

COSTA RICA

Date of Elections: February 5, 1978

Purpose of Elections

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

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Costa Rica, the Legislative Assembly, consists of 57 deputies who are elected for a 4-year term and are not immediately re-eligible.

Electoral System

Every citizen of Costa Rica who has reached the age of 18 and who is a registered elector within his constituency is entitled to vote. Persons who cannot vote are those under judicial interdiction and those whose political rights have been suspended. Naturalized citizens can only vote 12 months after acquiring such status.

While electoral registers are drawn up at the national level, electors are listed under the district to which they belong and in which they may exercise their right to vote. The Civil Register prepares the lists two months and 15 days before an election, on the basis of revisions which have been made continuously. Voting is made compulsory by the Constitution.

Every member of the electorate who is Costa Rican by birth or who has resided in the country for at least 10 years after naturalization is eligible for election to the Legislative Assembly provided he is at least 21 years old, can read and write and is in possession of his civil rights. The President of the Republic (or his close relatives), Ministers, certain high magistrates and high officials in the provincial government or autonomous institutions cannot be elected to Parliament while in office or for six months after leaving these positions. Public contractors are likewise barred.

The number of deputies elected from the country's seven provinces is determined by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in proportion to the population of each.

In accordance with the Electoral Code, elections are conducted in conformity with the quotient and sub-quotient party-list system of proportional representation, under which electors vote for party lists without being permitted to combine different lists. The quotient is the number obtained by

dividing the total of valid votes cast in a particular province by the number of seats to be filled in the same; the sub-quotient is the total of valid votes cast for a party which, while not attaining the quotient, obtains or exceeds 50% of it.

Successful parties are those which have attained the required quotient. Seats remaining unfilled on the basis of the quotient system are distributed among parties in the order of their residual votes; for this distribution, those parties which did not attain the sub-quotient are also taken into account, their votes being treated as residual votes.

Should a parliamentary vacancy arise between general elections, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal assigns the seat to the «next-in-line» candidate on the party list to which the former member belonged.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In the elections for the Legislative Assembly — held the same day as those for President of the Republic — the ruling National Liberation Party (PLN) obtained only 25 seats and thus lost its dominant parliamentary position.

The main political group to present candidates was the coalition *Unidad Opositora*, or Opposition Union, (made up of the Democratic Renovation, the Calderonist Republican Party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Popular Union), which ultimately won 27 seats. Candidates were also fielded by the coalition left-wing People United (Popular Vanguard (Communist) Party, Socialist Party and the Workers Party), the Costa Rican Popular Front and the Cartago Agricultural Union, the last two of which had been established at the provincial level. Principal issues during the six-month campaign related to administrative corruption and inflation.

Mr. Rodrigo Carazo Odio of the conservative Opposition Union was elected President and appointed a completely new Cabinet subsequent to the elections.

Statistics

1. *Distribution of Seats in the Legislative Assembly*

T> au i ^ Poht.cal Group	Number of geatB
Opposition Union	27
National Liberation Party.	25
People United.	3
Popular Front1
Cartago Agricultural Union.1
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