

PENSIONS.

The amounts paid for pensions, other than recent war pensions, during the year are as follow :—

	Statutory Pensions. £	Allowance under Finance Act. £	Total Pensions. £
Old-age pensions	482,438	260,605	743,043
Widows' pensions	44,714	36,058	80,772
Military (Maori War) pensions ..	39,477	11,033	50,510
Miners' pensions	10,722	2,555	13,277
Totals	<u>£577,351</u>	<u>£310,251</u>	<u>£887,602</u>

The pensions paid show an increase over last year in every class except Maori War pensions, but taking the actual statutory pension, as apart from the war bonus under the Finance Act, 1917, the only increase over last year is in the widows' pensions, and this is due to the recent epidemic. The actual variations are as follow :—

	Decrease. £	Increase. £
Old-age pensions	19,647	..
Widows' pensions	..	2,728
Military (Maori War) pensions ..	5,363	..
Miners' pensions	1,246	..

Against the total payment of £887,602 must be credited £38,234, including £32,647 from national endowments on account of old-age pensions, and £4,425 from gold duty in respect of miners' pensions, leaving a net charge of £849,368 against the State.

Under the provisions of the Finance Act, 1917, the bonus granted under that Act to old-age, widows', military, and miners' phthisis pensioners continues till twelve months after the termination of the war, which is a day to be fixed by Proclamation. It will be seen, therefore, that the payment of the bonus can be continued until late in 1920 without further legislation. It is considered desirable to defer the necessary legislation till it can be considered by a new Parliament next session. Amending and consolidating legislation, therefore, will be introduced next session to deal with the bonus, and to remove various anomalies which from time to time have been pointed out.

The annual liability in respect of each class of pension, the total number in force at close of year, and the amount of the average pension are set out hereunder :—

	Number in Force at 31st March, 1919.	Statutory Pensions. £	Allowance under Finance Act. £	Total. £	Average Pension. £
Old-age pensions	19,872	473,574	258,336	731,910	36
Widows' pensions	3,211	65,860	46,758	112,618	35
Military (Maori War) pensions ..	1,040	37,440	10,374	47,814	45
Miners' pensions	240	10,120	2,483	12,603	52
Totals.. ..	..	<u>586,994</u>	<u>317,951</u>	<u>904,945</u>	

Except in the case of widows' pensions there has been a decrease during the year by deaths and cancellations as compared with new grants, as shown in the undermentioned table :—

	New Grants.	Deaths and Cancellations.	Increase.	Decrease.
Old-age pensions	2,235	2,323	..	88
Widows' pensions	1,349	330	1,019	..
Military pensions	12	125	..	113
Miners' pensions	82	112	..	30