

There has been an all-round increase on the figures of the previous year, the total increase of the net property owned by pensioners being £74,963. A factor which has contributed to this position is the admission to the pension roll under the Act of 1905 of 111 pensioners, who under previous Acts were ineligible by reason of the amount of their property and income, and are now each in receipt of a small pension.

It may here be mentioned that out of 13,257 on the roll no less than 2,245 have benefited by the provision in the 1905 Act, whereby a deduction of £150 instead of £50 is allowed in cases where pensioners permanently reside on their own properties which produce no income.

The average amount of property held by each pensioner, after the deduction of mortgages, is this year £32 16s., as against an average of £28 12s. held last year.

The total annual income earned by pensioners is £110,012, being an average of £8 5s. per annum per pensioner, as against £8 4s. per pensioner in the previous year.

The particulars which go to make up these figures are set out in further detail in the Appendix.

HOMES AND HOSPITALS.

During the year the total amount paid to the controlling bodies of the various homes and hospitals throughout the colony was £16,121 7s. 2d., the number of pensioners resident in such institutions on the 31st March being 637. Of this number 615 represent pensioners who prefer to permanently reside in homes, the remaining 22 being hospital patients receiving treatment. A return setting out the amount paid to each institution, and the number of pensioners resident therein, is embodied in the Appendix.

As indicating the effect which the operation of the pension scheme has had on the annual expenditure on outdoor relief in the colony since the Old-age Pensions Act came into force in 1898, the following table is supplied. It will be noted that the cost of outdoor relief has decreased from £50,850 in 1899 to £36,532 in 1907, or a decrease from 1s. 4½d. to 9½d. in the cost per head of the European population.

Year ended.		European Population.	Annual Cost of Outdoor Relief. £	Cost per Head of Population.	
				s.	d.
31st March, 1899	746,676	50,850	1	4½
" 1900	758,617	41,790	1	1½
" 1901	772,719	42,181	1	1
" 1902	789,994	38,934	0	11½
" 1903	814,842	43,421	1	0½
" 1904	838,954	42,618	1	0½
" 1905	864,971	40,799	0	11½
" 1906	889,968	39,547	0	10½
" 1907	913,873	36,532	0	9½

OLD-AGE PENSIONS AND FRIENDLY SOCIETIES.

As some doubt seems still to exist as to the effect which the operation of the old-age pension scheme has on the membership of friendly societies, I should like to emphasize the statement made in my last year's report—namely, that any benefit derived from a friendly society by way of sick or funeral allowance is exempted, not only by law but in actual practice, from being applied to reduce the amount of pension payable to any claimant. This statement was fully borne out by the replies to my inquiry in the matter then published from the various Magistrates in the colony, every one of whom intimated that in no case had any deduction been made from a pension on account of benefits received from any friendly society.

The law is very clear on the point, the definition of income in section 2 of the Old-Age Pensions Act of 1898 containing the following words: " 'Income' . . . shall be deemed to include personal earnings, but not any pension payable under this Act, nor any payment by way of sick-allowance or funeral benefit from any registered friendly society."

The meaning of this provision is that a member of a friendly society may be in receipt of a sick-allowance of £60 (or more) per annum, or may have received by way of funeral benefit a similar sum, sufficient in itself to disqualify an ordinary applicant, and yet be entitled to receive the full pension of £26, provided he is otherwise qualified in accordance with section 8 of the Act referred to.

The Old-age Pensions Act, therefore, in my opinion, offers a special inducement to a person to become a member of a friendly society, inasmuch as he will in his old age be qualified to receive the old-age pension in addition to any benefit that may accrue to him as a member of such society.

J. EMAN SMITH, Registrar.