

Luke, Esq., (C.M.G.) and a representative from the Trades and Labour Council, Wellington, have been present at each ballot as scrutineers for the general public, as well as some Press representatives. I wish here to acknowledge the office's appreciation of Mr. Luke's constant and continuous attendance as scrutineer; he has attended at very considerable inconvenience to himself during the whole drawing at every ballot.

For the protection of Reservists it was decided to issue "certificates of enrolment" to all men included in the Register, and this proved a colossal task in itself. In order to ensure that the certificates should reach the men to whom they really referred a personal delivery through the post-offices of the Dominion was arranged for, and so that some proof of the holder's identity could be available at any subsequent inspection each Reservist is required to sign his name in the margin of the certificate in the presence of the postal officer making the delivery.

Over two hundred thousand applications for these certificates were sent in, each applicant indicating at which post-office out of the three thousand odd in the Dominion it would be most convenient for him to receive his certificate. A preliminary post-card acknowledgment of these applications was issued immediately on receipt, and the mere addressing of these post-cards required a staff of approximately two hundred postal officers working three hours each evening during three weeks in September. Subsequently the applications had to be sorted into the respective post-offices, and those for each post-office placed in alphabetical order.

While the applications were being sorted a large staff of typists was engaged typing the certificates from the enrolment cards. As soon as these were completed the applications and the certificates had to be brought together and the latter scheduled and issued to the various post-offices where they were required, a separate advice being at the same time sent to the Reservist that the certificate was awaiting delivery.

The preparation and issue of these certificates, which had to be carried out concurrently with the work of enrolment, balloting, &c., has taken much longer than was anticipated, but the work has now been completed. A large number of certificates is still unclaimed at the various post-offices throughout the Dominion as well as at this office. The difficulty of the work was very greatly increased by the number of cases in which discrepancies were found between the names on the application and on the enrolment card of the same man.

In connection with this work I wish to place on record my appreciation of the kindness of Mr. W. S. La Trobe and Mr. Bolton, of the Wellington Technical School, in having a large part of the scheduling to Postmasters performed by the typewriting class attached to the school. The work, which was done *gratuitously*, was well and accurately carried out, and very greatly helped to relieve the congestion at a particularly busy time, when the whole typing staff, accommodation, &c., were otherwise taxed to the utmost.

The office has been very greatly assisted in carrying out the work imposed on it under the Act by officers of the Postal and Police Departments throughout the country, who have had a very large amount of extra work thrown upon them in regard to enrolments and inquiries of all kinds. Without the assistance thus obtained it would be quite impossible for the office, except at enormously increased cost, to have carried out the work. Every one of these officers has most readily and zealously helped whenever required, and I am very greatly indebted to them.

I also wish to thank officers of the Customs and Marine Departments for assistance in bringing the requirements of the Act under the notice of and obtaining enrolments from new arrivals and men discharged in New Zealand from foreign ships.

To the Government Printer and his staff, likewise, my sincerest thanks and appreciation are due for the care and expedition with which immense and invariably very urgent orders for printing have been filled from time to time in connection with the National Registration and Military Service Acts.

QUINQUENNIAL CENSUS.

The Census and Statistics Act provides for a census to be taken every fifth year counting from 1911. In the ordinary course of events the census of 1916 would have been taken early in the year, but on account of the dislocation of the population occasioned by the war it was deemed advisable to postpone it. Cabinet subsequently instructed that it be taken in the middle of October, and this was done accordingly.

It was foreseen that with the higher cost of living, the shortage of suitable men, the unsettled state of the weather, and the bad condition of the roads, the collection, if carried out on the same system as at previous censuses, would result in increased expenditure all round. I accordingly made certain proposals with a view partly to keeping expenditure within bounds and partly to improving the accuracy and completeness of the census. The principal of these was the utilization of the machinery of the Postal Department for the distribution and collection of the census schedules. The adoption of this and other proposals has resulted in a saving to the Government in the cost of the collection work (as distinct from compilation) of approximately £5,000 compared with the census of 1911. Moreover, each of the past few censuses has cost approximately 20 per cent. more than the previous one, and considering the abnormal conditions existing last year it is certain that had the old methods been followed at last census a similar increase in cost would have been experienced.

Almost without exception officers of the Post and Telegraph Department engaged on census work gave of their best, and worked energetically and willingly to make a thorough success of it. In other ways, too, the new system has justified itself: the returns have been received in better order than at any previous census, the number of incomplete schedules being practically nil; the work has been carried out entirely without friction between the collecting officers and the public; and last, but not least, many officers of the Postal Department have had an experience and acquired a knowledge which will be of considerable use to themselves and the service.

Another innovation on this occasion was the enumeration of the small Maori population in the South Island on the same schedules and by the same sub-enumerators as the Europeans,