

centres. Those societies, which were established independently of the provincial bodies, were advised to transfer their funds either to the latter, arranging for local representation on the provincial committees, or to the National War Funds Council, to be administered in the interest of soldiers throughout the Dominion.

In a very large majority of cases this advice has been gratefully received and acted upon, the committees concerned realizing that such a course will relieve them of their long and arduous work, and that as units of the larger organizations they may still have a voice in the local administration of relief.

It is regretted that in some cases the committees cannot agree to the course suggested, claiming that as they were instrumental in raising the money they alone should decide how it is to be expended, and overlooking the fact that patriotic funds may only be expended on the specific objects for which they were raised unless the sanction of the Minister is obtained to use them for some cognate purpose or for some object which is for the practical benefit of returned soldiers or dependants of soldiers.

The War Funds Amendment Act, 1918, provides for the disposition of such patriotic funds as can no longer be used for the exact purpose for which they were raised, and, in my opinion, the time has arrived when the provision of that Act should be taken advantage of, and the allocation of the funds placed in the hands of trustees approved by the Court.

While the administration of funds raised for relief and assistance of soldiers by the principal War Relief Societies is carried out in a manner deserving of all commendation, and the controlling committees are actuated by a desire to use the funds in the best possible way, there are, unfortunately, indications that the trustees of many societies do not fully realize their obligations to the contributors of their funds or the necessity of strict compliance with the War Funds legislation, and unless action is taken as suggested above these funds will be gradually dissipated in directions that will be of very little, if any, permanent benefit to those most in need of help. It must also be borne in mind that in many cases the administrative expenses of these funds is abnormally high, and it is very necessary that some finality should be arrived at in connection therewith.

NATIONAL WAR FUNDS COUNCIL.

The total income to the 31st March, 1919, amounted to £40,214, and the expenditure to £5,486, including £2,339 contributed towards the cost of hospitals for returned soldiers. £1,990 was distributed for relief and assistance to soldiers and dependants, and temporary loans amounting to £1,121 were granted. Of the latter amount, £462 has been repaid. The amount in hand at the end of the year was £34,728, of which £33,500 is invested, the interest income to date amounting to £2,035. The total charges for administration since the establishment of the fund in November, 1915, amount to £36, or about 7d. per cent. per annum.

The Council continues to control the administration and expenditure of the funds handed over by the Westland Patriotic Committee, Buller Sick and Wounded Fund, and the Public Service Sick and Wounded Fund. The Advisory Committees of these funds receive from the Council from time to time such advances as may enable them to deal with all cases of relief and assistance to soldiers and their dependants on whose behalf their respective funds are held, and the relations between the Committees and the Council are in every way satisfactory.

J. W. KINNIBURGH,
Officer in Charge.

The Under-Secretary, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington.

VII. REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT ASTRONOMER.

Hector Observatory, Wellington, New Zealand, 1st July, 1919.

THE TIME SERVICE.

The time service has been maintained in fair working-order, as in former years, and all the routine duties have been attended to. It has been necessary to suspend the time service fairly frequently whenever the errors of the clocks became too great to allow an accurate time-signal to be provided. With improved equipment, however, and additional staff, with facilities for observing at night, it is hoped that the number of such occasions will be considerably reduced in the future.

EXTENSION OF THE TIME SERVICE.

At very small expense a number of improvements might be made in the time service so that it would be of greater value to the people of the Dominion. For example, the public clocks in the City of Wellington could be checked daily and kept accurately to time; the various clocks in the Parliamentary and Government Buildings and the Tramway clocks could be controlled by the Observatory standard clock, and kept to accurate time; and clocks synchronized by the Observatory standard clock might be exhibited at the Observatory and in the city. In this way it would be possible to keep all the chief clocks in the City of Wellington to one uniform time, in place of the diversity which obtains at present.

Accurate time-signals could also be supplied to the public at every telegraph-office throughout the Dominion whenever such signals are transmitted from the Observatory (usually twice a week), while residents in Wellington could receive them by telephone, for which a fee might be charged. At present the supply of time-signals by galvanometer is limited to the City of Wellington. It is possible to extend this service and supply time-signals by radio-telegraphy to all parts of New Zealand, so that the public can take full advantage of the facilities offered.