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**Soldiers and Social Change:
The Forces Vote in the Second World War and New Zealand's Great
Experiment in Social Citizenship**

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Abstract :

Labour's victory in the 1943 New Zealand general election allowed the party to set the political agenda in New Zealand not only for the remainder of the Second World War, but, arguably, for forty years thereafter. The outcome of the election hinged on the votes of service personnel engaged in fighting the Second World War. This paper examines why soldiers, airmen and sailors voted overwhelmingly for Labour in 1943. The paper shows, by conducting the first social class survey of an army in the Second World War, that the forces vote was not determined by the socio-economic background of the military cohort. Instead, through use of censorship summaries of the soldiers' mail and the detailed returns showing the number of votes recorded for each candidate at each polling-place in the election, the paper finds that the most persuasive explanation for the pattern of voting among service personnel was their degree of participation in the war effort. The closer to combat a cohort of voters found themselves, the more they were inclined to manifest strong beliefs in fairness, social justice and 'big Government', key aspects of the Labour manifesto, in their franchise. A spirit of social cohesion had emerged from the exigencies of combat cohesion with profound implications for the future of New Zealand.

**Soldiers and Social Change:
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Experiment in Social Citizenship¹**

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In September 1943, the Labour Party, under the leadership of the incumbent Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, defeated Sidney Holland's National Party in the 25th general election in New Zealand. The 45 seats (plus one allied independent) won by Labour gave them a majority of 12 over National, who won 34.² Labour's victory ensured that party politics remained active and confrontational in New Zealand for the duration of the Second World War.³ With a strong majority, Labour had a mandate to run the country and the war as it saw fit. It was able to continue its social and economic agenda, including nationalisations and social and employment reform.⁴ Labour's third successive electoral victory ensured that the balance in New Zealand politics lay firmly to the left. In the decades following the war, National adopted Labour's social welfare agenda and became increasingly inclined towards a policy of

¹ I am grateful to John Crawford, James Kitchen, Catherine Holmes and to two anonymous *English Historical Review* referees for their helpful comments. I would also like to thank Peter Cooke, Mary Slater, Carolyn Carr and all the librarians at the Defence Library, Headquarters New Zealand Defence Forces, for their research assistance.

² John E. Martin, *The House: New Zealand's House of Representatives 1854-2004* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2004), pp. 213-14; Michael Bassett and Michael King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song: The Life of Peter Fraser* (Auckland: Penguin, 2000), pp. 205, 223-4. An election had been due to take place in New Zealand in 1941, but, with the war situation deteriorating after setbacks in the Mediterranean, Labour introduced a Prolongation of Parliament Bill that autumn. National agreed to delay a vote on the understanding that there would be as little contentious legislation as possible put before the House. With the collapse of the War Administration in October 1942, however, the agreement to postpone the election lapsed and the poll took place during September 1943.

³ F.L.W. Wood, *Political and External Affairs: The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War* (Wellington: Historical Publications Branch, 1958), p. 266.

⁴ Robert Chapman, 'From Labour to National', in Geoffrey W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 368-9. The Bank of New Zealand and Internal Airways were nationalised (in 1945) and the coalmines were nationalised gradually; a Minimum Wage Act was introduced, also in 1945.

full employment. So great was the significance of the victory, that Robert Chapman has argued that successive Labour successes in this period ‘set the terms of political debate and action [in New Zealand] for the next forty years’.⁵

The election, however, was a far closer contest than Labour’s majority of 12 seats indicates. Forty thousand, out of a total of 950,000 votes, were cast for Democratic Labour, a party to Labour’s left. These votes ‘cannibalised’ the Labour vote and contributed to the loss of eight seats to National compared to their showing in 1938. In fact, with the civilian votes counted, it appeared that the Government was very close to defeat in an additional six key seats (Eden, Nelson, Oamaru, Otaki, Palmerston North and Wairarapa). It was only when the armed service votes ‘were added to the [domestic] totals’ that the Government survived by narrowly holding on to all six seats.⁶ Had National won these constituencies, the House would have been split evenly between the two parties and there is every chance that the Government would have fallen, with profound implications for the war effort and the shape of the post-war political economy of New Zealand. Fraser later commented, ‘it was not only North Africa that the Second Division had saved’.⁷

That the soldiers’ vote saved Labour in 1943 is well documented in the

⁵ Ibid., p. 351.

⁶ Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, pp. 255-6. The Electoral Amendment Act 1940 granted the right to vote to members of New Zealand’s armed forces serving in any part of the world. See ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 *N.Z.E.F. Times*, 2 August 1943.

⁷ Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 256; Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33a; ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 Major W.A. Bryan, Report on the Conduct of the 1943 General Election in the Middle East. Nelson was won by an Independent who voted with Labour. Palmerston North was lost by an Independent who voted with National. It is also conceivable that a truly non-party war administration, as advocated by Holland, might have been installed.

historiography.⁸ However, to date, in spite of a growing corpus of work on voting behaviours in New Zealand,⁹ there is no in-depth study of the factors that may have affected why the soldiers voted overwhelmingly for Labour.¹⁰ This gap in the historiography is not unique; there is a lacuna in literature on war and political and social change in the twentieth century more generally. The growing consensus that the wars of the twentieth century ‘laid the basis’ for important reforms, most notably the birth of the modern welfare state,¹¹ has been driven almost exclusively by studies of the home front in war;¹² too rarely have scholars investigated how citizens at the battlefield have affected change.¹³

⁸ See, for example, J.R.S. Daniels, ‘The General Election of 1943’ (Masters Thesis, Victoria University, 1961), p. 333; Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 256; Michael Bassett, *The State in New Zealand, 1840-1984: Socialism Without Doctrines?* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998), pp. 234-5; Neill Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy: A History of the Vote in New Zealand* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2003), p. 154.

⁹ See, for example, Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*; Steve McLeod, ‘Did Farmers Really “Lurch towards the Left” in 1935? Reassessing the Election of New Zealand’s First Labour Government’, in Miles Fairburn and Erik Olssen (eds.), *Class, Gender and the Vote: Historical Perspectives from New Zealand* (Otago: University of Otago Press, 2005); R.M. Chapman, W.K. Jackson and A.V. Mitchell (eds.), *New Zealand Politics in Action: The 1960 General Election* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett, ‘The Rise of the Left and Working-Class Voting Behaviour in New Zealand: New Methods’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. xxxv, No. 4 (Spring 2005); Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett, ‘Cleavage within the Working Class? The Working-Class Vote for the Labour Party in New Zealand, 1911-51’, *Labour History*, Vol. 88 (May 2005); Alan Gamlen, ‘The Impacts of Extra-Territorial Voting: Swings, Interregnums and Feedback Effects in New Zealand Elections from 1914 to 2011’, in *Political Geography*, Vol. 44 (2015).

¹⁰ Only Daniels deals with the subject in any depth in an appendix to his 1961 Masters thesis. There has, as Roberto Rabel has argued, been ‘little scholarly analysis’ of the ‘social and cultural dimensions of New Zealand’s war experience’ more generally. See Roberto Rabel, ‘New Zealand’s Wars’, in Giselle Byrnes (ed.), *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 259.

¹¹ Elizabeth Kier and Ronald R. Krebs, ‘Introduction: War and Democracy in Comparative Perspective’ in Elizabeth Kier and Ronald R. Krebs (eds.), *In War’s Wake: International Conflict and the Fate of Liberal Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1-2; Elizabeth Kier, ‘War and Reform: Gaining Labor’s Compliance on the Homefront’, in Kier and Krebs (eds.), *In War’s Wake*, p. 139; Tony Judt, *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin, 2008), pp. 8-12; Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Belknap Press, 2014), p. 20, Translated by Arthur Goldhammer.

¹² See, for example, Kier and Krebs (eds.), *In War’s Wake*; Angus Calder, *The People’s War: Britain 1939-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969); Harold L. Smith (ed.), *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986); Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Indivar Kamtekar, ‘A Different War Dance: State and Class in India 1939-1945’, *Past and Present*, Vol. 176, No. 1 (2002).

¹³ For some notable exceptions see, Albert Grundlingh, ‘The King’s Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa’s Defence Force During the Second World War, 1939-45’, *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 40, Issue 3 (November, 1999); Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of*

The failure to interrogate the impact of military personnel on social and political change in the twentieth century appears anomalous considering the central place occupied by the citizen soldier in the western democratic tradition.¹⁴ This significant historiographical omission may be as much a consequence of a dearth of sources and ready methodologies as it is of historical oversight. Shifts in attitudes and opinions on the home front over time, especially in the case of the Second World War, can be gauged through the use of polling data such as that produced by Gallup, or by reference to Mass Observation studies in the case of Britain and man-on-the-street studies in the United States.¹⁵ The opinions of the armed forces, for obvious security reasons, were typically not recorded in that manner.¹⁶ Moreover, the results of elections, those events that provide the most definitive guide to shifting attitudes and mark measurable shifts in the path to political action, are, in the main, not broken down in a way that is amenable to differentiating the votes of armed forces personnel from those of the general public.

Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy; Richard Vinen, *National Service: Conscription in Britain 1945-1963*; Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Geoffrey Field, “‘‘Civilians in Uniform’’: Class and Politics in the British Armed Forces, 1939-1945’”, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 80, Fall 2011; James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). The few scholarly works that assess the impact of the soldiers’ attitudes and voting behaviours on political and social change include: J.A. Crang, ‘Politics on Parade: Army Education and the 1945 General Election’, *History*, Vol. 81, Issue 262 (1996); F.D. Tothill, ‘The Soldiers’ Vote and Its Effect on the Outcome of the South African General Election of 1943’, *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 21 (1989); F.D. Tothill, ‘The 1943 General Election’, Masters Thesis University of South Africa (1987); Daniels, ‘The General Election of 1943’; J.L. Granatstein, ‘The Armed Forces’ Vote in Canadian General Elections, 1940-1968’, *The Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (February 1969); Guy Grossman, Deborah Manekin and Dan Miodownik, ‘The Political Legacies of Combat: Attitudes Toward War and Peace Among Israeli Ex-Combatants’, *International Organisation*, Vol. 69, Issue 4 (September 2015).

¹⁴ Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London: Routledge, 1983); Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

¹⁵ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, pp. 55-9.

¹⁶ The best known works on opinions in the US Army are Samuel. A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath, Volume II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949) and S.L.A. Marshal, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (Gloucester, 1978).

This paper aims to take a step towards filling this gap in the historiography by making use of three categories of unexplored and under-explored sources. To begin with, a statistically robust social class profile of the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force (2NZEF) in the Second World War is compiled. Such information is ‘usually considered essential’ to understanding voting behaviours and social change.¹⁷ The New Zealand Defence Forces Headquarters library in Wellington New Zealand houses a detailed list of the names, rank, unit, conjugal status, place of enlistment, address, details of next-of-kin and occupation of the 113,847 men who embarked from New Zealand to fight in the Middle East and the Mediterranean theatres of the war between 1940 and 1945.¹⁸ The detailed list of occupations contained in these rolls allows the compilation of a social class profile of the 2NZEF (the first as far as this author is aware on any army in the Second World War).

By utilising reports based on the censorship of soldiers’ mail, the paper also explores in depth the hopes, aspirations and political views of the 2NZEF.¹⁹ These sources can be found in archives in New Zealand, Australia and South Africa; 101 weekly and biweekly reports, covering the period 13 June 1941 to 25 January 1944, survive from the period when the 2NZEF served in the Middle East;²⁰ a further 104

¹⁷ Olssen and Hickey, *Class and Occupation: The New Zealand Reality* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2005), p. 9.

¹⁸ Defence Library, New Zealand Defence Force, Nominal Rolls 1-15, Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force, 1940 to 1945. Some men would have embarked on a number of occasions.

¹⁹ The censorship summaries have been used by J. L. Scoullar, *Battle for Egypt: The Summer of 1942. Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-1945* (Wellington, 1955); John McLeod, *Myth and Reality: The New Zealand Soldier in World War II* (Auckland, 1986); Jonathan Fennell, *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein* (Cambridge University Press, 2011); Jonathan Fennell, ‘In Search of the ‘X’ Factor: Morale and the Study of Strategy’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37, Nos. 6-7 (2014); Jonathan Fennell, ‘Air Power and Morale in the North African Campaign of the Second World War’, *Air Power Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2012); Jonathan Fennell, “‘Steel my soldiers’ hearts”: El Alamein Reappraised’, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2011).

²⁰ South African Defence Force (SADF) Army Intelligence (AI) Group (Gp) 1 Box 43 Censorship Summaries Troops in Egypt, 1941 Parts 1 & 2; Australian War Memorial (AWM) 54 883/2/97 Part 1: Middle East Field Censorship: Part 1, Summary of British Troops in Egypt and Libya 1941; AWM 54

weekly censorship reports were collated in Italy, between November 1943 and October 1945.²¹ These reports were compiled from the examination of about 2,000 letters sent every week, or 10,000 letters every month, representing roughly 7 per cent of the total number of letters sent home by New Zealand soldiers during the war.²² The reports describe in detail the attitudes and state of morale of the 2NZEF; they cover issues widely and deeply, only expressing views that represented a considerable body of opinion among troops, not isolated instances of over-exuberance or ill-temper.²³ They, therefore, provide a reliable documented insight into the concerns of the 2NZEF and arguably rank alongside sources such as Gallop Polls and Mass Observation studies in terms of their significance to historians of social and political change in the Twentieth Century.

As well as the nominal rolls and censorship summaries, a third under-used source is examined in this paper, the detailed returns showing the number of votes recorded for each candidate at each polling-place in the 25th New Zealand general

883/2/97 Part 2: Weekly Summary, British Troops in Egypt and Libya, January to June 1942; Archives New Zealand (ANZ) WAI/1/DA508/1 Volumes 1, 2 3 & 4 Censorship Summaries, 1942 to 1944. The summaries for 9 to 16 December 1941 and 29 December 1943 to 11 January 1944 were not available in the archives.

²¹ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/3 1 & 2 NZ Field Censor Section Weekly Reports, 1943, 1944, 1945. Due to reorganisation of the censorship apparatus, two reports were compiled each week between the weeks ending 2 August 1945 and 6 September 1945. An additional 44 bi-weekly censorship reports were produced as part of the Central Mediterranean Force biweekly censorship reporting apparatus (November 1943 to September 1944). These reports summarised the information from the weekly summaries and were passed on to the War Office, Allied Forces HQ, HQ Allied Armies in Italy and GHQ Middle East. See National Archives (NA) War Office (WO) 204/10381 Appreciation and Censorship Reports: Nos. 1 to 52, 30 November 1942 to 15 September 1944; NA WO 204 10382 Appreciation and Censorship Reports: Nos. 53-77, September 1944 to September 1945.

²² ANZ WAI/1/DA 302/15/1-31 History 1 and 2 NZ Field Censor Sections, pp. 35-54; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/3 1 & 2 NZ Field Censor Section Weekly Reports, 1943, 1944, 1945. The weekly reports in Italy were compiled from the censorship of 237,792 air letter cards, airgraphs, green envelopes and ordinary letters.

²³ AWM 54 883/2/97 Middle East Field Censorship Weekly Summary (MEFCWS), No. I (12 to 18 November 1941), p. 1.

election of September 1943.²⁴ Throughout the war, those armies that were called on to defend democracy were also periodically required to partake in it. Due to the exigencies of a world war, troops were often overseas during these periods and enormous efforts were made to ensure that citizen soldiers were given the opportunity to vote. In the case of the 1943 New Zealand general election, serving military personnel voted in New Zealand, Canada, England, the Middle East and the Pacific. The number of votes cast in each of these locations for each candidate in each constituency was recorded and presented to both houses of the New Zealand General Assembly in 1944. This source offers historians one of very few opportunities to gain an insight into the military as opposed to the civilian franchise at a key moment in the political and social evolution of a country.²⁵

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New Zealand entered the Second World War having experienced a truly dramatic, and at times traumatic, 1920s and 30s. The prosperity expected after the First World War ‘did not materialise’.²⁶ During the 1920s, New Zealand sent on average at least 75 per cent of its exports to, and bought 50 per cent of its imports from, Britain. Thus, fluctuations in overseas demand hit New Zealand hard. With the onset of the Depression, export income nearly halved. The Conservative Government (a coalition

²⁴ Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33a; ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 Major W.A. Bryan, Report on the Conduct of the 1943 General Election in the Middle East.

²⁵ See, for example, Crang, ‘Politics on Parade’, *History*, Vol. 81, Issue 262 (1996); Tothill, ‘The Soldiers’ Vote and Its Effect on the Outcome of the South African General Election of 1943’, *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 21 (1989); Granatstein, ‘The Armed Forces’ Vote in Canadian General Elections’, *The Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (February 1969); Grossman, Manekin and Miodownik, ‘The Political Legacies of Combat’, *International Organisation*, Vol. 69, Issue 4 (September 2015); Jonathan W. White, *Emancipation: The Union Army and the Reelection of Abraham Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014).

²⁶ Philippa Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 146.

between the United Party and the Reform Party) slashed expenditure, provoking anger at its ‘seeming indifference to the needs of ordinary people’. ‘The principle of “no pay without work”’ (there was no payment of a ‘dole’) ‘led to massive public works schemes’. The government ‘laid off staff and re-employed them at relief rates. Arbitration in industrial disputes and union membership ceased to be compulsory’, giving more power to employers.²⁷

In the worst of the crisis, some cohorts of the male population (the Maori) suffered 40 per cent unemployment. More generally, unemployment fluctuated between 12 to 15 per cent for the depression years. This level of unemployment ‘overwhelmed charities and charitable aid boards’, etching the image of ‘the soup kitchen in popular memory’.²⁸ Although the experience of the Depression was varied, on the whole it did seem to align along class and occupational boundaries;²⁹ this ‘left a gulf between the unemployed and the employed, between workers – especially casual labour – and the privileged’ and the gap between rich and poor widened.³⁰

Politics during the inter-war years, much as was the case elsewhere in the Commonwealth, was dominated by conservative parties. In the 1920s, Labour gained some traction in the cities but mostly failed to garner mainstream support ‘until it abandoned its platform of socialisation, especially the nationalisation of land’.³¹ The turning point came with the Depression and in November 1935 Labour, led by Michael J. Savage, won a landslide victory. The Labour Party’s election manifesto

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 142-51; Margaret McClure, *A Civilised Community: A History of Social Security in New Zealand, 1898-1998* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998), p. 49.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 151-3.

²⁹ Tom Brooking, ‘Economic Transformation’, in Geoffrey W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 251.

³⁰ Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p. 152.

³¹ Ibid., p. 146.

promised to use the ‘wonderful resources of the Dominion’ to restore ‘a decent living standard’ to those who had ‘been deprived of essentials for the past five years’. It pledged to restructure the economy and to secure a comfortable standard of living for all.³²

The new Labour government believed that by increasing the purchasing power of the ordinary New Zealander, through state intervention in the economy and benefits, it would boost growth, and, as Philippa Mein Smith has argued, ‘it did’. Recovery from depression was ‘unusually fast’ and by 1938 real GDP per capita had risen by a third.³³ Unemployment remained stubbornly high;³⁴ nevertheless, Labour managed to change the narrative. It succeeded in closing the gap between rich and poor and through intervention in the economy, reforms to pensions, healthcare and unemployment benefits, culminating in the Social Security Act of 1938, a true social citizenship was born.³⁵

In language that would be echoed in the more radical aspects of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s four freedoms,³⁶ Walter Nash, Minister of Finance, argued that,

There is and can be no freedom in any real sense of the term so long as a large proportion of the population is perpetually faced with the fear of economic and social insecurity. What freedom did the unemployed have, under the last

³² Ibid., pp. 155.

³³ Ibid., pp. 154-6; McClure, *A Civilised Community*, pp. 48-93; Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 160.

³⁴ Brooking, ‘Economic Transformation’, in Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, p. 251.

³⁵ McClure, *A Civilised Community*, pp. 48-93.

³⁶ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, pp. 43-6. Roosevelt’s four freedoms were freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

government, to bring up a healthy and happy family? How free were the invalids who had to depend for their livelihood on the charity of others? How much liberty did the old people enjoy – trying to eke out a miserable existence on 17s 6d a week? Did the widows and the orphans and the sick appreciate the wonderful heritage of freedom and liberty bequeathed to them? ‘Freedom’ ... to the Labour Party ... involves above all else the right to enjoy the necessities of life and the amenities of a decent, civilised existence.³⁷

By 1939, it was apparent that New Zealand was firmly on the path towards building a progressive society where ordinary people were protected from the inherent uncertainty of the market and freed from anxieties and hardships caused by circumstances over which they had little control.³⁸

The new ‘social contract’ championed by the Labour Party after its election victory in 1935 came under sustained pressure on the outbreak of the Second World War. Both Fraser, who became the new Labour Prime Minister after Savage’s death in March 1940,³⁹ and Nash ‘saw the successful conduct of war as the primary goal of the government’. In Fraser’s first address to the Labour Party Conference as Prime Minister, in April 1941, he advocated patience and sacrifice for the duration of the conflict, and pledged the reward of social reconstruction to follow. The ambition of Labour to remove extremes of wealth and poverty should be left ‘in abeyance’, he declared, for ‘if the Nazis win we lose everything, and instead of remaining free men

³⁷ Quoted in McClure, *A Civilised Community*, p. 60.

³⁸ McClure, *A Civilised Community*, p. 83; Margaret Galt, ‘Wealth and income in New Zealand, c.1870 to c.1939’, PhD thesis, Victoria (1985); Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p. 124.

³⁹ Martin, *The House*, p. 212.

we become nothing more nor less than the slaves of a foreign ruling class'.⁴⁰ Plans for the implementation of universal superannuation, as laid out in the 1938 Social Security Act, were 'whittled down in size, and the final outcome was a token superannuation. The minimal rate of about four shillings a week (16s 8d a month) was too small to distribute in fortnightly payments and was paid in three-monthly amounts to make its insignificance less obvious'.⁴¹

To prevent inflation, Labour carried out a strict policy of stabilisation of prices and wages, gaining the support of trade unions to check workers' demands for wage rises. To compensate for 'the tight rein on wage levels' and the effects of additional war taxation, family benefits were raised. However, family benefits were means tested. 'If men worked long hours on farms or in factories, or mothers joined the workforce, and parents together earned more than the £5 weekly income limit, their family benefit was reduced pound for pound of earnings'. Workers were 'better off if they refused long hours or weekend work' and it 'became clear that the means test on family benefits was a barrier to full production'. As a consequence, the hopes of the government to 'obtain longer hours of work from the one-fifth of New Zealand families receiving the benefit were stalled'.⁴²

Workers protested against the means-test and the loss of family benefit, but, ironically, at least at the beginning of the war, 'workers' confidence' in New Zealand's Labour party guaranteed the Government more leeway than that enjoyed by administrations in other Allied countries. British unions, for example, 'were far more

⁴⁰ Quoted in McClure, *A Civilised Community*, p. 95; See also, Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', p. 240.

⁴¹ McClure, *A Civilised Community*, p. 96.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 97-8.

suspicious of their government enlarging wage packets through a family or motherhood allowance, and strongly opposed these supplements as a replacement for wage increases'.⁴³ The production boom in the United States was built on the widespread support of labour, influenced by significantly increased wages and the ready availability of overtime.⁴⁴

As the war progressed, the uneasy truce on the home front in New Zealand began to deteriorate. Labour had promised to avoid conflict about equality during the war; powers to conscript wealth were to equal those to conscript men. However, in reality, big business was booming while the standard of living of the ordinary worker was broadly stagnant; 'businessmen and manufacturers had guaranteed markets, sure sales, a disciplined labour force with set wages and conditions, and price margins which provided uninterrupted profitability, capital growth, and resources for further investment'.⁴⁵ By comparison, for the working class, opportunities 'to be upwardly mobile were poor ... and even sagged under the ... Labour government'.⁴⁶ This led to widespread strikes. In 1940, 28,100 working days were lost to strikes. In 1941, 26,200 were lost and in 1942, 51,200. The six years of the war (1940 to 1945) saw a 45 per cent increase in days lost to strike action compared with the six years preceding the conflict.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid., p. 97.

⁴⁴ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, pp. 113-17, 166.

⁴⁵ Robert Chapman, 'From Labour to National', in Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, pp. 367-8; Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, pp. 171, 200-1.

⁴⁶ Miles Fairburn and S.J. Haslett, 'Stability and Egalitarians: New Zealand, 1911-1951', in Miles Fairburn and Erik Olssen (eds.), *Class, Gender and the Vote: Historical Perspectives from New Zealand* (Otago: University of Otago Press, 2005), p. 25.

⁴⁷ G.T. Bloomfield, *New Zealand: A Handbook of Historical Statistics* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1984), p. 148.

It was apparent that Labour, in its desire to create a national war effort, was placing a disproportionate burden on the very constituency that had delivered it power. The parliamentary Labour Party was critical of this approach. An editorial in *Standard* noted, for example, that

Labour has never sought power by making a compact with its political enemies. It will not now yield its power to them. Labour was elected Government of this country by the largest vote ever accorded one party in the history of the country. It has a tremendous majority in the House of Parliament. It can make its decisions and carry them out without reference to any other group.⁴⁸

Fraser, by comparison, wished to maintain a 'degree of flexibility' in his dealings with industry and the political right in New Zealand.⁴⁹ Events forced Labour's hand. With the fall of France in June 1940, public opinion demanded national unity and on 16 July, Fraser announced the formation of a two-party War Cabinet made up of three Labour (Fraser, Nash, and Frederick Jones, the Minister of Defence) and two National representatives (Adam Hamilton, the leader of the National Party, and the former Prime Minister, Gordon Coates). In a constitutionally anomalous arrangement that reflected the split in the Labour Party over how to manage the war effort, New Zealand would have two cabinets; one, a War Cabinet, including the National representatives, would take major war related decisions, and another, a regular Labour Cabinet, would run domestic affairs.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', p. 11. The editorial was published in March 1941.

⁴⁹ Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', p. 11; Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 230.

⁵⁰ Guy H. Scholefield, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record, 1840-1949* (Wellington: R.E. Owen, 1950), p. 52; Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 197.

This arrangement pleased few. The Labour Party, in spite of Fraser's efforts, remained opposed to a national government.⁵¹ The National Party was so unimpressed that it removed its leader, Hamilton, and replaced him with Sidney Holland, who declined to take a seat in the War Cabinet that November (Hamilton and Coates remained in their posts regardless).⁵² With the fall of Singapore in February 1942, the stakes became even higher. The war was now a direct threat to New Zealand and with increasing strikes and industrial unrest, Fraser turned again to National. Fraser realised, in this time of national crisis, that he could not contain the demands of unions who fully expected the Labour government to support them against management, and viewed the refusal of Labour to do so as a betrayal. Strikes on the home front highlighted the 'glaring contrast' between those 'who, to a greater or lesser extent, were inflicting loss on the community in pursuit of sectional advantage', and the servicemen 'who had volunteered or been conscripted into risking their lives for the common interest'. According to F.L.W. Wood, the 'problem of maintaining industrial discipline' became 'worse than embarrassing for the Government'.⁵³

That June, a new War Administration was set up, including seven Labour and six National Ministers. The new arrangement, however, was 'as a constitutional device even more anomalous than its predecessor'. In order to ensure that all the Labour ministers kept their portfolios and that each National minister was responsible for some aspect of the direction of the war, considerable overlap of responsibilities was accepted. For example, Labour's Jones remained Minister of Defence while the former Prime Minister and opposition Member of Parliament Coates became Minister

⁵¹ Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 230.

⁵² Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', pp. 7-10; Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 198.

⁵³ Wood, *Political and External Affairs*, pp. 229-30 and 241-2.

of Armed Forces and War Co-ordination. As if to highlight the ad hoc nature of the agreement, the existing domestic cabinet remained in place.⁵⁴

A coherent and straightforward vision for the management of the New Zealand war effort did not materialise that summer. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the new War Administration lasted only until October, when a dispute at the Huntly mines highlighted the fundamental frictions and competing interests inherent in the deal. The standoff threatened to escalate into a national strike involving 1,200 miners. With Fraser in the United States, the new War Cabinet authorised legal proceedings against the miners (through the Strike and Lockout Emergency Regulations). Holland, deputy chairman of the War Cabinet and Leader of the Opposition, stated that,

This is a time for the strongest action . . . There can be no thought of any arrangement that interferes with the processes of the law by which those who break it are punished . . . The question of who is to rule this country must be settled once and for all.⁵⁵

This, surely, was exactly what National had been co-opted into the War Administration to do. However, on return to New Zealand, Fraser supported a very different course of action to that agreed in his absence. On 21 September, he recommended to a joint meeting of the War Administration and domestic cabinet that the mines should be taken under state control, the prosecution of the miners be cancelled and that the owners of the mine should be paid a return on their capital for

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 230-3; Guy H. Scholefield, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record, 1840-1949* (Wellington: R.E. Owen, 1950), p. 50; Martin, *The House*, p. 214; Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 230.

⁵⁵ Wood, *Political and External Affairs*, p. 235; Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 231.

the rest of the war. This was completely unacceptable to Holland, who advocated that the ring-leaders be imprisoned and the rest given forty-eight hours to get back to work or be drafted into the army. National decided to withdraw from the War Administration and in early October the six National Party members duly resigned. Fraser had neither guaranteed a truly egalitarian distribution of wartime sacrifices nor demonstrated the will to control labour when it predictably revolted. He admitted in parliament that ‘the basis of unity in the country’ had ‘been destroyed – irretrievably destroyed’, there could ‘be no trust between the two parties now’. ‘The best solution’, according to Holland, was to hold an election ‘as soon as’ the war situation permitted.⁵⁶

.....

It would be eleven long months before ‘the war situation permitted’ an election in New Zealand, with the votes of service personnel proving decisive to the Labour victory. ‘The most obvious starting point’ for investigating why the forces voted so overwhelmingly for Labour when the polls opened in September 1943 is the ‘socio-economic profile’ of the cohort.⁵⁷ Indeed, a hypothesis that the New Zealand armed forces of the Second World War were predominantly made up of a group of men likely to vote for a party with working class interests (Labour) does not seem

⁵⁶ Wood, *Political and External Affairs*, pp. 236-9; Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 232.

⁵⁷ Richard Mulgan, *Politics in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004), p. 274. While political scientists recognise that no ‘single theory of political motivation’ can capture the complexity of voting behaviour, it is apparent that voters are subject to a variety of standard influences; there are long-term social factors, such as class and family background, ‘as well as more immediate effects’, including situational factors, like, for example, ‘perceptions about the prime minister and the government of the day or about the policies of the competing parties’.

unreasonable.⁵⁸ In the First World War, the call-up system, as it operated in Britain, put a disproportionate strain on certain segments of society, especially skilled working class and lower middle-class men.⁵⁹ Studies on conscription in New Zealand in the First World War point to a similar dynamic.⁶⁰

To date, however, only one study has attempted to gauge the social class composition of a cohort of the New Zealand Army in the Second World War. John McLeod's revisionist work, *Myth and Reality: The New Zealand Soldier in World War II*, used a sample of 800 officers as evidence that appointments to leadership positions in the 2NZEF became more progressive over the course of the war. McLeod's approach was highly innovative, but his sample was not large enough to be conclusively representative; nor did it adequately encompass the class composition of Other Ranks (ORs) in the 2NZEF. Perhaps more importantly, it did not engage in comparisons with New Zealand society more generally.⁶¹

This study builds on McLeod's work to provide the first comprehensive and statistically robust social class survey of the New Zealand Army (and as far as this author is aware, any army) in the Second World War. Unlike most major developed countries, there is a distinct absence of consistent census data and scholarly literature

⁵⁸ Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 177. In an appendix to his 1961 Masters thesis, Daniels also argued that the forces vote was a product of the men's social class background. See Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', pp. 339-41. See also e.g. R. Anderson, 'Class Matters: The Persisting Effects of Contextual Social Class on Individual Voting in Britain, 1964-97', *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 18. No. 2 (2002), pp. 125-138.

⁵⁹ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 81 and 317.

⁶⁰ David Littlewood, "'Should He Serve?': The Military Service Boards' Operations in the Wellington Provincial District, 1916-1918' (Masters Thesis, Massey University, 2010), pp. 55-74.

⁶¹ McLeod, *Myth and Reality*, pp. 156-69. The study did show the percentage of Others Ranks with the occupations of solicitor, teacher, shop assistant and labourer in the first three echelons of 2NZEF. For works on the class and occupational structure of New Zealand, see Fairburn and Olssen (eds.), *Class, Gender and the Vote*; Erik Olssen and Maureen Hickey, *Class and Occupation: The New Zealand Reality* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2005).

on occupations and occupational structure in New Zealand.⁶² This matters, as the usual method for ascertaining social class categorises groups based on their position in a graded hierarchy of occupations.⁶³ As Erik Olssen and Maureen Hickey put it, in industrial societies,

Ideas about careers and occupations fused in complex ways to constitute occupation as a dimension of identity. Occupation also became the key determinant of the work one did, the pay or income one got, the quality of house one lived in and where it was situated, the level of risk of accident or illness, and one's life chances generally.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, the 1945 New Zealand census did not provide a social class breakdown by occupation; in fact, it wasn't until 1972 that W. Elley and J. Irving produced an occupational index, allowing scholars to make comparisons between population sub-sets and the population in general in New Zealand.⁶⁵ Elley and Irving

⁶² Melanie Nolan, 'Constantly On The Move, But Going Nowhere? Work, Community and Social Mobility', in Giselle Byrnes (ed.), *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 363; Olssen and Hickey, *Class and Occupation*, p. 17. A person's occupation can be defined by the kind of work he or she performs; the nature of the factory, business or service in which the person is employed is immaterial. For example, all clerks, whether employed in insurance or trade etc. would be classified as 'clerks' and grouped, in the context of the UK, as 'skilled' (Social Class III). See, General Register Office, *Census 1951: Classification of Occupations* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1956), p. v.

⁶³ David Rose, 'Official Social Classifications in the UK', *Social Research Update*, Issue 9 (July 1995), p. 2. Social classes or groups are based on a number of criteria, including the kind of work done, the nature of the operation performed, the degree of skill involved, the physical energy required, the environmental conditions and, perhaps most importantly, the social and economic status associated with the occupation. See, The Registrar General's Decennial Supplement: England and Wales, 1951. 'Occupational Mortality, Part II, Volume 1, Commentary' (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office), pp. 12-13.

⁶⁴ Olssen and Hickey, *Class and Occupation*, p. 13.

⁶⁵ W.B. Elley and J.C. Irving, 'A Socio-Economic Index for New Zealand Based on Levels of Education and Income from the 1966 Census', *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1972), p. 154. Elley and Irving used the median level of education and income reported for each occupation in the 1966 census combined, with equal weight, to arrive at their index of the status of each occupation. They later revised their scale to incorporate the International Standard Classification of Occupation which the New Zealand Census first used in 1971 (see W.B. Elley and J.C. Irving, 'Revised Socio-economic index for New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol.

segmented New Zealand society into six 'levels', or classes: level 1 included, for example, accountants, doctors, lawyers and university teachers; level 2 included bank managers, clergymen, artists, company directors and farmers; level 3 included bookkeepers, clerks, laboratory technicians and policemen; level 4, builders, fishermen, mechanics and electricians; level 5, blacksmiths, bus and truck drivers, textile and other factory workers; and level 6, farm and general labourers, janitors and miners.⁶⁶

To gauge the proportion of the army in each occupation grouping or social class in New Zealand, it was decided to cross reference data on the occupational background of the 2NZEF, contained in the nominal rolls of 2NZEF embarkations from New Zealand, with the social class category classifications from the study of Elley and Irving.⁶⁷ The occupational background of the 2NZEF was derived from a probability sample of embarkations, where each of the 113,847 men who embarked from New Zealand had an equal chance of being chosen.⁶⁸ The embarkation rolls were already organised alphabetically and the individuals selected for the sample were picked on a systematic basis i.e. one name was chosen from the middle of every second or third page of the embarkation rolls depending on the number of names on the page. When the individual's occupation was ascertained it was then assigned to a class category using the Elley and Irving classification. The total sample size was 1,244; thus at a 95 per cent confidence level there was a sample error of ± 2.8 per cent.

11, No. 1 (1976), pp. 25-36). The Elley and Irving classification is still widely used by researchers (see Olssen and Hickey, *Class and Occupation*, pp. 31-2 and 259.

⁶⁶ Elley and Irving, 'A Socio-Economic Index for New Zealand', pp. 161-2.

⁶⁷ The nominal rolls, 15 in total, contain information on the occupation of each emarkee, of every rank. They are housed in the Ministry of Defence Headquarters Library in Wellington, New Zealand. A more recent study by Olssen and Hickey, *Class and Occupation*, provides a detailed breakdown of the urban occupational structure of New Zealand in 1936. The work, however, does not provide a breakdown for rural occupations, and, therefore, was considered unsuitable for comparisons with a cohort that contained a considerable proportion of individuals with rural occupations.

⁶⁸ Some men would have embarked on a number of occasions.

As the 1945 census did not include social class categories, it was not possible to directly compare the 2NZEF social class composition with a contemporary social class breakdown of the New Zealand population. The 1966 census data on occupations grouped into classes by Elley and Irving is the earliest acceptable social class categorization; thus it was used as a proxy for the 1945 New Zealand national social class profile. There is, therefore, a twenty-one year gap between the Army sample and the analysis of the general population. Nevertheless, the social class composition of societies tends to change at a sufficiently gradual rate to make comparisons meaningful.⁶⁹

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Table One: The 2NZEF by Social Class.⁷⁰

Class	Army	1966 Census
I Higher Professional	5.3%	5.8%
II Lower Professional	9.5%	19.3%
III Clerical & Highly Skilled	13.3%	13.3%
IV Skilled	23.8%	28.2%
V Semi-skilled	22.6%	21.3%
VI Unskilled	25.5%	12.1%

The results show that the 2NZEF had a disproportionately small percentage (14.8 per cent) of the professional classes, levels I and II, as compared to the population at large (25.1 per cent). Skilled workers, level IV, were also under-

⁶⁹ Elley and Irving, 'A Socio-Economic Index for New Zealand', p. 159.

⁷⁰ Elley and Irving, 'A Socio-Economic Index for New Zealand', p. 159; Defence Library, New Zealand Defence Force, Nominal Rolls 1-15, Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force, 1940 to 1945. Elley and Irving did not name their different levels (or classes), but the terms 'higher professional', 'lower professional', 'clerical & highly skilled', 'skilled', 'semi-skilled' and 'unskilled' seem appropriate given the occupations included in each level (or class).

represented (23.7 per cent, as opposed to 28.2 per cent). Unskilled workers, level VI, by comparison, were represented to a disproportionately high extent (25.5 per cent in the 2NZEF as compared to 12.1 per cent in the general population). It is evident that the 2NZEF was, therefore, of lower occupation status than the population at large. Accordingly, the Army would have been, it could be argued, more likely to vote for Labour than for the right of centre National Party in the 1943 general election.

Detailed analysis of the forces vote, however, throws considerable doubt on this supposition. By aggregating the votes cast for each party from each military theatre in each constituency (see Table Two), it is evident that a greater proportion of those stationed in England voted Labour than those stationed in other theatres, such as the Pacific and Middle East.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

Table Two: Results of the 1943 New Zealand General Election: The Civilian and Forces Vote.⁷¹

Party	Civilian	NZ	Canada	Forces Pacific	ME	England	Forces Total*	Total
Number of Votes								
Labour	399,290	19,743	717	11,631	14,848	1,917	49,048	448,338
National	370,873	14,836	541	7,159	8,404	949	32,004	402,877
Dem Lab	34,405	2,700	62	1,475	1,800	113	6,164	40,629
Rest	45,042	2,271	72	1,126	1,381	131	5,002	49,775
Total	849,610	39,550	1,392	21,391	26,433	3,110	92,218	941,619
Percentage Vote								
Labour	47.00%	49.92%	51.51%	54.37%	56.17%	61.64%	53.19%	47.61%
National	43.65%	37.51%	38.86%	33.47%	31.79%	30.51%	34.70%	42.79%
Dem Lab	4.05%	6.83%	4.45%	6.90%	6.81%	3.63%	6.68%	4.31%
Rest	5.30%	5.74%	5.17%	5.26%	5.22%	4.21%	5.42%	5.29%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* The forces total includes 342 votes cast on the Chatham Islands and by the Mercantile Marine.⁷²

NZ=New Zealand; ME=Middle East. England includes a limited number of New Zealanders stationed in Greenland, Iceland and Gibraltar.

The vast majority of the 3,110 voters in the UK were Air Force personnel, individuals who were likely to have been of a higher social class than the majority of those in the 2NZEF.⁷³ Throughout the war, the British and Commonwealth armies continually struggled to find ‘good human material’ as the majority of the ‘best’

⁷¹ *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33a; ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 Major W.A. Bryan, Report on the Conduct of the 1943 General Election in the Middle East.

⁷² These were distributed: Labour 192 (56.14%), National, 115 (33.63%), Democratic Labour 14 (4.09%) and Others 21 (6.14%).

⁷³ H.L. Thompson, *Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-45: New Zealanders with the Royal Air Force, Vol. I* (Wellington: Government Printers, 1953), p. 388. The New Zealand Defence HQ Library, ‘Report of the National Service Department, 1946’, p. 15, reported that in October 1944 there were 4,086 New Zealand Air Force personnel in the UK. There were also 1,676 stationed in Canada. AJHR 1944 I H-33c, The General Election 1943, The Report of the Special Returning Officer in the United Kingdom, certainly gives the impression that the majority of voters were Air Force personnel. In December 1942, there were 5,085 New Zealanders serving with the RAF and based in the UK

intakes chose to join either the Royal Air Force (RAF) or the Royal Navy.⁷⁴ Nominal rolls, such as those used for the 2NZEF, are unfortunately not available for the airmen who served with the RAF in the United Kingdom. However, there are several books that include biographical information about New Zealand airmen in the Second World War.⁷⁵ Kenneth G. Wynn's study of New Zealanders with the Battle of Britain Clasp, for example, gives details of the occupations of 120 of the 131 men who were awarded this honour by the Battle of Britain Fighter Association or the Royal New Zealand Air Force.⁷⁶ This sample, although clearly too small to be statistically representative, suggests what one might expect, that New Zealand airmen were of a higher social class than those in the 2NZEF generally (see Table Three).

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

⁷⁴ Fennell, *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign*, p. 97; NA WO 163/123 Army No 72. Allocation of Man-Power in the Army: Statement of the WO Views on the 22nd Report of the Select Committee on National Expenditure (Session 1940-1941). Memorandum by the WO, 20 October 1941.

⁷⁵ Biographical information on New Zealand airmen is available in Kenneth G. Wynn, *A Clasp for 'The Few': A Biographical Account of New Zealand Pilots and Aircrew who Flew Operationally with RAF Fighter Command During the Battle of Britain, 10th July to 31st October 1940* (Auckland: Self Published, 1981); Colin Hanson, *By Such Deeds: Honours and Awards in the Royal New Zealand Air Force, 1923-1999* (Christchurch: Volpane Press, 2001); Ivan and Lorna Lindsey, *In the Heavens Above: British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, RNZAF Aircrew Training Canada, 1940-1945* (Christchurch: Willsonscott Publishing International, 2012); Paul Harrison, *Courage in the Skies: New Zealand Airmen at War* (Wellington: Grantham House, 2011).

⁷⁶ Wynn, *A Clasp for 'The Few'*, pp. xi-xiii.

Table Three: New Zealanders with a Battle of Britain Clasp by Social Class.⁷⁷

Class	New Zealanders with a Battle of Britain Clasp	The 2 NZEF
I Higher Professional	6.7%	5.3%
II Lower Professional	23.3%	9.5%
III Clerical & Highly Skilled	30.0%	13.3%
IV Skilled	23.3%	23.7%
V Semi-skilled	12.5%	22.7%
VI Unskilled	4.2%	25.5%

These figures indicate that the cohort in the UK was overall of higher social status than the 2NZEF generally. But that cohort exhibited the highest level of support for Labour in their votes. The voting behaviour of the New Zealand forces in the UK does not, therefore, support the argument that social class background was a key factor in shaping the forces vote.

Additionally, as there is no reason to believe that soldiers serving in New Zealand or the Pacific were of a different social class background to those in the Middle East, or that airmen serving in Canada were of a different social class background to those in the UK, social class can also be discounted as an explanation for the differences in their voting preferences. There appears, therefore, to be no clear association between the social class status of New Zealanders in the armed forces and their voting behaviours. This conclusion is consistent with recent research on the voting behaviour of the urban working class in New Zealand. Miles Fairburn and

⁷⁷ Elley and Irving, 'A Socio-Economic Index for New Zealand'; Wynn, *A Clasp for 'The Few'*, pp. 1-461.

Stephen Haslett have shown that the working class was by no means unfailingly inclined to vote for the left between 1911 and 1951.⁷⁸

It could be suggested that another factor played a role in the forces franchise, the situational influence arising from the soldiers' distance from the main election campaign arena and the length of time they were absent from that arena. J.R.S. Daniels has argued, for example, that the troops serving abroad had been isolated for too long from the cut-and-thrust of domestic politics in New Zealand. As a consequence, they were more likely to have voted for what they knew, incumbent local Members of Parliament, and to have been unaffected by the general decline in support for Labour that took place on the home front.⁷⁹ 47 of the 80 constituencies in the 1943 general election were contested by Labour incumbents, and, indeed, incumbents were generally more likely to win on the day.⁸⁰ However, while the percentage vote received by Labour incumbents did increase broadly in line with distance from New Zealand,⁸¹ the vote for National incumbents did not.⁸² It follows then that the variation in voting patterns outlined in Table Two cannot be explained

⁷⁸ Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett, 'The Rise of the Left and Working-Class Voting Behavior in New Zealand: New Methods', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. xxxv, No. 4 (Spring, 2005), pp. 542-6; Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett, 'Cleavage Within the Working Class? The Working-Class Vote for the Labour Party in New Zealand, 1911-51', *Labour History*, No. 88 (May, 2005), p. 194.

⁷⁹ Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', pp. 339-41.

⁸⁰ The New Zealand Official Yearbook, 1944, Section 45 "Miscellaneous"; Appendix to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944, Session I, H-33 and H-33A; Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', p. 339. Out of 69 incumbents who contested the 1943 election, 57 won (nearly 83 per cent). 39 out of 47 Labour incumbents won (83 per cent).

⁸¹ In constituencies where Labour incumbents stood, they received 51 per cent of the civilian vote, 54 per cent of the forces vote in New Zealand, 60 per cent in Canada, 61 per cent in the Pacific, 63 per cent in the Middle East and 69 per cent in the UK

⁸² In constituencies where National incumbents stood, they received 59 per cent of the civilian vote, 55 per cent of the forces vote in New Zealand, 54 per cent in Canada, 53 per cent in the Pacific, 51 per cent in the Middle East and 51 per cent in the UK. The New Zealand Official Yearbook, 1944, Section 45 "Miscellaneous"; Appendix to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944, Session I, H-33 and H-33A.

by changing propensities of soldiers voting for what they knew (sitting incumbents) the farther from the home country that they were based.⁸³

Additionally, in the sources examined for this study, there is every indication that in the lead up to the election Labour were just as unpopular with the troops overseas as they were on the home front. Before the disaster in Crete, Members of Parliament, who were serving on the front line, warned Fraser ‘that the average soldier was disenchanted with the government’.⁸⁴ An overall assessment of the censorship summaries leaves the reader in little doubt that with strikes back home and continued concerns about the unequal sacrifices being made as part of the New Zealand war effort, the Government was unpopular to an extent well beyond standard military grousing. It was anticipated that Labour would ‘receive a shock’⁸⁵ and ‘lose a number of seats’.⁸⁶ An OR wrote at the end of August 1943, ‘the attitude seems to

⁸³ Furthermore, there is little evidence, that those who volunteered early in the war, and were thus less in touch with New Zealand politics, were over represented in those theatres that voted overwhelmingly for Labour (the Middle East and the UK). By April 1943, casualties among New Zealand forces in North Africa came to around 18,500, 43 per cent of the total force that had been sent to the Middle East; of the first three echelons, the ‘Main Body’ of original volunteers, only 9,281 remained; the total number of votes cast in the theatre was 26,433. As regards the UK, New Zealanders in the RAF in the UK had already had 2,761 personnel killed or captured by December 1942; this represented close to 50 per cent of those serving in that particular theatre. Accordingly, many troops who voted had to have been relatively recent arrivals. New Zealand military personnel had begun arriving in Canada as early as October 1940 and in Fiji, in the Pacific, that November; these cohorts had the lowest percentages voting for Labour, yet were away from New Zealand for as long, if not longer, than many of those in the UK and the Middle East (see, Turnbull Library MS Papers 2183-31 Frederick Jones Papers, ‘First Middle East Furlough Draft’, p. 1; ANZ WAI/1/DA1/9/40/16 W.G. Stevens, ‘Notes on Relief of First Contingent’, 22 April 1943; Wood, *Political and External Affairs*, pp. 243-8; H.L. Thompson, *New Zealanders with the Royal Air Force, Vol. II. Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-45* (Wellington: Government Printers, 1953), p. 455; Ian McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Second World War: The People, the Battles and the Legacy* (Auckland: Hodder Moe Beckett, 2003), pp. 85-6; Lindsey, *In the Heavens Above*, p. 46). The total number of votes cast in the Middle East does not include 951 informal ballots (see ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 NZ General Election 1943: Forces Vote Middle East, Official Count, p. 17).

⁸⁴ Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, pp. 213-14.

⁸⁵ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 MEMCFS No. LVIII, 24 February to 9 March 1943, p. 21.

⁸⁶ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 MEMCFS No. LXXI, 25 August to 7 September 1943, p. 30.

be, anyone is better than them, the result being that many declare that they will vote for anyone in preference to Labour'.⁸⁷

Tours by several cabinet ministers to the Middle East before the election made little difference to this negative feeling among the troops. The Minister of Defence, Frederick Jones, for example, visited 2NZEF in March/April 1943. He did, according to one man, paint 'a glorious picture of what would be done for us after the war was over. We will be given a bungalow, plenty of work and everything would be rosey [sic]. Wasn't a bad political speech'. But, even this writer was sceptical that the promises made by Jones would be kept. On the whole, the visit, according to the censors, left units 'in a bad mood, having disliked the Minister's speech which had increased their disapproval of the N.Z. Govt. and the Yanks in N.Z., their worry about wives and girl friends, and their home sickness and war weariness'.⁸⁸

In many respects, National appeared a more credible option for the military vote. Fraser had strongly opposed conscription in the First World War and had spent twelve months in jail for sedition. Nash, the Minister of Finance, had been a 'Christian pacifist'.⁸⁹ By contrast, Holland had served in the war and gained a commission from the ranks before he was invalided home in 1917. He had lost his brother during the conflict.⁹⁰ So confident were National of their appeal among servicemen, that when the result of the soldiers' vote was announced, they were convinced that there had been some sort of irregularity in the voting. This suspicion was reinforced when it became known that the used ballot papers in the Middle East

⁸⁷ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 MEMCFS No. LXX, 11 to 24 August 1943, p. 30.

⁸⁸ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 MEMCFS No. LX, 24 March to 6 April 1943, p. 23.

⁸⁹ Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 171; ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 *NZEF Times*, 15 September, 1943.

⁹⁰ ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 *NZEF Times*, 15 September, 1943.

had been destroyed rather than returned to New Zealand as required by law. A Select Committee of the House was set up to inquire into the matter. It found that Major W.A. Bryan, the special returning officer sent out from New Zealand to conduct the poll, had approached the military authorities to have the papers returned to New Zealand, but had been told that no shipping space was available. Had the enemy been able to capture the material, the strength of the New Zealand forces in the Middle East would have been accurately known and its security endangered. It was, therefore, decided to burn all the election material, including the used ballot papers. The committee decided that though Bryan had committed 'an error of judgement', the episode was not in the least sinister.⁹¹

.....

If the social class of the cohort polled or issues such as time away from and distance from New Zealand were not decisive to the forces vote, the question then arises whether another factor might have encouraged the forces to vote Labour in September 1943. The pattern of voting across theatres and the censorship summaries, for instance, suggest that the attitudes of the forces were in many ways affected by the experience of the war itself and that it was this more immediate dynamic that impacted decisively on voting behaviour.

As can be seen in Table Two, Labour's share of the vote increased in line with one important aspect of the wartime experience, proximity to combat. Labour received 47 per cent of the civilian vote, 50 per cent of the vote of those military

⁹¹ Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', pp. 334-6. Nevertheless, the National Party felt aggrieved and their members of the committee contended that the report had been a 'whitewash'.

personnel training in New Zealand, 52 per cent of the vote of those who had left New Zealand and were mostly training in the Air Force in Canada, 54 per cent of the vote from 3rd Division who had experienced minor operations in the Pacific and were now undergoing training at Guadalcanal, 56 per cent of the vote from 2nd Division who were recovering from major operations in the desert and Tunisia and preparing for the next phase of the war in Italy and 62 per cent of those serving in the UK, mostly Air Force personnel, who were ‘almost continuously engaged’ in highly hazardous bombing missions over the towns and factories of Europe.⁹²

The censorship summaries indicate that the war made soldiers more aware of the limits of individualism and the degree to which they were dependent on their fellow citizens for prosperity, security and wellbeing. Almost every aspect of the soldiers’ lives required cooperation, sharing and teamwork, the more so the closer to combat they got; extreme individualism or selfish behaviour was not only undesirable and inefficient but potentially life threatening. The censors, throughout the war, bore testimony to the ‘mutual trust, confidence and comradeship between all ranks’ in New Zealand units.⁹³ As a sergeant wrote in December 1943, ‘the spirit of the troops is really great. We live with the same chaps month in and month out without contact with English speaking civilians . . . in the talks we have at night the view on all types

⁹² Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33c, p. 2.

⁹³ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. L, 4 to 17 November 1942, p. 17; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXXI, 12 to 25 January 1944. See also, for example, S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (Alexandria: Byrrd Enterprises, 1947); Samuel A. Stouffer *et al*, *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949); Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behaviour of Men in Battle* (London: Cassell, 1985).

of subjects is most interesting'.⁹⁴ Such comradeship was all the more powerful in battle, as 'a stink' as another man put it, could 'do a lot to weld us together'.⁹⁵

Concepts of fairness and egalitarianism became deeply embedded in the 2NZEF.⁹⁶ As an OR wrote in May 1943, 'all we want is a fair deal'.⁹⁷ The troops railed against anything that smacked of privilege or 'the old school tie'.⁹⁸ Replacement officers arriving from New Zealand in 1943 had to revert to Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) rank upon arrival in the Middle East as it just would not have been fair for 'a chap with tons of desert service' to take orders from a 'rookie'.⁹⁹ Those at the front were clearly confident that the very specific and extreme experience of 'fighting side by side' had changed opinions and would lead to 'closer co-operation' after the war;¹⁰⁰ 'We are all one big family', a man in the 28th Maori Battalion wrote, 'with no such thing as tribal differences. Each individual works not for the good of his tribe or Coy. [Company] but for the good of the ... whole'.¹⁰¹

The censorship summaries demonstrate that there was an overwhelming sense among the troops that gross inequalities and unfairness at home too had to be addressed, and it was the responsibility of the state (the Government) to do so.¹⁰²

⁹⁴ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/3 2 NZ Field Censor Section Weekly Report No. 4, 13 to 18 December 1943, Part II, p. 1.

⁹⁵ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXV, 20 October to 2 November 1943, p. 26.

⁹⁶ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXIII, 5 to 18 May 1943, p. 24; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXVI, 8 to 21 September 1943, p. 26; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/3 2 NZ Field Censor Section Weekly Report No. 34, 16 to 22 July 1944, Part II, p. 3.

⁹⁷ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 4 MEMCFS No. LXIII, 5 to 18 May 1943, p. 24.

⁹⁸ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. L, 4 to 17 November 1942, p. 18.

⁹⁹ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXI, 25 August to 7 September 1943, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXV, 2 to 15 June 1943, p. 21. This was especially noted in relation to Maori and Pakeha.

¹⁰¹ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LVI, 27 January to 9 February 1943, p. 23.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. L 4 to 17 November 1942, p. 18; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXVII, 30 June to 13 July 1943, p. 24; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXVI, 3 to 16 November 1943, p. 23; ANZ

Equality of sacrifice was much more than a catch phrase; the men believed that they had the right to expect others to do as much as them. After all, they were fighting for a free, democratic and egalitarian society.¹⁰³

The manner in which the respective political parties addressed issues of fairness, social justice and the role of the state ('big Government') was, therefore, key to their support among the troops in the election. As much as elections can be a ballot on the performance of an incumbent, they are also about a vision for the future, and, in the case of the forces vote, a vision for which it had to be deemed worth fighting and perhaps dying.

In the Middle East, a theatre that was broadly representative of how the election was fought in all the locations where New Zealand forces voted in 1943,¹⁰⁴ the men first heard of the probability of an election at the beginning of March 1943. The matter received 'little interest'¹⁰⁵, much as was the case on the home front,¹⁰⁶ and the Government showed hardly any more; Fraser remarked early in the year that 'I do not think that men in Egypt think about politics at all'.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps as a consequence, there was little urgency in efforts made by the Government to organise the overseas forces vote. W.G. Stevens, the Officer in Charge of Administration in the 2NZEF, asked on two occasions (with little effect) for party policy statements to be sent to the

WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXVII 17 to 30 November 1943, p. 22; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXXI, 12 to 25 January 1944.

¹⁰³ Turnbull Library MS Papers 2183-31 Frederick Jones Papers, 'First Middle East Furlough Draft'; Wood, *The New Zealand People at War*, p. 269; McLeod, *Myth and Reality*, p. 151; ANZ WAI/8/70 Defender to Main 2 NZ Division, 13 January 1944.

¹⁰⁴ Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33c. It is worth noting, for example, that the same electioneering information and material was distributed to forces personnel in all voting locations.

¹⁰⁵ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 MEMCFS No. LXII, 21 April to 4 May 1943, p. 24.

¹⁰⁶ Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 246.

¹⁰⁷ Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', p. 332.

theatre, so that they would reach the troops at least three weeks before the election. Bryan, the special returning officer, only arrived in the Middle East with the 10th Reinforcement on 18 August. With his arrival, preparations began to gather pace. Bryan set about investigating the dispositions of the troops and put together a staff of 22 clerks and typists, some with parliamentary experience, to record and count the vote.¹⁰⁸ 104 polling stations were set up throughout theatre and all units were instructed to appoint a polling officer.¹⁰⁹

The soldiers' newspaper, *NZEF Times*, began its election coverage on 2 August and a week later it announced the date of the poll. Even the local Egyptian newspapers gave the issue some attention. Posters presenting information regarding regulations, voting facilities and nominated candidates were 'distributed liberally' to all units of the 2NZEF, as well as to the New Zealand Forces Club, the New Zealand YMCA and all Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI). The *NZEF Times* repeatedly emphasised the soldiers' 'right' and 'duty' to vote and encouraged the men to engage meaningfully with the election. However, with no information on party policies having arrived, and with Bryan having neglected to bring any election literature with him to the Middle East, Bernard Freyberg, the General Officer Commanding 2NZEF, who had stood as a Liberal Party candidate in Cardiff South in the UK in 1922, cabled the Government on 21 August urging that election material be

¹⁰⁸ ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 Major W.A. Bryan, Report on the Conduct of the 1943 General Election in the Middle East, pp. 1-5; Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33c, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 Major W.A. Bryan, Report on the Conduct of the 1943 General Election in the Middle East, pp. 11-12. these men attended a lecture on 9 September to be instructed in their duties.

ready for distribution by 9 September, three days before the planned vote on 12 September.¹¹⁰

On 11 September, the New Zealand Division began to move to a new training area in preparation for its upcoming involvement in the Italian Campaign. The next day, it halted to carry out the voting. However, as information on the parties' manifestos had still not arrived, Freyberg and Bryan decided to delay the vote; this was too late in the day to prevent the first 6,000 votes being cast.

The election statements of the parties eventually arrived on 13 September and on 15 September they were released in the *NZEF Times*.¹¹¹ Each party was given an allocation of space broadly in line with the number of seats that they were contesting, Labour 49 column inches, National 45, Democratic Labour 29, the Independent Group 23 and the Real Democracy Movement 6. The three sitting Independents, Harry Atmore, Bill Barnard and Herbert Kyle, were each allowed a 100-word message. These policy statements were printed in all the forces newspapers throughout the world and were distributed at around the same date in each theatre.¹¹²

The Labour Party's policy statement stressed what Labour had already done for soldiers and for their loved ones at home. Significantly, it also looked to the

¹¹⁰ Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', pp. 336-7; ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 Major W.A. Bryan, Report on the Conduct of the 1943 General Election in the Middle East, pp. 5-7. This file contains election related clippings from the *NZEF Times* for 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 August, 6, 13, 15, 20, 27 September 1943, 4, 11 October 1943 and 1 November 1943, *Air Force News* for 7 September 1943 and the *Egyptian Gazette* for 23 September 1943. See also, Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 176.

¹¹¹ ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 Major W.A. Bryan, Report on the Conduct of the 1943 General Election in the Middle East, pp. 6-11. According to Freyberg, these election statements were the only policy information received by the men (see Atkinson, *Adventure in Democracy*, p. 154).

¹¹² Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', pp. 332-3; Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33c.

future. It promised the 'most generous war pension system in the world'. Employment would be guaranteed for all ex-servicemen. For those who wanted to study, there would be free or subsidised education. It was full of facts and figures, but, importantly, in the context of the soldiers' experience of the war, one concept ran like a thread through the whole document, fairness. 'Ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen', pronounced the statement, 'must come first in the national development because they have been first in the defence of our country and all that people cherish'. 'What happened after 1914-18' would 'not happen again'.¹¹³

The statement made great play of the Servicemen's Settlement and Land Sales Act, which had been introduced in August just before the House rose. The legislation aimed to facilitate the settlement on the land of discharged servicemen at reasonable prices, and in general to prevent speculation in land or undue increases in prices.¹¹⁴ According to Daniels, 'pressure had been growing for some time for control of land values, which had risen spectacularly since 1939'. The failure of soldier settlement after the First World War had mainly been attributed to the high price of land. The Labour party argued that the Government had 'to take strong action and get land at a fair price for soldiers'¹¹⁵ and that this would be best achieved by giving it power to take over land suitable for subdivision and by controlling the price of all land sales.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 *NZEF Times*, 15 September, 1943.

¹¹⁴ Wood, *The New Zealand People at War*, p. 264; Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 250.

¹¹⁵ Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', pp. 262-3.

¹¹⁶ Wood, *The New Zealand People at War*, p. 264.

Such policies resonated with the troops. The censorship summary for the 2NZEF in the Middle East, 8 to 21 September, showed that writers were ‘taking a deeper interest in post war problems’.¹¹⁷ A Padre wrote,

I tried an experiment which proved very successful. On church parade I preached a rather controversial sermon on post war reconstruction and invited everybody in the evening to come to a kind of ‘open-forum’ debate in the hangar which is my recreational place. Well, when I strolled along there ten minutes before I had intended starting, the place was packed, there was hardly standing room . . . After a few preliminary remarks from me I invited one officer to give his idea of post war things from the financial point of view – this much was pre-arranged – and after that there was no holding them, chaps popped up and said their say about all sorts of things – but the chief topics were freehold or leasehold land and state housing. They were still going strong at 10.15 when I closed it for supper and at 11.30 when I went to put out the light, there was one group still arguing. Every tent seems to have become a debating society.¹¹⁸

The National Party, the press, farming groups, real-estate agents, chambers of commerce and the Law Society vehemently opposed the Servicemen’s Settlement and Land Sales Act. National complained that the Government was using the rehabilitation of servicemen as a cloak for pushing its socialistic schemes and that the act would operate unfairly against the holders of property in land or houses.¹¹⁹ Here lay the essential difference between the two parties. It was not that the National party

¹¹⁷ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXII, 8 to 21 September 1943, p. 26.

¹¹⁸ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXII, 8 to 21 September 1943, p. 26.

¹¹⁹ Wood, *The New Zealand People at War*, p. 264. The bill established prices on 15 December 1942 as a base price for land in spite of the fact that since then prices had risen by nearly 70 per cent (see Bassett and King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song*, p. 250).

manifesto was devoid of its own narrative of fairness, but that the Labour manifesto clearly advocated fairness as it was understood by the troops.

The National Party statement to the forces emphasised personal freedoms as an immutable principle and interest. It promised to give New Zealanders

Freedom to live their own lives in their own way without bureaucratic dictation, to live in a system of competitive free enterprise, to own their own homes; freedom for our returning servicemen to follow the occupation of their choice without having to go cap in hand to the Government for a licence to earn a livelihood.¹²⁰

The weakness of this perspective, the Labour manifesto countered, was that the ‘old competitive style of market values’ championed by the Nationals really meant that the prosperity of ordinary citizens would be subject to the whims of ‘speculators’ and ‘vested interests’, the ‘wolves of commerce’.

In many other ways, the National Party policy statement echoed that of Labour. It promised to maintain wages and social services, and indeed to extend social security benefits. It pledged ‘jobs for all’ and to ‘remove the avoidable causes of want’.¹²¹ But, it was not the similarities in appeals that mattered to the troops, it was the underlying differences in ethos. It is clear from the censorship summaries that having seen and experienced the war, and the manner in which the state was able to mobilise its resources for destruction, the men believed that the state could also play a

¹²⁰ ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 *NZEF Times*, 15 September, 1943; John E. Martin, *The House: New Zealand's House of Representatives 1854-2004* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2004), p. 214

¹²¹ ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 *NZEF Times*, 15 September, 1943.

positive role in a prosperous and fair peace, defined by the ideals and practice of social justice.¹²²

On 19 September, voting in the Middle East finally took place.¹²³ The men cast their ballots overwhelmingly for Labour. They had been given very little time, only four days instead of the planned three weeks, to absorb the parties' statements and reflect on their voting preferences.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that, on the whole, what information was available was more than sufficient for the needs of the soldiers. By mid-August, the censors had already begun to note that 'with the proximity of elections' there was 'more discussion' about politics and the New Zealand Government.¹²⁵ Those tasked with administering the forces vote certainly took the view that service personnel had been given enough time and information to

¹²² See, e.g., ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. L 4 to 17 November 1942, p. 18; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXVII, 30 June to 13 July 1943, p. 24; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXXVI, 3 to 16 November 1943, p. 23; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXXVII 17 to 30 November 1943, p. 22; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXXI, 12 to 25 January 1944.

¹²³ Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', p. 338.

¹²⁴ Daniels, 'The General Election of 1943', pp. 339-41. The delay had certainly not been the fault of the National Party, which had submitted its material in adequate time for distribution. The Labour material, on the other hand, had been six days late, delaying the whole process. Some, as a result, thought that the whole election 'was a waste of time'. One man wrote that some 'finish up by shutting their eyes and stabbing their fingers on a name as though they were playing hickery, dickery, dock'. One Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) wrote, 'it would seem that the gentlemen running the Dominion of Noo Zillund hope to creep back to parliament on our votes – they hope we'll vote for them since we know what they'll do and have no idea of anybody else's policy'. This dissatisfaction was reflected in a higher proportion (2.7 per cent) of informal ballots (spoilt votes) in the military vote as compared to the civilian vote (1.0 per cent). In the UK, F.T. Sandford, the Special Returning Officer, spent much of his time tracking down New Zealand personnel, who were dispersed among the many RAF squadrons, rather than disseminating information on party manifestos. As a result, 'quite a number of ballot-papers were returned from the stations with notes from the polling officers that the men for whom they were intended did not wish to vote'. In Canada, nominations were only received on 10 September and the material for the election news sheet the next day. This information was only circulated to the troops on 14 September. In the Pacific theatre, polling commenced in some areas as early as 16 September even though party manifestos were only distributed in the rear areas on 12 September and to troops at the front on 14 and 15 September. See (ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 MEMCFS No. LXXI, 25 August to 7 September 1943, p. 30; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 MEMCFS No. LXXII, 8 to 21 September 1943, p. 26; ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 NZ General Election 1943: Forces Vote Middle East Official Count; Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33c, 'Report on the Conduct of the General Election in United Kingdom, Gibraltar and Iceland, 'New Zealand Elections in America' and 'Pacific Area, General Election 1943').

¹²⁵ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXX, 11 to 24 August 1943, p. 30. See also, ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXII, 8 to 21 September 1943, p. 26.

engage with the election and make reasoned use of their franchise. F.T. Sandford, the Special Returning Officer in the UK, noted that ‘I feel satisfied that those who did not register have not the excuse that they had not sufficient information’.¹²⁶ The Special Returning Officer in the Pacific pointed out that in the circumstances the delivery of election material ‘could not have been done with greater promptitude’ and that in spite of all the difficulties experienced ‘the list of candidates was given every prominence in all places where troops assembled and was posted up in all polling-booths’.¹²⁷

Bryan was convinced that the New Zealand forces in the Middle East had been ‘election conscious’ and that they had shown a ‘considerable interest’ in the election process. This view is largely confirmed by a turnout figure of 88 per cent, a remarkable statistic in the circumstances and greater than the 83 per cent turnout by New Zealand civilians.¹²⁸ Turnout was even more impressive in the Pacific where 97 per cent of the ‘estimated voting strength of all services’ voted.¹²⁹ In the UK, where the bulk of serving New Zealanders were in the Air Force, 75 per cent of those who registered voted; the ‘inclination to vote’ was, according to Sandford, ‘naturally not as keen as it would have been in units composed solely of fairly large numbers of New Zealanders’.¹³⁰ Of approximately 1,900 men entitled to vote in or near North

¹²⁶ Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33c, Report on the Conduct of the General Election in United Kingdom, Gibraltar and Iceland.

¹²⁷ Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33c, Pacific Area, General Election 1943.

¹²⁸ ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 Major W.A. Bryan, Report on the Conduct of the 1943 General Election in the Middle East, pp. 7, 14-17, 26; Daniels, ‘The General Election of 1943’ and WAI/1/DAZ121/9/A32/1 HQ 3 Division, Officer Records, General Elections, 1943. Every member of 2NZEF, even those who were not on the electoral register in New Zealand, was entitled to vote.

¹²⁹ Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33c, Pacific Area, General Election 1943.

¹³⁰ Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33c, p. 2.

America, 1,443 voted, a turnout of 76 per cent.¹³¹ While, therefore, in some theatres the forces turnout was less than that of the civilians in New Zealand, it was still a very substantial participation in the democratic process under extraordinarily difficult conditions.¹³²

In the final analysis, it appears clear that the men had sufficient time to reflect and vote on the issues most relevant to them, the role of fairness, social justice and the state in society. The more actively engaged voters were in the war effort, the more important these issues became. A spirit of social cohesion had emerged from the exigencies of combat cohesion, with profound results for the future of New Zealand.

.....

To conclude, the complexity behind the development of social citizenship in New Zealand has, as Margaret McClure has argued, been ‘concealed by accounts of the community’s consensus of support for the welfare state’.¹³³ To this we might add the observation that ‘the main interest in the 1943 election’ should not be in its place in the ‘development of electoral trends in the nineteen-thirties and forties’, but in the ‘culmination of political developments that were a direct result of the war’.¹³⁴ The continuation of New Zealand’s great adventure in social citizenship in the twentieth century, which had been set in motion by Labour’s victory in 1935 and consolidated

¹³¹ Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1944 Session I, H-33c, New Zealand Elections in America.

¹³² These figures indicate that voter turnout, which can sometimes be a decisive factor in determining the results of elections (see Mulgan, *Politics in New Zealand*, pp. 269-73), was not central to the forces vote in 1943. It should be noted, for example, that the Labour Party received its highest share of the vote in the UK (a theatre with a low turnout) and its second highest share of the vote in the Middle East (a theatre with a high turnout).

¹³³ McClure, *A Civilised Community*, p. 95.

¹³⁴ Daniels, ‘The General Election of 1943’, p. i. For more on this, see Kier, ‘War and Reform’, in Kier and Krebs (eds.), *In War’s Wake*, p. 161.

in the 1938 Social Security Act, hinged to no small degree on the voting preferences of the cohort of citizens who fought in the Second World War.

In the early years of the war, Labour in New Zealand had echoed Churchill's approach to the conflict more than that of Roosevelt in the United States. Churchill 'engaged little with domestic politics' and saw debate about social change and reconstruction 'as a distraction from his main task'.¹³⁵ By contrast, Roosevelt sought to unite the domestic and martial elements of the war effort. In a radio broadcast on 11 January 1944, he told the American people that 'there is only one front. There is one line of unity which extends from the hearts of the people at home to the men of our attacking forces in our farthest outposts'. Roosevelt understood the need to garner widespread support for the war by engaging meaningfully with social conditions on the home front. By succeeding in this endeavour, he laid the foundations for victory on the battlefield and for four decades of 'big Government' in America.¹³⁶ It is worth noting that Roosevelt won re-election in 1944; Churchill dramatically failed to do the same in 1945.

In New Zealand, Labour institutionalised a split between home and front by creating dual cabinets to administer the domestic and martial aspects of the war. It was only by figuratively promising in the 1943 Labour manifesto to renew the 'social contract', so powerfully encapsulated in the 1938 Social Security Act, that the party reconnected with the citizen-soldier and ultimately survived the election.

¹³⁵ Toye, *The Roar of the Lion*, pp. 97-205.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-9. 44.

The Second World War clearly had, as so much of the historiography has shown, a considerable effect on civilians. But, it also profoundly affected those serving on the front line. Active engagement in the war effort fostered communitarian and egalitarian attitudes that were to impact greatly on voting preferences. The censorship summaries show that the men wrote about and were deeply concerned by issues such as social security, socialism, lack of control over profiteering, rights and class.¹³⁷ The basic expectation was that the men, the home front and the state would all ‘pull together’.¹³⁸ In December 1943, as the men wrote home after the receipt of mail from New Zealand covering the period of the election campaign, it was clear to the censors that the ‘large majority’ appeared to ‘approve of the re-election of the Labour Govt.’. An officer wrote, capturing the mood of the men,

The Labour Members may not be ‘gentlemen’, they are rather working men; honest and vigorous, but their policy, before and during the war, has made little NZ one of the most respected and envied countries in the world. Sir William Beveridge acknowledges the debt of his much lauded plan to the Social Security Scheme of the Labour Party ... All in all they are the only party with a definite progressive policy.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. L 4 to 17 November 1942, p. 18; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXVII, 30 June to 13 July 1943, p. 24; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXVI, 3 to 16 November 1943, p. 23; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXVII 17 to 30 November 1943, p. 22; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 3 & 4 MEMCFS No. LXXXI, 12 to 25 January 1944.

¹³⁸ ANZ WAI/1/DA508/1 Vol 4 MEMCFS No. LVIII, 24 February to 9 March 1943, p. 21.

¹³⁹ NA WO 204/10381 CMF and BNAF, Appreciation and Censorship Report No. 35, 16 to 31 December 1943, p. C3; ANZ WAI/1/DA508/3 2 NZ Field Censor Section Weekly Report No. 4, 13 to 18 December 1943, Part II, p. 2. The success of Democratic Labour, which stood to the Left of the Labour party, can be explained in a similar light. It championed a comparable set of social and economic policies to Labour, but with the added carrot of a ticket home to New Zealand. Its manifesto stated: ‘We believe the Middle East forces should be returned to New Zealand for a rest and that those troops with the longest period of active service should not be called upon to reinforce our division in the Pacific until men with no active service have had their turn’. See Wood, *The New Zealand People at War*, p. 265; ANZ WAI/1/DA565/1 *NZEF Times*, 15 September, 1943.

War, as George Orwell wrote, ‘above all . . . brings home to the individual that he is *not* altogether an individual’.¹⁴⁰ Parties, such as Labour, that harnessed this ideal and emphasised the role of the state in arbitrating between sectional interests in society, were better placed than those that emphasised personal freedoms and the market economy to benefit from these dynamics. Taking the Labour and Democratic Labour vote in 1943 together, the ‘left leaning’ vote was 51 per cent among civilians in New Zealand and 65 per cent among the mostly Air Force personnel serving in the UK, the most dangerous part of the war effort for New Zealanders in September 1943 (see Table Two). For the soldiers who fought and the communities they represented, the meaning of the war went far beyond victories and defeats on the battlefield. In the case of New Zealand, Labour’s great experiment in social citizenship in the Twentieth Century could arguably have floundered had it lost the 1943 general election. The votes of service personnel politicised by their experience of the Second World War proved decisive. A spirit of social cohesion had emerged from the exigencies of combat cohesion, with profound results for the future of New Zealand.

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¹⁴⁰ George Orwell, ‘The Lion and the Unicorn’, in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters, Vol. 2* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970), p. 117.