

will be seen from the report of the Board, which will be presented to Parliament shortly, that, according to reliable official statistics, the scale of food-prices in New Zealand is lower than that obtaining in the other countries mentioned in the report.

Comprehensive information has been obtained by the Board for the Government as a result of its investigations into the prices of butter, wheat, flour, bread, and petrol. The serious rise in meat-prices over pre-war rates in several towns in New Zealand was made the subject of special inquiry. Prices were steadied, and in some towns controlled, by allowing butchers to draw their supplies from stocks of meat which were being held for the Imperial Government. In Auckland, where meat-prices were comparatively higher than in other centres, two meat-depots were opened under State control. The saving to the consumers effected by the operation of these depots, and the meat question generally, will be fully dealt with in the Board's report above referred to.

PENSIONS.

The gross payments made under the Pensions Act, 1913, through the Post Office during the year were as follows :—

	£
Old-age pensions	480,229
Widows' pensions	38,016
Military pensions (Maori War only)	45,673
Total	<u>£563,918</u>

These figures show increases over the figures of last year of £890 for old-age pensions and £1,659 for widows' pensions, with a decrease on account of military pensions of £2,600, making a net decrease in all of £51.

Payments of miners' pensions under the Miner's Phthisis Act, 1915, totalled £8,065.

The numbers of pensions in force under each head and the approximate annual liability in regard thereto at the close of the year were,—

	Number of Pensions.	Annual Liability. £
Old-age pensions	19,697	482,000
Widows' pensions	2,024	39,000
Military pensions	1,232	44,000
Miners' pensions	238	10,000
Total	<u>23,191</u>	<u>£575,000</u>

The numbers of widows' and miners' pensions represent increases of 134 and 118 respectively over the figures of the previous year, while the old-age and Maori War pensions have decreased by 107 and 91 respectively.

WAR PENSIONS.

The claims for war pensions dealt with from the passing of the War Pensions Act in August, 1915, to the 31st March, 1917, total 7,337, made up of 4,677 from discharged soldiers and 2,660 from dependants of deceased and disabled soldiers. These have been dealt with as follows :—

	Soldiers' Claims.	Dependants' Claims.
Pensions for twelve months and upwards..	1,003	2,075
Temporary pensions	3,194	258
Declined	436	259
Adjourned	10	10
On hand	34	58
Total	<u>4,677</u>	<u>2,660</u>