

JAMAICA

Date of Elections: December 15, 1976

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of the House of Representatives after Parliament had been prematurely dissolved on November 23, 1976. Previous general elections had taken place on February 29, 1972.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Jamaica comprises a Senate and a House of Representatives.

The Senate consists of 21 members appointed by the Governor-General: 13 on the advice of the Prime Minister and 8 on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition.

The House of Representatives consists of 60 members* elected for 5 years.

Electoral System

All citizens of Jamaica residing in the country on the date of the compilation of the register of electors, as well as citizens of the British Commonwealth who are resident in Jamaica on the said date and have so been for at least 12 months immediately preceding it, and who are 21 years of age or more may vote for members of Parliament. The insane, persons under a sentence of death or who serve or are under a sentence of imprisonment of or exceeding six months, persons convicted of electoral fraud and persons holding certain offices connected with the elections may not be registered as electors.

Electoral registers are revised before each election. Voting is not compulsory.

A candidate for election as member of the House of Representatives, or appointment to the Senate, must be a Commonwealth citizen of the age of 21 years or upwards who has been ordinarily resident in Jamaica for the 12 months immediately preceding the date of his nomination or appointment and who is not insane, bankrupt, owing allegiance to a foreign State, under a sentence of death or serving or under a sentence of imprisonment of or exceeding six months. Disqualified for nomination or appointment are public officers, judges of the highest courts, certain persons connected with govern-

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 12.

ment contracts, members of the defence force (unless excepted) and (for nomination) persons holding an office connected with elections. The Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives may not be a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary; the same applies to the President and Deputy President of the Senate.

For the purpose of electing members of the House of Representatives, Jamaica is divided into 60 constituencies. Each returns one member by simple majority vote.

Vacant seats in the House of Representatives are filled through by-elections. Vacancies in the Senate are filled by appointment made by the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The December polling date was set on November 21, 1976. Nomination day was fixed for November 29.

The elections were held under a state of emergency which had been declared in June 1976 in an effort to curb a wave of violence which had swept the country. The only opposition to the ruling People's National Party (PNP) came from the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), led by Mr. Edward Seaga. During the troubled three-week campaign, Prime Minister Michael Manley pledged to keep Jamaica's security situation under strict control and advocated his policy of "democratic socialism" and a new international economic order which would be more beneficial to Third World countries. The somewhat more conservative JLP had a free-enterprise platform and, among other things, attacked the Prime Minister's close ties with Cuba.

The PNP won in a landslide, gaining 47 seats in the newly-enlarged House. Prime Minister Manley announced his new Cabinet on January 4, 1977.

Statistics

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

Number of registered voters.	870,000 (approx.)
	85% (approx.)
Valid votes	733,466

Political Group	Votes obtained	0/ .0	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dis- solution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
People's National Party . . .	419,990	56.8	47	36	
Jamaica Labour Party . . .	313,476	43.2	13	15 2	1 1
			60*	52**	53

* Seven seats added since last elections

** Plus one vacancy