

GAMBIA

Dates of Elections: April 4 and 5, 1977

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 the Gambia, the House of Representatives, consists of:

- 35 " elected members ";
- 4 " Chiefs' representative members ";
- 4 " nominated members " appointed by the President of the Republic;
- The Speaker, elected by the House, who may either have been a member of it or not, but may not be a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary;
- The Attorney-General, who sits *ex-officio*.

Only the elected members, Chiefs' representative members, and the Attorney-General have the right to vote.

All members of the House have 5-year terms of office.

Electoral System

Requirements applicable to electors:

•→ Of elected members: to qualify, any citizen of Gambia must be registered on the electoral rolls, must be at least 21 years of age, and must be a resident for at least six months of the constituency in which he is registered. No person under allegiance to a foreign State, insane, or serving a sentence of imprisonment is qualified, nor are Head Chiefs.

— Of Chiefs' representative members: these are elected exclusively by the Head Chiefs.

The electoral registers of each constituency are revised in each " general registration year ", i.e. every fifth year after 1968; a supplemental registration is carried out in each of the intervening years. Voting is not compulsory.

Requirements applicable to candidates:

— As elected members: any citizen who is at least 21 years of age, who can speak English well enough to take an active part in the proceedings of the House and who is qualified as an elector may be a candidate for election as an elected member. Undischarged bankrupts, persons under a sentence of death, those serving, or having in the preceding five years served, a sentence of imprisonment of at least six months and those party to certain government contracts are ineligible.

— As Chiefs' representative members: the same qualifications and disqualifications apply as for elected members, except that candidates for election as Chiefs' representative members need not qualify as electors.

Every candidate for election must be nominated by at least three voters of the same constituency and make a monetary deposit, which is reimbursed if he is successful or obtains at least one-fifth of the votes cast for the elected candidate.

The Gambia is divided into 35 electoral constituencies, the boundaries of which are fixed by a presidential commission. In each of these, a single deputy is elected by simple majority vote. Votes are cast by ballot tokens dropped through a hole next to the candidate's picture.

Chiefs' representative members must be approved unanimously by the Head Chiefs from a list proposed by them; if they are not so approved, they are selected on the basis of simple majority.

A by-election is held to fill any seat of an elected member or a Chiefs' representative member which becomes vacant between general elections.

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

The election date was announced on February 23, 1977, by President of the Republic Sir Dawda Jawara.

Four legally recognized political parties contested the 35 seats (expanded from 32 since the previous general elections) of popularly elected members of the House of Representatives. The ruling People's Progressive Party (PPP), which advocates economic and cultural links with neighbouring Senegal, fielded the most candidates. It was opposed by the United Party, which is traditionally strong in Banjul, the country's capital, and by two parties established in 1975 — the National Convention Party (NCP) and the National Liberation Party.

On polling day, the PPP once again gained a clear victory; the newly-formed NCP, which nominated candidates in all constituencies but the capital, won five seats.

Sir Dawda Jawara, re-elected as Head of State by the majority party, formed a new Government on April 9. The new Vice-President/leader of government business in the House is Mr. Alhaji Badara N'Jie, formerly Minister of External Affairs.

Statistics

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

Number of registered voters.	216,234
Valid votes	177,181

Political Group	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats
People's Progressive Party.	123,297	69.6	29 (+ 1)
National Convention Party*.	40,212	22.7	5
United Party.	5,403	3.0	1 (- 2)
National Liberation Party*.	4,095	2.3	—
Independents.	4,174	2.4	- (- 1)
			<hr/> 35**

* New party

** Three seats added since last elections