

It is worthy of note that there is no reliable source for up-to-date information regarding the location of New-Zealanders in the Air Force and Navy in the Middle East with the exception of those in the Levant Fleet, as there is no central record office for either Force. To obtain detailed information would necessitate a personal visit to India and the headquarters of the other Fleets and Air Force commands mentioned in this report. This was absolutely impossible in the time available.

#### INDIA

On arrival considerable thought was given to voting arrangements for New-Zealanders in India, but it was found most difficult to obtain information as to communications, and there appeared to be no Central Office to make responsible for the whole of India.

Surface mails were unreliable and infrequent, and there was a delay of air-mails, even with priorities, of a week or more.

After exhaustive inquiries and discussions with officers with recent knowledge of India the names of the following were obtained :—

- Colonel Stewart, Eastern Group Supply Council, New Delhi.
- Captain J. W. Fisher, New Zealand Liaison Officer, Ceylon Army H.Q., Colombo.
- C. R. C. Gardiner, Resident Manager, New Zealand Insurance Co., (and New Zealand Supply Liaison Officer), Bombay.

It was decided, therefore, to establish polling-places at New Delhi, Colombo, and Bombay, to appoint each of the above-named gentlemen Polling Officers for their respective areas, and to cover 257 known New-Zealanders in India by the Postal Voting Scheme. At this stage I would mention that the most up-to-date list I could obtain of New Zealand personnel in India was one reasonably correct in March, 1943. (The above-mentioned booths were, of course, in addition to the naval booths which I established at Colombo, Kilindini, and Bombay and which are dealt with in another part of this report.)

On 5th September the Liaison Officer, New Delhi, was notified by cable of his appointment as Polling Officer for the New Delhi area, and warned to expect an air-mail letter from me and a cable from New Zealand with a list of nominated candidates within a few days.

On the same date Captain Fisher, Colombo, and Mr. Gardiner, Bombay, and Colonel Stewart were posted full instructions and the necessary voting materials.

These letters and packages were despatched "Fast Air" on 5th September.

The results of the Indian voting were as follows :—

- (1) *New Delhi*.—Supply Liaison Officer failed to take any votes. The only knowledge I have of this matter is the Chief Electoral Office cable to me of 30th September and my reply of 2nd October.
- (2) *Colombo*.—A cable was received from the Polling Officer on 6th October that no votes had been recorded.
- (3) *Bombay*.—Fourteen votes were recorded and returned by air-mail and received by me in time for inclusion in the official count.

In view of the distance from this headquarters, the difficulties of communication, and the absence of a central office to cover the whole of India, I made the best arrangements possible, after discussion with army officers with recent knowledge of the country. The failure of New Delhi to record any votes is inexplicable.

The most disappointing feature was, however, the failure to receive any postal votes from Air Force personnel in India. The papers were posted by "Fast Air" through the R.A.F. Post Office, Cairo, on 11th September and planes left for India on the 11th, 13th, and 14th September. Postal votes were received from two naval personnel in India.

I have made every endeavour to ascertain the reason why no votes have been returned, but without success. See letter from Staff Sergeant Sleight attached (Appendix "E"). It has since become apparent that the Indian Air Force mail was inadvertently despatched by surface by the postal authorities.

- (4) *Burma*.—Owing to communication difficulties and the impossibility of obtaining any information as to personnel in Burma it was impossible to make any arrangement in regard to that area.

It is apparent that every country within which it is desired to record votes should be visited by the Special Returning Officer or his representative to make arrangements on the spot with local authorities. The paucity of mails renders it impossible to make satisfactory arrangements and explanations from a distance. For this purpose greater time than was at my disposal should be allowed.

#### NAVY

As anticipated the Navy (together with the R.A.F.) proved a major difficulty.

Maadi Camp is 12 miles from Cairo and this is about 130 miles from the Mediterranean Coast. Africa is a large continent, and to arrange voting for New-Zealanders involved contacting four fleets—namely, Mediterranean, Levant, Eastern Command, and South Atlantic. The headquarters of these fleets were respectively 1,800 miles, 130 miles, 3,400 miles, and 5,000 miles away. These fleets are separate and under the direct control of the Admiralty, London.

After discussion with the Secretary to the Commander in Chief, Levant, it was decided that the best action to take would be to cover the Levant Fleet by the postal scheme and to forward booth supplies to main bases in other areas. The Levant Fleet headquarters at Alexandria made a search of all records and supplied me with a list of all New-Zealanders serving in that fleet, and also undertook to supply information about main bases in other areas and request that all vessels calling be advised of all voting facilities. The notifying of the nominated candidates would have to be undertaken through the Admiralty in London. In addition, I was advised to contact the Fleet Mail Office at Cairo to arrange immediate despatch of any supplies or letters.