

and Air Transmission Officer, and an excellent system was adopted. The time spent on its preparation was fairly extensive, but the result proved that it was well worth while, and our thanks are particularly due to Major McIntosh, of Army Signals, for the work performed by him in this connection. From the above it will be observed that it was impracticable for results to be received by me at my headquarters in New Caledonia, and I subsequently returned to New Zealand for that purpose. It is gratifying to report that a fair result of the preliminary count was available on election night in New Zealand, but, in view of the operational role of the Division, only portion of the results from the forward area were received.

CASTING OF VOTES

6. The method of voting was strictly in accordance with the requirements of the Electoral (Members of the Forces) Regulations 1941, and all unit commands were required to afford every opportunity to voters to record their votes. Rolls of all personnel serving overseas were issued to most units, and where these were not on hand declarations were made by the voters establishing their right to vote. Many cases occurred where the official rolls were at variance with the last registered domicile of the voters. Attached hereto is a schedule by locations showing the total number of votes cast in the respective places set out. As will be seen from the record of votes polled, a high percentage of personnel exercised their right of voting. The means taken to ensure that all personnel knew of the election and also that they had every opportunity to vote were varied to suit the particular location, but the following was the general principle carried out:—

- (1) Election notices and lists of nominations were displayed on all notice-boards in camps and in all general buildings, mess-halls, recreation-rooms, Y.M.C.A. :
- (2) Notices in routine orders, and special orders on the subject :
- (3) Announcements at movie shows and at mess :
- (4) Instructions to sub-unit commanders to make sure that all personnel under their command had an opportunity to vote :
- (5) Announcements at parades.

I am satisfied from inquiries made on the subject that all possible publicity was given to produce a full poll. In so far as 3 Division was concerned, the *Kiwi* newspaper was most generous in allotting space to make the election known to all its readers.

Polling commenced in some islands as early as 16th September, 1943, and from reports received it is evident that the polling period as provided by the regulations was ample.

The Pacific is studded with small islands on which there are small groups of New Zealand personnel, all of whom come under the respective command of some island neighbouring Force. They are not far from the mainland, but just sufficiently distant to be out of touch in the event of unfavourable weather.

A case in point is as follows:—

Eua	4
Coast-watching stations in northern islands	12
On H.M.S. "Kia Kia"	6
	22

During the whole period of the polling the weather conditions were such that landing at Eua was deemed impossible by those operating the available boats. Indeed, for the greater part of the time it was not considered safe to make the crossing between Tongatabu and Eua in the only available boat, let alone attempt to enter through the reef. Regarding the Observer Company personnel in the northern island, the time was too short for votes to be obtained by boat. The only possible means was by seaplane.

An effort was made to get this form of transport, but the Air Force Command at Tonga was unable to supply a plane for the purpose. In any case, I am informed that it probably would not have been able to effect a landing at either Tin Can or Keppel Islands from a seaplane.

In the case of the "Kia Kia," the same condition applies. The ship left two days before the receipt of nominations and did not return to Tonga until after the election. She could only have been reached by seaplane. The number of voters disfranchised is shown at twenty-two.

It is considered that a Special Returning Officer is required to obtain as many votes as possible, and the method which he adopts, particularly in a theatre of war, must be determined at the particular time under review. This applies especially to the forward area and is a matter that required to be decided fairly hurriedly in view of impending movements at the time of the election. It will have been observed that special attention had been given this area, and as is now known, on 17th September, 1943, detachments from 3 (N.Z.) Division were on the move from Guadalcanal. This sudden alteration demanded immediate action lest these detachments be deprived of the opportunity of voting.

Arrangements were accordingly made by Major Malcolm to meet this situation, and voting actually took place on ships in convoy to Vella Lavella. A total of sixteen booths operated on these ships, and in one instance only were the votes from a booth not received. These votes are still outstanding and are the subject of a separate inquiry.

The remainder of the Division voted on Guadalcanal. In addition, the votes of all New Zealand casualties in American hospitals in Guadalcanal were collected. These included Navy, Army, and Air Force personnel.

Votes were also obtained from Munda, Russell Island, and other advanced "air strips." A mobile booth operated by air from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal was responsible for collecting the votes of all New Zealand Air personnel forward of Guadalcanal. This plane was also on other tasks, but owing to enemy action was unable to depart from Henderson Field until 21st September, 1943, when it took a polling staff for the purpose of collecting the votes of personnel from these new stations.

Ships of R.N.Z.N. were operating in the forward waters, and the votes of all the New Zealand personnel were taken while the ships were at sea.

The collection of all votes from the forward area presented some anxiety and required co-ordination of all Services to ensure the safe custody of ballot-papers, and it is gratifying to report that all arrangements were satisfactorily completed, excepting in one instance cited above.