

SOCIAL WELFARE

SOCIAL PENSIONS

In reply to questions in the Assembly during February,¹ the Ministers in charge of the Departments concerned furnished the information that is summarized in the tables below. The figures apparently refer to the end of 1972. No information was given about Chinese people; and it appears that Africans in the Transkei were not included. African pensions are paid every two months. The numbers of persons receiving social pensions were:

	Whites	Coloured	Indians	Africans
Old age pensions	115 155	67 236	10 632	397 416
Blind pensions	890	1 659	174	13 776
Disability grants	23 793	26 154	10 039	106 209
War veterans' pensions	16 434	5 133	158	—
Grants to ex-members of military forces	—	—	—	180

A means test is laid down, defining the free income permitted, which includes assets other than cash, up to certain amounts. In the case of married couples, part of the wife's earnings may be deducted from the combined income. So far as Africans are concerned, payment in kind as well as in cash is taken into consideration, as are family circumstances. As a person's income rises above the free income permitted, the pension is progressively reduced. As one example, an African with an income of just over R10 a month does not qualify for any pension. According to the Ministers, the numbers of people receiving the maximum pensions were:

	Whites	Coloured	Indians
Old age pensions	102 961	59 960	10 066
Blind pensions	810	1 525	146
Disability grants	21 940	24 795	9 674
War veterans' pensions	15 274	4 614	148

No figures were furnished in respect of Africans.

In his Budget speech² the Minister of Finance announced that as from 1 October there would be an approximate ten per cent increase in the maximum amounts payable. The bonuses paid to war veterans would be raised. (Africans do not qualify for war veterans' pensions.) The free income permitted, which was increased for Whites during 1972, would now be increased for Coloured and Asian pensioners. Later, on 24 August, the Minister

¹ Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions, Hansard 2 col. 85; Minister of Coloured Relations, Hansard 4 cols. 252-3; Minister of Indian Affairs, Hansard 2 col. 86; Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, Hansard 1 Question cols. 58-9.

² Assembly, 28 March, Hansard 8 cols. 3537-9.

stated that slightly larger increases in pensions than those promised earlier were to be paid.

During the first nine months of 1973, the free income allowed per month, and the maximum pensions payable monthly, were:

	<i>Whites³</i>	<i>Coloured and Indians⁴</i>	<i>Africans⁵</i>
Free income	R42	R8	R6,66
Maximum pension:			
Old age, blind, disability	R47	R23,50	R8,00
War veterans	R51	R25,50	—

Corresponding figures as from 1 October, in so far as ascertained at the time of writing, were:

	<i>Whites</i>	<i>Coloured and Indians</i>	<i>Africans</i>
Free income	R42	R21	R6,66
Maximum pension:			
Old age, blind, disability	R47	R23,50	R8,00
War veterans	R57	R28,50	—

In the Assembly on 16 February, Mr. G. N. Oldfield (U.P.) moved a Private Member's Motion,⁶ "That this House expresses its concern at the plight of pensioners and urges the Government (a) to review the present rate of social pensions and the means test applicable to such pensions, and (b) to consider the advisability of introducing a national contributory pension scheme".

The Deputy Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions agreed⁷ that the rate of pensions was small, but said it would be very costly indeed to increase it. South Africa was not a welfare state, he said. A national contributory scheme would not help those who were not economically active and could not contribute. Private pension schemes should be extended.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION

During the year under review three further lists, totalling about 16 000 names, were published of awards under the Workmen's Compensation Act that had been unclaimed for twelve months or more.⁸ Again, roughly 80 per cent of the persons concerned were Africans, and in large numbers of cases no particulars were given except the man's first name. Most of the sums due were small, but several people had large amounts awarded to them, indicating that their injuries must have been severe.

The Star ran a feature article on the subject on 11 September. The writer had been in touch with the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner, who pointed to the difficulty of tracing members of a highly mobile work force consisting largely of migrant labour. He circulated names of missing workers to police stations, Bantu

³ Speeches by the Minister, quoted earlier.

⁴ Government Notices 1403-6 of 10 August, and 2402-4 of 29 December 1972.

⁵ Government Notice 1180 raised the maximum pension for Africans to R7,50 from 1 April. Government Notices 2104-6 again raised the maximum, as from 1 October.

⁶ Hansard 2 cols. 801-11.

⁷ Cols. 839-46.

⁸ *Gazettes* of 8 December 1972, 9 March, and 24 August.

Affairs Commissioners, and labour officers, he said. It appeared that a major difficulty was that many employers failed to record full details about their employees (often because they were employing the men illegally). Also to blame were doctors who failed to send in the necessary forms, and hospitals that did not keep proper records of patients.

SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT

In reply to a question in the Assembly on 6 March,⁹ the Minister of Labour said that 1 316 Whites, 411 Coloured people, 15 Indians, and 14 Africans were working in sheltered employment schemes falling under his department. No further Africans were to be admitted to such schemes. Coloured and Indian women were not eligible.

The Deputy Minister of Bantu Development said on 9 February¹⁰ that there were ten centres or workshops in the homelands for disabled Africans. In November 1972, about 1 200 people were employed there.

⁹ Hansard 5 cols. 338-9.

¹⁰ Hansard 1 Question col. 46.