

BENEFITS.**UNIVERSAL SUPERANNUATION.**

Superannuation benefits came into operation for the first time in New Zealand on the 1st April, 1940. This benefit is now paid to all citizens of the Dominion with the necessary residential qualifications who are sixty-five years of age and over, irrespective of their financial position. For the financial year ended 31st March, 1941, the rate of benefit was £10 per annum, and this rate will be increased by £2 10s. each year until 1968, when the full superannuation benefit of £78 per annum will be in operation. The rate for the year commencing 1st April, 1941, will therefore be £12 10s. per annum. From 1st April, 1940, to 31st March, 1941, a total of 40,724 claims was received. Of these, 38,938 were granted benefits, while 1,316 applications were rejected. The number in force as at 31st March, 1941, was 36,602, with an annual value of £366,020. The expenditure for the year amounted to £240,336.

AGE-BENEFITS.

At the end of the first year's operations of the Social Security Act—*i.e.*, 31st March, 1940—the number of age-benefits in force was 93,262, with an annual value of £6,859,420. By the 31st March, 1941, the number of benefits in force had increased by 4,344 to 97,606, with an annual value of £7,127,821. The total payments made for the financial year 1940-41 were £7,101,346, as against £6,517,899 for the previous year, an increase of £583,447.

WIDOWS' BENEFITS.

At 31st March, 1940, there were 10,174 widows' benefits in force with an annual value of £830,623. During the year the number of benefits increased by 395 to 10,569, with an annual value of £843,516. The total payments made for the financial year 1940-41 were £836,368, as against £785,952 for the preceding year, an increase of £50,416.

ORPHANS' BENEFITS.

At 31st March, 1940, the number of orphans' benefits in force was 330, with an annual value of £16,743. At the end of the present financial year the number had increased by 20 to 350, with an annual value of £17,888. The total payments made for the financial year 1940-41 were £17,713, as against £14,880 for the preceding year, an increase of £2,833.

FAMILY BENEFITS.

During the year the Social Security Act, 1938, was widened in its scope by extending family benefits to cover each child after the first child of a family, and this wider coverage has resulted in a considerable increase in the number of benefits in force.

As at 31st March, 1940, there were 11,053 family benefits in force, with an annual value of £314,458. During the year an increase of 5,573 benefits occurred, and the figures at the 31st March, 1941, were 16,626 benefits in force, with an annual value of £485,337. The total payments made during the year amounted to £411,811, as against £252,562 for the preceding year, an increase of £159,249.

INVALIDS' BENEFITS.

At the end of March, 1940, there were 11,811 invalids' benefits in force, with an annual value of £1,005,116. This number had increased as at 31st March, 1941, by 125 to a total of 11,936, with an annual value of £998,792.

The total payments made during the year amounted to £999,648, as against £942,196 for the preceding year, an increase of £57,452.

Where any application for benefit or renewal of benefit is rejected on medical grounds there is a right of appeal against the decision of the Social Security Commission to an Appeal Board of three medical practitioners.

There were 31 appeals outstanding at the end of March, 1940, and during the past year a further 296 appeals were received. Of these, 285 cases were dealt with, of which 118, or 41 per cent., were upheld, a further 152 cases were dismissed, and 15 were either withdrawn or struck out. The appeals outstanding as at 31st March, 1941, numbered 42.

MINERS' BENEFITS.

This class of benefit has shown a decrease of 57 during the year. At the end of March, 1940, there were 988 benefits in force, with an annual value of £90,179. As at 31st March, 1941, there were 931 current benefits, with an annual value of £85,394.

The total payments made during the year amounted to £88,656, as against £92,653 for the preceding year, a decrease of £3,997.

MAORI WAR BENEFITS.

Maori War benefits are steadily decreasing as death removes one by one these veterans of the Maori Wars. The number in force at 31st March, 1940, has decreased during the year from 12 to 7, five deaths being recorded.

The annual value as at 31st March, 1941, was £546, as against £936 at the end of March, 1940. The total payments during the year amounted to £744, as against £1,103 for the preceding year, a decrease of £359.