

Mr. RUTHERFORD (Palmerston North) also thought some provision should be made by the Government for attendance on such cases. One of the staff of an institution, while attending to a delirium tremens patient, had received injury the effects of which she would carry to her grave.

The CHAIRMAN said provision had been made for attendance on delirium tremens cases at the expense of the Government. With regard to refractory inmates of old men's homes, they could be dealt with for a breach of the by-laws with a penalty of £5. Failing payment, he supposed they could be committed to gaol. Also, under the Police Offences Act a man could be arrested as a vagrant when he left the institution. However, it was a matter to which he would give consideration.

Mr. BELLINGER (Taranaki) pointed out that if an old-age pensioner were committed to gaol he lost his pension, and thus the whole of the maintenance fell on the institution.

Old-age Pensioners.

Mr. BAGNALL (Auckland) said there were two points in connection with the Old-age Pensions Act upon which he thought the Conference might make a representation to the Government. The first was the difficulty many old people had in obtaining sufficient guarantee of their age. The Magistrate must have some authentic testimony or certificate as to age, otherwise he would not allow the pension. There were in Auckland people of seventy-five to eighty years of age who were barred from receiving the pension because they could not prove their age. In the Old Men's Home there were five or six people in that position. They could satisfy the authorities in regard to everything except the question of age. Then there was the case of a man who took a glass of beer on his way home to the institution and who sat down and went to sleep. If a policeman came along and took him in charge for drunkenness he lost his old-age pension. That amounted to practically a fine of £130 for taking a glass of beer. He thought some more reasonable penalty should be imposed.

Mr. SCANTLEBURY (Reefton) said that if a man in his district could place before the Magistrate reasonable evidence of his age the pension was granted.

Canon JORDAN (Tauranga) referred to the case of a woman whom he knew as a girl fifty-two years ago. She was then to his knowledge eleven or twelve years of age. He wrote to the Registrar stating that he was quite prepared to make a sworn declaration to that effect, but the Registrar declined to receive such affirmation, although a certificate was produced showing that she was over twenty-one years of age at the time of her marriage, which would go to prove that she was now about sixty-five years of age.

Mr. HORRELL (Christchurch) said the homes which provided for old men and women were to a large extent filled up by old-age pensioners. When these people gained admission to a home they regarded themselves as boarders. They demanded the best of everything, but they could not be got to do anything. Owing to the crowding of the homes by old-age pensioners they were unable to admit many old people who were really indigent. He thought the Government, instead of giving a pension of 10s. a week, which was quite inadequate for a man to live on, should establish some institution where the old pensioners could go and live for the remainder of their days.

The Chairman.

On the motion of Mr. TAPPER (Dunedin) the Hon. Mr. C. M. Luke and Mr. Gallaway were appointed a committee to draw up a motion expressing the high appreciation of the Conference of the able manner in which Dr. Valentine had presided over and controlled its deliberations.

The CHAIRMAN thanked the members present for their kindly expressions. He was afraid he had not proved himself a model Chairman, but it was regarded as a part and parcel of his duties to act in that capacity. He had felt when taking the chair that the position would be a difficult one for him, but he found that owing to the forbearance and courtesy of the delegates his task had been a most pleasant one, and for this he most heartily thanked the members of the Conference. Since he had occupied the position of Inspector-General he had met with extreme courtesy from one end of the land to the other. Chairmen, Secretaries, and members of Boards had been always most anxious to give him all the assistance in their power. With regard to hospitals, naturally, by virtue of his profession, he had been able to keep himself fairly well up to date; but when it came to such problems as the administration of charitable aid and many others which cropped up in the various districts, they were quite new to him, and he took this opportunity of thanking those gentlemen who had so materially assisted him, and who had contributed so much to the success of this Conference. The decisions which had been come to by the Conference would, no doubt, for the most part be embodied in a new Bill which would be drafted for the consideration of Parliament. Even if the Conference had been productive of nothing else, it was a good thing that the representatives of the various districts should meet together and exchange views, and it was so much more satisfactory for him to discuss matters with men who were present than with men who were at a distance. He hoped to be able to continue to serve the Dominion and to retain the confidence of those who had so kindly expressed their confidence in him to-day.

Mr. GALLAWAY asked that a short account of the proceedings be prepared and sent to each delegate. In asking this he wished to refer to the admirable manner in which Mr. Killick had carried out his duties as Secretary to the Conference.

The CHAIRMAN stated that such a document was already in course of preparation, and would be circulated.

Old-age Pensioners.

Mr. TALBOYS (Dunedin) thought the Conference should express some opinion with regard to the regulation by which the pension was taken away from men who had been the worse for liquor, thus throwing the cost of maintenance of those men on the ratepayers.