

and to give notice to the Postmaster through whom the instalments are payable to suspend payment of any instalments pending such inquiry." In those cases where the Registrar has asked for a special inquiry I think he should certainly be represented.

10. *Mr. Herries.*] Have any of those cases come before you?—No, not yet; but the cases I have mentioned, discovered through the police inquiries, might be brought before me in that way. There is always a great difficulty about the Maori claims.

11. Have you many in Wellington?—We have about a score, I should think. In the Wairarapa I had more.

12. What is the difficulty with regard to them?—You never know whether they have land or not. It is also very difficult to tell their age, especially that of the men, and it is also very difficult to tell their character.

13. *The Chairman.*] There would be no chance of getting confirmatory evidence from the immigration records about them?—No.

14. Can you not get information from the Native Office?—I have not found that much useful information can be obtained from the Native Office or from the Land Registry.

15. They have a nominal roll in the Land Registry?—Yes, I believe so; but not, I think, in the Native Office. The officials give me all the information they can; but I have not always been able to satisfactorily elucidate the position of Native applicants as regards interest in land.

16. Do you take cognisance of the fact, when making inquiry into Maori property, as to whether there is any income derivable from it? The applicant may have land worth £10,000 and yet be starving?—Yes; that applies to Europeans also. The pension is granted on the annual value of the property; but the property may be three times the value of the maximum allowed.

17. That would be particularly the case with Maoris?—I have always felt a difficulty about the form of pension-claim itself. It contains—and there is a statutory declaration to it—nearly all the information required in granting a pension; but the people who sign it really do not understand it, and I, for one, am very anxious that no class of pension agents should come into existence in New Zealand such as they have in America.

18. *Mr. Herries.*] Is there any sign of that having started yet?—Well, one or two have come to the Court, but they have not been warmly received by the Magistrate. The Magistrates know the danger connected with pension agents.

19. *The Chairman.*] Have you any idea of the number of Maori pensioners in the colony?—None whatever.

20. *Mr. Herries.*] How do you suggest the pension-claims should be altered?—That is the difficulty. The Magistrate wants the case brought before him duly prepared. He wants the pensioner to come with a properly filled-up claim, and with his proper proofs—his certificate of birth or baptism, a statutory declaration of some well-known individual as to his arrival in the colony, or some other proof that he has been twenty-five years in the colony. He also requires a statutory declaration by some person well known to the Magistrate as to his character, and satisfactory proof that he has no means, or, if he has some small means, a satisfactory valuation of whatever property he has. That is what the Magistrate has a right to expect in any ordinary case brought before him, and what he desires he does not see his way to obtain in these cases. I think it is throwing too large a burden upon Magistrates to really make them investigators of unprepared claims, and yet they do it.

21. You mean that the applicants have none of these things ready?—No; they cannot have them without assistance.

22. *The Chairman.*] You make a suggestion that the police should make periodical inquiries, have a roll made, and that all pensions should end on the 31st March, or at some other date to be fixed?—Yes.

23. Also, a printed form for Magistrates' minutes, and a printed form of questions to be put?—Yes. Some Magistrates seem to feel a difficulty in regard to Regulation 12, subsection (1): "If, in the course of the investigation, the Magistrate considers that further evidence on any specific matter is necessary, he may authorise an officer of his Court, or any other fit person, to inquire into the same, and may accept the result of such inquiry as evidence." The Magistrate holds, and apparently quite rightly, that he cannot order this investigation until he himself has begun to investigate, and that he wants the materials to be prepared before the case comes before him the first time.

24. You suggest that some officer should prepare the evidence?—I suggest that some officer in the Deputy Registrar's Department should make it his business to see that the claims are properly filled up, and that the applicant is in possession of the *prima facie* evidence necessary to sustain the statements in the application.

25. That the officer should see that the claims are properly prepared, and that the applicant has a right to the pension?—Yes. It is only what a patent agent or solicitor would do in the preparation of papers for the Court in an application for a patent or in an ordinary suit. This work would be done if we had such people employed as they have in America. I had to prosecute a pension-claim in America some time ago, and I had a dozen circulars from pension agents who were prosecuting pension-claims which have been made since the Civil War, and I do not want to see such agents here.

26. *Mr. Herries.*] You say that the pension-claim is not generally filled up. There are instructions at the back of the form, but, as a matter of fact, the instructions are not carried out?—No; and when the form is filled up the applicant does not understand it. It is filled up by somebody, and just signed as a matter of form, the result being that the Magistrate has to go over all the facts stated, and to satisfy himself that the applicant understands his or her statement. I put all the applicants on oath, and a little deposition is taken.