

SESSION II.
1906.
NEW ZEALAND.

OLD-AGE PENSIONS DEPARTMENT

(EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE), FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1906.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 62 of "The Old-age Pensions Act, 1898."

The REGISTRAR OF OLD-AGE PENSIONS to the Hon. the COLONIAL TREASURER.

SIR,—
Old-age Pensions Department, Wellington, 31st July, 1906.
I have the honour to submit herewith my report on the working of the Department for the financial year ended the 31st March, 1906.
The principal event of the year was the passing of the Amendment Act increasing the amount of pension to £26 per annum, the immediate result of which has been not only an enlarged expenditure, but also a marked addition to the number of participants. The various provisions of this Act, which have helped to bring about these increases, are as follows :—

- 1. An increase in the amount of pension from £18 to £26.
- 2. An increase from £52 to £60 in the amount of income required to disqualify an applicant.
- 3. An increase from £78 to £90 in the amount of joint income (with pension added) required to disqualify a married couple.
- 4. An equal division of all property owned between husband and wife.
- 5. An increase from £50 to £150 in the deduction allowed from property where such property, or part thereof, constitutes a home from which no income is derived.
- 6. Provision for the private investigation of claims by Magistrates.

The Act referred to received the Governor's assent on the 29th July, and, as it decreed that the change in the amount of pension was to take effect immediately—i.e., with the instalment which commenced to accrue on the 1st August and became payable on the 1st September—no time had to be lost in making arrangements for the increased payment on the date named. Despite the fact that the increases of pension in every case had to be sanctioned by the various Magistrates throughout the colony (for no pension or increase of pension can be paid without the authority of a Magistrate), I have to report that on the 1st September there were only four pensions which were not available at the increased rate, and these four were available before the days of grace allowed for collection had expired.

I here desire to place on record my appreciation of the readiness with which Magistrates assisted the Department in enabling the increased payment to be made as provided by law. Without their generous assistance the task attempted would not have been consummated.

PENSIONS IN FORCE.

On the 31st March last the number of pensioners on the roll stood at 12,582, being 812 more than at the close of the previous year, or 194 less than on the 31st March, 1902, when the number was at its highest since the passing of the original Act—namely, 12,776. Of this number 667 were Maoris.

Although the number of pensioners has increased, it is satisfactory to note that the percentage of pensioners to the population eligible by age and residence has not gone up. The percentages for the past six years are as follows :—

On 31st March,	Estimated European Population eligible by Age and Residence.	European Pensioners.	Percentage.
1901	26,563	11,307	42
1902	27,993	11,721	41
1903	29,384	11,589	39
1904	30,890	11,197	36
1905	32,013	11,138	35
1906	35,157	11,915	34

[NOTE.—The estimated eligible population has been arrived at from figures taken from the last available census returns (1901), after making allowance for the actual number of deaths during the past five years, supplied by the Registrar-General.]