

1909.
NEW ZEALAND.

OLD-AGE PENSIONS DEPARTMENT

(ELEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE), FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1909.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 69 of "The Old-age Pensions Act, 1908."

The COMMISSIONER OF OLD-AGE PENSIONS to the Right Hon. the MINISTER OF FINANCE.

SIR,—

Old-age Pensions Department, Wellington, 30th April, 1909.

I have the honour to submit herewith my report on the working of the Department during the financial year ended 31st March, 1909.

The principal event of the year was the passage through Parliament of an Amendment Act, which widened the scope of former Acts, and thereby added considerably to the number of pensioners. This Act received the Governor's assent on the 10th October, 1908.

The main features of this enactment are,—

- (1.) A provision giving Magistrates power to grant pensions to applicants immediately on their losing their employment who previously were ineligible for the best part of twelve months after ceasing work.
- (2.) The exemption of life-assurance policies and annuities as accumulated property under the Act.
- (3.) A reduction in the period of good behaviour before the granting of a pension from five years to twelve months.
- (4.) The elimination of a provision in the principal Act relating to residence which placed restrictions on the allowance of four years' absence from New Zealand.
- (5.) An increase from £300 to £650 in the value of property transferable to the Public Trustee in return for a pension.
- (6.) A provision for payment to the Mental Hospital Department of pensions granted to pensioners admitted to mental hospitals.
- (7.) An alteration in the due date of the first instalment of a pension, making it one month earlier than previously.
- (8.) A provision for the suspension of an order of forfeiture during the period a pensioner is being maintained in a charitable institution.

It may be mentioned that the former Acts above referred to were consolidated in one Act by Parliament early in the session of 1908.

PENSIONS IN FORCE.

A considerable increase in the number of participants in the scheme—the largest in any year since 1901—has taken place during the past year. On the 31st March last there were 14,396 pensioners on the books, including 691 members of the Native race. This represents an increase of 827 on the figures of the previous year, thus :—

New pensions granted	..	..	..	..	..	..	2,113
Deduct,—							
Deaths ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,112
Cancellations	..	..	..	..	..	..	174
							— 1,286
Net increase	..	..	..	..	..	..	827

Not only has the increase been in actual numbers, but also in the percentage of pensioners to the population eligible by age and residence. The following table indicates the rise and the previous fall :—

On 31st March		European Population eligible by Age and Residence.	European Pensioners.	Percentage.
1901	(Actual)	26,563	11,307	42
1906	"	37,367	11,915	31
1908	(Estimated)	39,336	12,912	32
1909	"	40,176	13,705	34