

## GUYANA

**Date of Elections:** 15 December 1980

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament. General elections had previously taken place in July 1973, the sitting of the National Assembly having been extended twice (in 1978 and 1979) so as to permit the Constituent Assembly to complete the preparation of a new Constitution\*.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

Under the 1980 Constitution, the unicameral Parliament of Guyana, the National Assembly, comprises 53 members elected by universal suffrage for 5 years, 10 members elected by 10 Regional Democratic Councils and 2 members elected by the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs. The Speaker, Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries who are not elected Assembly members are in addition deemed parliamentarians, although they have no voting rights; these currently number 17 altogether. Total membership thus now stands at 82.

### **Electoral System**

All Guyanese citizens who are at least 18 years of age as well as Commonwealth citizens who are domiciled and resident in Guyana and have been so resident for a period of at least one year are entitled to vote. Disqualified are the insane and certain persons who have been convicted of election-connected offences.

There exists a National Register of electors which is revised prior to each election. Voting is not compulsory.

Guyanese citizens of at least 18 years of age who 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 qualify for election as National Assembly members. Disqualified are persons owing allegiance to a foreign State, those under sentence of death or serving a sentence of imprisonment exceeding six months, the insane, certain public officials, members of the armed and police forces, and certain government contractors.

A candidate for election by universal suffrage must be a member of a political party. A party list of candidates must be supported by not less than 200 and not more than 220 electors.

General elections are conducted according to a party-list proportional representation system, each list bearing from 53 to 65 names. Each elector has one vote and may cast it for

\*See section *Parliamentary Developments*, pp. 13-14.

any of the lists. All valid votes cast are divided by 53 for the purpose of computing the electoral quota. Each party's total number of votes is divided by this quota, the whole number resulting therefrom representing the number of Assembly seats allotted to it.

If they fall vacant between general elections, parliamentary seats of directly elected members are filled by another candidate of the same party list who had not previously been declared elected. Vacancies of indirectly elected members are filled through by-elections conducted by the body concerned.

### General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The new Constitution prepared by the Constituent Assembly was promulgated on 6 October 1980\* and, on 25 October, elections were announced for December.

In June 1980, the leader of one of the opposition political parties, the Working People's Alliance (WPA), was assassinated and internal opposition to the People's National Congress (PNC) Government increased. Most opposition groups, with the notable exception of the leftist People's Progressive Party (PPP), called for a boycott of the elections. Polling day procedure was observed by an international team. The PNC, led by President of the Republic Forbes Burnham (formerly Prime Minister), won four-fifths of the Assembly seats.

On 30 January 1981, the newly-elected Parliament held its first sitting.

### Statistics

#### 1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the National Assembly

Number of registered electors . . . . .	493,550	
<b>Voters</b> . . . . .	406,265	(82.31%)
Blank or void ballot papers . . . . .	3,251	
Valid votes . . . . .	403,014	

Political Group	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats
People's National Congress (PNC)	312,988	77	41
People's Progressive Party (PPP)	78,414	19	10
United Force . . . . .	11,612	3	2

53\*

" Figures apply only to members elected by universal suffrage.

\*See section *Parliamentary Developments*, pp. 13-14.

2. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Professional Category*

Social workers. . . . .	.19
Teachers. . . . .	.12
Lawyers. . . . .	X
Farmers. . . . .	8
Journalists. . . . .	4
Businessmen. . . . .	4
Technicians. . . . .	4
Doctors. . . . .	4
Economists. . . . .	3
Clergy. . . . .	3
Sports and culture. . . . .	3
Others. . . . .	.10
	<b>82</b>

3. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Sex*

Men. . . . .	.64
Women. . . . .	.18
	<b>82</b>

4. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Age Group*

21-30 years. . . . .	
30-40. . . . .	23
40-50. . . . .	32
50-60. . . . .	.17
Over 60. . . . .	<u>3</u>
	<b>82</b>