

prorogation and dissolution of Parliament after the passing of a new Representation Bill, I have the honour to inform you that the elections under the new Act were held throughout the colony on the 26th ultimo.

2. The result of the elections has been adverse to the Ministry. It is difficult, however, to arrive at a precise estimate of the relative strength of parties. The total number of members of the House of Representatives is 95, and these are classified in the various newspapers published throughout the colony as Ministerialists, Oppositionists, and Independents. The numbers allotted to each of these sections vary according to the political bias of each particular newspaper. The estimate of the strength of the Ministerialists varies from 34 to 43, of the Oppositionists from 44 to 54, and of the Independents from 1 to 9. All the papers published in Wellington agree in allotting 54 members to the Opposition, and estimate the Ministerialists at from 38 to 40.

3. Of the four chief provinces, Auckland, Wellington, and Otago have returned a large majority in favour of the Opposition, whilst Canterbury remains strongly Ministerialist.

4. There are 33 of the recently-elected members who did not sit in the last Parliament, and, of these, 24 are altogether new to parliamentary life.

5. Several prominent members both on the Ministerial and Opposition side have been rejected by their constituents. Foremost amongst them is the Premier, Sir Robert Stout, who failed to secure his re-election. Mr. Tole, Minister of Justice, also lost his seat. Of the Opposition party, the most notable of the rejected candidates are Mr. Rolleston and Mr. Bryce. Both are able and experienced politicians, who have held office for prolonged periods in previous Governments, and have rendered no small services to New Zealand, Mr. Rolleston as Minister of Education, and Mr. Bryce as Native Minister.

6. On the defeat of Sir Robert Stout being announced, no fewer than five members of the Ministerial party offered to resign their seats in his favour, but he has resolved to retire from political life for some time, and will not be persuaded at present to offer himself again for election.

7. The Ministry recognised that the verdict of the country was adverse to them, and on the 30th ultimo Sir R. Stout tendered to me the resignation of himself and his colleagues, which I duly accepted.

8. I then sent for Major Atkinson, who, in the last Parliament, moved the vote of want of confidence in the Stout-Vogel Ministry, and is the most prominent and influential member of the Opposition party. I requested him to form a Ministry, and he is at present in communication with various members of his party, in order to consult them before making formal proposals. Meanwhile the Ministry of which Sir R. Stout is Premier continues to discharge the duties of Government.

9. Major Atkinson's task of forming a Ministry is less easy than might be supposed from a cursory glance at the classification of the parties in the House. It is considered by some that the fall of the Stout-Vogel Ministry may remove the chief bond of union between the sections of the Opposition, and that on the assumption of office by Major Atkinson some members may withhold their support from him. He is accordingly obliged to exercise extreme caution in his selection of colleagues, and his task is rendered the more difficult by the fact that his party now comprises many men who are looked upon as having a fair claim for consideration in the allotment of portfolios, but few, if any, whose claim is so superior as to make their selection a certainty.

10. It has been suggested in some quarters that the formation of a stable Government will be impossible until a coalition is effected between Major Atkinson and Sir Julius Vogel. The latter is credited with the staunch support of at least twenty members from Canterbury and the northern provinces of the South Island. On the other hand, there are many members with whom the first article of their political creed is opposition to Sir Julius Vogel, and whose support would be withdrawn from Major Atkinson if the suggested coalition were effected. There is, however, no immediate prospect of the coalition being brought about, Major Atkinson having expressed himself so distinctly averse to it.

11. Such is the present political situation, and it remains to be seen: