

I feel that I have devoted a good deal of space to the setting-forth and elaboration of details in connection with points which I have altogether discarded in the statement of my own conclusions on the subject. Yet I think that a consideration of such details is desirable, and is calculated to have a sobering effect on the mind. This is not a subject on which we should be led by enthusiastic social reformers, but is one for which there is need of patience and wise delay before committal to any particular scheme. Serious difficulties will no doubt always present themselves for solution when one sets oneself the task of controverting the truism that the poor shall be always in our midst. We have considered several schemes having that object in view, and fortunate will be the State which is able to devise a scheme which will discard all the objectionable features and retain only the good. A State scheme of old-age pensions is calculated to bring into play many complicated forces the effect of which on the body politic it is very difficult to foresee and provide for. And while our sympathies are no doubt in favour of the creation of some comprehensive scheme for the kindly and considerate treatment of the aged and deserving poor—a want which is sadly felt in our midst at present—it would become us as an insurance institute to insist as strongly as possible that every effort should be made to encourage the making of a suitable provision, by means of the insurance societies existing in our midst for the purpose, or in any other ways which would come under the category of “thrift.” It has been a matter of pride in the colonies that various departures have been made from the beaten track in legislation that have been recognised by other countries as worthy of imitation; and it is our hope that when the Legislatures come to deal with this question they will do justice to their best reputations. The New Zealand proposal is, in my opinion, a great improvement on any elaborate system involving individual contributions and the building up of huge reserves; but I believe it to be unsound in the directions I have already indicated, affecting the amount granted and the conditions attaching to the grant.

Considering that my subject is “Old-age Pensions,” you will, I imagine, have come to the conclusion that, on the whole, I have condemned them. But it has been held to be sometimes as useful to prove a negative as to establish an affirmative, and in this view I hope my criticism of the various schemes may be of some service.

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