

GUYAXA

Date of Elections: July 16, 1973

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament. Previous general elections had taken place on December 16, 1968.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Guyana, the National Assembly, comprises 53 Deputies elected for 5 years. The Speaker, elected by the Assembly itself, may be chosen either from among the members of the Assembly who are not Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries or from among persons who are not members of the Assembly but are qualified for election as members; in the latter case, the Speaker is counted as a member of the Assembly in addition to the aforesaid members.

The Governor-General may designate up to 6 Ministers as non-voting *ex-officio* members of Parliament from among non-members qualified for election " or such greater number as Parliament may prescribe ".

Electoral System

No person can vote at general elections unless he is registered as an elector. A person is qualified to be so registered if he is at least 21 years of age * and a citizen of Guyana who is domiciled in Guyana or resident in Guyana and has been so resident for a period of one year immediately preceding the qualifying date; Commonwealth citizens who are domiciled and resident in Guyana and have been so resident for a period of one year immediately preceding the qualifying date are also granted suffrage. Citizens residing abroad are entitled to vote provided they are duly registered.

Disqualified from being registered are persons who, on " the qualifying date " (the date with reference to which a register of electors is compiled or revised), are not of sound mind, are under sentence of death or are serving a sentence of imprisonment exceeding 6 months.

Commonwealth citizens are qualified for election as members of the National Assembly provided they are eligible voters, have been resident in Guyana for at least one year, and are able to speak and read the English language with a degree of proficiency sufficient to enable them to take an active part in the proceedings of the Assembly. Disqualified are certain public officials, persons owing allegiance to a foreign State and undischarged bankrupts.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 9.

A list of candidates may be submitted by not less than 200 and not more than 220 persons registered as qualified voters; it is transmitted to the Chief Election Officer by the representative of the list.

Assembly elections are conducted according to party-list system, with no preferential vote or vote splitting, on the basis of proportional representation of seats throughout the country. Each elector has one vote and may cast it for any of the lists. When seats are allocated to any list the representative of the list selects the people figuring thereon who will occupy the same.

Parliamentary vacancies are filled by persons qualified for election as members of the Assembly who appear at the head of a list of candidates.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The 1973 general elections were the first held since Guyana became a Republic in 1970.

Violence marked the election campaign. Controversy especially surrounded registration of certain electors overseas and counting of votes at individual polling stations.

The People's National Congress (PNC), outgoing majority party in the Assembly headed by Prime Minister Burnham, succeeded in gaining more than 2/3 of the 53 seats at stake. Mr. Burnham boasted that the outcome evidenced his party's support from the diverse racial groups inhabiting the country. The left-wing People's Progressive Party (PPP), strengthened by the nation's sizable Indian population, rejected this result, charging electoral fraud in its attainment. The right-wing Guyana Liberator Party declined for its part to occupy the seats it had won, alleging misconduct at the polls.

Mr. Burnham announced his newly-organized Cabinet on July 21.

Statistics

1. *Distribution of Seats in the National Assembly*

Political Group	Number of Seats
People's National Congress (PNC).	37 (+7)
People's Progressive Party (PPP).	14 * (^5)
Guyana Liberator Party.	2 * (+2)
United Force.	— (-4)

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* These groups rejected their seats following the elections. The 2 seats won by the Liberator Party were later occupied by the United Force.