

# Scottish Seniors



Newsletter of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum

Issue 22 / April 2009

## Centenary, and now ...

In November 2008, almost 250 pensioners attended a rally in Glasgow to highlight the centenary of the state pension, introduced as the 'Old Age Pensions Act 1908'.

The rally was held in the Glasgow Council chambers and organised by the Scottish Pensioners' Forum, the National Pensioners' Convention and the Scottish Trades Union Congress.

The theme of the rally was, after one hundred years where are we now in terms of pensioners' economic security or, in plain language, a basic state pension will take more than two million pensioners in the UK over the poverty line.

Glasgow's Lord Provost, Bob Winter, opened the rally with a civic welcome and wished us success in our future fight for a better state pension. He spoke of the valuable contribution the SPF and other pensioner groups made in campaigning for a better state pension.

Jo Swinson, Liberal Democrat MP for East Dunbartonshire, spoke of the memory of the state pension and its introduction by a Liberal government. In Westminster Jo continues to pursue the imbalance which exists in incomes for women. She roundly criticised the means-testing 35-page pension credit application



*Pictured (clockwise from above): The Scottish Pensioners' Forum banner; Bob Winter, Glasgow's Lord Provost; Jo Swinson, Lib Dem MP for East Dunbartonshire; Eugene Duffy, UNISON Retired Members; and Ian Davidson, Labour MP for Glasgow South West*

form which, it was agreed, was degrading, and backed the campaign for a decent living pension.

Ian Davidson, Labour MP for Glasgow South West, felt that much had been done but that there was still a long way to go. He said that the problem with maximising pension income was very often the unwillingness of people to claim. He also said that he and like-minded colleagues hoped to persuade the Chancellor, Alistair Darling, to restore the link between the state pension and earnings sooner rather than later. The government had already pledged to restore the link in 2012 and hoped that this might restore some of the imbalance in pensioners' income.

Ian also referred to the obscene profits the oil companies were

making and the absence of a reduction in fuel charges.

Eugene Duffy, Unison Retired Members, asked the rally, 'What is the government and politicians really doing for us?' The support from the trade unions over the decades had been vital and yet successive governments had paid lip service to the decline in the value of the pension. Pensioners in serious debt could not be ignored and the frustration of the Grey Vote could very well lead to some type of pensioners' political intervention in the democratic system, i.e. a political party which would give the incumbent political parties food for thought. An 'X' meant no.

Sandra Whyte, SNP MSP, is the convener of the Scottish

*Continued overleaf*

### Editorial Committee

Eugene Duffy, Jessie McHarg, Elinor McKenzie, Bob McLean, Margaret Murdoch, David Oattes, Jeanette Pieper, Eric Souter

*Continued from previous page*

parliament's cross-party group on older people and she is at the forefront of establishing more pensioners' representation at the Scottish parliament. Sandra reminded the rally that the SNP, although in minority government, had frozen the council tax and introduced other measures in Scotland to ease the financial burden of pensioners, disabled and low paid.

The question was asked, if we as a nation can afford to fund wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, why can we not treat the vulnerable and elderly with dignity.

The next speaker was Frank Cooper, president of the National Pensioners Convention, who thanked the STUC and the SPF for the invitation to the rally. Frank was impressed with the SPF motto, 'Robin the Pensioner', which he hoped one day could form an early day motion at Westminster inviting Jo Swinson to promote the idea. The real focus of attention for the government should be to remember that 27% of the electorate are pensioners. Billions of pounds are lying in the national insurance fund so why do pensioners have to wait to 2010 when financial support is required now. Like other speakers,



*Clockwise from top: Elinor McKenzie (third from left); Frank Cooper, NPC President; and Sandra White, SNP MSP*

Frank condemned the despicable pension credits application bureaucracy. The only solution to that would be a big bonfire of the paperwork involved.

The final speaker was Elinor McKenzie, chairperson of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum, who reminded the rally that although pensions are a reserved issue for Westminster, the SPF would continue to campaign on all issues affecting pensioners in Scotland. Today's government and past governments have eroded the quality of life for pensioners who were the creators of wealth over the generations. Elinor reminded us we are all pensioners today and tomorrow and politicians should remember this.

The rally was closed by Ian Tasker, Assistant Secretary at the STUC, who pledged to take forward the issues raised at the rally and thanked all the speakers for their contribution. Ian also thanked Glasgow city council for their hospitality and the entertaining Glasgow-based Eurydice choir who provided songs to inspire during the interval.

## STUC conference

The issue of both state and occupational pensions will be debated at this year's STUC conference. This link between those still in employment and those who have retired from employment is a growing element of how people will survive once they cease employment. In today's disastrous economic climate state intervention must ensure a decent, dignified, secure pension for those who are struggling to survive. The Forum's Margaret Murdoch is hoping to deliver this important message to Congress.

## PCS joint initiative

Elinor McKenzie reported to the Forum executive that through the STUC the PCS union was interested in setting up a joint initiative with the Scottish Pensioners' Forum to campaign for a substantial improvement in the state pension.

Elinor stated that the promotion of pensions was an important element of our link to PCS, particularly when considering today's economic climate and the threat to public sector pensions as well as the state pension.

## Note for your diary/calendar

### Scottish Pensioners' Forum – Annual Conference, Tuesday 16th June, 2009

This year's annual conference has been confirmed for **Tuesday 16th June, 2009, at Glasgow City Council Chambers.**

#### And ...

You will soon receive the conference draw raffle tickers which add to the interest of the day (as well as the Forum's funds). Please encourage your family and friends to not only purchase tickets but to participate in raising funds by selling the raffle tickets to their families, work colleagues etc.

# See the person, not the age ...

**... was the Scottish Government's theme at a seminar held in Glasgow in November last year.**

The 'All Our Futures' event, supported by the Scottish Pensioners' Forum and the West of Scotland Seniors Forum, was the first in a series of round Scotland seminars gathering information, opinions and concerns of Scottish pensioners which gives the Scottish Government an insight into how pensioners in Scotland view their future.

A 'listening post' of subjects was offered to the delegates for their response: issues such as life expectancy, health and welfare, transport, safety, fuel poverty and the opportunity for older people to become involved in their community.

This initiative by the Scottish Government will, in time, expose what the future political ruling body in Scotland will do to enhance the life of pensioners and hopefully erase the attitude of ... 'see the age of that person'.

After the opening remarks by John Storey, head of the Older People and Aged Team at the Scottish Parliament, the event opened with a look back at the statistics of age in Scotland and events which happened through the decades culminating in the formation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. The 'All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population' was introduced by the previous Scottish Executive and a publication was produced highlighting most of the issues facing the elderly in Scotland today.

After John Storey's presentation a question and answer session took place but unfortunately

descended into a minor political hustings which was an unfortunate deviation from the principle behind the event.

Once the dust had settled on that item it was the turn of councillor Derek Mackay who spoke to the regeneration of Renfrew's town centre and the benefits that the citizens of Renfrew would benefit from including the elderly. Although this gave an opportunity for those delegates from Renfrew to air an opinion it did not seem beneficial to the rest of the audience. There was a question and answer session around issues, for example accessibility to shopping, public benches and public toilet facilities.

The morning session concluded with a mature ladies' tap dancing group and was entertaining to those who appreciated the art of dance.

After lunch Gordon Hanning, Head of the Concessionary Travel & Integrated Ticketing Unit, delivered a most informative item on the agenda outlining the Scottish Government's approach to concessionary travel and seeking to improve on what was available at the moment. Whilst not perfect Gordon did allude to improvements in travel cards, ticketing machines and the monitoring of bus companies in general.

A question and answer session included the extension of the travel scheme to other modes of transport, bus services particularly in the rural areas and in the evening and the training of drivers to remind them of an elderly person's ability to board a bus and make their way to a seat

without being launched in the familiar way.

The programme at this time had been changes from an item on health and wellbeing to one known as 'Silver Deal'. This transpired as an organisation outsourced by Glasgow City Council to bring to the elderly a variety of leisure activities associated with health and fitness. The culmination of this presentation was a 'chairrobics' exercise to music. Notepads and post-it stickers were available to all to allow the 'listening post' feedback, the principle of which, one would believe, was the aim of the Scottish Government to say we have gone round Scotland and we have listened to the elderly and given them the opportunity to respond.

We could be cynical and say that a government, any government, can turn round and say we have given the people the opportunity to express their views and we have listened, but will any benefit transpire ... we'll have to wait and see.

Finally, the intention of the event was well meaning but missed the mark. However, in a more constructive way the Scottish Pensioners' Forum was able to fly the flag and our stall experienced what can only be described as an excellent response for this and with our Chair Elinor Mackenzie's contribution and Doreen Kean's administrative excellence we can safely say we did not let the side down!

The event is still touring around Scotland so, if you managed to attend in your area, let us know your experience and opinion of the seminar.

# Round and about

In looking to the future we are hoping to highlight issues which are happening in your area affecting pensioners, retired members and other Forum members who come across items which reflect the Forum's attitude to campaigning for a better all round deal for pensioners.

For example, Chairperson Elinor McKenzie recently attended and addressed the International Women's Day conference organised by Kirkcaldy and District Trades Union Council. Our own Margaret Murdoch, who is very active in that area, reported: "The conference was very well attended and a varied thought-provoking programme included items such as dementia, patient care, credit unions and life as a woman in Palestine. On behalf of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum Elinor spoke about women in poverty. A real stimulating day and, as conferences go, a thorough success."

The above is a good example of the type of event we want to hear about, especially if the Forum is involved. It's our 'flag' – fly it!

## Membership renewal ...

It is that time of year again when all individual members, groups and organisations will be contacted to renew their membership. The Scottish Pensioners' Forum exists to campaign for pensioners in Scotland and remind all those politicians who make decisions on our behalf that our goal is a proper, dignified and safe life for those who have reached the stage in their lives where financial security is a basic human right. No benefits, no begging bowls, no financial or other insecurity.

Please renew your membership and/or donation to the Scottish Pensioners' forum to help achieve this goal.

## WHY NOT JOIN US?

I/we wish to join the Scottish Pensioners' Forum

**Annual Membership Fee:** (April each year)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organisations £30       | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual pensioners £3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local groups/forums £10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other individuals £10    |

(Please tick as appropriate)

Please make cheques and postal orders payable to "Scottish Pensioners' Forum"

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation/Branch \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No \_\_\_\_\_

■ Please return the completed form to: Scottish Pensioners' Forum, 333 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6NG. (Tel 0141 337 8113)

## Glasgow's evening visitor service

At a recent SPF Publicity and Media Committee meeting, Bob McLean and Eric Souter raised the item of a free hospital visitor service within the Glasgow city hospital area and it would be interesting to hear the details of such a service if available in other areas throughout Scotland which we can then publicise.

The service is offered for evening visits between 6.00pm and 10.00pm, Monday to Friday, and if you live within Glasgow city area then you access this free door-to-door service to the following hospitals:

- Glasgow Royal Infirmary
- Stobhill Hospital
- Gartnavel Hospital
- Western Infirmary
- Victoria Infirmary
- Southern General

The service does give a priority to elder people, registered disabled and those on a low income. The booking telephone number is 0845 1284027 and the line is open between 2.00pm–4.00pm, Monday to Thursday and 2.00pm–3.30pm, on Friday.

This service is jointly run by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Community Transport and SPT.

■ Thanks to Caledonian University archive department for their research material, David Oattes for photographs, Eileen Cawley and all others who contributed to our centenary and spring edition of our newsletter.

# CENTENARY

A LOOK BACK AT WHAT HAPPENED THEN

WHILST, at first glance, the marking of a centenary of a piece of legislation may be considered a rather dull and dry undertaking and not one to spark lively and controversial debate, however the 1908 Old Age Pensions Act was the start of a completely new role for government which was ultimately to result in the Welfare State. It embodied the new political initiative of wealth redistribution and a vision of social intervention that still endures. Those that built the Act faced exactly the same problem as today's politicians – cost, payout value, age limits, parameters for means testing. The Act marked a complete break with previous definitions of government responsibilities, an end to laissez-faire and was a radical reaction to the very real concern of poverty in Britain. If modern governments are to tackle today's pension issues they need to be as radical and learn from that Liberal government to finally 'think the unthinkable'.

The 1908 Act established a non-contributory, low level and means-tested benefit funded by central government. The Act's purpose was to provide assistance for the 'deserving' poor. Consequently, the first state pensions did not provide enough for subsistence, requiring supplements from other means. Means testing also introduced further restrictions on who was to be eligible for the payments. The Treasury was keen to keep costs down even further and insisted on a starting age of 70 for the new benefit. The first handouts issued in 1909 were given to only 500,000 people, two thirds of whom were women.

One of the surprising facts is the dominance of women in the development of state pensions.

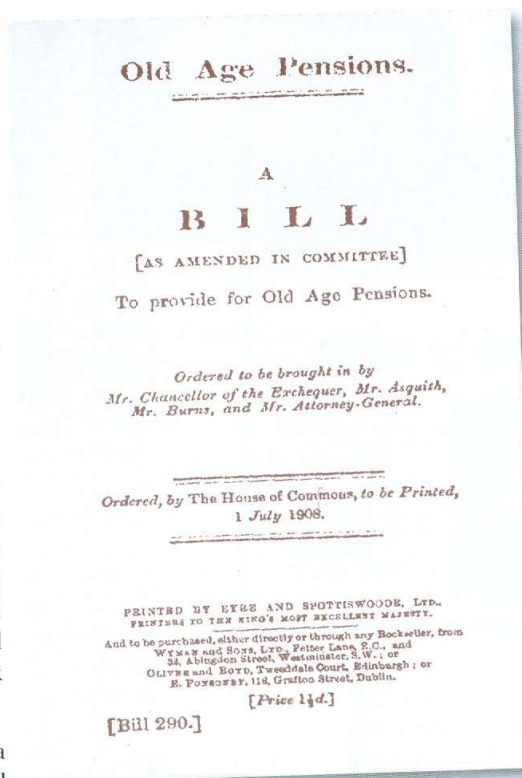
Women were to be the primary beneficiaries, picking up two thirds of the first pensions. They lived longer than men, worked irregularly, were low paid and had little chance to build savings.

A formidable range of British parliamentarians were involved in the creation of the 1908 Act – Asquith,

Lloyd George and Winston Churchill dominated the Edwardian political landscape and provided the driving force for the reforming zeal of the 1906 Liberal government. However, it was noted that a state pension had been on the political agenda since the 1870s, encouraged by innovations in Germany and New Zealand.

By the start of the twentieth century, concerns about poverty and health dominated the public agenda and the Liberals' 1906 election landslide win meant that in 1907 the Chancellor HH Asquith started to put into practice, for the first time in British politics, wealth redistribution by higher taxes on the rich. Asquith had a shaky

grasp of the details of the Bill and several examples of slip-ups by him during the early stages of its parliamentary journey threatened to expose many of the potential weaknesses in the government's position. However, upon the retirement of Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister, Asquith moved into No 10 and Lloyd George took over as Chancellor to see the Bill through its second reading and subsequent parliamentary hurdles. Another Liberal, William Beveridge, took a close interest in the new legislation and the development of state pensions and was particularly uncomfortable with the means testing element for the inevitable unfairness it brought for borderline cases and its ability to deter take-up.



## THAT MEETING IN BROWNING HALL...

Delegates from 14 trade unions, alongside the National Union of Women Workers (a social purity organisation) and the Bristol, Hull, London and Leeds trades councils - representing 376,948 organised workers - met on 13 December 1898, at the Browning Hall in Southwark to start the pension campaign which, a year later, created the National Pensions Committee.

Those 14 trade unions were the real pension pioneers who over a decade helped secure the first old age

state pension.

They were recorded by Rev Stead as being:

• Amalgamated Society of Engineers

• Amalgamated Society of Carpenters & Joiners

• Associated Shipwrights' Society

• Friendly Society of Iron Founders

• London Cab Drivers' Trade Union

• National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades' Association

• National Association of Operative Plasterers

• National Hosiery Federation

• National Union of Clerks

• National Union of Gas Workers & General Labourers

• National Union of Shop Assistants

• Society of General Smiths, Fitters, Bellhangers and Whitesmiths

• United Builders' Labourers' Union

• Workers' Union



WHERE IT ALL BEGAN: Browning Hall, Southwark, London

## PENSION PIONEER FREDERICK ROGERS

Frederick Rogers was a self-educated man who began his working life as an errand boy in London's Whitechapel.

He was a pioneer of adult education and became the President of the Vellum Binders Union.



In 1899 Rogers became the organising secretary of the National Pensions Committee and travelled the country to talk about the need for an old age pension.

He helped found the Labour party in 1906.

## OLD-AGE PENSIONS.

### A REPRESENTATIVE CONFERENCE IN GLASGOW.

A conference organised by the Glasgow Trades' Council was held last night in the St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, when the subject of old-age pensions was discussed. Mr. George Galloway, president of the Glasgow Trades' Council, presided, supported by Dr. Charles Booth, who had been asked to give details regarding his scheme for the endowment of old age. In the audience were Professors Smart and Murray, Bailie Hunter, Councillors Bilsland, P. G. Stewart, W. Martin, G. Mitchell, and Johnston; ex-Councillor Crohn, Lady Mary Murray, Miss M. Irwin, Miss Galloway, Miss King, Mr. A. Haddow, Mr. John Paul, and representatives of a number of Parish Councils and the Trades' Councils of Greenock, Aberdeen, Arbroath, Ayrshire, Paisley, Glasgow, etc., and secretaries of many trade and Co-operative societies, etc.

The Chairman claimed that a satisfactory pension scheme must apply to women, and in seeking for such a scheme they were only endeavouring to follow the dictates of Christianity.

Mr. Booth argued that the State should provide old-age pensions for everybody who claimed them. The cost of that provision, he argued, should be borne by general taxation. He referred to the disadvantages old people were placed under by existing conditions of things, and argued that assistance from children was

#### FREQUENTLY URGED TOO FAR.

that charitable aid was frequently undesirable and poor-law relief distinctly objectionable. He pointed out that in the upper classes children looked to their parents for support until the death of the parent, but that in the poorer classes the position was reversed, and that the parents looked to the children for support. He disliked both those extremes, but favoured reciprocity in vogue in middle class society. The State could only contribute a small sum towards that desirable condition of things. He objected to contributory schemes because they discouraged friendly society effort; and they did not provide for the very poor, for women, and for present-day requirements. In favouring a non-contributory scheme he argued that it would not be pauperising any more than a child was pauperised whose parents took advantage of free education. He did not believe that wages would be decreased to the extent of the pension.

A number of questions were asked, chiefly urging Mr. Booth to provide for the scheme out of the taxation of land values and against additional taxation, but the lecturer refused to usurp the position of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and say where the funds should come from.

Mr. Herbert Stead asked for a definite outcome of the conference, and on the motion of Mr. Mitchell, Glasgow, seconded by Mr. A. Catto, Aberdeen, the meeting unanimously agreed to the principle that the State should provide old age pensions for everybody, and a committee was appointed to co-operate with English committees on the subject.

## OLD-AGE PENSIONS.

### ROYAL COMMISSIONER LECTURES IN GLASGOW.

The monthly meeting of the Insurance and Actuarial Society of Glasgow took place last evening in the Philosophic Hall, the chair being taken by the president, Mr. W. Smith Nicol. An address upon "Old Age Pensions" was delivered by Mr. George King, F.I.A., F.F.A., Actuary of the London Assurance Corporation, who was a member of the recent Royal Commission upon that subject.

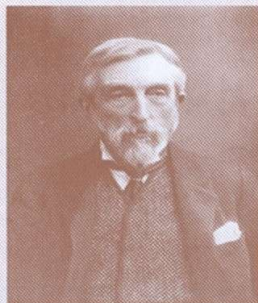
Mr. King, in discussing Mr. Charles Booth's scheme for universal pensions, pointed out that for the State to give 5s per week to everyone who reached the age of 65, unless legislation was provided to prevent people spending that sum in one day it would prove a failure, and in any case would be disproportionate to the advantage gained, and would make everybody paupers. Attention was also paid to Canon Blackley's scheme for compulsory contributions, Sir Spencer Walpole's scheme for voluntary State-aided pensions, and the scheme for special classes of the community. In conclusion the lecturer favoured an improved system of outdoor relief in preference to any of the schemes enumerated.

After the lecturer had been thanked, the annual business meeting of the Society was held and the following office-bearers were elected:—President, Mr. David L. Haddow; hon. treasurer, Mr. Stewart Lawrie; hon. secretary, Mr. Henry G. Andrews.

## PENSION PIONEER CHARLES BOOTH

**Born in Liverpool in 1840, Charles Booth became a successful businessman, taking over his father's firm.**

**In his youth he had canvassed for the Liberal Party, but had subsequently become disillusioned with all political parties.**



**He undertook scientific surveys of the poor which underlined the need for reform and led him to argue that older people deserved physical comfort, independence and the power to give as well as receive.**

**He died in 1916.**

**C**harles Booth stirred audiences up and down the country with his convincing case for a universal, non-contributory old age pension. Arguing that everyone recognised the deplorable state of poverty in old age; Booth pointed out that the old were industrially at a disadvantage and received no share of the growing national prosperity.

Booth believed that charity and poor relief were no solutions, and ruled out contributory schemes because they would not provide for all poor women, or future generations, most of whom would be unable to contribute. He stressed that the costs should be borne by general taxation, and the benefits should be for all who claimed them.

Following these initial public meetings, delegates representing 37 trade unions and 2 trades councils met in January 1899 and formed the National Committee of Organised Labour for Promoting Old Age Pensions for All. Rev Stead became honorary secretary, Edward Cadbury acted as treasurer and Frederick Rogers of the Vellum Binders Union, and later chair of the Labour Representation Committee, was appointed to the post of organising secretary.

On 9 May 1899, under Stead's leadership, the National Pensions Committee called a national campaign for universal non-contributory old age pensions at 65.

In September that year, the Trade Union Congress unanimously passed a resolution demanding a pension of five shillings for all citizens of 60 years of age; a demand which was echoed by the Cooperative movement.

**B**efore 1908, apart from a few officials and members of the armed forces, hardly anyone reaching the end of their working life had a pension on which to base their retirement. Queen Victoria's Britain was one of the strongest and wealthiest of the world's nations, but millions, especially older people, lived in poverty.

Comfortable Victorians liked to believe that poverty was a product of laziness and a profligate life. Hard work and thrift was the answer, and charity should only be granted to the 'deserving' poor.

But in the last decade of the nineteenth century, destitution was so widespread among the old that it was becoming difficult to merely put it down to laziness, immorality or lack of thrift.

In 1894, Joseph Chamberlain MP said: 'It must be remembered that it is almost impossible for a large proportion of the poorer classes to make adequate provision against old age' and 'half of all men belonging to the working and poorer classes, is compelled under our present system, if he lives to 65, to have recourse to parish relief'.

This view was also echoed by Charles Booth in his groundbreaking social survey of London which uncovered the hardship faced by the elderly.

In *Pauperism and the Endowment of Old Age*, Booth recognised that parish charity and the workhouse did nothing to abolish destitution or the suffering of the elderly.

He proposed that the government should introduce a non-contributory pension of five shillings per week for all aged 65 and over as a way of ending the link between old age and pauperism.

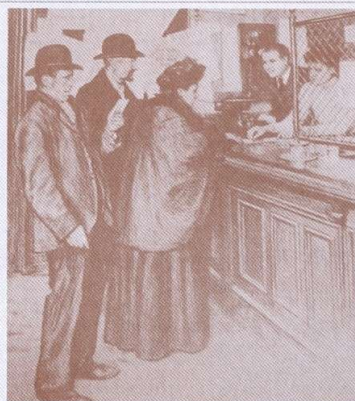
Booth argued that 'women have often spent lives of the most active and invaluable citizenship.

## COLLECTING THE PENSION

From 1 January 1909, those reaching 70 who qualified under the means-test, could collect their 'Lloyd George', named after the Chancellor of the day, at the post office.

On 31 March 1909, 647,494 received the pension, of whom 582,565 pensioners received the full five shillings.

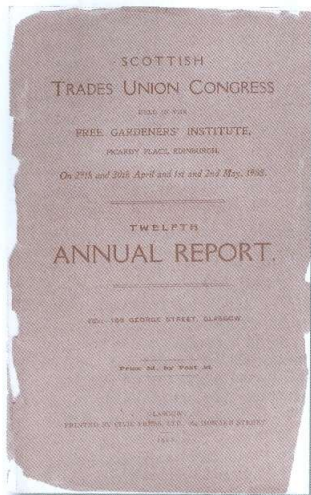
A few years later, pensioners received an additional allowance of two shillings and sixpence per week in recognition of the increased cost of living.



PICKING IT UP: The very first 'pensioners' at the Post Office



The five shillings old age pension order taken from the original pension book



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housing reform, or even temperance. Giving the man, the husband, and the father the right to work at a living wage, he can feed his children at his own board, which is more desirable and more satisfactory than any other method that might be adopted.

#### OLD AGE PENSIONS.

I am pleased to report that since we met last year Parliament has passed into law an old age pension act. From your first Congress, thirteen years ago, until now you have taken every opportunity of pressing the need of such a reform upon past Governments and taken some little part in forming public opinion on this great measure of social reform. While I admit that it does not come up to expectations, it is a great step forward.

I am pleased to note that in the King's Speech there is a proposal to be brought forward for amending the Act in certain particulars where in practice inequalities of treatment have been found to arise. This I think is just as it should be, for I know of no reform where the inequalities of treatment were greater than in this Act.

It will be the duty of this Congress, and your Parliamentary Committee to bring all the pressure that they possess to bear on the Government to have the age limit reduced, for if 65 years is considered a reasonable age for civil service, surely it is not too much to ask for 55 for those who have to run the great risks attending occupations in our iron and steel works, mines, shipbuilding yards, factories, workshops, and various other occupations.

#### Old Age Pensions

A circular letter was issued to Members of the Government and Scottish Members of Parliament, protesting against the action of the Government in regard to the inadequate provisions made for the establishment of Old Age Pensions in their last Budget, requesting the Government to give effect to its promise by at once instituting these pensions. A second circular on the same subject was subsequently issued. These were duly acknowledged. It has, however, been stated that provision will be made in the forthcoming Budget for establishing these pensions on a non-contributory basis. We will await with interest the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject.

#### OLD-AGE PENSIONS.

Another very urgent social question is that of Old-Age Pensions, and when we look back on many promises that have been given to deal with the question, it is one that is now very much overdue, and yet there was no reference to it in the King's Speech. The Labour Party took the same course as they had done in the Right-to-Work question, Labour Party then determined to make a start with Old-Age Pensions in the shape of a Private Member's Bill, which was brought before the House. It had a second reading on 10th May, 1907, and was supported by a large majority. The Government accepted its principles, but declined to give facilities for its passing through, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget proposal had allocated 2½ millions as a nucleus with which he hoped to make a beginning this year. It is pleasing to learn that through the Chancellor's able handling of the Income Tax question (I do not now refer to the reduction of 3d in the 41, with which I do not agree), but with his method of ascertaining who were entitled to pay Income Tax, and other causes, that he is going to have a surplus of between 5 and 6 millions. If we take the statement made by a responsible member of the Cabinet a few days ago in Manchester, it would seem that a start was about to be made. I hope he wins his bet that an old age pension scheme will be established within a year, and I also hope that the workers will win their or desert or otherwise at a certain age, and that age be fixed at not more than 65 years. These two reforms which have been referred to are of supreme importance to the workers of the country, and the need for them is, in my opinion, greater than the feeding of school children,

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The Committee instructed me to write to you in reply that the subject of your letter has already been under the consideration of the Special Buildings Committee, and will not be left right of.—I am, your faithfully,  
R. R. SIMPSON.  
Gen. Carson, Esq., 156 George Street, Glasgow.

Subsequently we again wrote inquiring what had been done in the matter. We were advised that the question was still under consideration, and would have to be reported on. Nothing further has been heard on the subject.

#### POSTING BILLET OF PIECE-WORK RATES.

The Departmental Committee appointed to enquire into this question issued its report some time ago. It recommends that men working at the Docks on Piece-Work Rates shall have the right to demand and receive Weigh-Bills and Bills of Lading through their accredited representatives, and where necessary appoint a check-weighman. These recommendations are to be embodied in a Bill and presented to the House of Commons shortly, and it is expected to become law.

#### HOUSE LETTING.

During the year we have been pressing the Government and Scottish and Labour Members of Parliament to have this question dealt with on the lines of the Report issued by the Inquiry Committee. We understand the Lord Advocate has now introduced a Bill on the subject, but what the terms of the Bill are we are not in a position at present to say, as it has not been published, but unless it fulfils the conditions of the Minority Report it cannot be accepted as satisfactory.

#### OLD AGE PENSIONS BILL.

When this Bill was before Parliament a special circular was issued to all Scottish Members of Parliament, the Labour Party, and the Government. The reason for this was that we were not satisfied with the provisions of the Bill on three points. First, the age limit of 70 years. We were of opinion this was altogether too old. And, second, the sum of 5/ per week was quite inadequate to meet the wants of the mass of the people who would be entitled to these pensions. And, third, we were opposed to the question of income being introduced at all into the Bill.

On the Bill being passed, we issued a circular letter to all the Trades Councils, pointing out that there would be several Members to be co-opted on the various local committees to

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deal with all applicants, and that it would be advisable, in view of protecting their interests, and, as far as possible, see that they got full justice. They should see to it that they had representation on these local committees. In a good many places a fair measure of success has attended our efforts in this direction.

Since the Act has come into operation, it has been shown to be seriously defective in one very special respect, namely, the Poor Relief disqualification; and this requires to be corrected as soon as possible. That we believe is likely to occur, as a reference was made in the King's Speech that an amendment of the Act was to be effected during the present session of Parliament; it is, therefore, more than likely that the Poor Law Relief disqualification will be removed.

There is no doubt the Pension, small as it is, has been of much benefit to tens of thousands of people, and has helped to make their lives a bit more easy and comfortable than before; it is some satisfaction to know that this result has been brought about by the efforts of the organised workers, as have others of a like beneficial character. Still, we cannot be content with the Act as it stands, and we should not rest satisfied till the Act is amended so as to give effect to the proposals contained in our resolution.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT.

The resolutions on this question were sent out along with circular to Scottish Members and Labour Party, and also the Members of the Government. The circular dealt with the following essential points—First, the abolition of the residential qualification. This being the cause of serious hardship and suffering to thousands of people who were by reason of the present restricted qualification denied the right to work.

Second—"That all applicants to District Committees should be supplied with work, or if that could not be found for them, they should be provided with a sufficient maintenance for themselves and families."

The present industrial system being the cause of Unemployment, it is only fair and just these people should be supplied with the means of living.

Third—"That the question being a national one, the Government provide the funds necessary to meet all requirements. The nation being responsible for the present condition of affairs, the Government as representing the nation, should find all the money required for the purpose."