APPENDIX IV.—WAIMARINO BUSH-FIRE RELIEF.

The losses sustained as a result of the bush-fires that occurred in March, 1918, mainly in Raetihi and the adjoining district, were so great that it was found necessary for the Government to come to the assistance of the sufferers. The public generously subscribed a sum of £14,000, and to this the Government added a subsidy of £10,000.

At the suggestion of the National Efficiency Board an association known as the Bush-fires Relief Association was incorporated under the Incorporated Societies Act, 1908, the affairs of this association being conducted by a committee consisting of persons representing the various local bodies and local residents, with the addition of two representatives appointed by the Government. The administration of the subscribed funds, together with the Government subsidy, was undertaken by this committee, the moneys being wholly applied to the relief of hardship resulting from fire

The benefit of these funds was given mainly to workers and townspeople, and for the purpose of assisting farmers to reinstate their properties and restock the Government authorized the raising of a loan of £75,000. Attention was in the first place directed to the regrassing of burnt areas, and in cases where the financial position of the farmer was such as to justify it the accounts for grass-seed were paid by the Government, and promissory notes with interest at 5 per cent. were taken from the persons affected, half of the amount being at twelve months and the balance at two years. On account of the loss of revenue owing to inability to make use of the land until the new grass was sufficiently advanced to permit of its being restocked, it has been found necessary in many cases to renew either in whole or in part the promissory notes falling due this year.

In view of the scarcity and high prices ruling for corrugated iron, 20 tons was secured at wholesale price, and this was forwarded to Raetihi and disposed of principally to farmers for cash or on promissory notes according to the financial position of the person requiring it. A sufficient amount for the re-erection of the necessary buildings was reserved for the dairy factory.

The purchase of the grass-seed and iron out of the £75,000 authorized left an amount of some £44,000 available for the reinstatement of buildings and fences and the purchase of stock. It was decided that this balance should be dealt with by way of loans to farmers, repayment to be secured by mortgage over the land. As those who were most in need of the assistance were, of course, men whose holdings were already somewhat heavily encumbered, it was necessary that arrangements should be made with the banks and commercial firms operating in the district for the protection of the Crown's interest. In all cases a willing response was received to requests in this direction, and arrangements satisfactory to all parties were completed, under which it is considered that the Crown's liability to loss will be reduced to a minimum. In all cases the term of the mortgage is seven years, interest being payable half-yearly at 5 per cent. per annum. preparation and registration of the documents has been arranged, the whole of the costs being borne by the Relief Association. Advances for the re-erection or repairing of buildings and fences are being made only on the certificate of a departmental officer that the work for which the money was intended has been completed.

Applications were invited for loans on these terms, and a total of sixty-two applications, involving an amount of £76,348, were received. After careful consideration of the necessities of each case and investigation of the security available, advances totalling £44,150 were authorized to be made to fifty-four applicants. The statement of losses by these sixty-two applicants showed a total of £88,553, including buildings £15,170, fencing £8,585, sheep £53,898, and cattle £4,614. These figures do not include damage to grass nor the losses resulting from a forced sale of stock in a much-depreciated condition owing to the effects of the smoke and lack of feed. The extent of this loss is largely dependent upon the prices ruling for stock when the properties are being again stocked. A Receipts and Payments Account and balance-sheet showing the

position of the fund as at the 31st March, 1919, are appended.

WAIMARINOTBUSH-FIRETRELIEF FUND. F

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT	FOR YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1919.
Dr. £ s. **d.	Cr. £ s. d. £ s. d.
Loan Account: Debentures issued	Advances—" Grass-seed] 29,755 9 6 Buildings and fences rein-
	statement 21,320 12 5
	Roofing iron: Purchases, freight, &c. 1,394 0 4 Stamps, fees, &c. 39 15 6 Cash in hand, 31st March, 1919 23,050 2 0
£75,559 19 9	£75,559 19 9
	
BALANCE-SHEET AS A	r 31st March, 1919.
Liabilities. £ s. d.	Assets. £ s. d.
Liabilities. £ s. d. Loan Account: Debentures issued	Assets. £ s. d. Sundry debtors—
Liabilities. £ s. d.	Assets. £ s. d.
Liabilities. £ s. d. Loan Account: Debentures issued . 75.000 0 0 Consolidated Fund: Interest on debentures 1,657 1 9	Assets. £ s. d. Sundry debtors— Secured by promissory notes
	Assets. £ s. d. Sundry debtors— Secured by promissory notes
	Assets. £ s. d. Sundry debtors— Secured by promissory notes

Chief Accountant, Department of Lands.