

SAORSTÁT ÉIREANN.



REPORT

OF

Old Age Pension Committee of Enquiry

DUBLIN:

PRINTED FOR THE STATIONERY OFFICE.

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SAORSTÁT ÉIREANN.

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COMMITTEE ON OLD AGE PENSIONS.

REPORT.

To/

EARNAN DE BLAGHD.

Minister for Finance.

The Committee have the honour to submit their Report and recommendations :—

(1) The Committee were appointed under Minute dated 1st January, 1925, "to consider and report what alterations, if any, should be made in the provisions of the Acts (including regulations made thereunder) relating to Old Age Pensions and Pensions for the Blind respecting the machinery for the determination of claims, questions and appeals, regard being had especially to the desirability of the just and expeditious treatment of all applications."

(2) The Committee have held in all nineteen sittings. At the earlier sittings the Committee occupied themselves with a detailed consideration of the system at present in force. The existing procedure is briefly described in a later paragraph.

(3) Having mastered the working of the present system, and having considered some of the complaints which are usually made regarding it, we invited the undermentioned organisations to submit the names of a few of their members, who would be prepared to give evidence :—

- (a) The National Executive of the Irish Labour Party.
- (b) The General Council of County Councils.
- (c) The Irish Farmers' Union.
- (d) The Association of Municipal Authorities.
- (e) The St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Each of these organisations nominated witnesses to give evidence before us. Ten witnesses in all were nominated by them and of these seven, who were or had been members of Pension Committees, were in a position to give us first hand information regarding the working of these bodies.

(4) We also asked the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Local Government and Public Health to nominate officials to give evidence regarding such matters, coming within the terms of our reference, as fell within the cognizance of each Department.

The Revenue Commissioners were informed that the Committee particularly desired to have evidence from Pension Officers having experience (a) in urban areas, (b) in rural areas (congested) and (c) in rural areas (non-congested). The Department of Local Government and Public Health was asked to nominate—

- (a) an official who habitually adjudicated on appeals;
- (b) an Inspector engaged on general pension work: and
- (c) a Medical Inspector under the Blind Persons Act, 1920.

Four officials were nominated by the Revenue Commissioners and three by the Department of Local Government and Public Health. We examined these witnesses very fully, and they gave us much valuable assistance.

(5) We also had advertisements inserted in the Dublin daily papers, inviting any person who desired to make representations to us regarding the subject matter of our Terms of Reference, to forward the same in writing, and to send us a précis of his proposed evidence if he desired to be examined. As a result of this advertisement, many communications were received from Pension Committees, and from individuals interested in old age pension administration. Four gentlemen who volunteered to give evidence were examined by us. A large number of complaints regarding individual grievances were also received; we had, of course, no mandate to deal with them, but they were considered in so far as they were relevant to matters within our reference.

(6) During our sittings 21 witnesses were examined, of whom 7 were officials. Of the 14 non-official witnesses, one came from Ulster, two from Connaught, five from Munster, and six from Leinster. The official witnesses included Pension Officers from Dublin City, Cork County, and Connemara. The first meeting for the examination of witnesses was held on the 25th March, 1925, and the last on the 26th May, 1925. Nearly two months then elapsed before type-written copies of the evidence were available for the Committee, and this was, to a large extent, the cause of the delay in submitting this Report.

OUTLINE OF EXISTING PROCEDURE.

(7) The local pension committee is the body upon whom the duty is primarily cast by the statutes of considering and deciding all claims. It is appointed for every borough or urban district having a population of 10,000 by the borough or urban district council, and for every county by the county council, and the persons appointed need not be members of the council.

A local pension committee may appoint sub-committees and delegate to them its powers. These sub-committees may consist wholly or partly of the members of the local pension committee appointing them.

Throughout the Saorstát the councils appoint themselves as local pension committees, but, save in a few instances, the pension committees so constituted delegate their powers and duties to one or more local sub-committees, and upon those sub-committees fall the statutory duties of deciding all claims in their respective areas. There are, in all, 27 county pension committees, 4 county borough pension committees, 11 urban district pension committees, and 329 local pension sub-committees in the Saorstát. In the succeeding paragraphs of this report the expression "Pension Committees" must be read as including sub-committees.

An applicant for an Old Age Pension must fill up a claim in a prescribed form,* obtainable free of cost at any Post Office. Postmasters are instructed to afford claimants such information and assistance as may be necessary. The claim is usually sent direct to the Pension Officer, but, in some cases, it is sent to him through the pension committee. Generally speaking, the Pension Officer is an officer of Customs and Excise who, in addition to his ordinary Revenue duties, also performs old age pension work. In the cities of Dublin and Cork women pension officers are appointed who have no Revenue duties. All pension officers are under the control of the Revenue Commissioners.

The Pension Officer investigates each claim to an old age pension at the claimant's home, and then sends it to the pension committee together with a report* giving particulars of his investigation, and his recommendations. This report is countersigned by the officer's official superior, the local surveyor.

* See Appendix.

Pension
Commit-
tees

Claims.

Pension
Officer.

It is the duty of the pension committee, on receipt of the pension officer's report, after obtaining from him or from any other source, if necessary, any further information as to the claim, to consider the case and give their decision upon it. Consideration by Pension Committee

The pension officer is entitled to attend the meetings of the pension committee, but is not bound to do so even if requested. In all cases where the pension officer does not recommend the full claim, notice* is served on the claimant stating the pension officer's grounds and affording the claimant an opportunity of being heard at the meeting of the pension committee. If the pension committee disagree with the pension officer's report, it is the committee's duty to make such further investigation as they think necessary.

The pension committee has power to adjourn the consideration of any claim for further investigation, in which case they must notify the claimant of the day fixed for the further consideration, and he is entitled to be heard thereat. Pension Committee's Decision.

The pension committee's decision, when given, is in a prescribed form.*

The decision of the pension committee is subject to appeal, by either the pension officer or the claimant, to the Minister for Local Government and Public Health; and where the claimant is not appellant, he receives notice of the appeal.* Appeal. For the purpose of the appeal, the Department of Local Government and Public Health is provided with the following documents:—

- (a) the notification of appeal;
- (b) the claim or the statement of the question or application in respect of which the appeal is brought;
- (c) the report of the pension officer;
- (d) a statement of the decision of the committee and, in any case in which the committee disagree with the report of the pension officer, a statement of the grounds of their decision;
- (e) all other documents in the possession of the committee relating to the claim, question or application.

The appeal is in practice considered and decided by one of the officials specially appointed to that duty by the Minister. The official considers the above-mentioned documents and causes such further enquiries to be made and steps taken as he considers necessary, including in some cases an investigation on the spot by one of the Department's inspectors.

Any pensioner having less than the maximum rate of pension is entitled to apply for an increase. If the pension officer is of opinion that a pensioner is no longer entitled to the pension of which he is in receipt, he can apply to the sub-committee to have the matter determined. Applications of both kinds are technically known as "Questions." Questions In certain cases the officer has statutory power to stop payment of the pension pending the decision of the question. When a question is raised by a pension officer, the pensioner is informed of the grounds on which it is proposed to reduce, or to revoke, the pension. Questions, whether raised by the pensioner or by the officer, are dealt with in the same manner as claims.

COMPLAINTS IN REFERENCE TO EXISTING PROCEDURE.

(8) During their sittings the committee heard many criticisms of the existing pension machinery, complaints as to its working, and suggestions for its improvement both in general design and detail. All these criticisms, complaints and suggestions have received the committee's anxious consideration, and most of them will be dealt with in detail in this report. We would wish, however, to deal in the first instance with one serious defect in the working of the machinery which

* See Appendix.

has been clearly revealed in the course of the evidence, and the remedy of which the committee consider essential to the smooth and successful working of the system.

(9) There can be little doubt that the design of the Old Age Pension Legislation was to place the main responsibility for the working of the system on the pension committees. Under section 7 of the Act of 1908 all claims and questions are referred to them, and they are directed, after receiving the pension officer's report, and after obtaining from him or from any other source, if necessary, any further information as to the claim in question, to consider the case and give their decision. This general intention of the Statute is elaborated by the Statutory Regulations which are drawn with a view to securing careful investigation and considered decisions by the pension committees.

The pension committee was intended to be, and should be, the pivot of the whole system.

(10) We are satisfied that there are many pension committees in the Saorstát that realise and carry out their duties in a way that leaves no room for criticism, but there can be little doubt that a very large number throughout the country fail to realise the position they were intended to occupy in the system, and the serious nature of the responsibilities and duties cast upon them by the Statutes. It is not that there is any conscious neglect of their duties, it is rather a general apathy often finding its expression in irregular attendances and careless investigation of claims. There are no doubt many reasons for this apathy, but several witnesses told us that there was a general feeling amongst the members of the pension committees that the committees did not count, that they were mere figure-heads; that, whenever a conflict arose between a committee and a pension officer, the latter almost invariably appealed and was almost invariably upheld, and that as a result committees had become apathetic "and had lost interest in the whole thing."

(11) The analysis appearing in paragraphs 25 and 26 of this report of the official figures supplied to us would go to show that the allegations as to appeals by pension officers and their results are exaggerated, but be that as it may, the committee are satisfied that the feeling above described is very prevalent throughout the country, and that where it exists and so long as it continues, the old age pension machinery cannot be expected to work satisfactorily.

The committee have, therefore, devoted special attention to the investigation of the causes which lie at the root of this trouble.

(12) The non-official witnesses spoke highly of pension officers as a class, and the individual officers examined before us impressed us as being broad-minded, intelligent and conscientious men, well fitted for the duties assigned to them.

The committee are satisfied that pension officers do their work with fairness, efficiency, and consideration, and that the feeling mentioned above cannot be ascribed to any default on their part.

We have come to the conclusion that the main cause for the said feeling lies in the want of confidence and co-operation between pension officers and committees, and that this want is mainly due to the non-attendance of pension officers at the committee meetings. There is no provision in the Regulations making it compulsory on the officer to attend, and in the result, while in some districts the officer attends the meetings fairly regularly, in the majority he appears to attend very rarely, and in some cases not at all.

(13) The witnesses examined before us were almost unanimous in their views as to the advantages which would accrue by bringing committees and pension officers into closer and more constant touch, and it seems to us these advantages are self evident.

(14) The pension officer is a Government official. His report is a lengthy document containing a large number of facts and findings, but in the nature of things it could not be expected to set out all the considerations resting on local experience and often on personal knowledge of the claimant which formed the basis of his findings. Many of the matters which might quite legitimately have influenced an officer in a doubtful case might not be such as he would care to embody in an official report. Furthermore, it must often be difficult to weigh and appreciate the statements and findings in the report without discussing them across a table.

On the other hand, the pension committee's decisions would often be based on local and personal knowledge and considerations which would not be present to the mind of the pension officer or be taken into account by him.

The result must often be that a pension committee gives its decisions without properly understanding or appreciating the pension officer's reasons or point of view, and that the pension officer appeals without understanding the point of view of the committee or the reasons which actuated them in coming to their decision.

(15) Such a state of things naturally leads to a position in which each party considers the other unreasonable in every case of disagreement, and in which a sort of antagonism develops, resulting in the committee allowing claims which should never have been allowed, and the pension officer appealing in cases which should never have been appealed, the ultimate result being an abnormal number of appeals and the delay, irritation and dissatisfaction consequent thereon.

(16) In addition to the above considerations, the committee believe that the attendance of officers at the meetings would have a very valuable educative effect. Committees in constant touch and consultation with pension officers would rapidly acquire a more solid knowledge and understanding of the Acts and Rules, and a fuller realisation of their own responsibilities and duties.

(17) An indirect result of such a change would be that the appeal body would attach far more weight to the decisions of committees when they found that in all cases they were dealing with bodies who realised and acted up to their responsibilities and duties, and were no longer allowing claims on insufficient evidence.

(18) It was urged by some of the witnesses that the many duties of pension officers presented practical difficulties in the way of their attendance at meetings. We are not satisfied that these difficulties are insuperable, and the matter is, in our view of such outstanding importance that even if it involves some rearrangement of official duties and dates of committee meetings and some additional expense, we consider that the Regulations should be amended by making it compulsory on the pension officer to attend, if not at all the meetings, at any rate at any meetings which he is requested to attend by the committee.

(19) Another matter which, no doubt helps to foster a spirit of distrust and antagonism between pension committees and pension officers is the existence of the "secret instructions," as some of the witnesses called them, on which the pension officer is bound to act, and does act, in investigating and reporting upon claims.

Departmental
Instruction
to Pension
Officers.

The instructions referred to are, we understand, confidential instructions issued to pension officers by the Revenue Commissioners in reference to the performance of their duties.

These instructions have not been placed before the committee and they are not available to the pension committees.

It has been stated that they are within the four corners of the Acts and Regulations, and that they are merely explanatory; but this, in the committee's view, does not dispose of the matter.

(20) The pension committees are the bodies entrusted by the code with the duty of deciding on evidence whether a claimant to a pension is, or is not, entitled. The main evidence on which committees have to come to their decisions consists in the reports and recommendations of pension officers, and the complaint of the pension committees is that it is impossible for them to weigh properly the conclusions and recommendations of the pension officer or to collate them with the views they may have themselves formed, without having before them everything which may have influenced the officer's conclusions or the methods by which he arrived at them. They say that they feel that "all the cards are not on the table," and that this takes away confidence in the pension officer's report and recommendations.

(21) We were told by some of the witnesses that there were Departmental reasons against the publication to committees of these instructions, and it was urged that the Revenue officers acted under similar instructions in the performance of all their other duties, and that there was no reason why any distinction should be drawn in the case of their duties as pension officers. If, however, as is stated to be the case, the instructions in reference to ascertainment of means and age are in strict accordance with the Acts and Regulations, it is difficult to see what reason can exist for their non-disclosure, and there would appear to be an obvious distinction between instructions in reference to the purely administrative functions of Customs and Excise, and instructions as to the methods and principles to be followed in ascertaining age and means and preparing a statement of facts, conclusions and recommendations, which is to form the main evidence upon which a Statutory tribunal is to come to a decision. A relaxation of the general rule in the latter case would not furnish any precedent for its relaxation in the former. We are, therefore, of opinion that, if at all possible, having regard to Departmental considerations, such portions of the official instructions as deal with the investigation of claims and questions should be disclosed to pension committees. We make this recommendation, as we believe that such a disclosure would go a long way towards restoring confidence and co-operation between pension officers and committees, and towards eliminating the feeling, which is very prevalent in committees, that they and the pension officer are not really acting on the same plane.

(22) It has been urged before the committee that the present system of appeal is defective in its design and unsatisfactory in its working, and it has been suggested that an intermediate appellate body between the pension committees and the Local Government Department should be established.

(23) In outline, the proposed body would be constituted as follows:—

A panel of referees would, in order to secure immunity from local influence, be selected from a large area, say two or three adjacent counties; and there would be a direct appeal from the pension committee to two or three members of the panel with

some local legal gentleman as a chairman. The decisions of this body would in turn be subject to appeal to the Minister for Local Government and Public Health.

(24) Two arguments are put forward for the necessity of this change.

Appeals by
Pension
Officers
and their
result.

In the first place, it is alleged that under the existing system the pension officer almost invariably appeals against any decision of a pension committee which is not in accordance with his own recommendation, and that the Department of Local Government almost invariably upholds the pension officer on appeal and gives no weight to the opinions of the pension committees.

In the second place, it is alleged that great delays take place in the investigation of appeals by the Local Government Department, with consequent hardship on claimants throughout the country.

(25) As regards the first allegation, it was not supported by any evidence of a detailed nature given by the witnesses examined before us, but we have been supplied by the Revenue Commissioners with a return* showing the number of claims dealt with in the years ended 31st March, 1924, and 31st March, 1925, respectively. An examination of the figures shows that the allegation that the pension officer almost invariably appeals, when the decision of the pension committee is not in agreement with his recommendation, is by no means accurate. The official figures show that in the year ended 31st March, 1924, pension officers recommended 5,633 claimants for pensions, and that the committees allowed 18,570 claims. In effect, the committees allowed pensions to 12,937 persons whom the pension officers had not recommended. The officers appealed in 9,133 cases, and accepted the decisions of the committees (although against their original recommendation) in 3,804 cases.

The exact measure of agreement between pension officers and pension committees is, however, greater than these figures would suggest. In the year in question, the committees disallowed 3,234 claims which the officers had reported against, and taking the total number of claims (21,804) dealt with in that year, we find that officers and committees were in ultimate agreement as regards 58 per cent. of the cases.

In the year ended 31st March, 1925, pension officers recommended 5,442 claimants, and the committees allowed 16,224 claims. The committees, therefore, allowed pensions to 10,782 persons whom the pension officers had not recommended.

The officers lodged 6,733 appeals, and accepted the decisions of the committees in 4,049 cases. In that year the number of claims dealt with was 18,971, and officers and committees were in ultimate agreement as regards 64 per cent. of them.

(26) As regards the allegation that the Department of Local Government invariably decide in favour of the pension officer, and give no weight to the opinions of the pension committees, we have not been supplied with any evidence of a detailed nature by the witnesses who made the complaint. We have, however, been furnished with a return* by the Department of Local Government showing the number of claims dealt with by that Department during the years ended 31st March, 1924, and 31st March, 1925, respectively. It will be found, on examining this return, that the statement that the pension officer is almost invariably upheld on appeal is true in the sense that the result of appeal is, in most cases, favourable to the pension officer. In the year ended 31st March, 1924, the Department dealt with 9,348 appeals. We are informed that we may safely assume that about 97 per cent. of these were appeals by the pension officer against decisions of the committee. We find that 1,382 claims were allowed on appeal, and that 7,966 were disallowed.

* See Appendix.

In effect, the pension officer was upheld in about 85 per cent. of the cases in which he appealed. In the year ended 31st March, 1925, 6,984 appeals were dealt with. Of these, pensions were granted in 1,908 cases and refused in 5,076. The pension officer was therefore upheld in about 73 per cent. of his appeals in that year.

(27) In so far as the allegation as to appeals by pension officers and their results is borne out by the actual figures, the committee believe that this feature is to a large extent explained by the failure of many pension committees to pull their weight in the system.

If the Department of Local Government finds a committee allowing claim after claim without taking proper steps to sift them, and without insisting upon the production of the best procurable evidence as to age, etc., the natural result will be that the recommendations of that committee will lose the weight and authority which they should possess. Furthermore, it would appear that under the existing rules committees generally communicate to the Department little more than their bare decisions on cases, and give little or no real assistance in determining the appeals.

We believe that this feature, in so far as it exists, will automatically disappear when committees throughout the country become fully alive to their duties and assume and act up to the serious responsibilities laid upon them under the Acts and Regulations.

Delays.

(28) As regards the contention that the present system of appeal results in great delays, there is no doubt that there have been considerable delays with which we have considered it necessary to deal in a subsequent paragraph of this Report, but the committee believe that the delays are largely due to the abnormal number of appeals and to the difficulties experienced by the Department in obtaining sufficient local assistance in their investigation. The committee have little doubt that with the toning-up of pension committees throughout the country, the number of appeals will become comparatively small, and that this and the increased facilities for obtaining local information resulting from our subsequent recommendations, will make it easy to deal with appeals in the future without any undue delay.

(29) The committee are therefore of opinion that the proposed change in the system of appeal is unnecessary, and apart from this they are not at all satisfied that the suggested alternative would be likely to produce better results. Such a new tribunal as is proposed would necessarily be expensive. It would necessarily have paid officials, and there might be a difficulty in securing regular attendance by the members of the Panel unless they also were adequately remunerated.

Unless upon the appeal there was a full rehearing and reinvestigation including, in many cases, a visit to the claimant's home, the decision on appeal would be of little value; and the trouble, delay, and expense consequent on such a rehearing and reinvestigation would, in the opinion of the committee, be quite out of proportion to any advantages likely to accrue from the change. Besides, whatever arrangements were made as to the evidence on which the proposed tribunal was to act, there would still be the objection that men with no previous knowledge of the claimant or of the conditions of his locality would be deciding the case over the heads of men who were the claimant's neighbours and had a life-long knowledge of the condition of the locality in which he lived. Furthermore, the committee believe that the adoption of such a system would, if anything, tend to increase the number of appeals and to accentuate the inconveniences and delays complained of.

(30) The Committee have given this question of appeal careful consideration and they have arrived at the conclusion that the best method of dealing with it is to concentrate on the improved working of the pension committees. At the same time the committee consider that the system can easily be improved in detail and that the adoption of the following recommendations will materially conduce towards the smooth and satisfactory working of the existing appeal machinery.

Recommendation for Improvement of Appeal System.

THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND :—

(1) That Form 17 (B) should be altered by providing, in cases where the committee differ from the pension officer, for a detailed statement of the facts and reasons on which the decision is based. The Form should have a special section to be filled in when neither birth nor baptismal certificate is produced, and the committee should be bound to state in this section (a) the efforts made by the committee to have such certificate produced and their result, and (b) the efforts made by the committee to get the next best secondary evidence, either in the form of affidavits or otherwise, and the result. The form should show generally what independent investigations and enquiries they have made as to any matter in dispute.

(2) The regulations should be modified by providing that when Form 17 (B) comes before the Department of Local Government and Public Health, it should be their duty, when not satisfied with the replies to the various queries in the Form, to refer the case back to the pension committee with specific questions in reference to the matters on which they are not satisfied.

(3) The Regulations should also provide that if the replies to the last-mentioned queries, coupled with any other evidence available, do not enable the Department to deal finally with the case, it will be their duty unless satisfied that the claim is clearly unsustainable to send an inspector personally to investigate the case.

(4) If as a result of such investigation the Department of Local Government considers that the decision of the pension committee cannot be accepted by them, it should be their duty under the Regulations to communicate to the committee the result of their investigation, and the reasons underlying the decision they give in the case.

(31) As above mentioned, the committee believe that the improvement of the working of the pension committees will, to a large extent, remove the complaints made as to the delays which occur on appeals; but as these complaints have been stressed in the evidence of many of the witnesses examined before us, we have given the matter our special consideration.

Delays in the Determination of Appeals.

(32) The delays complained of fall into two groups :—(1) Delays in connection with Blind Pension Cases, and (2) Delays in connection with Old Age Pension Claims.

(33) As regards the first class, there is no doubt that there have been very serious delays in dealing with Blind Pension Claims. In this connection it is well to point out that for reasons dealt with in paragraph 34 of this report practically all Blind Pension cases are appealed, and this of course means that a very large number of cases go to the Department of Local Government. Apart, however, from this, special circumstances existed in the last two or three years which are not likely to recur, and which resulted in a very large and quite abnormal number of appeals in Blind Pension cases.

Delays in Blind Pension Cases.

(34) During the first eighteen months after the Blind Persons Act of 1920 came into operation, there was no accepted scientific standard as to the degree of blindness necessary to qualify for the pension, and in practice Blind Pensions were awarded in all cases where a certificate from the local practitioner was forthcoming to the effect that the applicant was so blind as to be unable to perform any work for

which eyesight was essential. In the result great numbers of Blind Pensions were awarded all over the country, and it was found that the number of people who enjoyed such pensions was quite out of proportion to the numbers in other parts of the then United Kingdom. To enquire into the matter, a Departmental Committee was established, and had its sittings in the months of September and October, 1922. This committee came to the conclusion that the abnormal number of Blind Pensions awarded was largely due to the fact that the medical gentlemen giving the certificates rarely had specialised knowledge in eye-troubles, or the instruments and apparatus necessary for a satisfactory test. The committee accordingly recommended in substance that, in the future, no Blind Pension should be awarded without a certificate given by a specialist that the degree of blindness came within a prescribed scientific formula which had been adopted by the committee set up in England in the year 1917, preparatory to the bringing in of the Blind Persons Act of 1920. This formula* was arrived at as the best available test of the existence of the necessary degree of blindness as subsequently defined in the Act. The formula has been since, and is now being, acted on in Great Britain. It has also been acted on in the Saorstát, but as there are very few local specialists available there has necessarily been an appeal in nearly all cases, followed by an inspection by the Medical Inspector of the Department of Local Government. The Departmental Committee also recommended that there should be a general revision of all Blind Pensions granted since the Act of 1920 came into operation. The revision started at the end of 1923: there was only one Medical Inspector at first for this work, and it was not until January, 1925, that a second was appointed. The committee are not aware of the reasons for the delay in appointing the second officer. The work of revision necessitated personal inspection in every case, entailing constant journeys from one end of Ireland to the other, and although grouping of cases in local centres was resorted to as far as possible, this was impossible in many cases, and the Inspectors had often to journey to remote districts for the purpose of inspecting one or two cases.

(35) In the year ended 31st March, 1925, 1,303 revision cases were investigated, 583 of which were found not to comply with the standard of blindness required, and were removed from the Pension List. During the same period 744 new claims were investigated, of which 477 were refused pensions. Thus during these twelve months over 2,000 cases were inspected and dealt with. The arrears are, we believe, now wiped out, and we understand that under normal conditions in the future, the number of cases to be investigated will not exceed 600 or 700 per annum.

The immense amount of work to be done owing to the revision undoubtedly caused very serious delays in many cases, but the committee believe that there is no likelihood of delay in the future, and they consider that it will be possible to have every case investigated and determined within three months of the appeal being received.

It appears from the evidence that the Medical Inspector has been in the habit of ascertaining, in the course of his inspection tours, the persons claiming, or about to claim Blind Pensions, affording them the opportunity of examination by him, and notifying the results to the pension officer. We are of opinion that this practice might with advantage be formally embodied in the Regulations. The pension officer on the receipt of a Blind Pension claim, accompanied by the customary local medical certificate of blindness, would communicate the name and address to the Department of Local Government and Public Health, in the meantime pursuing his inquiries into the other aspects of the claim. The case would then be referred to

* See Appendix.

the Medical Inspector for examination on his next visit to the district. A considerable number of appeals, and a great deal of delay might thus be avoided, seeing that the Department would get to work at an earlier stage.

(36) As regards old age pension cases a good deal of general complaint as to delay appears in the evidence. In the case of one of the General Inspectors of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, it transpired that he had 70 claims at the moment to investigate for appeal purposes, and that 34 out of the 70 had been in the hands of the Department for more than four months. By way of explanation it was pointed out to the committee that the cases referred for inspection were selected on account of their difficulty and of the failure to obtain decisive information by means of correspondence, which was often prolonged in order to afford the claimant the fullest opportunity of furnishing supplementary evidence. In the opinion, however, of the committee delays so great as these are very prejudicial to the smooth and satisfactory working of the Act, and they consider that arrangements should be made by the Department to secure that the determination of appeals is carried out with the utmost expedition consistent with due investigation. The committee believe that the number of appeals will be very largely reduced if the foregoing recommendations are adopted, and that there will be little excuse for any delay in dealing with them in the future. An additional cause for the number of appeals in recent months is to be found in the number of cases arising under the revision consequent upon the new scales introduced by the Act of 1924. This cause is of course transitory.

Delays in
Old Age
Pension
Cases.

(37) The committee are satisfied that speaking generally claimants for Old Age Pensions are very helpless people. They are no doubt anxious to secure the pension, but they are extremely ignorant of their exact legal rights, as to the kind of evidence they are expected to produce, and as to the steps they should take to procure it. To meet this difficulty the committee make the following recommendations:—

Assistance
to Claim-
ants.

(1) A form of leaflet should be prepared, and should be delivered to each claimant together with the claim form. The leaflet should also be given to anyone who asks for it at the Post Office or Pension Office. The leaflet should contain:—

(a) a short, clear résumé of the rights under the Acts;

(b) a short statement explaining that in every case the Birth or Baptismal Certificate, if procurable, must be produced, in proof of age, and giving instructions as to the steps which should be taken to procure them; and the claimants should be warned that unless they satisfy the committee that they have made every reasonable effort to procure such certificate and failed, secondary evidence no matter how cogent will not be accepted;

(c) suggestions as to the other classes of evidence to be sought for in the absence of a Baptismal Certificate, *e.g.*, School Registers, Vaccination Registers, Marriage Certificates, &c.

(d) clear instructions as to the classes of affidavits and declarations* which will and will not be considered.

(2) Large posters should also be prepared and displayed in Pension Offices, Post Offices and other public places giving in large type a résumé of the important features of the leaflet, and stating that fuller particulars and information can be obtained in the leaflet procurable at the Post Office or from the Local Pension Officer.

* See paragraph 44.

(3) The claim form should be amended by containing separate sections to be filled in in cases where no Birth or Baptismal Certificate is forthcoming, the said sections to set out respectively : —

- (a) the efforts made by the claimant to procure a Birth or Baptismal Certificate, and the result;
- (b) the efforts made by the applicant to get evidence from such documents as Marriage Certificates, School Records, Vaccination Registers, &c., and the result;
- (c) details as to the claimant's family, *i.e.*, the names of his parents, when and where they were married; the names of claimant's brothers and sisters, living and dead, in order of birth, and the addresses, if any, in the Saorstát, of surviving brothers or sisters, or children of deceased brothers or sisters.

(4) The committee consider that two days' notice to the claimant to attend before committees is too short, and that the period should be extended to a week. As at present drafted No. 14 of the Consolidated Regulations does not mention any period of notice to be given to the claimant to attend at adjourned hearings, and the committee consider that this Rule should be amended by requiring a week's notice.

(5) The committee understand that where the claimant attends committee meetings, the pension officer's report is commonly read and explained to him, but the committee consider that there should be a specific Rule making this obligatory.

(6) The committee are of opinion that every pension officer appointed to the Gaeltacht should be able to speak Irish fluently.

Estimation
of Means.

(38) The committee received a large volume of evidence in reference to the calculation of means for the purposes of claims to Old Age and Blind Pensions, and various suggestions were made to us for the improvement of the machinery and methods adopted in such calculation.

(39) The complaints were mainly in reference to the calculation of the means of owners of small agricultural holdings.

It was suggested by some of the witnesses that an improvement might be effected by appointing to agricultural districts pension officers who were country-bred or at least had some special experience and knowledge of country life and agricultural values. Under the existing system, the duties of pension officers are performed as a rule by Revenue officers who have many other duties of an entirely different nature, and the committee are satisfied that without a complete reorganisation and probably a large increase in the numbers of the staff, it would be quite impossible to carry out this suggestion. Such a change would involve large additional expense, which, in the view of the committee, would not be justified by any improved results at all likely to be obtained.

(40) It was explained to us by the representative of the Revenue Commissioners that a pension officer, in the beginning of his service, remains only a short time in any particular place, and is often employed in assisting the older officers, and that before he is actually appointed as a fixed officer he has had some years of general experience extending to both town and country. It also appears that the Reports of every pension officer are examined by his official superior, the Surveyor of Customs and Excise, before they are sent to the pension committees. As the Surveyor was himself, before his promotion, a pension officer of wide experience, he is able to detect any omissions or errors in the officer's report, and it is his duty to refer back any incorrect report to the officer for further inquiry and amendment. Each pension officer is also required to keep a record in his books of the current local market prices of stock and farm produce, and to correct this record from time to

time. It must also be borne in mind that under the Pensions Code the enquiry of the pension officer is in substance confined to the question of what the claimant is likely to make out of his holding in the ensuing year. Such an enquiry, unlike the case of valuing land for fair rent or land purchase purposes, would not require any deep expert knowledge of the inherent quality and value of land. The pension officers are men of good education and intellectual capacity. They are appointed to their positions by competitive examination, and having regard to the considerations above mentioned, the committee consider that they should be, and are, capable of performing their duties in reference to agricultural means. Many individual complaints were made to us of apparent want of uniformity in the valuations and recommendations of pension officers, but it is a matter of common experience that such a criticism might be levelled at the work of the most expert and trained valuers, and that the possibility of some want of uniformity and of occasional errors of judgment cannot be guarded against.

(41) It was suggested before us that some standardised method of calculating means derivable from small holdings should be substituted for the existing system of estimating by the stock and crops and general appearance of the holding. This suggestion was put upon two grounds: first, that its adoption would very much simplify the valuations, and would lead to greater uniformity; and secondly, that the existing system was demoralising in that it frequently resulted in penalising hard work and thrift. As regards the second ground, the case was put to us of two neighbouring holdings about the same size and capacity. One has for many years been in the occupation of a thrifty, industrious man, and when the pension officer goes to visit it, it presents every appearance of prosperity and every promise of a good return in profits for the ensuing year. The other holding has for a number of years been in the possession of a thriftless tenant, who has spent in the public house the time that the occupier of the first holding spent working in the fields. When the pension officer visits the second holding he finds little or no stock or crops, and little or no prospect of any profits of account being made in the coming year. In the result, the thriftless man gets the full pension, and the thrifty man gets either no pension, or a greatly reduced one.

Standard-
ised Valu-
ation of
Farming
Profits.

(42) The committee, while regarding the result as regrettable, recognise that the whole scheme of Old Age Pensions is open to very much the same criticism, and that analogous illustrations might easily be suggested in towns. Furthermore, none of the witnesses who put forward this contention was able to formulate any concrete plan that would bear investigation, or that would assure uniformity. One suggestion was that some value should be put upon the holding, based upon the Poor Law Valuation, but it appears to be admitted that valuations are not uniform throughout the country, and we consider that even if they were, a valuation made some seventy years ago might, owing to intervening circumstances, for which the present occupant of a holding might be in no way responsible, be no test at all of present earning power.

Purchase annuities were also suggested as a basis, but speaking generally, such annuities arise under different Acts of Parliament and were calculated at different times, under different economic and financial conditions, and on different principles, and the committee do not consider that a reliable or uniform standard could be based upon them. The only other suggestion before the committee was that a reliable standard could be arrived at by taking a mean between purchase annuity and valuation. But how this could be done, or how a reliable mean of two unreliable factors could be obtained, was not explained by any of the witnesses.

The committee have carefully considered the matter and have come to the conclusion that in dealing with what, after all, in most cases must be a human

problem, the present system of estimating the profits by reference to the stock and crops of a holding, though not ideally perfect, is for general purposes the most satisfactory and fair method that can be adopted.

It has, however, been stated to the committee that in congested districts there has been a substantial uniformity in the calculation of annuities payable for holdings purchased from the Congested Districts Board. The congested districts no doubt furnish a large proportion of the agricultural claimants to old age pensions, and if the above statement is correct, it seems to the committee that the working of the Act might be greatly simplified in these districts by a provision that any claimant whose purchase annuity was under a certain minimum figure, and who had no means other than stock, etc., on the holding, would be entitled to a pension, and that any claimant whose annuity was over a certain maximum amount would, in all cases, be disentitled to a pension. The committee mention the matter as one worthy of consideration. They have not sufficient information before them to enable them to make any actual recommendation.

Frauds in
Relation to
Means.

(43) In reference to the ascertainment of means, cases were mentioned to us of claimants who had a large number of cattle grazing on some mountain in the district without the knowledge of the pension officer or the committee, and also cases of claimants who, without such knowledge, had large sums of money on deposit in a bank. As regards the cattle, the committee are satisfied that, with the increasing realisation in the country that old age pensions in the long run come out of the pockets of the people, it would be quite impossible that a small holder could have a number of sheep or cattle grazing on a mountain, without its coming to the knowledge of the pension officer or some of the members of the committee. As regards the money in bank, the committee do not see how this form of fraud can be dealt with. Both bankers and their customers regard with great jealousy any infringement on the confidence surrounding the customer's account, and the committee do not consider that it would be either wise or feasible to adopt any inquisitorial methods as regards bank accounts for the purpose of old age pensions.

Proof of
Age.

(44) A very large number of suggestions and complaints were made before the committee in reference to the proof of age, and many of the witnesses referred to instances in which claims were turned down on the question of age, notwithstanding the production of affidavits from old people in the district. None of the witnesses who made these complaints furnished the committee with copies of the affidavits which were alleged to have been rejected in the cases referred to, and in most cases their recollection was somewhat hazy as to the averments they actually contained. The committee suspect that if these affidavits were produced and the cases investigated, it would be found that they were rejected on the principle adopted by the Department of Local Government in such cases, viz., that mere bare declarations of belief that a claimant has attained the age of seventy years should not be accepted. The view of the Department, in which the committee concur, is that an affidavit as to age should show upon its face by reference to some definite fact or circumstance common to the lives of the deponent and the claimant, or by hitching on the deponent's belief to some outstanding event or otherwise, that the statement is something more than a mere general averment, without tangible support.

Marriage
Certificate
as Evidence
of Age.

(45) Many witnesses complained that although the age given in marriage certificates is usually less than the actual age, particularly when the contracting parties are over 25 years old, the Pension Authorities regard the age given in the certificate as final, and in this way penalise claimants. We are satisfied that the age on marriage is frequently understated, and we recommend that the Pension Authorities, more particularly in the case of women, should exercise great caution

in placing reliance on such certificates, when there is anything pointing to the possibility of their being inaccurate.

(46) It was stated by some of the witnesses that cases frequently occur in which there is no baptismal certificate, no evidence to be derived from marriage certificates, vaccination or school records, and no possibility of obtaining reliable affidavits from anyone as to the claimant's age; cases, in a word, in which there is no evidence at all to go on except the appearance of the claimant. It was suggested that to meet such a case the matter should be left to the decision of a Medical Inspector, or to the District Justice. The committee, however, do not believe that either of these Tribunals would be in a position to form as good an opinion of age as the pension officer and committee members, who had probably frequently seen the claimant in the ordinary circumstances of his daily life.

Cases where
no Evidence
of Age is
Available.

The committee do not believe that there can be very many really honest cases of the kind above mentioned, but be that as it may, they do not see that any better method of dealing with them can be suggested than that operating under the present system.

(47) When an old age pensioner enters a Poor Law Institution his pension is withdrawn either immediately, or, if he is in receipt of medical relief, at the expiration of three months from the date of his admission, and he cannot have it restored unless he lodges a fresh claim and leaves the Institution. Several witnesses complained that, in practice, many weeks elapse between the date when the ex-pensioner leaves the Institution and the date on which the first payment of the new pension is made to him, and it was fairly urged that those who seek indoor Poor Relief are usually so poor and helpless, that any delay in paying the fresh pension must entail very grave hardship.

Poor Law
Relief
Disqualifi-
cation.

The committee asked the witness who represented the Revenue Commissioners whether anything could be done to obviate this hardship. The reply was that, under the present Regulations, a person may make a claim to a pension four months before the date on which he will become entitled to receive it. A pensioner, we were told, who is an inmate of a Poor Law Institution, and whose pension has ceased owing to his being such an inmate, and who intends to leave, say, on the 1st June, may make a fresh claim to a pension at any time within the four months preceding that date. If the claim is made within a reasonable time before the date when the pensioner intends to leave the Institution, the officer has an opportunity of investigating it, and the pension committee will have time to consider and allow it before the claimant leaves the Institution, and arrangements can be made for the payment of the pension on the Friday after the ex-pensioner is discharged. Should he leave a few weeks earlier or later than he originally intended, it is stated that provision is made in the existing Regulations for the amendment of the committee's decision, and for the immediate payment of the pension. The committee, however, do not believe that the average old age pensioner, who through ill-health or for some other reason has drifted into a County Home or Hospital, will make, or could be reasonably expected to make, arrangements for his departure a long time ahead, and they fear that unless he sent in his claim a month or six weeks before the date of his departure, there could be no assurance that his pension would be paid for some weeks after he left the Institution. The committee see no reason why a man who has been legally declared entitled to a pension should be put to unnecessary formalities and difficulties in resuming his rights the moment his disqualification has ceased. The committee, therefore, recommend that the code should be amended so as to ensure that in such cases the pension will automatically become payable on the Friday next after the date when the pensioner left the Institution.

Relation
back of
Pension
Rights.

(48) A case was brought to our notice where a claim having been disallowed for want of satisfactory evidence of age, it was subsequently ascertained that the claimant had actually attained the statutory age at the time he applied for the pension. He then made a second claim which was allowed, but he was held entitled to payment only as from the date of the later claim. This, no doubt, is in accordance with the existing law, but we are of opinion that in cases where a claimant, through no fault of his own, is unable to produce satisfactory evidence of age, with the result that his first claim to a pension is disallowed, he should, when a subsequent claim made by him is allowed, be entitled to arrears as from the date of his earlier claim, provided he had attained the statutory age at that date, and was otherwise qualified.

Appeals on
Questions
of Law to
the High
Court.

(49) It has also been brought to our notice that no provision exists for the determination by the High Court of questions of law arising on the interpretation of the Old Age Pensions Acts. We think it is in the public interest that such provision should be made. The persons whom the Acts are intended to benefit are not, under the existing law, in a position to contest the ruling of the Department of Local Government as to the meaning of an obscure section. It would, no doubt, be rarely necessary to seek the assistance of the High Court, but in our opinion it would be useful to have such assistance available when required either by the claimant or the Department. The committee therefore recommend that statutory provision should be made to enable such questions to be determined by the High Court.

Statutory
Standard of
Blindness.

(50) There is another matter which does not directly come within the terms of our reference, but to which we consider we may usefully direct attention before concluding our Report.

Section (1) of the Blind Persons Act of 1920 provides for the granting of a pension to a person otherwise qualified who is unable to perform any work for which eyesight is essential. An old clerk whose eyesight fails, and who is consequently unable to do his accustomed work, is apparently debarred from a pension under the Act, if his eyesight is good enough to enable him to perform any work, *e.g.*, to shovel gravel into a cart or break stones on the road. Such work would probably be physically impossible for the clerk in question, but he would nevertheless be excluded from all the benefits of the Act if his eyesight was sufficient to enable him to perform it. The committee find it difficult to believe that the legislature could have contemplated such a hardship, and they suggest that the code might be well amended by allowing the pension to persons who for defect of eyesight are unable to follow their usual employment or any other employment for which they are fitted.

Selection
and Control
of Sub-Com-
mittees.

(51) We approve of the present practice of local pension committees delegating their powers to sub-committees, but we are of opinion that they should exercise great care in the selection of sub-committees, which should be as representative as possible and include persons from the locality who have leisure to make the business of the committee a special interest, and persons who take an interest in social work. We think that the local committees should keep in close touch with the working of the sub-committees. They should also see that the meetings are regularly held, and that the Statutory Regulations as to attendance of members are enforced, and they should take such measures as may be necessary to secure that sub-committees perform their duties efficiently. We suggest that the recommendations in this paragraph should be carried into effect by Departmental suggestions stressing their importance.

Control of
Clerks to
Pension
Committees.

(52) The clerk of a committee holds office during the pleasure of the committee appointing him. It has been represented to us that while the majority

of the clerks discharge their functions satisfactorily, some few have, from time to time, been guilty of serious dereliction of duty, and have caused delay in the decision of appeals.

It would be a useful addition to the Regulations that the Central Authority should be invested with an emergency power of removing a clerk from office for persistent neglect of duty, after a communication with the committee.

(53) The committee consider that the present system of remunerating clerks to pension committees and sub-committees is unsatisfactory and open to abuse. The remuneration of a clerk at present consists of :—

Remuneration of Clerks.

(a) fees based on the population of the area served by the parent committee; the fees in urban areas being 1s., and in rural areas 2s. 6d. for every 1,000 of the population; and

(b) fees for each claim, etc., dealt with in the quarter; the fee being 5s. for each of the first twenty claims, and 2s. 6d. for each claim in excess of twenty.

Provision is made in the Regulations for the division, in certain cases, of these fees between the clerk of a pension committee and the clerks of any sub-committees appointed by the parent body. In addition, allowances for the cleaning of rooms used for committee meetings, and for the hire of rooms, are sometimes payable.

We recommend that each clerk should be paid a yearly salary, roughly equivalent to the fees he received in the past, and that this salary should cover all expenses. We suggest that the quarterly average of the fees paid to the clerk of each pension committee and sub-committee during the period 1st April, 1923, to 30th September, 1925, should be the measure of his future salary. We are not unmindful of the fact that owing to the transitory causes referred to in paragraphs 34 and 36 of this Report, the number of claims, etc., dealt with during the above-mentioned period was abnormal, and that the amount received in fees by clerks was correspondingly high, but on the other hand, if the recommendations made by us in paragraphs 30 and 51 of this Report are accepted, the total amount of work to be done by the clerks may well be increased.

(54) Mr. Edmond Walsh, of the Revenue Commissioners' Office, rendered most valuable assistance as Secretary during our Sittings, and in the preparation of this Report. His alertness, efficiency, and unflinching tact and courtesy made it a pleasure to work with him and his detailed and accurate knowledge of the Statutes, regulations, and practices governing pensions administration materially lightened the task of the committee.

The committee also desire to acknowledge the services of Mr. T. T. Prestage of the same office who, during Mr. Walsh's temporary absence, acted most efficiently as his substitute.

T. S. McCANN (*Chairman*),
 ARTHUR D. CODLING,
 PÁDRAIG O CONGHAILE,
 THOMAS F. MACKEN,
 PATRICK McKENNA,
 DANIEL MORRISSEY,
 J. S. MYLES,
 M. V. NOLAN,
 BARTHOLOMEW O'CONNOR,
 J. L. S. SMITH.

EDMOND WALSH (*Secretary*),
 8th December, 1925.

RESERVATION BY MR. M. V. NOLAN.

I concur in the report except as regards the recommendation that attendance of pension officers at meetings of pension committees should be compulsory, and as regards the arguments on which this recommendation is based.

I am also in disagreement as to the exact nature of the evil for which this recommendation is intended to furnish a remedy. I cannot regard the evil as being simply apathy and loss of interest on the part of a large number of pension committees. Such an attitude, to my mind, would find its natural expression in a mere automatic adoption of the findings of the pension officer, and appeals, by the officer at any rate, would be comparatively few. The figures showing the very large numbers of claims allowed by committees, but found inadmissible on appeal, would appear to indicate that such claims are passed without the committees being reasonably satisfied that the claimants are entitled to pensions; and the possibility that claims are sometimes allowed when the claimants are obviously disentitled cannot be ignored. Instead of apathy, therefore, we have a very real activity which manifests itself in the promiscuous grant of pensions and which is highly detrimental to the public interest.

The officer's report, though it is necessarily a lengthy document, does not as a rule present any difficulties which would be solved by his personal attendance. The report sets forth all the relevant facts and considerations, and it rarely happens that the officer is influenced by a fact or consideration that he does not care to embody in his report. In any such special circumstances, however, the officer's instructions already provide for his attendance at the meeting of the committee. On the other hand, if in a particular case the committee are influenced in their decision by facts or considerations not embodied in the officer's report, the obvious course of action, if it is desired to avoid an appeal, would be to communicate those facts or considerations to the officer.

The compulsory attendance of officers at meetings of committees would necessitate a rearrangement of the work of pension officers all over the Saorstát, and would involve a substantial addition to the staff and considerable extra expense.

The chief objection to the proposal, however, is that it would impair the efficacy of the principal check on the improper grant of pensions which the existing system affords. Besides investigating claims and reporting to the committee the pension officer has another important duty to discharge. If the committee gives a decision in any case more favourable to the claimant than he considers warranted by the facts, the officer is bound, in the public interest, to lodge an appeal. It is through this statutory right of appeal of the officer that the State maintains control of the expenditure of the large amount of public money involved in the payment of old age pensions, no effective system of subsequent audit being in the circumstances feasible. It is essential that in the exercise of this right the officer should be absolutely independent of the committee; but his independence would be seriously impaired if his attendance at meetings of the committee were made compulsory. It is idle to suppose that an officer giving compulsory attendance, and in a permanent minority of one as regards practically all contentious cases, would be in the same position of independence as he now occupies; and there can be little doubt that in many cases undue pressure would be brought to bear on him to secure his acquiescence in decisions with which he did not entirely agree. It must be taken

into account also that it is exactly in the case of committees as regards which the maintenance of an independent check is most essential that the efficacy of the check would be most impaired. Consequently, and especially in view of the large numbers of inadmissible claims passed by committees, it appears to me to be in the highest degree against the public interest to make attendance of pension officers at meetings of pension committees compulsory.

M. V. NOLAN.

RESERVATION TO PARAGRAPH 18 BY MESSRS. ARTHUR D. CODLING
AND J. L. S. SMITH.

Whilst in no way dissenting from the views expressed in the Report as to the great advantages which may reasonably be expected to accrue from the more frequent attendances of pension officers at meetings of pension committees, we are of opinion that due weight must be given to the fact that the primary duties of a pension officer relate to Customs and Excise, and that duties relating to pensions take up only a proportion of his time. We cannot, therefore, subscribe to the recommendation in paragraph 18 of the Report that the attendance of a pension officer at any meeting of a committee which he is requested to attend should be an unconditional obligation.

We consider that equally good results would probably be obtained, without any serious dislocation of the work of pension officers, if—

- (a) the Revenue Commissioners issue an instruction that each pension officer shall attend any committee meeting which the committee request him to attend, unless he satisfies his superior officer, the local surveyor, that attendance on any particular occasion is impracticable owing to other duties, and if
- (b) each pension committee is given to understand that habitual or frequent failure of a pension officer to attend its meetings when requested to do so may properly be brought under the notice of the Revenue Commissioners.

ARTHUR D. CODLING.

J. L. S. SMITH.

APPENDIX.

OLD AGE PENSIONS.

Year ended 31st March	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
		Claims dealt with	Recommended by Officers	Not recommended by Officers	Claims passed by Committees	Claims rejected by Committees	Committees' decisions accepted by Officers, although claims were reported against	Appeals lodged by Officers	Percentage of claims passed by Committees in which appeals were lodged by Officers	Total No. of Pensions granted	Total No. of Pensions refused	Percentage of total claims in which Officers and Committees are in agreement
1924		21,804	5,633	16,171	18,570	3,234	3,804	9,133	49.1	10,819	10,985	58
1925		18,971	5,442	13,529	16,224	2,747	4,049	6,733	41.5	11,399	7,572	64

OLD AGE PENSIONS ACTS, 1908-1924, AND BLIND PERSONS ACT, 1920.

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS FOR YEARS ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1924 AND 1925 :—

(a) CLAIMS.

No. of Claims allowed at maximum rate	...	...	...	...	844	1,014
No. of Claims allowed at less than maximum rate	...	...	...	...	316	627
No. of Blind Pensions allowed	...	...	...	...	222	267
Total No. of Claims allowed						1,382	1,908
No. of Claims rejected on—							
Age	...	...	...	...	5,810	3,514
Means	...	...	...	...	1,014	848
Residence	...	...	...	...	30	18
Nationality	...	...	...	...	8	2
Relief and Asylum Maintenance	...	...	...	...	2	3
Blindness	...	...	...	...	1,003	477
Total No. of Claims rejected						7,867	4,862
Appeals dismissed late, etc., on claims	...	...	...	...	99	214
<i>Total Number of Decisions on Claims</i>						9,348	6,984

(b) QUESTIONS.

Pensions unaltered	...	...	...	...	88	682
Pensions increased	...	...	...	...	7	98
Pensions reduced	...	...	...	...	235	3,077
Questions on Blindness disallowed	...	...	...	...	178	720
Pensions revoked on—							
Age	...	...	...	...	7	3
Means	...	...	...	...	194	290
Relief	...	...	...	...	20	9
Maintenance in Lunatic Asylum	...	...	...	...	1	2
Blindness	...	...	...	...	173	583
Residence	...	...	...	...	—	1
Appeals dismissed, late, etc., on Questions						11	129
<i>Total Number of Decisions on Questions</i>						914	5,594
TOTAL NUMBER OF DECISIONS						10,262	12,578

NOTE. A claim may be made for the provisional allowance of a pension before the date on which the claimant will become actually entitled to receive the pension if allowed, but not more than four months before that date.

FORMULA DEFINING BLINDNESS.

(See paragraph 34).

“Persons whose acuity of vision (refractive error being corrected) is below one-twentieth of the normal ($\frac{3}{20}$ Snellen) are usually unable to perform work requiring eyesight, while persons with vision better than one-tenth ($\frac{6}{20}$ Snellen) are usually able to perform some such work.”

TABLE (a)

Total Number of Persons on Questionnaire		Persons on Questionnaire		Persons on Questionnaire	
No. of Blind Persons	No. of Persons with Vision below $\frac{6}{20}$ Snellen	No. of Persons with Vision below $\frac{6}{20}$ Snellen	No. of Persons with Vision below $\frac{3}{20}$ Snellen	No. of Persons with Vision below $\frac{3}{20}$ Snellen	No. of Persons with Vision below $\frac{3}{20}$ Snellen
1,014	244	244	244	244	244
427	318	318	318	318	318
387	332	332	332	332	332
<hr/>					
1,828	894	894	894	894	894
<hr/>					
1,014	244	244	244	244	244
427	318	318	318	318	318
18	30	30	30	30	30
2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3
177	1,061	1,061	1,061	1,061	1,061
<hr/>					
4,802	7,307	7,307	7,307	7,307	7,307
<hr/>					
414	60	60	60	60	60
<hr/>					
1,061	2,442	2,442	2,442	2,442	2,442

Total Number of Persons on Questionnaire		Persons on Questionnaire		Persons on Questionnaire	
No. of Blind Persons	No. of Persons with Vision below $\frac{6}{20}$ Snellen	No. of Persons with Vision below $\frac{6}{20}$ Snellen	No. of Persons with Vision below $\frac{3}{20}$ Snellen	No. of Persons with Vision below $\frac{3}{20}$ Snellen	No. of Persons with Vision below $\frac{3}{20}$ Snellen
603	66	66	66	66	66
30	7	7	7	7	7
1,077	332	332	332	332	332
170	178	178	178	178	178
<hr/>					
3	7	7	7	7	7
200	104	104	104	104	104
0	20	20	20	20	20
3	1	1	1	1	1
263	173	173	173	173	173
1	1	1	1	1	1
<hr/>					
2,442	303	303	303	303	303
170	11	11	11	11	11
<hr/>					
2,204	311	311	311	311	311
<hr/>					
12,578	10,203	10,203	10,203	10,203	10,203

SAORSTÁT ÉIREANN

ΔΕΥΤΑΝΝΑ um pínriun rean-aoipe 1908 go 1919.

(THE OLD AGE PENSIONS ACTS, 1908 to 1919.)

ΔΕΥΤ ΝΑ ΝΟΑΤΤΑΔΙΑΝ, 1920.

(THE BLIND PERSONS ACT, 1920.)

ÉILEAM AR PÍNSIUN.

(CLAIM TO PENSION.)

NOTE.—A claim may be made for the provisional allowance of a pension before the date on which the claimant will become actually entitled to receive the pension if allowed, but not more than four months before that date.

NOTE.—“If for the purpose of obtaining or continuing an old age pension under this Act, either for himself or any other person, or for the purpose of obtaining or continuing an old age pension under this Act for himself or for any other person at a higher rate than that appropriate to the case, any person knowingly makes any false statement or false representation, he shall be liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, with hard labour.” (Old Age Pensions Act, 1908, Section 9 (1).)

1. Full name of claimant.....

2. *Home address

* The Postal address in full of the claimant must be given.

3. Occupation

4. Sex

5. Are you single?

or married?

or a widower or widow?

If a married woman or a widow, what was your maiden name?

6. Age..... Date of birth.....

† This question need not be answered unless the claimant is under 70 years of age and is claiming as a blind person.

7. † Are you so blind as to be unable to perform any work for which eyesight is essential?

8. ‡ Place where born

‡ Give exact address if possible.

9. Are you of Irish Nationality?.....

If not, state your Nationality.....

10. At what place or places have you lived during the past 20 years?.....

11. How much have you coming in per week in money?

What are your other means of subsistence (if any)?

Do you pay rent for the house or lodging in which you live?.....

12. Have you previously made a claim for a pension?.....

If so, state the date on which, and the place at which, the claim was made, and with what result.....

13. Do you claim that you are now entitled to a pension, or that you will become so entitled at a future date?.....

If at a future date, state the date.....

NOTE.—You will subsequently have to furnish any further particulars which the Pension Officer may require, in order to satisfy himself that you are entitled to a pension.

I have clearly understood the above questions, and to the best of my knowledge and belief all the statements made by me in this claim are correct, and so far as I know I am not disqualified for receiving a pension [or, in the case of a claim for the provisional allowance of a pension by a person who is at the time disqualified for receiving a pension. I shall not be disqualified for receiving a pension on the day of.....].

Under the Old Age Pensions Acts, a person is by law disqualified for receiving a pension in the following cases :—

1. *While he is in receipt of poor relief as an inmate of any workhouse or other poor law institution, unless he has become an inmate for the purpose of obtaining medical or surgical treatment, in which case he is not disqualified for a period of three months from the date of admission provided that he so long continues to require such treatment.*
2. *While he is in prison under a sentence of imprisonment without the option of a fine, or under sentence of penal servitude.*
3. *If an order of a court disqualifying him is in force.*
4. *While he is detained in any asylum within the meaning of the Lunacy Act, 1890, or while he is being maintained in any place as a pauper or criminal lunatic.*

If my claim is allowed I desire that my pension should be payable at

the Post Office at §
.....

§ The full address of the Post Office must be given.

Signature (or Mark) }
of Claimant }

Witness to signature, or }
(where claimant is unable to }
write) to mark, of claimant }

Address of Witness.....

Date.....

The claimant must sign or mark the claim himself in all cases except when he is incapable of so doing through mental or bodily infirmity. In such a case a duly appointed committee or quasi committee administering his estate (in Scotland, the tutor, curator, or other guardian administering his estate), or a person who has been appointed an agent for the purpose by the Local Pension Committee or Sub-Committee may make and sign the claim on behalf of the incapacitated person, and in that case the committee, etc., or the duly appointed agent must fill up and sign the following statement :—

I sign this claim on behalf of the above-named.....

.....who is by reason of mental or other incapacity unable to act,

and I declare that it relates to the said.....

and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it is correct.

Signature (or mark) of person claiming }
on behalf of a person unable to act }

Witness to signature or mark

Address of witness

To be filled in only when the claimant has been assisted by a Sub-Postmaster.



I have assisted the claimant to fill up this form.

(Signature) Sub-Postmaster of

I certify that the applicant assisted in this case has been granted a pension (v. Register No.....).

Signature..... Pension Officer.

Date.....19..... Address.....

SAORSTÁT ÉIREANN



Oifigeac an Páinín.
(The Pension Officer.)

SAORSTAT EIREANN.

THE OLD AGE PENSION ACTS, 1908 to 1924, and THE BLIND PERSONS ACT, 1920.

District..... Station.....

No. in Pension } Name of }
 Officer's Register } Claimant }

To the Local Pension Committee of the (a).....
 (a) County, Borough, or Urban District, as the case may be.

STATEMENT AS TO ENQUIRIES MADE BY PENSION OFFICER.

1	Age of Claimant and by what means determined. Date of birth, baptism, or marriage, and age at marriage.	
2	Evidence of naturalisation (where required).	
3	Evidence obtained as to residence in the Irish Free State for the qualifying period.	
4	In the case of Blind Persons only :— Evidence as to BLINDNESS.	
5	In the case of Incapacitated Persons only :— Authority under which the person preferring the claim is acting.	

O.A.P. No. 2A.
 (including also Nos. 2b, 2c, and 2e).

6	Whether wife (or husband) is alive and residing with claimant. If an old age pensioner state number in pension register.																	
7	<p>Particulars of income or property :—</p> <p>(1) (a) Amount of Wages (if any), including bonus, overtime, tips, or other perquisites now being received and amount received during the last twelve months.</p> <p>(b) By whom and where now employed, and by whom and where employed during the last twelve months.</p> <p>(2) Amount of any pay, pension, or other allowance from any friendly or other society or trade union, or from any person, firm, or Company, or of any other Person including any bonus, or addition under the Pensions (Increase) Act, 1920, or otherwise.</p> <p>(3) Investments, at market value</p> <p>(4) Money, in hand ..</p> <p>(5) Money, at bank ..</p> <p>(6) House property — net yearly value in case of house owned and occupied : otherwise capital value.</p> <p>(7) Land—capital value when let</p> <p>(8) Amount of any outdoor Poor Relief.</p> <p>(9) Income derived from any business, farm, garden, allotment, or any other occupation whatsoever.</p> <p>(10) Anything else at all coming in on which to live.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="654 414 962 523">Claimant.</td> <td data-bbox="962 414 1413 523">Wife (or husband).</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="654 523 1413 779"> <p>STATEMENT AS TO RECEIPTS MADE</p> <p>(a) County, Borough, or Urban District</p> <p>To the Local Pension Committee of the (a)</p> <p>Officer's Register</p> <p>No. in Pension</p> <p>Name of Claimant</p> <p>District</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="654 779 847 1157">1</td> <td data-bbox="847 779 1413 1157">Age of Claimant and by what means determined.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="654 1157 847 1364">2</td> <td data-bbox="847 1157 1413 1364">Date of birth, baptism, or marriage and age at marriage.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="654 1364 847 1619">3</td> <td data-bbox="847 1364 1413 1619">Evidence obtained as to residence in the Irish Free State for the qualifying period.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="654 1619 847 1839">4</td> <td data-bbox="847 1619 1413 1839">Evidence as to BLINDNESS in the case of blind persons only.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="654 1839 847 2107">5</td> <td data-bbox="847 1839 1413 2107">Evidence in the case of incapacitated persons only: Authority under which the person presenting the claim is acting.</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="654 2107 1413 2211"> <p>O.A.P. No. 2A.</p> <p>(including also Nos. 2B, 2C and 2D).</p> </td> </tr> </table>	Claimant.	Wife (or husband).	<p>STATEMENT AS TO RECEIPTS MADE</p> <p>(a) County, Borough, or Urban District</p> <p>To the Local Pension Committee of the (a)</p> <p>Officer's Register</p> <p>No. in Pension</p> <p>Name of Claimant</p> <p>District</p>		1	Age of Claimant and by what means determined.	2	Date of birth, baptism, or marriage and age at marriage.	3	Evidence obtained as to residence in the Irish Free State for the qualifying period.	4	Evidence as to BLINDNESS in the case of blind persons only.	5	Evidence in the case of incapacitated persons only: Authority under which the person presenting the claim is acting.	<p>O.A.P. No. 2A.</p> <p>(including also Nos. 2B, 2C and 2D).</p>	
Claimant.	Wife (or husband).																	
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<p>O.A.P. No. 2A.</p> <p>(including also Nos. 2B, 2C and 2D).</p>																		

<p>8</p>	<p>Rent paid by claimant (if any) ..</p> <p>Whether claimant receives free main- tenance.</p> <p>If so, (a) circumstances and con- stitution of the household.</p> <p>(b) the weekly value ..</p> <p>If not, the amount paid for board and lodging.</p>	<p>Summary of Claimant's means from all sources</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Whether claimant has directly or indirectly deprived himself of any income or property in order to qualify for the receipt of a pen- sion, or for the receipt of a pension at a higher rate than that to which he would otherwise be entitled.</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>Whether claimant within three years before the date on which he becomes entitled to receive a pension assigned any property or income to any person.</p> <p>If so, (a) particulars of such property or income including capital value of property,</p> <p>(b) particulars of the convey- ance or transfer including price or other considera- tion, and in the case of land the poor law valuation thereof,</p>	<p>How of the Oireachtas</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Whether claimant is in receipt of indoor Poor Relief :—</p> <p>(a) Ordinary,</p> <p>(b) Medical or Surgical.</p> <p>If the latter, date of admission for such relief.</p>	<p>* A. To be used where report in favour of disqualification of claimant is (or will be) entitled to as from the inclusive.</p> <p>B. To be used where a part in favour of disqualification reasons namely: State of pen- graph not required.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>(1) Whether within the last 10 years claimant has been convicted before any court and is liable to have a detention order made against him under the Inebriates Act, 1898</p> <p>(2) If so, did the Court disqualify him from receiving a pension.</p> <p>(3) Particulars of the disqualifica- tion, if any.</p>	<p>Pension Officer's Sign</p> <p>Surveyor's Initials</p> <p>W. O. P. A. O.</p>

Summary of Claimant's means from all sources	AMOUNT	
	Separates	Total

* A. To be used where report in favour of allowance of claim.

A.—* I have investigated the claim of the above-named claimant, and in my opinion the claim may properly be allowed, and the claimant is (or will be) entitled to receive a pension at the weekly rate of
 as from the day of inclusive.

B. To be used where report in favour of disallowance.

B.—I have investigated the claim of the above-named claimant, and in my opinion the claim cannot properly be allowed for the following reasons, namely :—

Strike out paragraph not required.

Pension Officer's Signature.....

Date..... 192

Surveyor's Initials.....

Date..... 192

OLD AGE PENSIONS ACTS, 1908 to 1919.

THE BLIND PERSONS ACT, 1920.

(For use in cases where the Claimant is in occupation of land).

Name of Claimant

Number in Pension Officer's Register

Description of Land *

Rent, £ Rates, £ Valuation, £

CROPS			STOCK		Sum received during past year from the sale, if any, of the produce from the cultivated land	£ s. d.	
Acreage under	A.	R.	P.				
Potatoes				State number of Stock under general heads, e.g., under "Cattle" state number of cows, yearlings, calves, &c.	}		
Oats							
Barley							
Wheat				Cattle	If Turf free, state—		
Hay							
Grass				Horses, &c.	(1) Quantity consumed		
Mangolds & Turnips				Sheep	(2) Quantity sold, if any		
Flax				Pigs			
Vegetables				Fowl			
Other Crops, viz. :—							
TOTAL ACREAGE							

* State whether "good," "bad," "indifferent," or "bog," as the case may be.

Income from other sources (give particulars) :—

..... Pension Officer.

..... Station.

Date 192

..... Surveyor's Initials.

OLD AGE PENSIONS ACT, 1908 to 1919.

THE BLIND PERSONS ACT, 1920.

(For use in cases where the Claimant is in occupation of land.)

Name of Claimant		Number in Pension Office's Register		Description of Land*		Rate		Valuation	
A		B		C		D		E	
				CROPS					
				Potatoes					
				Oats					
				Barley					
				Wheat					
				Hay					
				Grass					
				Mangolds & Turnips					
				Flax					
				Vegetables					
				Other Crops viz—					
				Pigs					
				Poultry					
				TOTAL AVERAGE					
				STONE					
				State number of sack or other					
				general article, and number					
				of "Cattle" and number of					
				cows, yearlings, calves, &c.					
				Cattle					
				Horses &c.					
				Sheep					
				Pigs					
				Poultry					
				If land free state—					
				(1) Quantity					
				consumed					
				(2) Quantity					
				sold, if any					

* State whether "good" land, "bad" land, or "less" or the reverse may be. Income from other sources (give particulars)

Houses of the Oireachtas

Teacher Officer
 Station
 Date
 O.A.P. No. 88

THE OLD AGE PENSIONS ACTS, 1908 to 1919.
AND
THE BLIND PERSONS ACT, 1920

Notice of Meeting for Consideration of Claim.

Notice to Claimant.

..... Pension Committee.

..... Sub-Committee.

No. in ¹[Sub-] Committee's Register.....

District²

Station²

No. in Pension Officer's Register².....

Name of Claimant.....

To the above-named Claimant.

You are hereby informed that a meeting of the ¹[Sub-] Committee for the consideration of your claim will be held at³ on the..... day of.....

The Pension Officer reports that you are *[not entitled to a pension] *[entitled to a pension at the rate of.....shillings a week only].

If you have any reason to urge in support of *[your claim] *[your claim to a pension at a higher rate] you are entitled to attend and be heard at the Meeting.

Unless you then attend, or communicate with me further before the meeting, the ¹[Sub-] Committee will proceed to decide your claim upon the evidence before them.

.....
Signature of Clerk of ¹[Sub-] Committee).

.....
(Address of Clerk of ¹[Sub-] Committee).

Date.....

¹ Strike out "[Sub-]" in the case of a Local Pension Committee.

² These particulars are to be taken from the Pension Officer's Report on the claim.

³ Insert the precise place of meeting.



Saorstát Éireann.

To _____

OLD AGE PENSIONS.

**In case of non-delivery
return to Pension Com-
mittee named within.**

Not to be sealed or wafered.

Houses of the Oireachtas

Form No. 17A.

The Old Age Pensions Acts, 1908 to 1924,
AND
The Blind Persons Act, 1920.

This form, duly filled up, should be attached by the Clerk of the ¹[Sub-] Committee to the papers relating to each claim when decided by the ¹[Sub-]Committee.

..... Pension Committee.
..... Sub-Committee.
No. in [Sub-]Committee's Register

Decision of ¹[Sub-]Committee on Claim.

District²
Station²
No. in Pension Officer's Register²
Name of Claimant

The decision of the ¹[Sub-]Committee named above is as follows ³ : -

[That the claimant (is entitled) (will be entitled on the
) to a pension at the rate of shillings
a week.]

[That the claim is disallowed on the grounds that]

.....
Clerk of ¹[Sub-]Committee.

Date of decision

Date on which notice of decision was sent to Claimant and to
Pension Officer

1. Strike out " [Sub-] " in the case of a Local Pension Committee.
2. These particulars should be taken from the Pension Officer's Report on the Claim.
3. Strike out the words which do not apply.

The Old Age Pensions Act, 1908 to 1924
AND
The Blind Persons Act, 1920

This form duly filled up, should be attached to the back of the 'Sub-Committee' to the papers relating to each claim when decided by the 'Sub-Committee'.

Name of Claimant		No. in Pension Officer's Register		Section		District	
The decision of the 'Sub-Committee' named above is as follows:		The claimant (is/ is not) entitled to the rate of		[] to a pension of the rate of		[] shillings	
[That the claimant is entitled to the rate of		[] to a pension of the rate of		[] shillings		[] a week.	
[That the claim is disallowed on the grounds that]							
Date of decision		Date on which notice of decision was sent to Claimant and to Pension Officer		Name of Pension Officer		Signature of Pension Officer	

Houses of the Oireachtas

1. Strike out "Sub" in the case of a Local Pension Committee.
2. These particulars should be taken from the Pension Officer's Report on the Claim.

THE OLD AGE PENSIONS ACTS, 1908 to 1924
AND
THE BLIND PERSONS ACT, 1920.

Notification to Claimant or Pensioner of Appeal
having been brought.

..... Pension Committee.

..... Sub-Committee.

No. in ¹[Sub-] Committee's Register.....

District²..... Station².....

No. in Pension Officer's Register².....

Name of Claimant [*or* Pensioner].....

To the above-named Claimant [*or* Pensioner],

Take notice that an appeal has been brought against the decision of the above-mentioned ¹[Sub-] Committee that you are entitled [*or* will on theday of.....be entitled] to a pension at the weekly rate of.....shillings. The question will now have to be finally determined by the Minister for Local Government and Public Health.

Any evidence which you may desire to submit in support of your case should be transmitted to the Department of Local Government and Public Health within fourteen days, accompanied by this form.

.....
(Signature of Clerk of ¹[Sub-] Committee.)

.....
(Address of Clerk of ¹[Sub-] Committee.)

Date.....

¹ Strike out "[Sub-]" in the case of a Local Pension Committee.

² These particulars should be taken from the Pension Officer's Report on the claim.



Saorstát Éireann.

To _____

OLD AGE PENSIONS.

In case of non-delivery
return to Pension Com-
mittee named within.

Not to be sealed or wafered.

Houses of the Oireachtas

Houses of the Olreachtas

Houses of the Olyreachtas