

In the city electorates, as already mentioned, notices of objection were posted by registered letter to all those electors who were not found to be included in the householders' schedules, and in all cases, either in city or country electorates, where no appeal was made against the Registrars' proposal to remove, or where the postal officers were unable to trace the elector, it was intended to remove such names from the roll in accordance with the usual statutory procedure for purging the roll. In a few cases, however, it appears that, through some inadvertence on the part of collectors or clerks, notices of objection were posted to electors who were *bona fide* residents of the district. They naturally resented being informed by the Registrar, per notice, that their names were to be removed on the grounds of non-residence; but instead of advising him of their *bona fides* by means of the form of appeal and specially addressed envelope enclosed with their notice, some of them wrote to the Press, or complained to members of Parliament, with the unfortunate result that a short amending Act was passed at the end of the session of 1911 providing that objections to the retention of names upon the roll were not to be made on the grounds of the electoral census, and that all names already removed on these grounds were to be restored to the roll forthwith. The result was that there were restored to, or allowed to remain on, the rolls over 41,000 names, practically all of which, there can be no doubt, had no right to remain thereon, and thus the usefulness of the census, so far as the cleansing of the rolls was concerned, was completely stultified.

Many Registrars protested strongly against having to restore hundreds of names to the roll which they were quite satisfied had no right to be there, and in some instances, to my subsequent knowledge, the new amendment Act was quietly ignored and the purging of the roll carried out in accordance with the original plan.

Shortly after the election I obtained from Registrars a return of the results of the electoral census, and a report as to its general utility in effecting fresh enrolments, correcting addresses, &c., on the roll, and disclosing non-residence in the electorate. The reports received disclose a strong preponderance of opinion that the census was a very effective instrument in obtaining fresh enrolments and amending the existing roll, and the returns accompanying these reports demonstrate that if it had been carried out as originally intended the rolls would have been purged of a considerable number of names which subsequent events strongly indicated had no right to be thereon.

Knowing that the taking of the census entailed considerable work on the part of Registrars, I was prepared to find a lukewarm attitude towards it from some Registrars whose ordinary duties leave them but little time to attend to electoral work; but with few exceptions the reports confirm the soundness and practicability of the whole scheme as originally outlined by the Department.

The following are some extracts from reports of Registrars—both for city and country electorates—in different parts of the Dominion:—

Waitemata.—"Am quite satisfied that my clean and up-to-date roll could not have been obtained without the electoral census. . . . I restored to the roll, in terms of section 2 of the Legislature Amendment Act of 1911, 253 names which I would have been quite justified in keeping off, as not one of the number attempted to vote."

Auckland West.—"I do not consider there was any approach to a 'census muddle' in Auckland; but I must say I think it was a dangerous step to stop the purging under the census. I hope you will not be discouraged, but will again adopt the census, and carry it out to the bitter conclusion. Registrars have now gained valuable experience and knowledge, and I have no fear but that the next census will see your ideal realized."

Parnell.—"The electoral census disclosed the fact that a great number of names were on the roll which should be removed, and the purging which would have followed in accordance with the original intention would have resulted in a much cleaner roll."

Bay of Plenty.—"The electoral census was certainly of distinct service in disclosing non-residence and enabling me to purge the roll. If the object is to ensure as complete a roll as possible, and particularly as clean a roll as possible, the electoral census, if carefully carried out, is the most effective procedure that we have yet had."

Gisborne.—"Generally speaking, I am of opinion that the electoral census was very successful, and am confident that, from what I can see, it is the only true way of keeping the roll near perfection in altering addresses, enrolling, and removing names. I think it only right that I should place on record the position as to why 2,238 persons appear to have not voted at the election. Had I been allowed to remove those electors to whom I sent notices of objection in accordance with the Act and your instructions, 1,480 names would have come off before the printing of the roll. I actually hold in my office 1,480 notices returned through the Dead Letter Office, and which I was prevented from dealing with on account of a new law passed that they were to remain on the roll."

Pahiatua.—"I found the electoral census a great means of effecting fresh enrolments and disclosing non-residence. As a means of enabling me to assure myself of the right of those enrolled to have their names retained upon the roll, as required by section 50 of the Act, the census was all that could be desired. Had the provisions of the Act been allowed to be carried out in their entirety, the roll would have been cleaner than it had been for years."

Masterton.—"I have no hesitation whatever in saying that the census worked well for effecting new enrolments and disclosing non-residence in the district. By means of it I was enabled to add 2,056 names to the roll, and to remove nearly 200 who had left the district. Many said that the roll for the last election was the best that the district had ever had. I do not attribute that state of things to anything that I did, but to the taking of the electoral census."