you follow in Dunedin?—We do not publish the names.

31. *Mr. Herries.*] But would it prevent fraud?—We have never done it. They must register their names and come into Court; but, of course, as I said before, Dunedin is a very particular place. There are three Magistrates dealing with four Courts, and they may be perfectly ignorant of the other cases, but where a Registrar can take all his cases before one Magistrate the matter is simplified.

32. Then, you think the Deputy Registrar should appear before the Court?—Yes; to watch the interests of the Government.

33. *The Chairman.*] About examining candidates: is it done in private? In Christchurch it is done in open Court, and there are some instances where very susceptible people have a great deal of difficulty: does the Magistrate cross-examine in the open Court?—Yes, in the open Court. I think it is a good thing in one sense, because he has all the people about, and they will give evidence at once if there is any fraud. If done privately we could not have any check upon them.

34. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] I believe fraud is being stopped a good deal?—Of course, they have to get a certificate from the Magistrate. I do not know what powers he has, but I send it right back if there is any fraud in it.

35. *The Chairman.*] Now, Mr. Taylor, is there any other suggestion?—Nothing else.

36. We are to understand that there is a necessity to give the Magistrate power to ascertain how the applicants stand in the Savings-Bank, and you also urge the necessity of the Registrar appearing on behalf of the Government?—Whenever he can do so.

The Chairman. We are much obliged to you, Mr. Taylor, for this evidence, and it will help the Committee in its deliberations on this matter.

SIR,—

Wellington, 16th October, 1901.

Before leaving Dunedin on Friday, the 11th instant, I was specially requested by Edgar Hall Carew, Esq., Stipendiary Magistrate, Dunedin, to report to you the difficulty we have of finding out in the Lands Valuation Office the several properties belonging to any one man.

The difficulty arises through the Land Valuation having no index to show where a person who has one property has another somewhere else. The Land Valuation Office can tell us all about a person's property, if we give them section, and block, and locality; but they cannot identify the person with a second or third property. If you could do anything towards getting the Land Office to make up an index, we could go to the bottom of any case in a few minutes.

I am, &c.

JAMES TAYLOR,
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The Chairman, Old-age Pensions Regulation Committee, Wellington.