

JAMAICA

Date of Elections: 30 October 1980

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of the House of Representatives following the premature dissolution of this body. General elections had previously taken place on 15 December 1976.

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 is composed 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 government contracts, members of the defence force (unless excepted) and (for nomination) persons holding an office connected with elections.

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 Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Following the 1976 general elections, the nationwide state of emergency was lifted in June 1977. However, the socialist People's National Party (PNP) Government of Prime Minister Michael Manley faced continuing problems as political tension and violent demonstrations were widespread by 1979, and Jamaica's economic situation (particularly unemployment, foreign debt, lack of foreign investment and exchange) steadily deteriorated. In February 1980, Mr. Manley called for a general election to seek support for his economic policies and a determination of what role, if any, aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should play in the country's affairs.

The subsequent election campaign was marked by considerable violence. The principal challenger to the PNP was once again the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), which advocated free enterprise in a mixed economy and closer co-operation with the Western world.

The elections were the first since the adoption, in early 1980, of amendments aimed at electoral reform to limit fraudulent voting*. Polling day saw a high turnout of voters and culminated in a large JLP victory; Mr. Edward P.G. Seaga, leader of the party, became Prime Minister. His 15-member Cabinet was sworn in on 7 November.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors			990,367
Valid votes			750,416
Political Group	Votes obtained		Number of Seats
Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). . .	432,766	57.6	51 (+ 38)
People's National Party (PNP).	317,650	42.3	<u>9 (-38)</u>
			60

*See section *Parliamentary Developments*, pp. 16-17.