

1877.
NEW ZEALAND.

POPULATION IN ELECTORAL DISTRICTS

(MEMORANDUM RELATIVE TO ORDER FOR RETURN OF).

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives, No. 46, of the 17th August, 1876.

Ordered, "1. That a return be prepared during the recess showing approximately the population in every electoral district in the colony, on the 31st day of December, 1876. 2. That such return, when prepared, be published in the New Zealand Gazette."—(Mr. Stout).

MEMORANDUM for the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

I FIND myself quite unable to comply with the resolution of the House of Representatives, passed on the 17th of last August, "That a return should be prepared during the recess showing approximately the population in every electoral district in the colony, on the 31st day of December, 1876." There are two ways in which the population of the colony is estimated:—

1st. By a general census, by means of which the distribution of the population over the whole colony, and consequently the population of any well-known division or locality, can be ascertained.

2nd. By estimates in the intervals between the censuses, based upon the increase by births over deaths, and by excess of immigration over emigration.

As the boundaries of the registration of births and deaths districts are not coterminous with the boundaries of electoral districts, the returns of births and deaths can only in a few instances be made use of to ascertain the increase of population by excess of births over deaths in any electoral district. The arrivals and departures are to and from a few principal ports, although the persons arriving and departing may go to or come from other electoral districts than those in which the ports of arrival or departure may be situated; the records, however, only exhibiting the actual port of arrival or departure; consequently it is impossible to apportion the excess of immigrants over emigrants between the several electoral districts with any approximation to truth. Likewise the constant passenger traffic between various parts of the colony is always disturbing the proportion of population in the various electoral districts; but of this traffic there is no record, and therefore any estimates based upon a proportionate increase in each electoral district would be very fallacious and misleading.

As examples, I will illustrate the Thames Borough and Hokitika. In March, 1874, the population of the Thames Borough was 8,073. The population of the colony having since then increased about one-third, a proportionate increase to the Thames population would have made it 10,756; but from a return of inhabited houses furnished by the municipal authorities, I estimate the present population is only 4,466. Similarly I estimate the population of Hokitika to have decreased during the same period from 3,352 to 2,905, instead of having increased.

While it has been found possible, with the assistance of the municipal authorities, to estimate the population of a few of the principal boroughs by means of the number of inhabited houses, it would be out of the question to attempt to do so throughout the colony, except by a general census.

The only possible way of obtaining the desired information is by a general census.

21st June, 1877.

WM. R. E. BROWN,
Registrar-General.