

for examination be reduced, and that the applicants be provided with reasonable accommodation when they have to be sent to Christchurch. On some occasions I have known them to be sent to third-class boardinghouses, such as they never had to use when they were able to pay their way—so bad, indeed, that they have refused to stay at them, on account of the dirtiness of the beds and the inferiority of the food provided. Another point that I wish to bring up relates to the payment of accrued pensions. I consider that the widow should be entitled to receive them.

4. *Mr. H. E. Holland.*] What is meant by “accrued amounts”?—From the date of a pensioner's death nothing is paid to his widow on account of his pension. If he lives to the 22nd of a month, his pension stops there, and his widow seems to be expected to live on nothing. At present the undertaker gets the money, and I can see nothing in the Act providing that he should do so. The widow is left unprovided for until she gets the widow's pension. I know of one Reefton case in which a man died the day before his pension was payable, and the undertaker received the amount due, less one day. It was not till six weeks later that the widow received her own pension.

5. Do you not think that the miner's pension should be a living-wage?—Most decidedly. I can give instances where men have suffered from miner's complaint, and their wives have had to go out to work. There are cases in which men have been invalids for four years, and their wives have been up for the greater part of each night nursing them, and sometimes they have suffered hardship because on that account they could not go out to work. Sometimes the wife loses part of the month's pension payable on account of her husband, and after his death she gets into debt, and it takes her the rest of her life to get out of it.

6. You advocate that applicants should be sent to Greymouth from Reefton for examination: Is the X-ray plant at Greymouth strong enough to locate miner's phthisis?—I understand so. The Pensions Department sent some men to Greymouth, and they received the pension.

7. The Westport apparatus is not strong enough?—No.

8. Where a medical man with such experience as, say, Dr. Conlon in regard to this disease certifies a case to be miner's phthisis, do you not think it should be provided that the Department should accept his decision?—Not in all cases.

9. My point is that when a doctor so highly qualified, and with such experience, as Dr. Conlon gives a decision that a man is suffering from miner's phthisis, the Department should not set out to try to prove against the claim—that his certificate should be accepted by the Department, instead of it making what is practically an appeal against his view?—I would be quite satisfied if an amendment of that kind were made, but I would not like to see any doctor given the sole right to be the examiner. We have had applicants turned down by medical men who were supposed to know, but afterwards pensions have been granted, and after drawing one or two instalments the pensioners have died from the disease.

10. With respect to the white paper which the pensioners are asked to sign every month, I am informed by Mr. Samuel that the pensioners at Waihi are allowed to earn £1 a week without it affecting their pensions, and I believe it is the same at Westport, but I am not sure. That was an unwritten arrangement made with the Hon. Mr. Anderson, the late Minister in charge of the Pensions Department, through Mr. Samuel. Are you aware of that arrangement?—I know of two cases in which it was reported to the Pensions Department that pensioners were earning money, and a policeman was sent to make inquiries. There was a good deal of trouble over the matter, but these men had not written applying for permission to make these earnings. On one occasion a pension was stopped for about two months, and the man had to apply afresh, and go through a lot of red-tape, just because one day he felt rather better than usual and started to do a painting job at a shop, for which he was to receive a few shillings. The other case was that of a man who cut up some kindling-wood at a boardinghouse, and on the fact being reported his pension was held up. Once I applied to the Commissioner of Pensions for permission for a pensioner to look after the swimming-baths at Reefton. Leave was granted, and the man got £1 a week. Quite recently I applied that a pensioner should be allowed to work as a watchman at the Globe battery. The Department wrote back asking what he would earn. In the meantime the man became so ill that he could not take the work. It was a light job, and he might have been allowed to take it. That man has six children and his wife to support out of his pension of 35s. per week, and he has house-rent to pay.

11. *Mr. Samuel.*] Do you not think that where a doctor has been in a mining district such as Reefton for a number of years he should be competent to judge whether a man is suffering from miner's phthisis or not?—Yes, but there may be difference of opinion between doctors whether the sufferer has been originally tuberculous or not. He may have both complaints. If a miner's general history is that he has been fifteen or twenty years at mining-work in Reefton, you can confidently say that he has miner's phthisis.

12. Take the case where a local doctor has certified that a man has miner's phthisis, and he is then sent before a Medical Board, which decides that his complaint is tuberculosis and not miner's phthisis. He is then sent to an independent Medical Board at the request of your union. Do you not think that in such a case the local doctor should be given a chance to state the reasons why he considers the man has miner's phthisis?—I certainly do.

13. Otherwise his evidence is of no use at all, because it has been considered by the first Board, which overrode it, and then the independent Board can only take the evidence of the Board that has rejected the claim, and the local doctor does not come into the picture. You agree that he should be given an opportunity to state his case, and give evidence on behalf of the applicant?—Yes.

14. Do you not also think that in all cases based on miner's phthisis the applicant should be represented by some one who understands his condition?—Yes. As a matter of fact Dr. Wickin, before I left Reefton, said with regard to Mitchell's case that he is satisfied now beyond doubt that he is suffering from miner's complaint, and is starting to go downhill. The doctor added that