

accounting systems in operation and suggests improvements where necessary. The instances reported do not point to remediable weaknesses in the accounting procedure, but one case is still being investigated.

The number of cases reported to the Audit Office in which recipients of pensions, sickness, age, and other benefits obtained payment in excess of scale rates by failing to disclose material particulars of their circumstances to the Social Security Department was 76, as against 164 last year, the relative amounts involved being £545 9s. 2d. and £1,992 17s. It has been ascertained, however, that the foregoing particulars relating to the year 1947–48 are not complete, in that they cover only overpayments of weekly benefits. Overpayments of monthly benefits and pensions, other than cases in which there were prosecutions, have not been recorded in the returns required to be submitted by the Social Security Department to Treasury and Audit. The Department explains that this omission has been due to a misunderstanding in its own office, and has stated further that, even in respect of weekly benefits, the return covers only cases where the Department considered that the breach was deliberate. The relevant Treasury Regulation, however, requires the return to include all cases where “any person illegally obtains possession of any public moneys,” and this would appear to apply to moneys improperly received as a result of any beneficiary’s carelessness or negligence in advising the Department of altered circumstances. This Office has suggested to the Department that if it proposes to continue to differ from this interpretation of the regulation it should take the question up with Treasury. Time did not permit of the figures submitted being corrected by the Social Security Department even on the basis of its own restricted reading of the requirements of the regulation, and the amount shown as overpaid must be read subject to these remarks.

File No.	Nature of Irregularity.	Amount involved.	Action taken, and Result.
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NOTE.—In cases marked * police inquiries were either unsuccessful or are incomplete.

CASES IN WHICH DEPARTMENTAL OFFICERS WERE INVOLVED

Department of Industries and Commerce

A. 21/42/30	Misappropriation of moneys ..	£ s. d. 49 18 3	Investigated by police. Restitution made. Officer resigned.
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Department of Industries and Commerce (Ministry of Supply)

A. 26/95 ..	Theft of wire	47 0 6	Offender admitted to probation and ordered to make restitution.
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Justice Department (Registrar-General’s Office)

A. 21/37/2 ..	Misappropriation of moneys ..	9 0 0	Offender admitted to probation for twelve months. Restitution made.
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