

Satisfactory arrangements were made for Iceland and Gibraltar, but it was ascertained from the United States authorities who control Greenland that no New Zealand nationals were in the Forces stationed there.

The work involved was heavier than I had expected from my experiences from time to time as a Deputy Returning Officer in New Zealand, but I have enjoyed the renewed contact with New Zealand affairs and hope that I have conducted the election to your satisfaction.

I shall continue in the High Commissioner's office until I have cleared up all matters except the payment of polling officers and polling clerks, leaving a list of these amounts with the Finance office for payment.

Yours faithfully,

F. T. SANDFORD, Special Returning Officer.

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER,  
WELLINGTON,  
NEW ZEALAND.

#### REPORT OF CONDUCT OF GENERAL ELECTION IN UNITED KINGDOM, GIBRALTAR, AND ICELAND

I COMMENCED this work during the third week in July, and as it seemed clear that electoral rolls would not be available for distribution to all Naval, Army, and Air Force stations the headquarters of each of these Services were asked to issue orders to all stations, instructing the Commanding Officer to forward, direct to me, lists of New Zealand nationals under their commands, giving in each case full name, last residential address in New Zealand, and approximate date of leaving the Dominion. The objects of obtaining these lists were first to enable me to prepare an electoral roll for each station, and secondly to ensure that all New-Zealanders in the Services would have brought to their notice the fact that a General Election was being held and that they had the right to vote. The lists, of course, constituted the Commanding Officers' certificates required by the regulations.

In response to these orders lists were received from 477 stations, but, as would have been expected, many of them were more or less incomplete on account of insufficiency of address or omission of date of leaving New Zealand. Considerable correspondence was involved in getting them all completed, so that the electorates could be accurately fixed and entered on the lists. In this way upwards of four thousand names were obtained. It was, of course, not possible to check the addresses, and therefore the address given in each case was taken as correct. This work was completed before the supplementary rolls were received, but as a matter of fact the rolls were of little use, as I would estimate that, in some 20 per cent of the cases, the addresses claimed by the men differed from those shown in the rolls. This was, I think, due to the fact that most men had at least two addresses—viz., where they lived or worked prior to enlistment, and the addresses of next-of-kin.

I found at a very early stage that it was useless to rely on men knowing the electorate within which the address that they gave was situated. To check up on this, I asked the headquarters staff of one of the New Zealand Services here to fill in declaration forms. Forty-six forms were received and in twenty-five of these the electorates were either incorrect or left blank because the electorates were not known. As these men were all engaged in administrative or clerical work it is reasonable to assume that over the whole of the fighting Services the percentage of correct electorates would at least not be higher.

The voting by declaration method is based on the assumption that the voter is fully aware of the electorate in which he is eligible to vote, but it is clear that, unless some one has the knowledge or information to advise the voter before he fills in his declaration form, so many votes will have to be disallowed as to render the poll farcical.

My instructions to polling officers, of which three copies are attached, require that when the voter is given the declaration form his attention must be drawn to the electorate in which his address entitles him to vote, it being assumed, of course, that the polling officer will check the declaration when completed with the list. This should have ensured that all declarations were in order, but out of some 3,200 declarations 78 (2·4 per cent.) had to be disallowed. These 78 incorrect declarations may have resulted from the voter claiming an address different from that shown on the list, in which case the polling officer would have no means of checking the electorate.

In every case the Commanding Officer of the station was appointed polling officer with power to delegate, and it is clear that the officers actually doing the work did not, in quite a few cases, take the trouble to read the instructions, as many instances occurred of the electorates not being filled in before the ballot-papers were handed to the voter. This omission rendered 88 out of 534 local option voting-papers invalid. It is not possible for me to identify the stations at which this occurred, but it is no doubt due to lack of interest or to other interests being uppermost in the minds of the fighting Services. This is not surprising as, in the case of the Air Force for instance, these men are almost continuously engaged on operations in Bomber, Fighter, or other Commands. The inclination to vote was naturally not as keen as it would have been in units composed solely of fairly large numbers of New-Zealanders.

In 395 Navy and Air Force ships and stations of the 477 from which lists were received there were only small numbers of men qualified to vote, and these were dealt with by post. Declaration forms were prepared in this office from particulars supplied by the stations, and these were sent to the stations for signature. On the return of these declarations, duly signed, the ballot-papers were sent by registered post. This process involved a fair amount of extra work, but I am convinced that it resulted in more men recording their votes, or at least being given opportunity to do so.

The lists received from Commanding Officers covered a total of well over 4,000 men, but of these, only some 75 per cent. recorded their votes. Quite a number of ballot-papers were returned from the stations with notes from the polling officers that the men for whom they were intended did not wish to vote. Transfers to other stations both in the United Kingdom and overseas were of daily occurrence, and although all men were notified that they must notify any change of address it is certain that these transfers contributed largely to the discrepancy between voters registered and votes recorded.

Every effort was made through the "New Zealand News," the Forces weekly broadcast by Mr. A. Heighway, and newspapers to distribute information, and I feel satisfied that those who did not register have not the excuse that they had not sufficient information.