

Old-age Pensions Act b MCH, 2020w 1 November 1898

(P-102) OK mat, n.d [m]



1898
P.10:

The Act gave a small means-tested pension to elderly people with few assets who were 'of good moral character'. Although Germany had earlier introduced a contributory state pension, New Zealand's was the first in the world funded from general taxation. It was one of the major achievements of Richard Seddon's Liberal government.

The Liberal reforms of the 1890s attracted international interest and seemed to symbolise New Zealand's egalitarian ethos. The groundbreaking legislation of 1898 was based on the principle that the state had some responsibility for elderly citizens who were not able to provide for themselves.

The amount on offer was small. Applicants had to meet certain criteria to qualify for a pension of at most £18 per year (equivalent to \$3400 in 2020). Only those with an annual income of £34 (\$6400) or less and property valued at no more than £50 (\$9500) received the full amount. Proof was required that the applicant was aged at least 65, which disadvantaged the many Māori whose births had not been registered. Applicants had to have lived in New Zealand for the previous 25 years; Chinese people were specifically excluded.

4

updated 3rd edition adene

Read more on NZHistory

Richard Seddon asleep during committee – Parliament's people

Richard Seddon

History of New Zealand, 1769-1914 – A history of New Zealand 1769-1914

External links

Richard Seddon (Te Ara biographies)

Liberal to Labour (Te Ara)

'The van of Liberalism' (Te Ara)

Social Security (1966 encyclopaedia)

Liberal Party (1966 encyclopaedia)

∨ How to cite this page

'Old-age Pensions Act becomes law', URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/old-age-pensions-act-passes-into-law>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 9-Sep-2020

Share this event