

An American ship conveying New Zealand reinforcements for 3 (N.Z.) Division was contacted at Noumea and a special polling staff travelled from Bouvail, a distance of 110 miles to take these votes, a total of 800-odd. The staff boarded the ship in the roadstead, and booths were set up in the holds. These were personnel who had just left New Zealand and they all voted by declaration.

We also provided for the civilians employed in Noumea by the American authorities. These people do not come within the scope of the regulations under which we were operating. They utilized the Postal Voting System, and their votes were despatched to respective Returning Officers in New Zealand.

AFTER THE POLL

7. The regulations provided for the appointment of two persons to act as witnesses for the scrutiny of the rolls and the official count. In view of the special circumstances existing in the Pacific, the Government decided that party representatives be permitted to attend at the scrutiny and official count. The following representatives duly arrived by air in New Caledonia on 7th October, 1943 :—

Mr. M. Moohan (New Zealand Labour Party) :

Mr. M. J. Nestor (National Party) :

Mr. W. Sinton (Independent Group) :

Mr. W. E. Millar (Democratic Labour Party).

They were met on arrival and conveyed to Bourail, where they were accommodated at the Base Reception Depot.

In order to speed up the official count the scrutiny was commenced prior to the arrival of the above-named gentlemen, and the time saved in this respect enabled the official count to be commenced earlier than would have otherwise been possible. The scrutiny continued from day to day as returns came to hand. The procedure adopted was similar to that obtaining in New Zealand, and any cases of apparent dual voting were carefully investigated, but in every instance they proved to be errors made by Polling Officers in booths, and there did not appear to be any cases of dual voting.

OFFICIAL COUNT

8. Following our inspection of the islands we deemed it desirable to have all ballot and voting papers from the forward area and Norfolk Islands brought to New Caledonia, and those from Tonga, Samoa, and Cook Islands brought to Fiji. This course seemed preferable to carrying them over long stretches of water with a possibility of loss in transit. There also appeared to be some anxiety about the method of delivery as any means of this nature was largely controlled by the American authorities. When it was intimated that party representatives were to attend the scrutiny and official count I considered it advisable to adopt the above course. Instructions were accordingly issued to Commanders affected to forward all papers used in the election direct to me in New Caledonia. This was done, but there was considerable delay in respect to the receipt of the parcels. For example, advice was received from one Island, dated 27th September, 1943, that parcels were ready awaiting despatch. These parcels reached us on 26th October, 1943. It will therefore be appreciated that there are real difficulties to surmount, but, given sufficient time, all are capable of being satisfactorily overcome.

On the 14th October, 1943, a progress report of official count of the votes on hand was despatched to New Zealand. The party scrutineers informed me that it appeared unnecessary for them to remain any longer in the area, and they did not wish to be in attendance until the conclusion of the official count. They assured me that they had no objections to offer regarding the conduct of the election.

During their brief stay in New Caledonia every opportunity was taken to afford the scrutineers means of visiting camps and institutions on the island to enable them to meet as many service personnel as possible. In addition, a trip to Honailon was arranged so that they would have an idea of the conditions and type of country on the island. It was unfortunate that more time could not be devoted in this respect. Their return journey to New Zealand was therefore arranged for 17th October, 1943.

As parcels came to hand they were expeditiously dealt with, and on the 20th October, 1943, a first supplementary count was despatched, and on the 27th October, 1943, a second supplementary count was forwarded.

DISPOSAL OF USED BALLOT-PAPERS AND FORMS

9. In accordance with your instructions all used ballot and voting papers have been returned to New Zealand, together with the corresponding counterfoils and other material used for the election, and these have been duly handed over to you for disposal.

A small supply of ballot-papers and forms was handed over to Officer in Charge Stationery, at N.Z.E.F.I.P., as reserve stock in the event of a by-election being held later.

Surplus stationery was also handed over for the immediate use of the Forces.

PRINTING OF FORMS

10. Our estimate of forms required in the various locations proved to be fairly accurate, but in order that no objection might be lodged by a voter on the ground of being unable to obtain the recognized form authority was given to all Polling Officers to improvise (if necessary) any forms in short supply. This improvisation took place in several cases, and thus enabled votes to be cast.

It was necessary for us to obtain an additional supply of voting-papers in respect of the Local Option Poll, and the printing of these was done by the *Kivi* Print in New Caledonia. The work was very satisfactorily performed.

OBSERVATIONS OF LEGISLATION FOR VOTING BY MEMBERS OF THE FORCES

11. We were entrusted with the task of carrying this scheme into effect in an area where our troops were dispersed over a wide territory and the locations separated in most cases by large stretches of water, also all concentrations were far distant from our headquarters. We also had the experience of operating the scheme where our Forces were committed to action. It is only when one has such an opportunity of applying the scheme to such a set of circumstances that there is an opportunity of judging its practicability and completeness. We are satisfied that the whole scheme was well thought out, and, despite