

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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JOINT SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE

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Re: Old Age Assistance.

State House, Augusta, Wednesday, Oct. 16, 1940.

Counsel:
Donald W. Webber
Hubert Ryan

Wednesday, Oct. 16, 1940.

BERTHA A. HUDSON, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

(By Mr. Donald W. Webber)

Q. Will you state your full name, Miss Hudson?

A. Bertha A. Hudson.

Q. You reside in Winthrop?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And you are a field worker for the Division of Old Age Assistance?

A. Yes.

Q. And how long have you held that position?

A. Ever since the work started in December, 1937.

Q. And by the work you refer to the work in the Old Age Assistance after the Legislature passed their enactment? In other words, you didn't work under the first set-up under Governor Brann, did you?

A. No; I didn't.

Q. How did you get your position in the first place?

A. Well, the first I knew of it I was called at eight o'clock the night before they first met and asked if I would be interested in working for Old Age Assistance. I was very much surprised, because while I would have liked to have had something in State work I had not thought definitely of this particular work, and I think it was Mr. Atwood -- I had never seen Mr. Atwood at that time -- he called and said if I would be interested would I call at eight o'clock the next morning when the supervisors and some of them were meeting, and he would be glad to have me come over, and I have been coming ever since.

Q. Who is Mr. Atwood?

A. Well, I don't know what his title is now. When the work first started he was auditor, I believe in Old Age Assistance. I don't know what his position was at that time. I had never seen him before.

Q. Well, do you have any more information than that? That is, what we are trying to determine as near as we can is how this staff of field workers was selected and set up, whether it was done by the Governor and Council or by the head of the department here or how.

A. That morning, I have forgotten who spoke to the people first, someone discussed the program and Mr. Leadbetter came in after the meeting that morning and asked if I thought I would like the work, and I gathered from what he said that he felt that perhaps that my work that I had done, that it might be work that I would enjoy doing, and that was all that was said.

Q. Now when you refer to work that you had done, what had been your previous experience?

A. Well, knowing people from the rural section, my work on the farm and buying eggs and vegetables from the farmers in the community and being interested in things that were of State welfare, that is not necessarily welfare work I mean, but things that in my opinion I would work for, things that seemed to be of benefit to the State or the community. I had had no social training and Mr. Leadbetter knew that, but he felt that perhaps because of my age -- perhaps that is the way to put it -- and things he apparently had heard about me and my interest -- and I had attended welfare conferences for many years, because I am interested in Federation work, being State President, it seemed to be necessary

to know things that were being done that were of interest and value to the State. I had attended welfare conferences as well as many other State conferences. That is the only reason that I could give you.

Q. In other words, so far as your particular case was concerned, you made no application for the position?

A. No; I made no application and I was very much surprised when I was given the opportunity to come over and see if the work was something I could do and would like to do. I questioned whether I could or not, and perhaps because I have questioned it I have put in more time than some of the staff on it, feeling I wanted to learn all I could as I went along.

Q. Have you had an opportunity to become acquainted with a great many of the field workers?

A. Only in this district.

Q. By "this district" you refer to Kennebeckx and Somerset?

A. Yes; through the conferences that Mr. Goodrich has felt were valuable and which have certainly seemed to be valuable, and through occasional social meetings, we have had a chance once a month or once in two months to meet the workers from this particular district. The only other opportunity would have been at State meetings once a year, such as the one we are having this week-end.

Q. Where is the State meeting this week-end to be held?

A. At Hallowell, tomorrow, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Q. Will all the field workers from all over the State be there?

A. No; I would doubt it, because they have to pay their own expenses, and I think many of them would not feel they could afford it. They have been held in Portland and Bangor

before this and there are more from this section that would attend, and this time it will be the central section of the State probably that will have the most representatives. I think in Bangor there were perhaps 150 altogether.

Q. That would include more than just field workers then?

A. There are people from the State organization as well as the districts. There were not so many I knew last year, so I couldn't tell just how many were there. I think the workers were practically all there both years from our particular district, because both times we were nearer the meeting place, but from Aroostook County it would be quite expensive for a person to go up there and pay their own expenses.

Q. Now from what you do know of the other field workers, can you say whether there are very many field workers who have carried over from prior to 1937, that is who worked under the set-up they had prior to the passage of the act by the Legislature?

A. I don't believe I would be qualified to state that. I think in our office three did work before. I wouldn't be qualified to say on the others because I really don't know. It has not been anything that has been discussed at all. I just happen to have seen these three in our office on some of the old cases. I don't know about the others.

Q. Now by "your office" what do you refer to?

A. The Augusta branch.

Q. And you are referring strictly to the District set-up?

A. I was referring in particular to the Augusta office, of which we are part of the district. There are offices also in Waterville and Skowhegan.

Q. The three people you refer to would be Mr. Goodrich--

A. No; the three field workers, Margaret Fuller, I think she was on for a while. She has only been in this office the last year. And Miss Brown and Miss O'Hara. I think they said they did the work before, but I wouldn't know about the others because I don't have occasion to know.

Q. Now how much territory do you cover in the work you do?

A. I have nine towns, quite a large territory.

Q. All in Kennebec County?

A. Yes; all in Kennebec County.

Q. And are they in a radius working out of Winthrop?

A. Yes, they are. I have Monmouth, Wayne, Readfield, Mount Vernon, Fayette, Sidney and Manchester and my own town of Winthrop that perhaps I didn't mention.

Q. Now since you have been a field worker what effort has been made to give you field workers any instructions?

A. Well, there have been many conferences in the district with Miss Simons, Mr. Leadbetter has attended one or two, Mr. Henderson has attended -- I don't know whether Mr. Haines attended one of the local ones, but of course Mr. Goodrich has had his instructions when the district supervisors meet and he in turn has passed them on to us. As a rule Miss Simons has been present, and for some time Mr. Goodrich had those meetings once a month, and at that time we had a speaker perhaps in the morning and a question period for the afternoon, which seemed to be quite valuable, because we all talked over our problems and discussed them together. That is in addition, of course to the manuals and the memos that have always been coming.

Q. What kind of speakers did you have at those meetings, people from the Federal government?

A. Well, I remember we had one meeting in Hallowell when there were two women, I couldn't tell you who they were, but they were, I think, from the Federal government. The others have been people connected with our work right here. I don't recall any Federal speakers except at that meeting in Hallowell, and that was about a year ago.

Q. Have the instructions and apparently the aims of the department apparently been to get as many people approved and receiving assistance as possible?

A. Well, of course they try to approve as many as there were funds for. I don't just know what you mean, get them approved. You mean get them approved whether they were needing assistance or not, or getting the most urgent cases approved?

A. I threw that question out because I wanted to get at what the field workers have been instructed to do. That is, we are trying to determine what the policies of the department have been as passed down to the field workers, and we have gotten the impression that the aim has apparently been to get as many recipients on the rolls as rapidly as possible. What do you say to that?

A. I think that is the idea of the public, and I think the Division of Old Age Assistance, the heads, have probably tried to ~~please~~ please the public to the best of their ability. I don't know as I know just what kind of an answer you want there. Of course when the set-up first started there was pressure from all sides, I suppose, but, being down at the bottom, we only just suppose. Naturally the

people all wanted to be taken on as quickly as they could, but if you mean them have taken them on regardless of whether they were urgently in need of assistance or not, of course they have taken on what they considered the neediest cases. I do think in the beginning perhaps it seemed to me as a field worker -- and this is just my opinion -- that perhaps they were taken on a little quickly in the beginning, but after all, there were so many wanting assistance and wanting it so urgently that the pressure was pretty strong from all sides. I think perhaps if some of these early cases were investigated for the first time today perhaps some of them would not have been accepted as quickly. I don't know as that is what you want.

Q. That is just what I want.

A. I don't think -- again speaking just my own opinion -- I do not think that is anybody's fault. I think there were so many urgent cases, I don't believe the public or the people employed realize how many people there were going to apply.

Q. Aren't there quite a few people on the rolls who got on there during that period you refer to when things were being done in a somewhat hasty way who ought to come off and make way for more deserving cases?

A. Well, of course I can only speak for my own territory. As I get the instructions from the office my understanding is that we are to watch and to cut whenever there is an opportunity, and that is something that is very difficult to do and something that makes you very unpopular in your territory if you try to cut or to stop. There have been cases, I have had several this fall that I have stopped for

a few months because I felt they could get along for a little while. I have stopped one because he had an opportunity to work for the summer and he didn't want to take that opportunity, and I felt and Mr. Goodrich and I think the State office agreed that if there was an opportunity for him to work and if he didn't feel inclined to take it, even though the man that wanted to employ him has known him all his life and he felt the work would be worth \$1.50 a day, so I felt as long as that man had worked until the first of December his allotment should be stopped, but I assure you I have been very unpopular in the district, except with the taxpayers. The man that offered him work has approved of having assistance stopped in that case. My understanding is we are to watch and do that thing every time there is an opportunity. That is what I have done in my nine towns and that is all I am in a position to know about, but it is never done without making a lot of feeling because nobody after having received a while wants to have that assistance stopped. I have never done it without discussing it with Mr. Goodrich and without his approval, but it is done and has been in my nine towns and I presume that is the policy in the others.

Q. What instructions have you had about suggesting to people that they apply for Old Age Assistance?

A. Oh, we just never do it. There are too many.

Q. Not even under any circumstances?

A. To suggest that they do apply, when there are so many cases that you can't even get considered, why would you suggest that someone else apply?

Q. Well, I am asking you.

A. If people ask me for an application or ask me to come in and help them out, I have done it, but I certainly never would go out asking ~~them~~^{for} people to do it.

Q. You remember this case?

A. Yes indeed, very, very well.

Q. Now any discussion we have on case No. 11123, if the name of the recipient is used simply refer to it as Mr. M or Mrs. M.

Now can you tell us something about that case?

A. Well, just what would you like to know about it? There is a lot to it. It is one of my problems.

Q. I will say ~~that~~ it is. Now you have stated that under no circumstances would you suggest to a person that they become an applicant. In reading the report, it appears now that Mrs. M. was solicited to make application. What do you say about that?

A. Well, perhaps that wasn't a correct statement to make, for this reason: In the beginning, and I think it is, well, perhaps not a written policy but I think it is an understanding that we have, that if one person in a family needs assistance then they must both need assistance. If one has income sufficient, then they would not either need assistance. The only cases I can think of, Mr. P. has recently died, and Mr. H. was recommended for discontinuance. I think in my nine towns those are the only two cases, and this makes the third, which have been considered favorably in which only one member of a family has applied, that is a man and wife. In all three cases the spouse has had property or income or something we knew or didn't know of, and there have been cases in which, as I say, my

opinion is that they would not accept either case unless they both applied.

Then there is another reason besides the idea of property. If only one in a family group of two is receiving assistance, as is the case of this Mr. P. who just died, and that one dies, the other is left without any income, and at that time they have been in the habit of having income from Old Age Assistance and then that income stops and perhaps it would not be possible to get that other spouse on the roll of Old Age Assistance and they would be left without anything. I think perhaps it was Mr. Leadbetter's idea -- this is just my idea, we haven't had anything on it -- but that it didn't seem advisable to give assistance to one if both were eligible, of age, and if the other didn't want to apply there would be the feeling that perhaps the other had resources which we didn't know about, and for that reason possibly neither of them were eligible for assistance, and that is the feeling in this particular case. I have always felt, and I still feel that there are resources which we have not been able to find. This woman had money enough to pay up the taxes on her brother's property, and the town gave her a deed for it, and it has never been recorded, and there have been several other things which have indicated that she did have some resources. and if she had sufficient resources and wasn't willing to tell them, then should he have assistance?

Q. Well, that is just the point I am inquiring. I got the impression in this case that you hold in your hand that the field worker and all of the State officials were

very anxious that assistance should be granted in this case, that the spouse should apply even if she was reluctant to do so and that the only opposition to the grant came from the Commission. Now is that a fair statement?

A. Well, I wouldn't say that opposition to having the grant came from the Commission, because two members of the Commission went out there on this particular case. Of course I have no way of knowing what they said, but the impression they gave us was that he should have the full amount of assistance. Now whether they said that or not, I have no way of knowing. There again, it is what they understood, and these old people often misunderstand, they misunderstand things I say, and they sort of interpret into the thing you say what they want to understand, and whether they were told he would have thirty dollars regardless of what happened, I don't know, but that is my understanding. He is quite hard of hearing, quite difficult to talk with, and when I first went there they were very difficult. I am under the impression I took the case over. I think it was Miss O'Hara's. I didn't do the original case. He is a very feeble old man and when I first went there he gave me the impression he didn't get enough to eat, didn't have money enough for fuel, that he really was suffering, and I felt very, very sorry for the old man, and then the more I knew of the case I began to wonder about the resources of his wife, because she still insists that she is ~~unable~~^{able} to support herself if she didn't have to take care of him, and she is 78 and he is 82, probably 83 now. I felt awfully sorry for him, in fact I shed a few tears while I was there I felt so sorry for him, and I still feel he is a very

pathetic person. He is very unhappy, apparently made to feel unhappy. As I understand the story, he sold his home when they were married, she kept her home, the money is used up, he is left with no money, she has everything, and apparently she makes life unhappy for him. I don't know as that answers the thing you want to know at all.

Q. Let me ask you this: Didn't you indicate to her that she should make application for a grant?

A. In that case it was the policy, although I am not sure I can find it in writing, but it was the policy, I think we all understood in the beginning that if one of a family needed assistance both did. It wouldn't mean they would be willing to grant any more assistance, but that the assistance should be divided between the two, for the reason I gave, that if anything happened to one there would still be some assistance given to the family. Now whether that is in writing or not, I wouldn't say, because I am not sure, but that has been my understanding of the thing. That seemed best to the people who know more about it than I do.

Q. And, as far as you know, that is still the policy of the department?

A. In cases where one needs assistance I think it is considered best to have both apply, not that it means more money spent but two people get it instead of one.

SENATOR LAUGHLIN: Do you mean just the case of husband and wife?

A. Husband and wife, oh yes.

Q. (By Mr. Webber) And where a husband and wife are living together and one of the two feels that they are

financially able to get along, it is still the policy of the Department to give assistance to the other and try to make the reluctant one apply. Is that right?

A. No. I think perhaps if one had sufficient resources that we knew of -- in this particular case we haven't definite proof of resources, we have just our feeling that there are resources, we have no proof of it. She does not care to give any information at all, but if the spouse had sufficient resources for herself then the budget would be made out for one. The cases I was referring to were where there apparently were no resources or very small resources. Of course if one member of the family had sufficient to care for herself and not sufficient to care for the other, you would not feel it was necessary for two to apply because she had some resources.

Q. Still the law considers the husband and wife one. I take it that the Department of Old Age Assistance doesn't. Is that right.

A. I would say that they did consider them one. That is why in this case in Winthrop I recommended for discontinuance, the wife has just had a little money left her. Now that man could see no reason in the world why the fact that she had several hundred dollars coming to her, why he should have his assistance stopped. He apparently does not consider she should take care of him while she has resources.

Q. What I can't get clear in my mind, Miss Hudson, to go back to this M. case. Here is Mrs. M., with a home, with electric gadgets, with apparently an evident reluctance to apply, which indicates some sort of a financial set-up on

her part, and yet the department considers that with her in that position her husband still needs help. That is what I cannot understand.

A. The gadgets you speak of, as I understand it, were purchased with Mr. M's money after he sold his home, and, because he is very feeble, they used up their money to put in an oil burner and electric refrigerator, not realizing how soon the money would come to an end. They have all these things but they have no money to use them with. They couldn't burn wood in their oil burner, and they couldn't run the electric refrigerator unless they had money to pay the lights, and with all these things they were no good to them unless they had something with which to pay current expenses.

Q. Well, you mean that with a house full of electrical appliances that they have bought and paid for, because they can't eat them they are in need? Is that what it would amount to?

A. Well, if you had a perfectly good oil burner and no oil in it, it wouldn't do you any good.

Q. Unless I wanted to sell it and buy a good-burning stove.

A. I have forgotten just how many years old that is, but I think they have had it for some time. When people get to be eighty-two years old, it is kind of hard to turn around and sell their oil burner. Possibly it could be done, but I think it is rather hard. The only thing they had to use last winter when they couldn't burn oil was their kitchen stove. I think the report will show I went there last winter when he had been sitting there all night

with his overcoat and overshoes on because all they had was wood. He didn't know I was coming, so it wasn't done for effect. He was sitting hunched against the stove, the only fire in the house. They live on a hill where the wind is strong, and it was a bitter cold day. I sat there with my overcoat and overshoes on all the time I talked with him. I did feel sorry for him. He says he can't get food with the amount of assistance he is getting.

Q. What is the present disposition of that case?

A. He is receiving the same amount.

Q. Does he get \$30 a month?

A. No; twenty-five. He understood the two Commissioners who called to say that he would get the thirty dollars and he felt that extra five dollars would have kept him warm, he would have been able to buy oil, and he has been very much dissatisfied. As I say, whether they promised it to him I have no way of knowing, because nothing was said to me. I wasn't supposed to know they had been out there, I don't think. That five dollar difference, in his opinion, made all the difference in the world between being comfortable and being uncomfortable.

Q. All these cases of a husband and wife, where one of them applies and the other doesn't and it is suggested to the other that the other apply, doesn't that in many cases result in a doubling up of the grant? Don't you get a lot of those so-called double grants where the two together get \$60 a month?

A. I will say offhand I haven't a case of two people getting sixty dollars. The only one I can think of is a case in Monmouth, and that was only for a few months

while the man was seriously ill and under great medical expense. I cannot think offhand of any other case I have had that had sixty dollars a month, I cannot think of any other double case that has sixty dollars a month, and that case was only for a few months, I believe three or four, because the man died very soon after this increase. I do not know how it is in other territories, but that is certainly the exception in my territory. I have had very few cases, I should say, where they get over twenty apiece where there are two in the family. It is more apt to be fifteen or sixteen, I should say.

Q. Supposing you should discover tomorrow that Mrs. M. had resources more than you know about at the present time, what would happen?

A. Well, I certainly wouldn't think there was any need of his having assistance.

Q. Would you immediately recommend that the assistance be withdrawn?

A. If I could prove that she had resources.

Q. It wouldn't make any difference whether the resources were in his name or in hers?

A. Of course if they were in his name he wouldn't be eligible anyway.

Q. But even if they were in her name?

A. If they were sufficient for both I wouldn't think he had any right to Old Age Assistance. If they were in his name, I should say that he should repay the State for what he had had. If they were in her name, I don't know whether anything could be done, but certainly he would not be eligible in my opinion to assistance if we could find

she had available resources. Her explanation of paying these taxes for her brother is that the money was left for that purpose. That is the only explanation I could get, in fact I think she is quite disturbed I should even know she had it.

Q. You remember the case No. 25,081?

A. Yes. That is another one the Commission went to visit. I guess those are the only two I know of they went to visit.

Q. In that particular case the man owned a substantial stand of timber, did he not?

A. He has one-third of a pine lot. He owns one-third. Two brothers who live in California own the other two-thirds.

Q. Isn't it a fact that he was unwilling to turn that timber into money?

A. Well, I have a letter in this case, I think you will find, in may be in the branch office, in which the two brothers who own the two-thirds of this pine lot have stated that they were unwilling he should sell because it is an undivided third. If a purchaser could be found for the whole thing they would be perfectly willing to sell, but they were not willing for him to sell one-third and have ~~xxxxxx~~ men come in there and cut off the best of it and perhaps do some damage. I think you will find a letter in here from those two brothers in California. The rest of it, as I recall it, is scattered and this man is unable to supervise the cutting of it himself, and I believe you know if you sell it to somebody they will go in and take a little of the best and leave an awful mess. We had a little experience of our own last year. I was looking for a memo in here in which it said pulpwood was worth

three dollars a cord. I am interested in that because I haven't been able to find anybody that thought pulpwood was worth three dollars a cord, but after the Commission was in there I believe they wrote a memo.

Q. Do you consider that where a man has gotten into the position of tenancy in common with his brothers, all right in the family--

A. These are not his brothers.

Q. Whose brothers are they?

A. They are people that ~~was~~ used to live in the community; they are not any relation, as I recall it.

Q. They are not related?

A. I do not think so. They are people that lived in the community. I am very sure there is no relation there. I had a very nice letter from him. John and George C. As far as I have any knowledge, there is no relation between the brothers that own the two-thirds and the undivided third. They have been in California for some time, and I understand they are two fairly elderly men.

Q. Now I take it under the instructions that you field workers receive that a condition of need would be found even in a case like that. Is that so?

A. Well, in this case, so far as the pine goes, unless he could find a buyer for the whole thing I do not think he has much chance of disposing of it. The rest of his wood is on property, as I recall it now, that has been cut over, and while there is some large wood there it would be quite expensive to get it, and even if he could have found a buyer for it last year, my understanding is it would have been some time before he would get the actual cash from that pulp if he sold it. He might be able to get

an advance on it, but it doesn't turn into ready cash unless he can find somebody to advance him the money. It has to be cut and laid and peeled, as I understand it, before it is marketable. That is as I understand it from talking with lumber people. I talked with Lumber people in Monmouth and talked with people up in that section who are quite familiar with the lumber industry, especially in that section, and their opinion was that it was not available resources at the present time. The value is there and can be gotten out sometime, but it needed a man who was able to go out and look after it in order to sell it to advantage.

Q. Does he own his home?

A. Well, there is a mortgage on the property. He owns three pieces of property, the home which has some timber but scattered, and an old farm that had been cut over within fifteen years, as I recall it, and no buildings, and this undivided thirty of a pine lot. A younger person probably could get something out of it, but I know from our own experience last year we sold pulp and were paid a dollar a cord for it. It was easily available to the road, and this man's pulp is scattered all over the place, and the town officials who know the property certainly felt that it was not what you would consider valuable resources.

Q. Do his equities in real estate, including his interest in standing timber equal or exceed \$1500?

A. No; if it had been, that is the two of them together, the two of them applying, if it was more than that they wouldn't have been considered anyway from that point of view.

Q. Is that a hard and fast rule that is followed by the field workers?

A. We try to estimate to the best of our ability, by town officials and people who know the property and the values what the value would be if they could find a ready market, that is more than the assessed value, but not as much, usually, as the people value the property to them.

Q. What instructions did you ever receive, and by you I mean the field workers, regarding giving preference to paupers?

A. Well, I think there have been several changes of thought along that line. I think there was a while when the feeling -- and here again I do not think this was ever in writing, but my feeling was they felt that if people who were being supported by the State were capable of handling their money and could be placed on Old Age Assistance, it would make more money available for State work, and then I think there was a feeling that perhaps that wasn't the wise thing to do that the other people were really the more deserving cases and just as needy, and we were sure the people who were being supported by the State were being taken care of anyway. I think there has been a change of thought on that two or three different times. At first I think there were quite a few of that type of person. Of course there is a difference in the type of person. There have been a few of my cases that were on the State that certainly were deserving people, and then there were people who you might say over-indulged in strong drink if they could get hold of money, and that type of case you wouldn't recommend.

Q. You say there have been several changes on the thought apparently. Have you had several different sets of instructions as to what you should do?

A. I wouldn't say there were any definite instructions, because we make our report and the need is evident in that type of case, and whether those are approved by the Commission or not has been beyond our say. We recommend it, and of course in a case we felt was particularly deserving -- there are some of these types of people who are certainly pathetic in these State boarding homes, people who through no fault of their own have just lived too long, but who are very fine types. I have two or three I can think of I was certainly very pleased to see get old age assistance, because it gave them a chance to live in different surroundings with people they were more at home with, but as far as our knowing what cases they would approve, that has been entirely up to the Commission. We have only recommended. My own personal opinion, if I thought the need was there, and if they are being supported by the State they are needy, if I felt they were particularly deserving, I would consider it. If I thought it was just need I simply showed their need and let the Commission decide the rest.

Q. It is your idea, I take it, that the Commission has had the final say on it?

A. Well, that is my understanding. Isn't that according to the State Plan that they should have?

Q. There seems to be a little difference of opinion about that.

A. I would say in any of my work it has been the Commission that has made the final decision, as far as I know.

Q. Has the Commission ever held any fair hearings in your territory?

A. No, never. I don't know that they have had a request for any.

Q. Do you see very much of Miss Simons?

A. We haven't seen her since we stopped having the conferences. When we had the conferences she was nearly always present for at least half of the day.

Q. Your contact is mostly with Mr. Goodrich?

A. Yes; mostly with Mr. Goodrich. If there is any special thing they have wanted to know, of course we have talked cases over with Miss Simons and different ones, Mr. Henderson and Mr. Haines, and sometimes there has been a particularly difficult case I have felt, after talking with Mr. Goodrich, he has felt it would be well to discuss with them, but otherwise my contacts are with Mr. Goodrich.

Q. I was wondering if you had any idea what Miss Simons does?

A. Well, I suppose by her title she was supervisor. It was her problem to be helpful and supervise the field workers. She was always present to answer questions and interpret policies at these conferences that Mr. Goodrich had, and I understood she did that in all of the State. She would perhaps bring to us the interpretation of policies and plans from the State office.

SENATOR LAUGHLIN: Just one question that came from that: You didn't have any policy of either preferring or delaying paupers as such?

A. No.

Q. You took them as to individual need?

A. Took the cases as they came, and if they seemed to be

deserving, as some of these poor old men are, I tried to approve it, if they seemed to be that type.

SENATOR LAUGHLIN: Purely on individual need?

A. The individual. That is the way I have handled all the cases. I have taken them right in turn, they haven't been delayed or hurried, I have taken the cases as they came.

SENATOR LAUGHLIN: I was just trying to get at the point there wasn't any policy of taking the paupers first or leaving the paupers till last?

A. Not in my territory. I wouldn't say there had been any policy of that kind at all. The cases have gone in as much in their order as possible and have been approved or disapproved accordingly. I haven't had any undue amount or any unusually small amount of grant in that type of case.

(By Mr. MacNichol)

Q. Miss Hudson, you back at the first of it said you thought you had put more time than others into it. How much time does this take, this position you hold?

A. Well, there is the State requirement of forty-three and a half hours a week.

Q. You put in forty-three and a half hours a week?

A. I have put in more than that. I think some of the town officials are more easily available and able to spend time with you if you go in the early evening, and some of the workers, I understand, can always get at their selectmen, they are mostly business men, but in my territory they are mostly workers, and if they are busy haying or working on the farm, they had rather not see

you coming. I like to discuss cases with them, so in many cases I get around in the early evening and spend some time with them. I think they appreciate my coming and talking cases over. I have had very fine cooperation among town officials in all of the towns so far as I know. I have never made a decision without discussing it with them. I usually go to them and ask about cases, and in most cases I go to them after I have made an investigation and have learned of their condition and talk it over with them again, and I think in most cases I have had very little complaint. I think Mr. Goodrich said he never had a town official come in and make any strenuous complaint. They felt I was trying to do a good job and appreciated it.

(By Mr. MacNichol)

Q. You have nine towns?

A. Nine.

Q. Do you know offhand the number of old age recipients you have in your territory?

A. The first of September, I think it was, I got 215, the first of January I had 290. There has been quite an exodus for some reason and quite a few deaths. I had 215 the first of September. I have had a few new applications. I think six have come in just recently, and I had one death yesterday. The number has been nearer 250 for an average; in fact, I have had quite a large case load, I think.

Q. How often does that allow you to get around and visit each recipient and also interview the new applicants?

A. At first I tried to get around every three months, and then as cases became more numerous that became impossible, and, as

I understand it now, they require two visits a year, one every six months, but many of my cases I see oftener than that, if they are sick or there is any particular reason for doing it I plan to see them much oftener.

(By Mr. MacNichol)

Q. And when you go back and visit with them you check at that time their budget and the way they are spending their money?

A. Yes, we try to keep a pretty close check. Of course often I stop in to see if their medical needs have increased or decreased. If they have large medical needs we try to keep track, keep in touch with doctors to see if their medical needs have decreased so we can decrease it, and also to see if there is an increase.

Q. And in that way you keep in touch with them?

A. I keep in touch with all the doctors.

Q. And also that gives you an opportunity to check their financial affairs if there has been any change one way or another?

A. Yes; we check banks thoroughly. In my particular nine towns it has been difficult to check banks because they bank in so many different towns. I have had to check Farmington and Livermore and Oakland. But we are checking and will have shortly checked all local banks; but even then you have to watch and see there are no transfers of property. We try to keep an eye on that. I can only speak for myself.

Q. This recipient that had this oil burner, did he have a good lot on his farm?

A. No; he lives in the village of North Monmouth.

Q. No woodlot?

A. No; it is a village home, a home that belongs to his brother. They are right there in the village of North Monmouth.

(By Mr. Ryan)

Q. How far do you go, Miss Hudson, in finding out whether a wife or husband actually has the property if the other makes application for assistance?

A. Well, we check with town officials, the tax collector, find out what they are doing, what they are assessed for in the community, and in talking with town officials, of course if they live in the town they have some idea of what they have, and then of course they sign this statement which gives us the privilege of checking at the banks.

Q. You mean if the husband makes application you ask the wife to give you the right to check her property?

A. Well, we ask about the property.

Q. Do you ask the wife to give you the right to check all property and bank accounts?

A. Not always on bank accounts, if they are people who apparently have never had anything, according to the town officials, and are very poor, we do not check the bank account.

Q. What would you do in case the husband made application and you had reason to believe the wife had independent property and she refused to give you information? What would you do?

A. I just haven't had that come up. This case, Mrs. M. is the nearest to any that have refused information. These people that apply for assistance are so anxious to get assistance

they are willing to do anything they can to cooperate with you.

(By Mr. Ryan)

Q. I am speaking of the case where one spouse was making application and the other didn't want to or chose to?

A. The cases I have had they are very anxious to cooperate. I haven't had that opposition except in this one particular case. The others have been perfectly willing to sign a bank statement to have the bank checked.

Q. You feel that you as a field worker have the right to inquire into the other person's property?

A. If a person needs assistance, I would think we had a right to find out as much information as we could.

Q. I am speaking about the other spouse.

A. After all, it is all part of the family, isn't it?

Q. You feel you have a right to inquire about both?

A. I would think so. I would think if either needed assistance the other should be willing and anxious to cooperate.

(By Mr. MacNichol)

Q. Miss Hudson, how many new applications do you have in your territory in a year, that is people that apply? You have about 215 now receiving, but I mean how many new people apply that you have to go and visit?

A. You mean how many applied this last year?

Q. Yes; how many applications do you have a year to consider, how many applicants?

A. I don't know as I could answer that. All new cases in my territory are investigated except two that came in this week, I think, and I suppose I have been doing five or six a month, perhaps, new ones, all during the year.

Q. And that would be about sixty a year, sixty to seventy-five?

A. That would be this year. But of course there are a good many of last year's cases that haven't been approved. I haven't had a list made out of these pending cases recently. I wouldn't way to say. There are quite a few. I should say there must be almost as many pending cases in my territory.

(By Mr. MacNichol)

Q. Would you say approximately as many pending?

A. Yes; I have a good many pending cases, and some of them are very urgent, very needy. I think some of the applications that are coming in now really need assistance more than some that came in earlier, because they have just gone to the last minute, they have spent all their resources, they have been too proud to apply before, and I know those new applications that came in today, I don't think anything could be more urgent than those two.

Q. Under the present set-up it will be probably five or six years at least before these people you are interviewing now are put on?

A. They will have to have help from some source.

Q. I say according to the present set-up it will be five or six years before these people can look for assistance?

A. According to what they tell us. The memos come back with no available resources to consider increases. That is the hard part of it, and it makes it very difficult for us as field workers, because we are the people they see, and when we write up a case and they don't hear anything they think we are the ones that don't want them to have assistance. It makes a very difficult situation for us at this time, because we are so

helpless. We can only recommend, and they keep wondering why we don't do something about it. We can't do a thing but say we are sorry, and that doesn't help.

(By Mr. Ryan)

Q. Does that mean that cases you have investigated over a period of months back wont have a chance for perhaps a great length of time to get actual payment?

A. Well, unless there is more money appropriated. They say there are no resources, so I suppose that means no new cases can go on. I do not think I have had a new case go on in my territory since last March. I have had two or three reinstatements and very few increases. I wouldn't want to make that as a definite statement, but I don't recall any since last March.

Q. And that would apply to all field workers throughout the State?

A. I wouldn't want to say. I have understood they were taking on some every month, but I think I am right in my statement I haven't had any since last March. If I have they are very few.

Q. What is the population of the territory you cover?

A. I don't know as I could answer that. I think Winthrop is 2100 and the other towns are not any bigger. Fayette is, I think, some 900; Monmouth, Readfield and Winthrop would be more or less the same. Wayne is not very large, I think some 1200. I had eight towns in the beginning, but Monmouth didn't seem to be getting very much attention and a year ago I took over that. I think there were forty-five cases.

Q. (By Mr. Webber) You might perhaps have ten or twelve thousand people?

A. I think there would be more than that. Do you know, Bobby?

Mr. MacNAMARA: I should think probably 16,000 or 18,000. There is more than 2100 in Winthrop.

THE WITNESS: That was the last census. I don't know what this census is. That is what is given in the directory, it seems to me.

CHAIRMAN TOMPKINS: Does the matter of what the applicants have had in the past have anything to do with the amount of assistance that you recommend?

A. You mean according to the amount of allowance you would make for food and fuel? Of course the allowance for food is more or less set by the plan, allowing a certain amount for a certain number of people. That fuel, I always try to have them tell me what they spent for fuel the previous year as near as they can. Many of the farmers have kept very good records and can estimate the number of cords. They have cut it themselves for years and they can estimate how much it will cost to cut it. That is divided by twelve for their fuel allowance.

CHAIRMAN TOMPKINS: What I was trying to get at: If you find an applicant for Old Age Assistance who has all the modern improvements in the home, is it your idea they should be given a sufficient assistance to operate all those appliances?

A. Well, in the first place you don't find many that have many appliances, but in the case of this man that has the oil burner, I don't know as that oil burner would

be much more expensive to him than if he had a wood furnace, if his house is equipped for a furnace and he has no stoves. We estimated his expenses as little as we could for the equipment he has. But there has been a policy with the Commission, as I would gather, because I know of it in at least one case that was changed, that seven dollars should be sufficient for fuel regardless. And of course the condition of the house, number of storm windows and things like that, have a lot to do with fuel needs, to keep it from being uncomfortably cool.

CHAIRMAN TOMPKINS: Do you take into consideration the past manner of living in making your recommendation for the amount a recipient shall receive?

A. Well, if a person had a large house--

CHAIRMAN TOMPKINS: That can be answered yes or no.

A. Well, I don't know as I would know just how to answer that. Of course they have got to use the equipment for heat. If you mean electric washing machines and ironers or toasters, I think people can get along without those things, but when it comes to heating apparatus, it would not be necessary to heat the whole house. I think the average person in the country dens up in the winter more or less in two or three rooms, where they may have eight or nine in the house. I do not think it would be necessary to allow for fuel to heat all the rooms in the house. I do not think the average person in my territory would expect it. So if you mean they would allow enough for them to heat a big house as they used to do when they were supporting themselves, I would say no.

BENATOR LAUGHLIN: Perhaps you stated, but I don't know as I head: About how much do you allow for fuel?

A. Seven dollars has seemed to be about the average.

Q. Seven dollars a month?

A. Yes. I had one case they cut from eight dollars to seven dollars. I had submitted eight dollars, because with the condition of the house it seemed to be necessary in order to have any degree of comfort to have more than the average amount of fuel, and I explained why, but it was changed to seven when it wen through, so I took it from that they felt seven dollars should be the maximum.

In many cases it is less than that, I think five would be nearer the average. And there are many that have their own woodlots and have children that help them get the fuel in, and it is much less than that. The medical attention is the item that is most varied and on that we try to talk with the doctors and get statements from them if it is more than the average amount of two or three dollars, we try to get a statement from the doctor and have him state why their needs are larger.

CHAIRMAN TOMPKINS: You do have people in your district receiving Old Age Assistance who are a great deal above the minimum age that is set for the requirements for Old Age Assistance?

A. I didn't just get what you said.

CHAIRMAN TOMPKINS: Do you have people in your district who are receiving Old Age Assistance who are of more advanced age than the sixty-five years that the law requires? What is the average age of people in your district.

A. I have never tried to figure that out. I really wouldn't want to say. I have many very old and quite a good many

that are only sixty-five. I would say that the majority that are receiving are nearer seventy than sixty-five, over seventy, I would say, but I never have figured that out. I think the more recent applications are the ones nearer sixty-five than the others. I think the recent applications are nearer sixty-five or very much older; there is not that medium of sixty-eight or seventy, but that again is just a guess. Some of these cases worry me terribly, and I think I worry the State office with them, because in some cases you don't know what is the fair thing to do. I have one with property worth more than that, but she is trying so hard to get some income from it, and, after all, if she sold it she wouldn't have anything, and the property will be valuable if some person could take hold of it, and I think the State office has felt the State would be protected. I doubt very much if the case would be considered to be approved today, but it is approved and I am putting in a report on it this week. that may make them think it should be denied. It has been one of my problems. Some of these cases it is very hard to know what to do, but we try so hard to be fair.

CHAIRMAN TOMPKINS: Are there any other questions? If not, thank you, Miss Hudson.

MISS HUDSON: I would just like to say in my experience with the State office I think they have tried very hard in my territory to be just as fair as they can, but when the money is gone what can they do?

CHAIRMAN TOMPKINS: Apparently people think all they have to do is print more.

A. I think that is true in some cases; but it is pretty hard

to go and tell these people, when they need it so badly there is not anything for them, and some of these people hate to call on the towns.

CHAIRMAN TOMPKINS: Well, will you tell me the difference between town assistance and old age assistance?

A. Mental, that is all. But some of these old people who have struggled so hard all their lives, that mental difference does make a lot of difference to them. They had almost rather starve than be on the town.

Q. (By Mr. Webber) They all consider this as a pension and not assistance?

A. I think a great many of them do. And I think that word has been used so much in the papers that they are justified in feeling that way. We try to explain to them that a pension is something you have earned, and, after all, this is a form of relief. There are occasionally people who feel it is their due regardless.

Q. Yes; they accept this as a matter of right and not as a matter of privilege.

A. Yes; we find that type too, who feel that it is their right; and the people who are becoming sixty-five today and just applying are the ones more inclined to have that mental attitude.

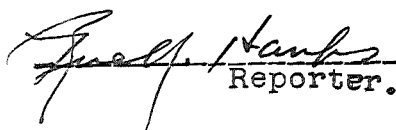
SENATOR LAUGHLIN: They have been educated to it?

A. They have been made to think they should have it. I don't know as I can blame them. Their neighbors tell them they should have it.

CHAIRMAN TOMPKINS: They listen to these political spellbinders, don't they?

A. Well, I couldn't tell what they are listening to. (Off record)
(Witness excused)

The foregoing is a true transcript of my shorthand notes in the above matter.


Reporter.

Wednesday, Oct. 16, 1940.

ROBERT PERLBERG, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

(By Mr. Donald W. Webber)

Q. Will you state your full name?

A. Robert Perlberg.

Q. You live in Augusta?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You are employed by the Division of Old Age Assistance?

A. Well, the Department of Health and Welfare under the set-up now. I guess it comes under the division of Old Age Assistance.

Q. Well, what is your position?

A. Statistician.

Q. And has there been a recent change in your work? That is, I understood that you were the statistician in the Division of Old Age Assistance, and I wondered from your first answer whether there has been any change in your work.

A. It is just that we moved from one large State office and some have gone into the Accounts and Audit and other different departments.

Q. Are you working now under the direct supervision of Mr. Henderson?

A. Mrs. Hammons.

Q. She is your superior?

A. That is right.

Q. What does she do?

A. She is head of the Division of Business Management.

Q. Now what are your duties as statistician? What do you do?

A. Well, compile figures and get them together so that the different ones can see what goes on. Right now I have been getting figures together on food relief. That is a lot different than what I have been doing for the Health Department. Before that all my work was for Old Age Assistance.

Q. What kind of statistics did you prepare for Old Age Assistance?

A. Well, how many cases were on the payroll, how many cases were denied, and also reports that came in from the branch offices, compiled those together, total cases that were investigated, pending investigation or on recall.

Q. Did you do quite a lot of work directly for the Division of Old Age Assistance?

A. Yes.

Q. You worked quite closely for and with the Commission itself, the three Commissioners?

A. Well, the only thing that I worked for them was to take the cases downstairs in the office and anything I asked for from the filing department they got it.

Q. This information that the Commission require they get from you?

A. In the State office, yes.

Q. Has Mrs. Hammons been your superior ever since you have been on this job?

A. No; she has been my superior since August.

Q. Since August of this year?

A. Yes.

- Q. Where did she come from?
- A. Health and Welfare Department.
- Q. She wasn't with Old Age Assistance before August?
- A. No.
- Q. Who was your superior before that?
- A. Mr. Henderson.
- Q. When did you first come with the State?
- A. In 1937.
- Q. Did you start in as a statistician?
- A. No. Wait a minute. Let me get this right. I went with Old Age Assistance under the old set-up, that is when they originally started, which was 1936.
- Q. Under Governor Brann's administration?
- A. That is right. And before that I worked for Surplus Commodities.
- Q. How did you happen to get this position with the Department of Health and Welfare?
- A. Well, we were in the same building and I didn't have much to do at that time with Surplus Commodities and Old Age Assistance was starting up and they were quite busy and I asked them if there was some work that could be done and just started in, that is all.
- Q. You work in the same office with Miss Simons?
- A. No.
- Q. Don't see anything of her work at all?
- A. No. The only work that I do see of hers is when she signs certification forms on deaths and discontinuances.
- Q. Now in connection with work that you did for and with the Commission, the Old Age Commission, did you ever receive any instructions from any of your operators which ran contrary to any of the express wishes of the Commission

itself?

A. No; not that I remember of.

Q. Were you aware of any conflict or feeling that was growing up between the Commission and the officials of the department, your superiors?

A. Well, there might have been something, but I never noticed it, because I have other work to do besides taking care of that work of the Commission.

Q. What I am trying to get at, from time to time the Commission would request certain material from you?

A. Yes.

Q. And, as I have been informed, you always did your best to get them the material they wanted and do it promptly and so forth. Now did you ever receive any instructions from any of your officials that made your work difficult in serving the Commission?

A. Not at all.

Q. No evidence that you saw of any effort to obstruct the work of the Commission?

A. No. Anything they asked for, if it was Mr. Henderson's office or any other office, I went in and told them the Commission would like to have it, and they gave it to me.

Q. Do you know who issued the orders in connection with moving of the Commission down into the stock room?

A. No.

Q. Do you know who moved the Commission's papers and so forth down into the stock room?

A. No. Because at that time we were down at the old Kennebec Journal building across from the depot on Water Street and were all moved around the same time, and I didn't

know anything about where they were going to be.

Q. That is all.

(By Mr. MacNichol)

Q. What work did you say you were doing at present?

A. Statistical work.

Q. Compiling what form of statistics?

A. Right now I am getting figures together for the Health Department on relief, for groceries.

Q. To show what?

A. To show the average of the State, so that they can make up their budget for social workers.

Q. The average food allowance?

A. The average food allowance of the State.

Q. From what source do you compile that?

A. Well, these forms that came in from different grocery stores, the different prices from all over the State.

Q. In other words, like a commodity index?

A. Yes.

Q. And that will later be used by the social workers to make up these budgets for the people receiving assistance, as to food allowance?

A. I presume it will be.

Q. (By Mr. Webber) How much do you receive a week?

A. Thirty-five dollars.

Q. Did you have a business school education?

A. High school and two years of business.

Q. What business school?

A. Bryant & Stratton.

MR. RYAN: You are taking a course in accounting now?

A. Yes.

MR. DOW: How are you taking that course?

A. Mr. Henderson is giving that course to anybody who wants to take it.

Q. You are taking it by personal instruction?

A. Yes.

MR. MacNICHOL: Is Mr. Henderson a C.P.A.?

A. I think so; I am not sure.

Q. (By Mr. Webber) Is that a course that is free to men in the department?

A. Yes.

(Witness excused)

The foregoing is a true transcript of my shorthand notes in the above matter.


Reporter.