

53. With reference to this question of police, Mr. Mansfield, are you of the same opinion—that the police are the proper persons to make inquiries?—I have had complaints of the people being highly offended by a policeman calling on them. If the police officer could be in plain clothes, and intimate that he was from the Deputy Registrar, it would be different. Anything from the Court is an exceedingly delicate matter, and creates nervousness amongst the old people. I think that the investigation might be controlled from the Deputy Registrar's Office by employing a police officer to be told off for that particular duty.

*Mr. Mason* : There are no plain-clothes officers in country districts.

*Mr. Mansfield* : There are not so many pensioners there; they mostly congregate in the towns.

54. *Mr. Field.*] The old people have as much objection to the blue clothes as they have to the blue paper?—Undoubtedly. Old-age pensioners have come down to my office and told me that they could not sleep a wink after the policeman's visit, fearing that they had been guilty of something when giving their evidence. I have had to reassure them that it was only inquiries that were being made by the department.

55. Are there many of those cases?—It is noticeable in a few very old people. In reference to the appointment of agents, I intended to suggest that the Magistrates might be relieved of that work entirely. There are difficulties that present themselves to the Deputy Registrar in cases that never reach the Magistrate.

*Mr. Mason* : I agree with Mr. Mansfield in that so far, but not to relieve the Magistrates of the power to appoint agents.

*Mr. Mansfield* : I think the Magistrate should deal with the appointment of agents in those cases where an order has been issued to pay agent only. But in a number of cases a son or a relative of the old-age pensioner comes to me, saying, "Father is laid up." I reply, "You will have to go to the Court and apply to the Magistrate, and support your application by the declaration of your father, before you can draw the pension." The Magistrate will not take the application unless the signatures are attested by a well-known person or a Justice of the Peace, and there is therefore a considerable amount of work thrown upon the agent before he can get appointed. The people have frequently said to me, "Oh, we will wait and see if father is going to get better." I suggest that this duty of appointing agents be thrown upon the Deputy Registrar.

56. *Mr. Field.*] You would empower the Deputy Registrar to deal with these cases?—Yes.

57. But you would not take the power from the Magistrates?—No.

*Mr. Mason* : In many districts the Magistrate goes about and the Deputy Registrar remains at home. In a place like Invercargill, for instance, the Magistrate will visit all sorts of places.

*Mr. Mansfield* : That is all the more reason why they should give the power to Deputy Registrars. The Post Office only pays on the presentation of the warrant.

58. *Mr. Field.*] You think, then, that by adopting your plan it would be quite as much a safeguard as under the present system?—I see no risk in the matter.

*Mr. Mason* : I think the Deputy Registrars can be trusted in reference to this.

*Mr. Field* : I heard of one case where there was a good deal of difficulty in getting the appointment of an agent.

*Mr. Mansfield* : The whole spirit of the Act is to help the old people to get what they are entitled to, but present methods absolutely impede them when they fall sick.

59. *Mr. Field* (to Mr. Mansfield).] You have seen no more objection to the police making inquiries necessary under the Act—apart from the fact of the blue clothes—than in their collecting statistics, and so forth?—If they were to put on plain clothes I think they need not represent themselves as policemen at all in this matter.

60. I understand from you, Mr. Mason, that something of the kind will be carried out, and also the question of an old-age-pension roll, and the dividing-up of districts?—Yes. I think it is intended to have a roll which would be compiled and submitted to the Magistrates dealing with all pensions on the list, so that they might have this when they are investigating the renewal claims.

61. Do you think, Mr. Mansfield, it would be putting an unnecessary amount of work on the Deputy Registrars if they were asked to do as the Magistrate has suggested—to relieve him of the large amount of inquiry on renewals?—Yes, it would, certainly, if the Deputy Registrar has to appear in Court on the renewals—which is evidently contemplated. But with original claims I should say that the Magistrates should deal with them.

62. All new claims, of course, the Magistrate would take; but he wants to be relieved of making inquiries into the renewals?—Yes. And, with regard to this question of the pension-year, my experience is that it would be a mistake to have all the investigations made at the beginning of the year. We have a great deal of work at the beginning of the year. Every pension is based upon its own year, consequently when those pensioners have died off which came in with the flood we would have the work spread over the whole year. I think it would be a great mistake to have them all terminating at one time in the year. It would create much confusion and work at one particular time.

63. You think it would be better to spread it out over the year?—Yes, far better. With regard to the question of fraud, I have not had many cases. The ones I have investigated in response to anonymous letters have all been disproved, every one of them. People talk and hear stories from "the man in the street," but do not know the private circumstances of the case. Under section 11, "The rate of each year's pension shall not vary during the year," and section 12, "For the purpose of ascertaining whether the claimant for a pension is entitled thereto, and also of fixing the rate of the first year's pension, his income for the next preceding income-year shall be deemed to be his yearly income. For the purpose of fixing the rate of the pension for the second and each subsequent year the pensioner's income for the income-year next preceding each such year shall be deemed to be his income for such year." This involves the question of the