

## SAINT VINCENT

Date of Elections: 5 December 1979

### Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the Representatives elected to the House of Assembly in the first general elections since Saint Vincent became fully independent on 27 October 1979\*.

### Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Saint Vincent, the House of Assembly, comprises 13 elected Representatives and 6 Senators appointed by the Governor-General—4 on the advice of the Prime Minister and 2 on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition. The normal duration of the legislature is 5 years.

### Electoral System

All Commonwealth citizens of the age of 18 and upwards who have been ordinarily domiciled or resident in Saint Vincent during the preceding 12 months are entitled to vote. Disqualified are the insane, persons under sentence of death or imprisonment exceeding 12 months and those under allegiance to a foreign State.

Electoral registers are revised annually. Voting is not compulsory.

All qualified electors of at least 21 years of age who are able to speak and read the English language are eligible to become members of the House of Assembly. Judges of the Supreme Court, public servants, persons having an interest in a Government contract, members of the armed or police forces and undischarged bankrupts may not simultaneously be members of the House of Assembly; ministers of religion may at the same time be Senators but not Representatives.

Each candidate must be supported by six electors of his constituency and deposit a sum of US\$ 45, which is reimbursed if he obtains at least one-eighth of the votes cast. Political party backing is not necessarily required.

For election purposes, Saint Vincent is divided into 13 constituencies which each returns one Representative by simple majority. Vacancies are filled through by-election or appointment within 90 days.

### General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Saint Vincent became independent on 27 October 1979. The House of Assembly was dissolved on 7 November and the electorate was called upon to vote on 5 December. A total of 50 candidates vied for the 13 seats. There were four contending parties: the

\* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, pp. 25-26.

Saint Vincent Labour Party (SVLP) led by Mr. R. Milton Cato, Prime Minister since 1974; the People's Political Party, the SVLP's traditional rival, headed by Mr. E.T. Joshua; the New Democratic Party, led by Mr. J.F. Mitchell; and the United People's Movement of Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, which contested elections for the first time. All four groups presented a similar manifesto but ideologically the United People's Movement was oriented to the left much as the political groups which had recently come to power in Grenada and Saint Lucia. The SVLP (considered a moderate socialist party), the centrist New Democratic Party and the People's Political Party were oriented to the right.

On polling day, the SVLP obtained a clear victory as it captured 11 of the 13 seats. Mr. Cato became Prime Minister; his new Cabinet begun its work on 7 December and was formally confirmed in office on 24 January 1980.

Statistics

*Results of the Elections and Distribution of Representatives' Seats  
in the House of Assembly*

Number of registered electors. . . . .	52,073
Voters. . . . .	33,275 (63.9%)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	321
Valid votes. . . . .	32,955

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained		Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections*
Saint Vincent Labour Party. . . . .	13	17,876	54.2	11	10	10
New Democratic Party	13	9,022	27.3	2	1	1
United People's Movement . . . . .	12	4,467	13.5			
People's Political Party	11	1,492	4.5		2	2
				13	13	13

\* Held prior to independence.

2. *Distribution of Members of Parliament  
according to Professional Category*

Lawyers . . . . .	
Businessmen and <b>women</b> . . . . .	
Ex-civil servants. . . . .	
Civil engineer. . . . .	
Craftsman. . . . .	
Electrician. . . . .	
Social worker. . . . .	
Ex-teacher. . . . .	
	<b>19</b>

3. *Distribution of Members of Parliament  
according to Sex*

Men _____	17
Women _____	2
	<b>19</b>

4. *Distribution of Members of Parliament  
according to Age Group*

26-40 years _____	<b>11</b>
<del>41-49</del> _____	
50-60 _____	<b>5</b>
61-65 . . . _____	1
	14