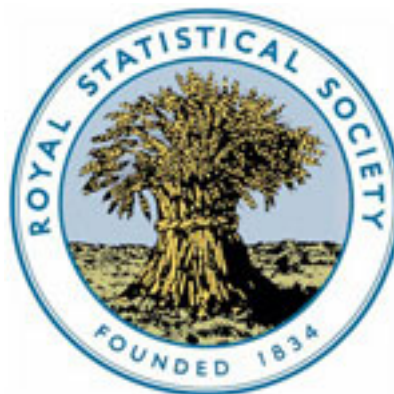


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Old Age Pensions. Tables which have Been Prepared in Connection with the Question of Old Age Pensions, with a Preliminary Memorandum.

Review by: E. B.

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Such information must form a very valuable contribution to the discussions on the Irish "financial relations" problem. Then, again, the data relating to the supplies to this country from Ireland of live-stock and important agricultural products, and to Ireland from this country for the necessary manufactures, are of the greatest interest in connection with current political questions. It comes somewhat as a surprise that whereas 9,666,000*l.* of live cattle were imported into the United Kingdom in 1905, the exports from Ireland, almost entirely to Great Britain, and not included in the above total, were 8,900,000*l.* The export of eggs from Ireland was estimated to have amounted to 2,500,000*l.*, while the total import into the United Kingdom, exclusive of Irish eggs, was 6,800,000*l.*

In order that these returns may become of greater value than they possess at present, it is desirable that they should separate the trade with Great Britain from all other countries. It should be possible to demand from exporters and importers at Irish ports the same full and detailed information respecting all cargoes entering or leaving the ports as are supplied when coming direct from or going direct to a foreign country. By placing the collection in the hands of one authority for the whole of the United Kingdom the value of the returns would be greatly enhanced, from the fact that uniformity would be established between the returns for Great Britain and Ireland respectively. The difficulty of dealing with 20 different measures for butter and 10 for lard would then not arise, as was the case with the voluntary returns with which the Irish officials had to deal.

In making the suggestions in the foregoing paragraph, no idea of criticism upon the capacity or industry of those who have compiled these reports is intended. With the limited powers which were available to them, and the general novelty of the work, they have carried out this self-imposed task in a manner at once admirable, and as complete as could be expected. S.R.

3.—*Old Age Pensions. Tables which have been prepared in connection with the question of Old Age Pensions, with a preliminary memorandum.* Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of His Majesty. [Cd-3618.] 54 pp., fol. London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1907. Price 5½*d.*

This very timely and useful official publication summarises and brings down to the present time the conclusions arrived at by a long series of Commissions and Committees, and will be found to be valuable by all those who have a real desire to make themselves acquainted with the question of Old Age Pensions, and with the difficulties that surround it. So far as it is possible to predict with any certainty the course of the future in legislation, that question will come up for determination in the next Session of Parliament, and this excellent blue book will furnish the combatants with a good supply of ammunition. Sir Samuel Provis, the Secretary of the Local Government Board, is the responsible and probably the actual author of the preliminary memorandum, and the public are much indebted to him for it.

The course of inquiry begins with Lord Aberdare's Commission of 1893 "to consider whether any alterations in the system of poor law relief are desirable in the case of persons whose destitution is occasioned by incapacity for work resulting from old age, or whether assistance could otherwise be afforded in those cases." The Commissioners reported in 1895 that they were unable to recommend the adoption of any of the schemes of Old Age Pensions that had been submitted to them.

In 1896 Lord Rothschild's Committee was appointed by the Treasury "to consider any schemes that may be submitted to them for encouraging the industrial population, by State aid or otherwise, to make provision for old age." They came to the conclusion in June, 1898, that none of the schemes submitted to them would attain the objects in view, and that they could not devise one free from grave inherent disadvantages.

In 1899 Mr. Chaplin's Select Committee of the House of Commons sat and formulated a scheme. In the same year Sir Edward Hamilton's Committee, of which Sir Samuel Provis was an important member, was appointed to investigate the financial aspects of the scheme proposed by the Select Committee. Another Select Committee, appointed in 1903, adopted with certain modifications the scheme of Mr. Chaplin's Committee, but no legislation has as yet resulted from either Report.

Series A of the Tables relates to the population, and shows that the number of persons living in the middle of 1907 above 65 years of age was, according to one method of estimation, 2,116,267; according to another, 2,147,536. Taking the lower estimate, a pension of 6s. a week or 15*l.* 12s. a year to every individual would cost 33,013,765*l.* per annum, or, if 3 per cent. be added for expenses, more than 34,000,000*l.*

Series B of the Tables relates to the various disqualifications for pension that were formulated by Mr. Chaplin's Committee, and is based on the labours of Sir E. Hamilton's Committee, but brings down their figures to the year 1907. These disqualifications are estimated to reduce the number of pensionable persons from 2,116,267 to 686,456, and the consequent cost, including 3 per cent. for expenses, to 10,780,000*l.*

Series C of the Tables relates to the rates of mortality and increase in the expectation of life of the general population, as derived from returns furnished by the General Register Office, and contains some important information as to the average age at death of members of trade unions.

Series D relates to certain classes of persons at present in receipt of pensions and superannuation allowances. It includes a communication from Mr. Stuart Sim, F.S.S., Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies, to the effect that, in the year ending 31st December, 1905, 70 trade unions paid 256,754*l.* by way of superannuation allowances to 13,383 of their members. It also contains particulars relating to the pensioners of local authorities in England and Wales, and to pension and almshouse charities in certain counties, compiled from information given by the Charity Commissioners.

Series E relates to pauperism, and shows that the number of persons receiving poor law relief in the United Kingdom has diminished from 37 per 1,000 of the population in 1872 to 24 per 1,000 in 1902. Of persons aged 65 and upwards, about 187 per 1,000 were receiving poor law relief on 1st September, 1903. The cost of poor law relief was for 1903-04 15,891,348*l.*; for 1904-05 16,507,690*l.*

Series F gives the results of the test census which Sir E. Hamilton's Committee instituted to ascertain the incomes of persons 65 years of age and upwards. Forty per cent. of the persons who were visited and gave information on the question acknowledged that they had incomes exceeding 10*s.* a week.

Series G relates to membership and funds of friendly societies, trade unions, savings bank depositors, &c., and shows a very considerable increase, both in regard to number and amount.

Other important matters in relation to the provision of State pensions are discussed in the memorandum, as, for example, the question to what extent it would be possible to reduce poor law expenditure under a system of Old Age Pensions. It is shown that the cost of indoor relief would be practically unaffected; and that the only appreciable saving would be in that portion of the cost which relates to outdoor relief. The total amount distributed in outdoor relief in 1904-05 was about 4,014,000*l.* Sir E. Hamilton's Committee, in 1899, computed that about 1,858,000*l.* of outdoor relief was granted to persons above 65 years of age. This includes medical relief, which would still have to be provided. The margin for saving in poor law expenditure is, therefore, not large. E.B.

4.—*Report on a Collection of Statistics as to the Physical Condition of Children attending the Public Schools of the School Board for Glasgow.* By Dr. W. Leslie Mackenzie and Captain A. Foster (Scotch Education Department). [Cd-3637.] 57 pp., 3 plates. Price 10½*d.*

In 1905, the School Board for Glasgow decided to institute records of physical measurements of the children attending their Primary and Higher Grade Schools, and at the same time to ascertain particulars as to housing and home conditions of the children. The School Board provided the equipment, the teachers undertook the actual work of measurement and enquiry, and the data were classified and issued by the Scotch Education Department.

The present report deals with the data for stature and weight only, in conjunction with housing conditions. Comparisons are made of the average stature and weight of boys and girls from age 5 upwards, with the standard averages of the British Association Anthropometrical Committee. The data are also classified according to the social character of the district from which the school draws its pupils (the schools being graded in four groups), and according to the number of rooms in the house (tenement) in which the child lives. With hardly any exceptions, the averages obtained are lower than the British Association averages taken as standards, and