

FJI

Dates of Elections: 4 to 11 April 1987

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats of the House of Representatives following premature dissolution of this body on 18 December 1986. General elections had previously been held in July 1982.

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 Gcjvneror-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 Rotumal

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. I
- *Indian*: 12 members elected by voters on the Indian Communal Roll;
10 members elected by voters on the National Roll. J
- *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 heps 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 Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Parliament was prematurely dissolved in December 1986 amid speculation that Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara would call early elections before increased development of the new left-of-centre opposition coalition.

The campaign was marked by sporadic violence. The opposition coalition comprising the National Federation Party (NFP) and the Fiji Labour Party (formed in 1985) pledged to pursue a foreign policy of nonalignment and to ban nuclear weapons from Fiji territory and, on the domestic front, focused on the issues of increased social services, lower taxes, land reform and government corruption. The ruling Alliance Party (AP) emphasized the country's booming economy and was supported by most indigenous Fijians, while the coalition, and especially the NFP, was backed by the island's Indian community.

On polling day, the conservative AP was voted out of power for the first time since independence in 1970 as its loss of five seats was picked up by the coalition. On 13 April, Labour leader Timoci Bavadra took office as Prime Minister to head the nation's first Government of mainly ethnic Indian rather than Melanesian origin; he announced the formation of his Cabinet the next day. On 14 May, however, the new Government was deposed in a military coup d'Etat and Parliament was dissolved*.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 10.

Statistics

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

Political Group	Number of Seats
Alliance Party (AP)	24 (-5)
National Federation Party (NFP)- Fiji Labour Party coalition . . .	28 (+5)
	52