

NEW ZEALAND

Date of Elections: 14 July 1984

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament following premature dissolution of this body on 15 June 1984. General elections had previously been held in November 1981.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of New Zealand, the House of Representatives, comprises 95 members elected for 3 years. Of these, 91 are members for "general" electoral districts, while 4 are members for electoral districts set aside for representatives of the aboriginal *Maoris*, who account for one-tenth of the 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 rolls are drawn up for each electoral district by Registrars of Electors. They are kept up to date by means of a system of continuous registration of voters, reprinted annually, and are completely revised every three years. 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, by a day which must not be less than 20 nor more than 27 days prior to polling day. A deposit of NZ\$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 95 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 Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Parliament was prematurely dissolved since Prime Minister Robert Muldoon (National Party) had decided to seek a fresh mandate before the normal expiry of the legislature's term of office in November 1984. The election was called on 14 June 1984 after the National Party had lost its one-seat majority in the House of Representatives.

The central issue of the lively three-week campaign was the state of the country's economy (foreign debt, budget deficit, high interest rates, unemployment, wage and price controls) and the policies followed by the outgoing Government in this field. Mr. David Lange, leader of the opposition Labour Party, advocated the need for "reconciliation and reform", calling for a national conference on the economy. Labour also adopted an anti-nuclear stance. Altogether 448 candidates were in competition for the newly-enlarged House's 95 seats. Four parties, including the newly-formed New Zealand Party, contested all constituencies.

On polling day, the Labour Party swept to victory, winning 56 seats and thus returning to power for the first time since 1975. The conservative National Party's showing was further diminished by the impressive performance of the right-wing New Zealand Party, which captured over 12% of the national vote.

On 17 July, membership of the Labour Cabinet was announced and on 26 July the new Government, headed by Prime Minister Lange, formally took office.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	2,111,651	
Voters.	1,978,798	(93.7%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	49,597	
Valid votes.	1,929,201	

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained		Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
Labour Party.	95	829,154	42.98	56	41	43
National Party.	95	692,494	35.89	37	47	4[^]
Social Credit Party	95	147,162	7.63	2	2	2
New Zealand Party	95	236,385	12.25			
Values Party.	29	3,826	0.20			
Others.	39	20,180	1.05		2 (independents)	
				95*	92	92

•Three seats added since last elections.

2. *Distribution of Representatives according to Professional Category*

<u>Farmers</u>	20
<u>Lawyers</u>	14
<u>Teachers (primary and secondary school)</u>	13
_____	12
<u>Lecturers (university and polytechnic)</u>	8
_____	4
_____	3
<u>Doctors</u>	3
_____	2
_____	2
_____	2
_____	2
<u>Others</u>	10
	95

3. *Distribution of Representatives according to Sex*

Men	_____	83
Women		12
		95

4. *Distribution of Representatives according to Age Group*

Under 30 years.	. . . . .	.1
30-34 years.	. . . . .	.9
35-39 ».	. . . . .	.20
40-44 ».	. . . . .	.19
45-49 ».	. . . . .	.16
50-54 ».	. . . . .	.15
55-59 ».	. . . . .	.7
60 and over.	. . . . .	.8
		95