

## WHY DO OUR MINISTERS RETIRE BEFORE THEY ARE WORN OUT ?

Why is it that since 1884 there has been a steady advance in the average number of years spent by claimants on the Fund ? What are the conditions back of premature superannuation ? Increased longevity has been already referred to. But why are not the added years spent in the active work ?

We cannot close our eyes to a growing sentiment on the part of our Quarterly Official Boards against elderly pastors and in favor of young men. This has led ministers who are still effective to ask for a superannuated relation years before they otherwise would. We are of the opinion that the intelligent and fraternal co-operation of Official Boards and Stationing Committees would go far toward securing results that are not possible by mere legislation.

But your Commission is reluctantly compelled to the conclusion that the crowding of ministers in the central conferences, consequent upon the union of the four Methodist Churches is the principal cause of premature superannuation on the one hand, and of inadequate income on the other. A careful analysis of the office records by the Treasurer shows that the personal contributions and circuit income of claimant ministers belonging to some of the churches which were parties to the Union have failed to balance the annuities of these claimants and their widows, the deficit corresponding very closely to the aggregate deficits of the Fund as represented by the discounted portion of annuities, and the reduced scale during the past twelve years. The union of these churches is of infinitely greater importance than any incidental disturbance of financial relations, and your Commission would have hesitated to mention this source of embarrassment did it not serve a useful purpose in suggesting that the chief cause must in the nature of things shortly pass away.

The radical changes made by the last General Conference have turned a succession of deficits into surpluses and placed the Annual Fund in a solvent position. Your Commission, however, is a unit in the conviction that the condition of the Fund demands the readjustment of some of its provisions. The present succession of surpluses in the Annual Account is a matter for congratulation. We are enjoying a season of unprecedented commercial prosperity which is accompanied by an increase of salaries and Connexional Funds. The average increase in the income of the Fund for the past (4) four years has been five per cent., as compared with an average of two per cent. during the previous 16 years ; but a check may be expected sooner or later when, as in previous periods of commercial reaction, our church finances will suffer : there-