

At this time a cable giving information about New-Zealanders serving in the Navy was received from New Zealand, and I was able to take immediate action with the assistance of H.Q., Levant.

Notifying nominated candidates was a great difficulty, for it was pointed out that to signal the length of such a list was impossible to send to all ships, especially in view of existing and forthcoming operational requirements and that it would be almost impossible to deliver supplies to the hundreds of ships in the four fleets, especially in the time available. It was decided, therefore, to concentrate on the main bases in each Naval Command.

I accordingly cabled the High Commissioner requesting that he arrange advice of the nominated candidates to these bases with the Admiralty, and received an affirmative acknowledgment.

In addition, it was arranged that the Port Detachment (N.Z.E.F.) at Suez would contact all vessels calling during the voting period.

It is pleasing to report that nearly all New-Zealanders of Levant Fleet voted by post or at Alexandria, and that a total of 104 New-Zealanders in the other fleets voted at Algiers, Malta, Bombay, Kilindini, Colombo, Naval Air Stations E.A., Pietermaritzburg, Simonstown, Durban, and Port Elizabeth in purely naval booths.

AIR FORCE

Early contact was made with Flight Lieutenant G. L. Gray, the R.N.Z.A.F. Liaison Officer in the Middle East, and through him was obtained an up-to-date list of all New-Zealanders known to be in the Middle East theatre. In addition, authority to communicate direct with R.A.F. units was arranged through him, thus avoiding the necessity for referring requests through higher formations to lower, and so on. There proved to be no concentration of New-Zealanders in the R.A.F. in the Middle East, as they are scattered throughout British units throughout Africa. It was decided, therefore, to post each person a postal vote and trust that it was received in time to record a vote.

Contact was made with the C.O., R.A.F. Post Office, and arrangements made that all votes would be despatched by "Fast Air."

It was found that in most cases papers were delivered in time, but that many persons to whom these were addressed had been transferred or become casualties. A number of votes were recorded by personnel serving in Italy and the Mediterranean in the Italian offensive. In other cases, however, units in an operational role did not receive the papers in time, and these were returned in due course unused. A number of votes addressed to units a long distance away were not received in time. As will be appreciated, a theatre of war is zoned and lateral communication is not good. Unless special planes can be chartered, it is almost impossible to guarantee delivery of mails in a limited period. This is largely a matter of chance.

MERCHANT MARINE

The permanent booth at Alexandria and the port detachment at Suez were requested to keep a close lookout for New-Zealanders in the Mercantile Marine. It is reported that only one was located and he did not desire to vote. Before leaving New Zealand inquiry from the Seamen's Union revealed that the only New Zealand seamen expected to be operating in Middle East waters were on the hospital ships.

HOSPITAL SHIPS

"*Oranje*."—The "*Oranje*" arrived in the Middle East during the voting period, and although it was known that voting material had been supplied in New Zealand, further booth supplies, together with lists of nominated candidates, were prepared and conveyed to the vessel immediately after its arrival. It was thought that if voting could be completed whilst in port the results could be absorbed in those of Middle East. This was not possible, and the "*Oranje*" returned all the material forwarded, except the list of nominated candidates, and arranged to record all votes while on the trip to Durban, and cable results from there to New Zealand.

Inquiry after the return of the ship from Durban revealed that voting had been completed and supplies returned to New Zealand.

"*Maunganui*."—This vessel was not in the Middle East prior to the election, but arrived shortly after the closing date. Colonel F. Prideaux, Paymaster, 2 N.Z.E.F., who had acted as Polling Officer was contacted, as it was thought that perhaps the official count for the vessel could be conducted in the Middle East, thus saving time in New Zealand, but it was found that he had despatched all voting material back to New Zealand.

PRISONERS OF WAR

Italy made unconditional surrender in the voting period, and it was anticipated that a large number of New Zealand prisoners of war would be freed immediately. Suggestions, probably facetious, were made that I should arrange voting facilities. The question was, however, given consideration, but was manifestly impossible. It subsequently turned out very few such prisoners were released.

SORTING OF VOTES, AND PRELIMINARY COUNT

While booth supplies were being prepared Native carpenters were preparing ballot-boxes and boxes for sorting of completed ballot and voting papers into electorates.

Immediately after the distribution of these booth supplies the packing tents were cleared, shelving erected, and the sorting-boxes placed thereon and labelled with the name of the electorate. For the layout see the photographs appearing in Appendix A [*not printed*].

As ballot-boxes were returned from units they were emptied and sorted into the boxes, declaration votes being placed on one side.

These declaration votes were investigated by a staff of two, and where correct put aside for sorting after separation from the accompanying declarations. Incorrect declarations were double-checked and then submitted to me for final check before being disallowed. It is interesting to note that of 7,408 declaration votes recorded only 318 were disallowed. In the circumstances this is very low.

The late receipt of statements of party policy necessitated the employment of additional staff for sorting of votes, as this was crammed into a very short period. Two shifts of eight were operated, one from 0730 hours until 1500 hours, and one from 1500 hours until 2230 hours daily.