

NORTH ISLAND REPRESENTATION COMMISSION.

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable Arthur William de Brito Savile, Earl of Liverpool, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in and over His Majesty's Dominion of New Zealand and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the members of the North Island Representation Commission, have the honour to report that, as directed by Your Excellency on the 30th day of August last, we commenced our sittings on the 10th day of September last for the purpose of dividing the North Island into electoral districts.

The boundaries having been provisionally fixed, maps were prepared showing the same, and descriptions were published in the *New Zealand Gazette*, notice being given at the same time therein that objections would be received up to noon of the 5th November.

In all thirty-one objections were received and dealt with, as set forth in the schedule herewith.

This Commission now respectfully submits for Your Excellency's consideration a map showing the boundaries of the electorates as finally fixed, with a schedule showing the actual and nominal populations in each electorate, which agree with the figures set forth in the report by the Joint Commissions; and also descriptions of the said boundaries.

Three new electorates have been created—one urban, at Auckland, to which the name “Roskill” has been given, and two rural, to which the names “Rotorua” and “Manawatu” (formerly the name of an electorate) have been given.

The Town of Taumarunui being now included in the Waimarino Electorate, the name “Waitomo” has been substituted for “Taumarunui,” as better describing the remodelled electorate.

The name “Wellington Suburbs and Country Districts” has been curtailed to “Wellington Suburbs,” there being now practically no country population included in the electorate.

As directed by the provisions of the Licensing Amendment Act, 1910, the Commission has declared that the Auckland East, Auckland West, and Auckland Central Electorates shall constitute the Auckland Licensing District, and that the Wellington North, Wellington Central, and Wellington East Electorates shall constitute the Wellington Licensing District.

Before concluding this report we, as a Commission, desire respectfully to bring under the notice of Your Excellency the following points, with suggestions thereanent:—

1. The wording of section 18 of the Legislature Act, 1908, dealing with the “margin” of population in electorates comprising “urban” and “rural,” does not express the evident intention of the section—viz., that such “margin” shall be the “margin” fixed for “urban” electorates plus a number bearing the same ratio to the number 300 (the difference of “margin” for “urban” and “rural” electorates) as the “rural” population in the electorates bears to the total population therein. It is suggested that the section be amended as to wording.

2. “Urban” population includes population within circles drawn with a five-mile radius from the post-offices of the four principal cities. This arbitrary boundary was decided on when these cities were very much smaller than at present, and it is now found that in some cases real suburban areas are not included within the circles. The fact that the census sub-enumerators cannot follow these circles on the ground causes all concerned in dealing with the population figures much needless trouble. It is suggested that, instead of these imaginary lines being adopted as boundaries, the “urban” areas shall be properly defined by boundaries that will include all suburban areas and all areas within five miles of the post-offices aforesaid, and that can be followed on the ground by the Census Enumerators; further, that such boundaries shall be fixed from time to time by Order in Council at least six months before any census is taken.

3. This Commission desires to call special attention to the difficulty experienced in obtaining electoral boundaries that will conserve community of interest and at the same time keep the population of each electorate within the limits at present prescribed by the Act. It is of opinion that the obtaining of suitable boundaries would be facilitated by increasing the “margin” allowed in respect of rural population from 550 to 1,000. It may be pointed out that the margin of 550 at present allowed is on the nominal population, and only represents an actual margin of 430, while the actual margin corresponding to 1,000 would only be 781.

The Commission also suggests that the increase of margin would enable Commissions to adjust boundaries in such manner as to more nearly comply with the provisions of the Licensing Amendment Act of 1914 than is at present possible, but does not believe that any reasonable margin would enable Commissions to fully comply in every case with that Act where, as with the present Commissions, it becomes necessary to increase or diminish the number of electorates in either Island.

This Commission is of opinion, having regard to the fixing of the best boundaries for electoral districts, that the question of keeping licensing districts distinct from electoral districts is worthy of consideration, but, realizing that this would open up a very big public question, does not consider it within its functions to offer any definite suggestions in this direction.

Given under our hands and seals, this tenth day of December, one thousand nine hundred and seventeen.

E. H. WILMOT [L.S.].

H. M. SKEET [L.S.]

JAMES TROUNSON [L.S.].

J. W. A. MARCHANT [L.S.].

G. H. BULLARD [L.S.].