

entirely by the State, as a compensation in old age to persons who have given their labour during all the best years of their life, at a very inadequate remuneration, for the public benefit.

Assuming the resolutions agreed to in the report as a basis on which to formulate a scheme of old-age pensions, we have to deal with the following figures, as supplied by the Registrar-General:—

Persons of sixty-five years of age and upwards in the colony number 15,359 (divided into 8,940 males and 6,419 females). These are the latest returns; and dealing with the figures therein more closely, it may be safely reckoned that one-third—it may possibly be more—of the above number (keeping in view the exceptions and limitations already noted) will not apply or be eligible for a pension, a reduction which leaves the result thus:—

Males	...	...	...	...	...	8,940	
Less one-third	...	...	...	...	...	2,980	
							5,960
Females	...	...	...	...	...	6,419	
Less one-third	...	...	...	...	...	2,139	
							4,280
							10,240

Of these 10,240 it may be reasonable to assume that 3,500 of them are married—husband and wife living together—and pensioned at £30 a year ... £ 105,000

Males	...	...	...	5,960		
Less married men	...	...	...	3,500		
					2,460 at £20 16s. a year	51,168
Females	...	...	...	4,280		
Less married women	...	...	...	3,500		
					780 at £20 16s. a year	16,224
						£172,392

A primage duty of 3 per cent. upon all imports, dutiable and free alike,	£
will produce a revenue of	195,243
Pensions	172,392
Surplus	£22,851

A PROPOSAL *RE* STATE-AIDED INSURANCE OLD-AGE PENSIONS.

By Mr. D. BUDDO.

THAT it is advisable that all persons over the age of sixty-five years who have lived in the colony of New Zealand for not less than twenty years, who have not been convicted of a crime for fifteen years, or of drunkenness for five years, and who have not been in receipt of charitable aid, shall be eligible to receive a pension if they have no other means of support. Such pension not to exceed 8s. per week, and be provided for as follows—and I might here point out that it is next to impossible to get statistics for my purpose: but, considering that all incomes of employes who do not contribute to income-tax should contribute to the pension fund, I estimate that £12,000,000 is earned by employes earning less than £300 per annum in this colony; this at 1d. in the pound would give £50,000, and this to be collected by the Insurance Department would be a very expensive matter; but it could be easily and cheaply collected by making the employer collect it as receipt stamps on the receipt for wages, every sum given for wages from £1 upwards to bear a penny stamp for every £1 of the amount.

There are nearly 15,000 persons in this colony over the age of sixty-five years, and I estimate that one-quarter of that number, or 3,750, will be in a more or less needy condition and require a pension in their closing years. To provide this number with a weekly pension each of 8s. would require £78,000, and, possibly, liabilities in consequence of increased numbers and expenses might make up altogether £100,000.

I might say here that I believe 3d. should be provided for every £1 earned by employes earning less than £300 per annum, and that the employe should contribute two-fifths and that the State should find the other three-fifths, and that the average of this fund should, if it raises more than is required, be used to assist more, by lowering the age of those who would receive a pension rather than raising the rate of pension.

Further contingencies may occur that might require providing for, such as that the number of persons over sixty-five years of age that are indigent may amount to one-third the total number instead of one-quarter; and also for the next twenty-five years there will be a steadily increasing number of old people as the colony grows older.

Therefore, I may fairly assume that the amount of 1d. in the pound from the employe and 2d. to be added from the State will eventually just about balance the liability.

In conclusion, I might add that no scheme based upon State-aided insurance lines can be made complete without evidence as to the indigent aged over sixty-five years, and also the amount of wages or salary earned by employes earning less than a specified amount; and I would here recommend that the Old-age Pensions Committee recommend the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to get evidence toward that end.