

LIBERIA

Date of Elections: 15 October 1985

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament for the first time since the national legislature was dissolved in April 1980*. General elections had last been held in October 1975.

Characteristics of Parliament

Under the 1984 Constitution** the bicameral Parliament of Liberia, known as the Legislature, comprises a House of Representatives and a Senate.

The House of Representatives is composed of 64 members elected for 6 years. The Senate consists of 26 members elected for 9 years, two being chosen in each of the country's 13 counties.

Electoral System

All Liberian citizens who are at least 18 years of age are entitled to vote in the constituency where registered as electors. Disqualified, however, are the insane and persons convicted of crime or owing allegiance to a foreign State. Voting is not compulsory.

Every qualified elector may be a candidate for the House of Representatives if he is at least 25 years of age, a taxpayer and domiciled in the county or constituency to be represented not less than one year prior to the elections; Senate candidates must have attained the age of 30 years.

All Legislature elections are held on the second Tuesday in October and determined by an absolute majority of the votes cast. If no candidate obtains an absolute majority in the first ballot, a second ballot is conducted on the second Tuesday following. The two candidates receiving the greatest number of votes on the first ballot participate in the run-off election.

Each electoral constituency has a population of approximately 20,000 or such number of citizens as prescribed by the Legislature in keeping with population growth, provided that the total number of constituencies shall not exceed 100.

* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XIV* (1979-1980), p. 20.

** See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XIX* (1984-1985), p. 13.

Vacancies in the Congress are filled through by-elections held within a period of 90 days, except where the vacancy occurs less than three months prior to the holding of general elections.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In the wake of the military coup d'Etat of April 1980, all legislative power was vested in the executive body known as the People's Redemption Council (PRC). In July 1984, a new draft Constitution was approved by national referendum. In the same month, the PRC was dissolved and replaced by a 58-member (civilian and military) Interim National Assembly chosen by President of the Republic Samuel Doe. The ban on political organizations was lifted in July 1984 and four parties, including the President's National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL), participated in the 1985 elections.

Polling day was generally peaceful but marked by opposition allegations of irregularities and voter intimidation. According to official results announced on 29 October, the NDPL came out ahead in both Houses and also retained the presidency, as Commander-in-Chief Doe gained a reported 50.9% of the popular vote for the six-year term. He was sworn in on 6 January 1986 and appointed a new civilian Cabinet on 15 January.

Statistics

*1. Results of the Elections and Distribution
of Seats in the Legislature*

Voters 520,000 (approx.)

| Political Group | Number of Seats in House of Representatives | |
|--|---|-----------|
| National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL) | 51 | 22 |
| Liberian Action Party (LAP) . . . | 8 | 2 |
| Liberian Unification Party (LUP) | 3 | 1 |
| United Party (UP) | 2 | 1 |
| | <u>64</u> | <u>26</u> |