

1944
NEW ZEALAND

SERVICEMEN'S VOTES (1943) COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF THE)

(MR. A. G. OSBORNE, CHAIRMAN)

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives

ORDERS OF REFERENCE

Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives

WEDNESDAY, THE 15TH DAY OF MARCH, 1944

Ordered, "That a Select Committee, consisting of ten members, be appointed to inquire into and report upon the organization set up and the methods employed for recording and dealing with votes of servicemen in the recent general election pursuant to the requirements of the Electoral Act, 1927, the Electoral Amendment Act, 1940, the Licensing Acts, and the Electoral (Members of Forces) Regulations 1941: the Committee to consist of Mr. Bodkin, Mr. Connolly, Mr. Goosman, Mr. Macdonald, Mr. Macfarlane, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Richards, Hon. Mr. Skinner, Mr. Watts, and the Mover."—(Right Hon. Mr. FRASER.)

THURSDAY, THE 16TH DAY OF MARCH, 1944

Ordered, "That for the remainder of the session all Select Committees of the House have leave to sit on days on which the House is not sitting."—(Right Hon. Mr. FRASER.)

By direction of the Servicemen's Votes (1943) Committee, I have the honour to present the report of the Committee on the matters referred to it by order of the House dated the 15th day of March, 1944.

The order directed the Committee "to inquire into and report upon the organization set up and the methods employed for recording and dealing with votes of servicemen in the recent general election pursuant to the requirements of the Electoral Act, 1927, the Electoral Amendment Act, 1940, the Licensing Acts, and the Electoral (Members of the Forces) Regulations 1941."

The Committee heard lengthy evidence, and the conclusions it reached thereon are as follows:—

(1) ORGANIZATION

The Select Committee is satisfied that adequate arrangements were made for the conduct of the general election among servicemen. Special Returning Officers were appointed to be based in the United Kingdom, Canada, the Middle East, and the Pacific Area. There was also a Special Returning Officer for servicemen in New Zealand. The Special Returning Officers overseas were responsible for enabling the maximum number of persons spread over very wide areas to record their votes. As a result of their organization, of the estimated voting strength in each area, the number of votes cast represented the following percentages:—

						Per Cent.
United Kingdom	..	..	..	..	..	75
Canada	..	..	..	..	..	76
Middle East	..	..	..	..	..	88
Pacific Area	..	..	..	..	..	97

These percentages compare favourably with the corresponding percentage of civilian votes cast to the roll strength in New Zealand, which was 82.8 per cent. The heavy polling among servicemen overseas reflects the adequacy of the facilities made available.

The Select Committee inquired into particular instances in which servicemen had been unable to vote. The most important of these related to servicemen in India. The Committee is satisfied that the Special Returning Officer made thorough preparations to provide for servicemen in India, and that the failure of the arrangements was due to Post Office officials, not under New Zealand control, sending material by surface mail instead of air mail as instructed.