

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Dates of Elections: June 18 to July 9, 1977

### Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament in the country's first general elections since independence in 1975 \*.

### Characteristics of Parliament

Under the Constitution of 1975, the unicameral Parliament of Papua New Guinea, the House of Assembly, comprises 109 members elected for 5 years.

### Electoral System

Every citizen of Papua New Guinea who is at least 18 years of age and who is neither under sentence of death or imprisonment for a period of more than nine months nor has been convicted in the preceding three years of an electoral offence is entitled to vote.

Qualified electors not less than 25 years of age who have either been born or resided (for the immediately preceding two years or for a period of five years at any time) in the district which they seek to represent and who are not insane are qualified to be members of Parliament. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with the post of Governor-General.

Assembly members are chosen by simple majority from 20 single-member provincial electorates and 89 single-member local, or "open", electorates. Each voter casts two votes, one for a provincial candidate and one for a local candidate.

By-elections are held to fill parliamentary vacancies which occur between general elections. No by-elections are held within the last six months of a legislature.

\* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections X* (1975-1976), p. 21.

**General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections**

Papua New Guinea's first parliamentary poll since independence from Australia two years before lasted three weeks because the electorate was scattered over thousands of miles and scores of islands. Polling teams equipped with portable voting booths made it possible for citizens in remote jungle and mountain villages to cast their ballots.

The main contestants for the 109 Assembly seats were the *Pangu Pati* (headed by Mr. Michael Somare, the Prime Minister), the People's Progress Party (PPP — *Pangu's* coalition partner) and the United Party. All the parties reportedly had similar campaign platforms, stressing rural development and the need for improved health and educational facilities. Some 879 candidates (including a large number of Independents) were in the running.

With his party having captured the largest number of Assembly seats, Mr. Somare formed a new coalition (predominantly *Pangu* and PPP) Government after he was elected Prime Minister through a majority vote in Parliament on August 9. A 21-member Cabinet was chosen from among the new Assembly members.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections*

Number of registered electors . . . . . 1,500,000 (approx.)

Political Group	Number of Seats*
<i>Pangu Pati</i> . . . . .	39
United Party. . . . .	38
People's Progress Party. . . . .	18
<i>Papua Besena</i> . . . . .	5
Mataungan Association. . . . .	3
National Party. . . . .	3
Bougainville Lobby. . . . .	2
Country Party. . . . .	1
	109

Figures include successful independent candidates who have pledged their allegiance to a certain party.