

NEW ZEALAND

Date of Elections: 25 November 1978

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament on the normal expiry of their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of New Zealand, the House of Representatives, comprises 92 members elected for 3 years. Of these, 88 are members for "General" electoral districts, while 4 are members for electoral districts set aside for representatives of the aboriginal Maori population.

Electoral System

Every person 18 years of age or over who is ordinarily resident in New Zealand and who has resided continuously in the country for at least one year may register as an elector. Such a person may vote in that electoral district in which he has resided continuously for three months immediately preceding the date of his application for registration. Persons of the Maori race, and anyone who is a descendant of a person of the Maori race and who wishes to be considered as a Maori, may register and vote either in the General electoral district in which they reside or in one of the four Maori electoral districts.

Persons suffering from various forms of insanity or mental disorder, those who have been convicted of corrupt electoral practices within the preceding three years, and persons incarcerated in any penal institution are disqualified from registering as electors.

Electoral registers are drawn up for each electoral district by a central Electoral Office, and are kept up to date by means of a system of continuous registration of voters; prior to each election the rolls are revised and reprinted. While it is compulsory to register as an elector, there is no legal obligation to vote.

All registered electors who are citizens of New Zealand are qualified to be members of Parliament. In addition, persons who were registered as electors on 22 August 1975 are qualified to be parliamentarians regardless of their nationality.

If a public servant is nominated as candidate, he must be placed on leave of absence until after the election, and, if elected, vacates office as a public servant.

Candidates need not be members of a political party. Each must be nominated by at least two electors of the district for which he seeks election, between 20 and 27 days prior to polling day. A deposit of NZS 100 is compulsory and is forfeited by the candidate if he

receives less than one-fourth of the total number of votes obtained by the victor. Individual election expenses must not exceed NZ\$ 4,000.

New Zealand is divided into 92 electoral districts. Each district returns one member to Parliament on a simple majority system.

By-elections are held to fill any parliamentary seat falling vacant between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The election date was announced on 13 September 1978.

The two major parties in contention were once again led by Mr. Robert Muldoon (the Prime Minister—National Party) and Mr. Wallace Rowling (Leader of the Opposition and a former Prime Minister—Labour Party). Two smaller parties—the Social Credit League and the Values Party—likewise fielded candidates in all constituencies.

The conservative National Party fought the election on its record of three years in office, and challenged the credibility of some of the Opposition's election promises, while the Labour party argued that far from solving the economic problems which faced the country in 1975, the national Government's policies had exacerbated them. The Social Credit League hoped to gain votes from disillusioned supporters of the two major parties, particularly in rural areas.

On polling day, the National Party was returned to power, with a reduced majority, despite obtaining fewer votes than Labour. The loss of support for the Government was matched by a considerable increase in the number of votes cast for the Social Credit League, which nevertheless succeeded only in retaining the seat held by its leader. On 13 December, Prime Minister Muldoon—who had first been elected in November 1975—announced a reconstruction of his Government, including the appointment of six new Ministers.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	2,489,510
Voters.	1,721,443(69.15%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	11,270
Valid votes.	1,710,173

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained		Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
National Party.	92	680,991	39.8	51)	54	55
Labour Party.	92	691,076	40.4	41	32	32
Social Credit League	92	274,756	16.1	1	1	
Values Party.	92	41,220	2.4			
Others.	53	22,130	1.3			
				92*	87	S7

5 seats added since last elections.

Distribution of Representatives according to Professional Category

Lawyers. . . . .	.16
Farmers. . . . .	.16
Trade & commerce. . . . .	.9
Teachers. . . . .	.8
Trade unionists. . . . .	.8
Accountants. . . . .	.6
Farm related. . . . .	.4
Labourers. . . . .	.4
Social work. . . . .	.4
Real estate. . . . .	.3
Special consultants. . . . .	.3
Research. . . . .	.2
Finance. . . . .	.2
Public service. . . . .	.2
Company secretaries. . . . .	.2
Others. . . . .	.3
	92

3. *Distribution of Representatives according to Sex*

Men.	88
Women.	4
	92

4. *Distribution of Representatives according to Age Group*

Under 30 years.	2
30-34.	9
35-39. . . . . .	.18
40-44. . . . . .	.13
45-49. . . . . .	.12
50-54. . . . . .	.13
55-59. . . . . .	.14
60 and over. . . . .	.11
	92

Average Age of Representatives: 46.7 years