

HONDURAS

Date of Elections: March 28, 1971

Reason for Elections

Electors in Honduras were called upon to elect their representatives in the National Congress which was to replace the Constituent Assembly elected on February 16, 1965.

Characteristics of Parliament

Under the terms of the Constitution, prepared by the Constituent Assembly and promulgated on June 6, 1965, the unicameral Parliament of Honduras, or National Congress, consists of 64 Deputies elected for 6 years on the basis of 10 per 30,000 inhabitants or fraction of more than 15,000.

Electoral System

Male and, for the first time in 1971, female citizens with Honduras nationality and no less than 18 years of age may vote. They may only vote in the constituency in which they are registered on the electoral rolls; these are revised between September 1 and 30 every year.

Article 40 of the Constitution of Honduras stipulates that voting is compulsory; fines are imposed on persons who abstain without valid reasons.

Candidates to the National Congress must be citizens of Honduras and no less than 25 years of age. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with public offices except those in educational or social fields.

In constituencies where only one seat is to be filled, the Deputy is elected by simple plurality of vote. In the other constituencies, the Deputies are elected by the party Ust system with proportional distribution of seats. The electoral quotient is fixed in each constituency by dividing the number of valid votes by the number of seats to be filled.

Seats which have not been filled after the initial distribution are allotted to the parties by the greatest remainder system. If the number of votes gathered by a party is less than the electoral quotient but equal to at least 50 % of it, these votes are considered a remainder and may help to secure a seat in the second phase of distribution.

Seats obtained are allotted to the candidates in the order in which they appear on the list.

A substitute member is elected with each Deputy and, should the need arise, replaces the latter in the course of a legislature.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The President of Honduras, General Oswaldo Lopez Arellano, had announced the legislative elections in January 1971.

Honduras' two main political parties, the Liberal Party and the National Party, both put forward candidates. They had come to an agreement at the beginning of the elections whereby representative power in Parliament, in the Supreme Court, in the Government, the Administrations and all State bodies would be shared by both parties. The winning party would designate the Congress Speaker who would have a casting vote.

The main topic of the electoral campaign centered on defending the interests of Honduras in the Central American Common Market from which the country had withdrawn in 1970. The National Party as well as the Liberals agreed that discussions with the other member countries of the Central American Common Market should be re-opened. Furthermore, both parties were of the opinion that relations between Honduras and El Salvador should return to normal after the conflict which had set the two countries apart in 1969.

The percentage of voters abstaining during the elections amounted to 31.9 %; left-wing groups, which had not proposed any candidates, had recommended abstention.

Following the victory of the National Party, Mr. Ramon Cruz was chosen by that group to succeed General Lopez Arellano as Honduras' Chief of State.

Statistics

*Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the National Congress*

Number of registered voters	900,658
Voters	614,007 (68.1 %)
Blank or void ballot papers	31,202
Valid votes	582,805

Political Group	Votes obtained	Number of Seats in National Congress
National Party	306,028	
Liberal Party .	276,777	<u>32</u>
		64