

## BAHAMAS

Dale of Elections: July 19, 1977

### Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of the House of Assembly on the normal expiry of their term of office.

### Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of the Bahamas consists of the House of Assembly and the Senate.

The House of Assembly is composed of 38 members elected for 5 years.

The Senate is composed of 16 members appointed by the Governor-General — 9 on the advice of the Prime Minister, 4 on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, and 3 on the advice of the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

### Electoral System

Any citizen of the Bahamas who is at least 18 years old and not subject to any legal incapacity and who has resided in a particular constituency for a minimum of three months is entitled to vote in that same constituency. Disqualified from registration as electors are the insane, persons serving any sentence of imprisonment and persons under sentence of death.

Electoral registers are revised annually. Voting is not compulsory.

Citizens of the Bahamas at least 21 years of age who have ordinarily resided in the Bahamas for a period of not less than one year immediately before the date of their nomination are qualified to be elected as members of the House of Assembly. Candidates for appointment to the Senate must be citizens who are at least 30 years old and who have ordinarily resided in the Bahamas for a period of not less than one year immediately before the date of appointment.

Ineligible, for both the House and the Senate, are undischarged bankrupts, the insane, persons owing allegiance to a foreign State, persons under sentence of death or imprisonment, and those convicted of a felony or of electoral fraud. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with the office of judge, substantive public officer or temporary public officer for a period exceeding three months; with being a member of any of the armed forces of the Crown other than in a time of war or emergency, or a member of the reserve of any such forces; and with employment on the personal staff of the Governor-General or in the Ministry of Tourism.

Candidates for the House must be nominated by a total of four electors and make a deposit of B\$ 400, which is forfeited if the candidate is not elected and does not obtain more than one-sixth of the total votes polled in his constituency.

For election purposes, the Bahamas are divided into 38 constituencies. One member of the House of Assembly is elected in each by simple majority vote.

House of Assembly seats which become vacant between general elections are filled through by-elections. Vacant Senate seats are filled by appointment made according to how the seat was originally filled.

**General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections**

The 1977 elections were the first since independence in 1973.

Four parties were in contention for the House of Assembly seats: the ruling Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) under the leadership of Prime Minister Lynden Pindling, the Bahamas Democratic Party (BDP), the Free National Movement (FNM) and the newly formed Vanguard Socialist Party. Also in the running were 12 independent candidates.

Central issues during the six-week campaign related to economic questions (especially unemployment) and corruption in public life. The Prime Minister called for a mixed economy and contended that his party was best suited to lead the country after 10 consecutive years in office.

On polling day, the PLP soundly defeated the divided opposition, adding to its pre-election Assembly total. Mr. Pindling formed a new, slightly enlarged, Cabinet on July 29.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors. . . . .	70,905
Voters. . . . .	62,818(88.6%)

<b>Political Group</b>	<b>ofSKLts</b>
Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) . . . . .	30
Bahamas Democratic Party (BDP) . . . . .	6
Free National Movement (FNM) . . . . .	-
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