

1950 - key events

British Empire Games come to Auckland



These were the first Empire Games (the forerunner to the Commonwealth Games) held since the Second World War. The main venue was Eden Park, which usually hosted rugby and cricket matches. The closing ceremony was held at Western Springs Stadium and the rowing regatta at Lake Karapiro in Waikato, 150 km away.

Over the course of the week a total of 250,000 spectators watched athletes from 12 countries compete. New Zealand's 175-strong team finished third on the medal table with a total of 54 medals, its second-best return at any Empire, Commonwealth or Olympic Games (after the 1990 Commonwealth Games haul of 58 medals, again at Auckland).

War in Korea



New Zealand service personnel were dispatched as part of a commitment to the United Nations' intervention in the Korean War. The navy frigates HMNZS *Tutira* and *Pukaki* departed for the Korean peninsula in July. In response to a further plea from the UN, the government agreed to commit a 1000-man ground force as part of a Commonwealth formation. Comprising the 16th Field Regiment of artillery and small ancillary units, Kayforce, as it was known, left in December and arrived in Pusan on New Year's Eve. A total of 4700 New Zealanders were to serve

as Kayforce.

Death penalty reinstated



When the Labour Party took office in 1935 it commuted all death sentences to life in prison. In 1941 the death penalty for murder was abolished. National reintroduced the ultimate sanction for murder. Over the next seven years eight men would be executed, the most in any decade in the 20th century. When Labour returned to office in 1957 it made the death penalty inoperative. A conscience vote in Parliament in 1961 saw the death penalty for murder finally abolished in New Zealand.

Tragedy at North Rock



On 28 December 1950 the passenger launch *Ranui*, on a holiday trip to Mayor Island, was struck by a single, massive wave. The boat capsized and was smashed to pieces on North Rock in Tauranga Harbour. Of the 23 passengers, only one survived. The *Ranui* was a new vessel, soundly constructed of kauri, and had been in service for only a matter of weeks.

The court of enquiry held no one to blame for the tragedy.

Other events in 1950:

- In June the government ended petrol and butter rationing, finally lifting restrictions introduced during the Second World War.
- The last 25 Legislative Councillors, known as the 'suicide squad', were appointed by the National government to ensure the Legislative Council Abolition Bill was passed. The Council sat for the final time on 1 December 1950 (the Act came into effect on 1 January 1951).
- TEAL (Tasman Empire Airways Ltd) launched a new flying boat service carrying 27 passengers between Evans Bay, Wellington, and Sydney. TEAL had been operating Solent flying boats between Sydney and Mechanics Bay, Auckland, since 1940.
- The death in December of wartime Labour Prime Minister Peter Fraser seemed to signal the end of an era dominated by the Depression and the Second World War.

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