

living in the same department -- such as a displaced person -- he/she could vote at the national level. In total, 7,000 voting tables with ballot boxes -- each box providing for a maximum of 500 ballots -- were to be provided in these 305 locations.

To avoid multiple voting, once a person had voted, his cedula was stamped accordingly and his finger dipped into ink which could not be removed for at least 72 hours.

Although the new voters list contained about 2.47 million names, this included persons who were not living in El Salvador (approximately 550,000), those living in areas of conflict where voting could not be carried out (approximately 100,000), and the armed forces (approximately 40,000), who were not permitted to vote. As a result, the forecast maximum number of voters was estimated at 1.8 million.

#### FOCUS

There was clear evidence of extensive effective motivation and commitment on the part of election officials to develop a "fool proof" voting system which would discourage and prevent fraud to the greatest degree. However, in attempting to achieve this objective, so many checks and balances were introduced in the system that its actual administration at the "grass roots" level became overly complex. This, combined with a serious lack of logistical administrative planning and of training and leadership at the polls, resulted in serious disorganization and confusion -- especially during the opening hours at the polls -- and in some cases throughout the day. At the "grass roots" level, the extensive effort of local officials to resolve the difficulties and the patience and commitment of the population -- some of whom stood in line in extremely hot and humid weather for hours on end (up to 10 - 11 hours) -- in order to exercise their right to vote, was clear evidence of the extent of the commitment to the electoral process of the greater part of the population. Few Canadian electors would have been so patient in similar circumstances. The atmosphere at the voting points, as assessed by the Canadian observers, was therefore positive in most respects and this impression was reinforced by the fact that no visible attempts were made to coerce or influence the choice of voters. This comment applies equally to voting officials, party representatives and military guards. The latter were stationed at the entrance to polling stations or immediately outside, but in no cases close to voting stands. Every vote we saw cast was done in such a way as to be impossible to see how the ballot was marked. Thus the integrity of the ballot appeared to be as total as had been intended. While organizational overkill described above undoubtedly hampered the voting process and reduced the number of ballots cast, it did produce the bonus of balloting which was largely or almost entirely protected from fraud. Scattered incidents of fraud of which we heard were not so extensive as to inhibit or prevent the people from exercising