

FJI

Date of Elections: March 19 to April 2, 1977

Purpose of Elections

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

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Fiji is composed of a Senate and a House of Representatives.

The Senate consists of 22 members appointed by the Governor-General, of whom:

- 8 nominated by the Great Council of Chiefs;
- 7 nominated by the Prime Minister;
- 6 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition;
- 1 nominated by the Council of the Island of Rotuma.

Appointments are for 6 years, 11 members retiring every 3 years.

The House of Representatives consists of 52 members elected for 5 years on the following basis:

- *Fijian*: 12 members elected by voters on the Fijian Communal Roll; 10 members elected by voters on the National Roll.
- *Indian*: 12 members elected by voters on the Indian Communal Roll; 10 members elected by voters on the National Roll.
- *General* (persons neither Fijian nor Indian): 3 members elected by voters on the General Communal Roll; 5 members elected by voters on the National Roll.

The " National Roll " consists of all registered electors on the three Communal Rolls.

Electoral System

Any person may be registered as elector on a Roll if he is a citizen of Fiji and has attained the age of 21 years. The insane, persons owing allegiance to a State outside the British Commonwealth, those under sentence of death

or imprisonment for a term exceeding 12 months, and those convicted of electoral offences may not be registered.

Rolls are revised both on fixed dates and before general and by-elections. Voting is not compulsory. Postal voting is permitted for certain categories of electors.

Any qualified voter is eligible to be elected as a member of the House of Representatives. Disqualified, however, are undischarged bankrupts, persons holding public office, persons who held certain government posts in the preceding three years, government contractors and election officials.

Candidatures must be submitted on a nomination paper signed by six to eight voters of the subject constituency, and be accompanied by a deposit of F\$ 100, which is forfeited if the candidate is not elected and the number of votes polled by him does not exceed 10 % of the total number of valid votes cast in the constituency.

To be qualified to be appointed to the Senate one must be registered as a voter on one of the three Communal Rolls. The same disqualifications apply as for candidates to the House, except that of interest in government contracts.

For election purposes, Fiji is divided into 12 constituencies, each returning one communally-elected Fijian member; into 12 constituencies, each returning one communally-elected Indian member; and into three constituencies, each returning one communally-elected General member. For the National Roll elections there are 10 constituencies, each returning one Fijian and one Indian member, and these are combined into five pairs for the purpose of each returning one General member.

Candidates are elected by simple majority. Each voter is entitled to cast four votes: one in respect of the Communal Roll constituency in which he is registered, and three in respect of the National Roll constituencies in which he is registered.

A by-election is held to fill a House seat which becomes vacant between general elections. Senate vacancies are filled by appointment.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The 1977 general elections were the second since independence in 1970.

As in 1972, the two main contenders for the 52 House seats were the ruling Alliance Party, led by outgoing Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, and the National Federation Party (NFP), headed by Mr. Siddiq Koya.

On election day, the Alliance lost a number of seats but neither of the two major parties was able to claim an overall House majority (27 seats).

Despite the fact that the NFP won the most seats (26), the Governor-General asked the defeated Prime Minister to form a minority Government. This touched off strong protests by the NFP. On June 1, the Governor-General dissolved Parliament after the Government was defeated in a vote of confidence. New elections were expected in September 1977.

Statistics

1. *Distribution of Seats in the House, of Representatives*

Political Group
National Federation Party.	26 (+7)
Alliance Party.	24 (-9)
Fijian Nationalist Party *.1 (+ 1)
Independent1 (+ 1)
	"52"

New party