

BELIZE

Date of Elections: 14 December 1984

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of the House of Representatives for the first time since independence in 1981*.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Belize, the National Assembly, consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The Senate has 9 members, all appointed by the Governor-General. The House of Representatives comprises 28 elected members**. All parliamentarians have a maximum term of office of 5 years.

Electoral System

All Belizean citizens who have attained the age of 18 years are entitled to vote. Qualified electors who have resided in the country for a minimum of one year immediately prior to their nomination for election may be candidates for the House of Representatives or the Senate. Disqualified are persons under allegiance to a foreign State, undischarged bankrupts, the insane, those under sentence of death or imprisonment exceeding 12 months, and persons convicted of electoral fraud. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with election-connected offices, membership of the armed or police forces and being party to a government contract.

For election purposes, Belize is divided into 28 electoral divisions; each of them returns one House member by simple majority vote.

Vacancies which arise in the House of Representatives between general elections are filled through by-elections, whereas Senate vacancies are filled by appointment.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Formerly known as British Honduras, the Central American territory of Belize became fully independent in September 1981. At that time, the bicameral Parliament comprised an eight-member Senate and an 18-member House of Representatives, last elected in November 1979.

*See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XVI* (1981-1982), pp. 9-10.
**See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 9.

The election was called on 21 November 1984 in accordance with a transitional provision of the Constitution. A total of 61 candidates were in contention. On polling day, the ruling People's United Party (PUP), led by Prime Minister George Price (who was running for his seventh consecutive term), suffered an unexpectedly large defeat to the conservative United Democratic Party (UDP), headed by Mr. Manuel Esquivel; the latter captured 21 of the 28 House seats. Observers attributed the centre-left PUP's setback in part to the electorate's wish for a change as well as to Belize's economic difficulties, caused especially by a fall in the world price of sugar, the country's main export product. In the campaign, the UDP had advocated the need for more foreign investment in Belize and less government control of the economy. The PUP was reportedly also damaged by internal dissension.

On 17 December, Mr. Esquivel was sworn in as Prime Minister. The following day, he announced the membership of his Cabinet.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	64,400	(approx.)
Voters.74%	

Political Group	% of Votes obtained	Number of Seats
United Democratic Party (UDP)	53	21
People's United Party (PUP)	44	<u> 7 </u> 28

*2. Distribution of Members of the National Assembly
according to Sex*

	<i>House of Representatives</i>	<i>Senate</i>
Men	27	1
Women	1	2
	28	9