

NICARAGUA

Date of Elections: February 6, 1972

Reason **for** Elections

The citizens of Nicaragua were called upon to elect a Constituent Assembly, whose first task would be to draft a new Constitution. The national Congress had decided, on August 21, 1971, to dissolve itself and to rescind the existing Constitution *.

Characteristics of Parliament

The National Constituent Assembly, charged with the task of approving a new Constitution as well as exercising the legislative function, consists of 100 Deputies.

When it has completed its constituent function, this body is to become the national Congress and as such, to hold the legislative power until November 14, 1974. This national Congress is to consist of a 70-member Chamber of Deputies and a 30-member Senate, as well as of formerly-elected Presidents of the Republic.

Electoral System

All Nicaraguan citizens at least 21 years old may vote, regardless of sex. In addition, citizens over 18 are eligible provided they know how to read and write or are married; high school or university graduates are eligible regardless of age or marital status.

Once they reach the age of majority for election purposes, however, all persons are under a moral obligation to register on the electoral lists of their constituency, which are revised every 6 years. Although voting is technically compulsory, enforcement has never been attempted.

Persons convicted of electoral fraud, those deprived of their civil rights, and members of the armed forces on active duty may not vote.

Any native-born Nicaraguan citizen at least 25 years old and in possession of his civil rights is eligible for election to the National Constituent Assembly. There is incompatibility of office as regards membership in the Assembly and the holding of public office or employment paid from governmental or municipal funds. This stipulation, however, does not apply to representatives of Nicaragua abroad in diplomatic, consular, or other capacity, members of social welfare

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 7.

boards, members of scientific or technical commissions, physicians, hospital directors or lawyers in service of the State.

Candidatures presented by political parties must appear on petitions signed by at least 5 % of those electors who voted at the previous election; these must be deposited with the Supreme Tribunal of Elections at least 60 days before the election.

For the election of the Constitutional Assembly, Nicaragua itself was considered a single constituency. In accordance with Article 6 of the decree foreseeing the election of the Constitutional Assembly, Deputies are elected by party-list system, with proportional representation calculated on the basis of a quotient. Minority representation in the Assembly must be at least 40 %.

Substitutes elected at the same time as titular Deputies fill vacancies occurring between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In March 1971, the 2 principal political parties of Nicaragua — President Somoza Debayle's Liberal Party and the Conservative Party of Dr. Agüero Rocha — made an electoral pact. According to this agreement the 2 — combined in a " National Front " — decided that the stronger of the parties at the elections would obtain 60, and the other 40, of the 100 seats in the Constituent Assembly.

The election campaign was waged amidst apathy as all opposition groups, including dissident Liberals and Conservatives and the Social Christian Party — whose request for official recognition was rejected by the Supreme Tribunal of Elections — supported by part of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, boycotted the elections.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the National Constituent Assembly

Political Group	Votes obtained	Number of the (^ t t ^ n uent
Liberal Party.	534,171	60
Conservative Party.	174,897	40
		~100

2. *Distribution of Parliamentarians according to Sex*

Men	91
Women	9
	100