

E. OVERSEAS GRAVES

Of the 11,863 casualties suffered by the New Zealand Forces during the Second World War, decisions in respect of 45 deaths only, are awaited. These are cases where search for the bodies and graves has not yet been completed. It is expected that information will be received from the Service Departments concerned at an early date.

IX. ELECTORAL OFFICE

The past year has undoubtedly been the busiest in the history of the Branch. While disposing of work that was on hand from the recent special gaming and licensing polls, the usual extensive arrangements were put in train for the 1949 general election. A cleansing of European rolls preparatory to printing, and the compilation and printing of the first Maori rolls for use at the general election, were carried out simultaneously with preparations for and the holding of a further special poll on the question of compulsory military training. Considerable reorganization was necessary to preserve the continuity of these various undertakings and to ensure their completion within restricted time-limits.

LEGISLATION

The Military Training Poll Act, 1949

The purpose of this Act was to ascertain, at a special general poll, the will of the majority of European and Maori electors upon the proposal that provision be made for compulsory military training.

Provision was made for using the general and supplementary rolls used at the last general election, together with the supplementary roll prepared for the poll taken under the Gaming Poll Act, 1948, and a further special supplementary roll of recent registrations.

The Act further provided for the European and Maori vote to be taken simultaneously, under the appropriate rules of the Electoral and Licensing Acts, on a date to be fixed by the Governor-General by Order in Council.

The Licensing Amendment Act, 1949

Provision was made in this Act, in accordance with Government policy, for Maoris to vote at general licensing polls.

There is also provision for special local polls on the question of Trust control, to be held if "local restoration" is carried in any no-licence district.

Statutes Amendment Act, 1949

Several sections of this Act are machinery clauses in connection with preparation of rolls. Further provision is also made as to campaigning by candidates at election-time.

The Electoral (Postal Voting) Regulations, 1949

While retaining the essential basic principles of the existing postal-voting system, these regulations adjusted weaknesses as revealed from experience at the 1946 elections. The principal alterations in the new system are:—

- (i) Applications for postal votes are required to be in writing.
- (ii) The form of declaration obviates the necessity for the elector to strike out reasons not applicable to his right to vote as a postal voter.
- (iii) "Authorized witness" to the elector's declaration includes similar classes of persons overseas to those authorized in New Zealand. This facilitates voting by electors temporarily absent from New Zealand.
- (iv) Authority is given to Customs officers to issue postal votes and so facilitate postal voting by seamen.
- (v) A scheme is provided by which officers appointed by the Electoral Department may arrange for postal voting by patients in hospitals or by inmates of other similar institutions.