

NEW ZEALAND

Date of Elections: 15 August 1987

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of New Zealand, the House of Representatives, comprises 97 members* elected for 3 years. Of these, 93 are members for "general" electoral districts, while 4 are members for electoral districts set aside for representatives of the Maori race, who account for one-tenth of the population.

Electoral System

Every person 18 years of age or over who is a New Zealand citizen or a permanent resident of 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 one month 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.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 13.

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\$5,000.

New Zealand is divided into 97 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.

Background and Outcome of the Elections

The election date was set on 30 June 1987.

Prime Minister David Lange (Labour Party) approached the three-week election campaign in a low-key and confident manner. He pledged that the Government would continue its economic reforms and give increased attention to making social services more effective. The Labour Government sought a mandate to finish the job it had begun.

The opposition National Party led by Mr. Jim Bolger had regrouped after experiencing internal divisions following the 1984 election loss. National attacked the Government's performance in its management of the economy, citing the record high interest rates and rate of inflation, high unemployment and indebtedness as evidence of Labour's failure. The credibility of the Government was also made an issue, as was New Zealand's continued membership of the ANZUS defence alliance, which was hindered by Labour's anti-nuclear stance. Law and order was another significant issue.

The conservative National Party faced a difficult task in advocating alternative policies because much of its traditional political ground had been taken over by Labour. It did pledge to reduce the size of the Government bureaucracy and to privatise some State agencies. The Democratic Party (formerly the Social Credit Party) was the third party to contest all constituencies. Altogether 424 candidates were in competition for the House's 97 seats.

On polling day, both Labour and National increased their percentages of the vote, with Labour increasing its majority to 19 seats; it thus became the first post-war Labour administration to govern for successive terms. The poll marked a return to a two-party contest as other parties faded significantly. On 18 August 1987, the revised membership of Mr. Lange's Cabinet was announced.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	2,114,656	
Voters.	1,883,394	(89.1%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	51,492	
Valid votes.	1,831,902	

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	97	878,526	47.96	58	55	56
National Party	97	806,348	44.02	39	38	37
Democratic Party	17	105,095	5.74	—	2	2
<i>Mana Motuhake</i> Party	7	9,789	0.53	—	—	—
New Zealand Party	31	5,306	0.29	—	—	—
Others	95	26,838	1.46	—	—	—
				97*	95	95

* Two seats added since last general election.

2. *Distribution of Representatives according to Profession*

Farmers	16
Teachers (primary and secondary school)	16
Lawyers	12
Trade and commerce	8
Lecturers (university and polytechnic)	6
Public service	4
Trade unionists	4
Farm-related	4
Engineers	3
Doctors	2
Scientists	2
Journalists	2
Research Officers	2
Others	16
	97

3. *Distribution of Representatives according to Sex*

Men . . . . .	.83
Women . . . . .	.14
	97

4. *Distribution of Representatives according to Age*

Under 30 years . . . . .	.2
30-34 » . . . . .	.7
35-39 » . . . . .	.18
40-44 » . . . . .	.17
45-49 » . . . . .	.23
50-54 » . . . . .	.19
55-59 » . . . . .	.6
60 and over . . . . .	.5
	97