

PACIFIC AREA

Memorandum for :
 THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER,
 WELLINGTON

GENERAL ELECTION, 1943

BEFORE THE POLL—PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS

1. The warrant of my appointment as a Special Returning Officer for the purpose of the Electoral Amendment Act, 1940, directed me to take the votes of those members of the Forces who were for the time being within the Pacific Area and such other areas as may from time to time be specified for the purpose. In general, this territory covered the following locations: New Caledonia, Norfolk Island, Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, Espiritu Santo, Guadalcanal, Australia, and all coast-watching stations throughout the area where New Zealand members of the Forces were stationed.

My previous experience at Army Headquarters, Wellington, had enabled me to obtain a general knowledge of where most of the Service personnel were stationed, and this knowledge was used to advantage in assisting me in my mission.

Arrangements were made for my release from Army Headquarters on attachment to your Office, and I duly reported for duty on the 1st July, 1943. In view of the importance of the work to be performed it was necessary to obtain the services of an officer experienced in electoral procedure, and it was decided that Major D. Malcolm, 1 Tara, be appointed. This officer is a public servant, and, having been a Returning Officer for several elections, was well qualified for the appointment. Major Malcolm has also been a commissioned officer in the New Zealand Military Forces for over twenty years. He commenced duty on the 7th July, 1943, and later proceeded overseas with me.

The date of the election at that stage had not been fixed, but in view of the probable minimum of time that might be ultimately available to conduct the poll we proceeded immediately with the necessary preliminary preparations. The headquarters of all Services were approached and information as to the probable future strengths of formations and movements within the area was obtained, and at this stage it is gratifying to record that the fullest co-operation was given by all Services. The territory to be covered was extensive, and the envisaging of proposed operational roles of formations affected had to be considered. Supplies of the requisite voting material were procured and despatched overseas.

Detailed instructions for Polling Officers and others were prepared and forwarded to those concerned to make them conversant with the proposed procedure.

We obtained information about prospective candidates for the elections with the idea of arranging for fullest information on this point to be available to the voters before they exercised their votes.

Every effort was made to ensure that adequate arrangements for the conduct of the election in the Pacific were made in New Zealand so as to simplify the procedure when we arrived at the various stations overseas. The time spent in these preliminary arrangements proved invaluable, as subsequent events will reveal. The fact that the area was in an American Command had to be taken into account and co-operation had to be maintained with the American Legation here to guard against any curtailment of our movement within the area.

DEPARTURE FROM NEW ZEALAND

2. When all these preliminary arrangements had been completed steps were taken for our departure from New Zealand to commence a tour of the whole area in order to complete our plans and obtain a first-hand comprehensive knowledge of the location and facilities available.

The Right Hon. the Prime Minister furnished me with letters of introduction to the following:—

Admiral W. F. Halsey, Commander, South Pacific Area.

Major-General H. E. Barrowclough, D.S.O., M.C., G.O.C., 2 N.Z.E.F.I.P.

Sir Philip Mitchell, Governor of Fiji.

Group Captain Wallingford, R.N.Z.A.F.

Colonel C. W. Salmon, Chiefs of Staffs' Representative.

I also had with me a letter of introduction to the Acting-Governor of New Caledonia from the Delegate for Fighting France in New Zealand, and a general authority for production to any to whom it may concern. These letters were of great value to me and very largely facilitated easy movement throughout the Pacific.

I left Wellington on the 8th August, 1943, for Auckland, and, as climatic conditions were unfavourable, my departure was delayed until the 11th of August, 1943, when I reached New Caledonia. Major Malcolm left New Zealand on the 12th August, 1943, and arrived at New Caledonia the same day, calling at Norfolk Island *en route*. We both travelled on American Service Command Air Transport (SCAT).

ARRIVAL OVERSEAS

3. (1) *New Caledonia*.—Before leaving New Zealand it was decided that our headquarters would be with 2 N.Z.E.F.I.P., and on arrival at Tontouta I proceeded immediately to Noumea and reported to Colonel Salmon, whose staff advised me as to the procedure for onward movement and made the required contacts with the American authorities. The necessary permission for us to visit the forward area was granted, and, our itinerary having been fixed, priorities to travel by air were arranged to the following islands in the order set out: Espiritu Santo, Guadalcanal, Espiritu Santo, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Espiritu Santo, Efate, Noumea.

We had been informed in New Zealand that the 3 (N.Z.) Division was moving from New Caledonia to the forward area, and on arrival at Noumea found that this move was then in progress and that some of the advance troops had already embarked.

While in Noumea the introductory letters mentioned above were presented to the gentlemen to whom they were addressed.