

in endeavouring to arrive at the possibilities in the way of a pension roll, by reason of the qualification relating to the parentage of children under fourteen; so also may the group between the ages of 55 and 65, which in the light of the experience already gained is not likely to provide many participants, particularly as the Old-age Pensions Act now provides for a pension in excess of the maximum available as a widow's pension to women at 55 and over who have young children. Those, therefore, who will be likely to receive the benefits of the Act are limited to the 8,500 below the age of 55, in regard to whom no statistics whatever are available to indicate what percentage is able to fulfil the necessary qualifications. [NOTE.—The number of widows aged 65 and over on the Old-age Pension Roll is 4,896.]

Taking the figures of the past five months, showing applications to have been lodged at the rate of about 250 per month, the number of applicants for twelve months would work out at close on 3,000; but, with the knowledge that there has been a marked decline in the number applying during the latter portion of the period mentioned, I do not anticipate that the first year's working will provide more than 2,000 claims, which, if all established at the amount of the average pension now payable, would represent an annual liability approximating £36,000. This estimate, however, is subject to considerable reduction if the present percentage of rejections, about 16 per cent., is maintained.

The number of claims recorded at Head Office to date is 1,334, of which number 990 have been granted and 200 rejected for various causes.

The number granted to the 31st March was 791, on whose behalf the sum of £1,963 6s. 5d. was paid during the financial year ending on that date. In the same period there was one refund of £1 6s. 8d., making a net charge against the Consolidated Fund of £1,961 19s. 9d. There were three pensions cancelled, leaving 788 pensions in force at the close of the year.

The annual liability in regard to these was £14,863, being an average of £18 17s. per pensioner.

The total families of pensioners range in number from 1 to 17, and the number of children in one family under fourteen years of age from 1 to 8, the averages being—Total family, 5 children; family under fourteen years, 2·43 children.

Full details regarding the distribution of the pensioners throughout the Dominion at the close of the year, together with the number payable at each rate of pension, are embodied in Tables XIV and XV of the appendix.

The ages, nationalities, and occupations of those who were admitted to that date appear in Tables XVII, XVIII, and XIX.

The income and property of the beneficiaries at the end of the year are as follows:—

Income—						£
From property	...	...	...	...	...	5,051
From other sources (including personal earnings)	...	...	...	...	...	28,374
Total	...	...	...	...	...	33,425
Average income per pensioner						£42
Property—						
Homes	...	...	...	...	...	57,588
Furniture	...	...	...	...	...	31,732
Cash	...	...	...	...	...	17,242
Other property	...	...	...	...	...	14,709
						121,271
Less mortgages	...	...	...	...	...	25,183
						96,088
Average amount of property per pensioner						£121

D. ROBERTSON, Commissioner.