GUYANA

Date of Elections: 9 December 1985

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office.

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 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

On 6 August 1985, President of the Republic Forbes Burnham died in office and was succeeded by Mr. Hugh Desmond Hoyte, who was also chosen as head of the ruling People's National Congress (PNC) party. Mr. Hamilton Green became Prime Minister.

The election date was set on 31 October 1985 and the campaign lasted five weeks. On polling day, Mr. Hoyte was declared elected as President and the socialist PNC captured 42 of the 53 popularly-chosen Assembly seats amid opposition charges of widespread fraud and electoral malpractices. The marxist People's Progressive Party (PPP), led by Mr. Cheddi Jagan, withdrew from contention but subsequent to the elections announced that it would occupy its eight seats won.

Mr. Hoyte was sworn in for a five-year presidential term on 12 December. He announced the formation of a new 11-member Cabinet on 28 January 1986.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors. 372,708

Political Group	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats
People's National Congress (PNC).	228,718	78.5	42 (+1)
People's Progressive Party (PPP).	45,926	15.8	8 (-2)
United Force.	9,810	3.4	2(=)
Working People's Alliance (WPA).	4,176	1.3	1 (+1)
			53*

* Figures apply only to members elected by universal suffrage.

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