

ment in St. John's and gets his instructions from the department. They have certain standing orders from the department, and I have always maintained that a relieving officer should have not only some initiative on his own part, but some power to grant relief in cases of destitution. It might be, perhaps, that in certain cases it might be abused, but certainly the department could check on the relieving officer; but naturally this relief has to be given out, as in the past, in larger quantities in certain sections to a great number of people, and they have to have certain other rather stringent rules and regulations. That is the set-up in the outports, any man can approach a relieving officer in his district; and I know some cases where the relieving officers are Rangers, and they forward on to the department the applications and need for relief as it arises. As you can see from the figures given there has not been much relief up until quite recently in the outports, but as the winter months move along the people become destitute, they have no money, no credit, and no means of providing themselves with food, and they have to apply to the relieving officer; and, as was pointed out last night, in certain sections, in White Bay for instance, where the trap fishery has failed for two years following, these people have just carried themselves along as far as they can. I think that the department is sympathetic towards these applications and, while each application has to be studied on its merits, the amount of earning power that a man has during the summertime and what avenues he has tried to secure employment, all these factors have to be ascertained and studied. As far as I know they are submitted to the department in St. John's and they get their orders from the official here who looks after outport relief and deals with the cases as they come up.

**Mr. Ballam** ... If a male is receiving a pension and he has a wife, on his decease the whole thing is forgotten unless she goes through the whole rigamarole all over again and has the relieving officer and the doctor state that she is eligible for the pension, and then she has to wait six months after his death. In nine cases out of ten the people are too old or too poor to bother about it. They don't get it until the whole thing is gone over. We should recommend that this should be automatic.

**Mr. Ashbourne** That has been my experience in the past. I have filled out quite a few applications

for old age pensions, etc. They can certainly find out by sending out a questionnaire to every old age pensioner who is married and ascertain the age of his wife; when the man dies, the cheque is immediately returned to the department and, as has been said, application has to be made. As soon as the application is made the cheque is sent forward, and if it happens to miss a quarter the past quarter is included with the next one. That's been my experience.... These old age pensions are marked "payable in advance" whatever that means. I know of a case or two where people have died after the beginning of the quarter, and have been alive at the 1st of April when the cheque is supposed to be issued. If the person is in St. John's and alive on the 1st of April he gets a cheque, and if he happens to die when the cheque was received in the outports, on the 4th or 5th, the cheque is sent back to the department; and I have had one or two cases where they have paid that cheque in order to give the benefit of the money for burial purposes. I quite agree with that point, and I don't see why a better plan could not be worked out as regards the age of the widow. It is the practice of the department to send out once or twice a year for a certificate showing that the old age pensioner and his wife are still alive. That's done so that nobody else would be getting the cheques....

That age limit of 65 is strictly adhered to, and there are cases where the widow may be 62 or 63 and has had to have her name entered on the widow's list instead of becoming eligible for the old age pension, and is therefore looked after by the fund for widows, orphans and the infirm. I don't know if that answers your question. I am in full sympathy with the idea that the pension age should be lowered. When I was introducing this report I mentioned that in my remarks. We have no authority to make any change in this age limit, it is a matter for the government. I know that to these elderly people, particularly the fishermen and others who have helped build up the economy of Newfoundland throughout the years, this amount, even if very small, is a help to them, and I am in sympathy with the remarks of Mr. Ballam.

**Mr. Vincent** Thank you very much for that explanation. Are the relieving inspectors making periodic visits to the outport districts? If so how many are there?