Some defence Forces property losses which might have been avoided if certain officers had shown a higher regard for the public interest have come under notice since last report. An army officer in Samoa was instructed to accept a tender of £510 for two trucks, but at the time the instructions were sent from New Zealand he was on discharge leave and no action was taken by him. Later inquiries disclosed that in the meantime care of the trucks had been neglected, and also that a quantity of tires, tubes, and batteries—valued at £263—had disappeared and could not be traced. The two trucks were eventually sold for £210, so that the total loss which prompt disposal could have avoided was £563, made up of £300 on the vehicles and £263 on the tires, &c. A write-off in respect of the £263 is included in the Appendix to this report in the figure of £7,547 13s. 3d. under the heading "Army."

Another case related to the sinking of an Air Force refuelling barge whilst lying in Lauthala Bay, Fiji, on 3rd March, 1947. Heavy seas threatened the safety of the barge, and the officer commanding the marine section and the n.c.o. were aware of the danger for several hours before the barge sank. They took no action other than to instruct Fijian personnel to obtain an extra pump and equipment, and to carry on. They then left for lunch, and on their return an hour later the barge had begun to settle. A Court of Inquiry found both guilty of negligence. The officer commanding was reproved under King's Regulations (R.A.F.) 1154 (whereby no entry is made in an officer's record), and the n.c.o. was reprimanded. The barge was valued at £5,500, and equipment and fuel lost with it at £1,211.

Cost of Rationing Defence Forces in New Zealand

Statements are prepared monthly by Army and Air Force units showing, amongst other particulars, the quantity of provisions used during the month, and also the average daily cost of rationing each man. The Army fixes a maximum quantity of each foodstuff which may be drawn per person on camp strength, and for book-keeping purposes it also fixes at intervals of about a year the standard cost of a daily ration at the schedule quantities.

This standard-cost figure applies throughout New Zealand. Any variation in the cost of foodstuffs according to locality or seasonal variations in prices are therefore not reflected in the statements.

In the Air Force the maximum quantity which may be drawn is fixed only in respect of a few commodities—*e.g.*, rationed goods are limited to the same standards as apply to civilians. Dry rations, which are not subject to seasonal fluctuation in price, and the cost of which is practically the same to all stations, are brought into the accounts at standard prices as in the case of the Army, but perishable rations—*e.g.*, bread, milk, butter, meat, fish, vegetables, &c.—are brought in at actual cost.

The rationing returns of the Army and Air Force are submitted to the Audit Office, which checks them in as much detail as is practicable. The Army returns indicate that reasonable care is given to their preparation, and