

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Date of Elections: 17 April 1984

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in the House of Representatives for the first time since independence was attained in November 1981*.

Characteristics of Parliament

Under the 1981 Constitution*, the bicameral Parliament of Antigua and Barbuda is composed of a Senate and a House of Representatives.

The Senate comprises 17 members appointed by the Governor-General, of whom 11 on the advice of the Prime Minister (including one inhabitant of Barbuda), 4 on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, 1 at his own discretion and 1 on the advice of the Barbuda Council.

The House of Representatives comprises 17 elected members.

All members of Parliament serve for a maximum of 5 years.

Electoral System

All citizens of the British Commonwealth at least 18 years of age who possess the requisite residence or domicile qualifications are entitled to vote in House elections.

Citizens who are at least 21 years of age, have resided in the country for a minimum of 12 months immediately preceding the date of appointment, and are able to speak and read the English language with sufficient proficiency to enable them to take an active part in the proceedings of the House concerned are qualified to become members of Parliament. Disqualified are persons under allegiance to a foreign State, undischarged bankrupts, the insane, persons under sentence of death or imprisonment for a term of at least 12 months, and those connected to electoral offences or guilty of certain crimes within the preceding 10 years. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with certain public offices, electoral responsibilities, and the post of minister of religion.

Members of the House of Representatives are elected in single-member constituencies by simple majority vote. House seats which fall vacant between general elections are filled through by-elections held within 120 days of the vacancy.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Parliamentary elections were previously held in April 1980, prior to independence. At that poll, the Antigua Labour Party (ALP), led by Mr. Vere Bird, captured 13 of the 17 House seats.

*See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XVI (1981-1982)*, p. 8.

The 1984 elections were called a year early. The campaign debate centered on the country's economic difficulties, problems which were currently common to a number of Caribbean nations. To counter these, the Government was contemplating financial help from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in return for the imposition of stringent austerity measures.

On polling day, the ALP, strengthened by the failure of the three opposition parties to form a common front, won all but one of the seats at stake. Prime Minister Bird continued in office and announced on 19 April the composition of a slightly modified Cabinet.

Statistics

*1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the House of Representatives*

Political Group	Number of Seats
Antigua Labour Party (ALP)	16
Independents	1
	17