

VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

Shortly after arrival in the Middle East an accurate location and strength statement of all units of 2 N.Z.E.F. was prepared and supplied.

This was considered in detail in the light of communications, &c., and compared with maps to enable a rapid appreciation of the position.

To save a multiplicity of booths, small units were, where possible, grouped with larger ones, and by this means it was necessary to institute only eighty-nine booths for the whole of 2 N.Z.E.F. In addition there were, of course, a postal booth, two mobile booths, two permanent booths, and eleven naval booths, and three booths appointed in India, which are all the subject of separate sections of this report. Booth supplies based on the figures resulting from the survey were made up and checked by the staff, and to save possible confusion all ballot and voting papers were machine numbered on corner and counterfoil before issue. Ballot-boxes were improvised by Native carpenters out of benzine-cases which had contained patriotic gift parcels despatched from New Zealand.

Publicity through posters and newspapers had already given personnel considerable information to ensure as far as possible correct action in booths. All units within reasonable reach were instructed to appoint a polling officer who would attend a lecture on 9th September and be instructed in his duties. This meeting was held, and the attending officers were lectured on polling-booth procedure. All points were driven home by operating a specimen booth and performing a series of playettes on different types of voting and the answering of probable questions.

At this meeting all supplies and ballot-boxes were issued to the polling officers (see photographs in Appendix A [not printed]).

As soon as the list of nominated candidates was received it was printed, a block having been set up in type awaiting the insertion of the names of candidates and the names of the parties. These lists were issued as soon as available from the printing press by despatch riders and air mail on a predetermined scale. The envelopes had already been addressed. The names of the Maori candidates had been "scrambled" in the original cable, and these were issued separately in a cyclostyled sheet a few hours later together with the corrections in party designation of independent candidates advised from New Zealand. The despatch was complete within twenty-four hours of receiving the first advice. This included the despatch of all postal voting-papers.

As mentioned under "Publicity," 2 N.Z. Division was moving its location and the 12th September had been left free for voting. Unfortunately the Division could not vote on that day, as the statements of party policy had not arrived. This raised numerous difficulties, for units were moving by foot, motor transport, and rail and were splitting up for the move. Units had therefore to be regrouped for voting purposes and special arrangements had to be made to collect completed voting-papers in time to include them in the preliminary count. This also meant handling all papers in a very short period, and for this purpose extra staff was obtained and shifts were worked on sorting.

MOBILE BOOTHS

In addition to the isolated New Zealand Army personnel, there were numerous small groups of New-Zealanders on duties or attending British courses of instruction in Palestine and Syria.

In view of the poor and uncertain mail service between Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, it was decided to send a car to Syria which would deliver polling-booth supplies to units and collect completed votes and unused material on return and, in addition, visit British hospitals and known isolated New-Zealanders on special duties. The Public Relations Section of 2 N.Z.E.F. had work to be done in this area, and this was adjusted to suit my requirements. Captain R. A. Bolland accompanied Lieutenant Barker, of the Public Relations staff, and acted as polling officer. This mobile booth delivered polling-booth supplies to eight groups or units, visited hospitals, and took votes of isolated personnel. In all, 41 votes were recorded. It left on 12th September, and returned on 23rd September after having covered two thousand miles. This trip, of course, involved no charge for transport.

This booth, however, could not cover the Canal and Cairo area, so a further mobile booth was instituted for which Staff Sergeant K. M. Sleight was the polling officer. Through the kind offices of Major W. G. Tweedie, New Zealand Red Cross Commissioner, this Staff Sergeant was taken to hospitals and New-Zealanders on courses, &c., from Cairo to Port Said and Suez with the Red Cross Hospital Visiting Service. For this booth it was necessary to arrange special transport for the Cairo area. This booth took 98 votes.

These mobile booths provided a very valuable service.

PERMANENT BOOTHS

Inquiries after arrival showed that Alexandria and Cairo were the two main centres in the Middle East likely to be passed through by New-Zealanders on leave or changing location, and it was therefore decided that permanent booths should be opened.

Alexandria.—The New Zealand Y.M.C.A. operates a hostel at Alexandria, and on a trip there, while investigating naval requirements, I arranged with Mr. N. Leibezeit, the Secretary, that two of my staff should stay there to operate a booth for the full voting period. Accordingly two left Cairo for Alexandria on 12th September to operate a booth. This booth was very valuable, as it also visited the British hospitals in the Alexandria area. In all, 162 votes were recorded by this booth, this proving its value, as there were no New Zealand units in Alexandria.

Cairo.—The New Zealand Forces' Club is without doubt the best Club in the Middle East area and very popular with New-Zealanders of all arms. It is famed throughout the Middle East, and was accordingly an ideal spot for a booth. New-Zealanders on loan to British formation headquarters for special duties were advised by phone to vote at this booth, and Commanding Officers of British Schools of Instruction allowed personnel leave to attend there. This booth, which was operated by two of my staff, recorded 527 votes.

In each case one of the two staff returned to my headquarters on 23rd September with completed votes, the other remaining until 1900 hours on 24th September to record votes and returning to my