

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Date of Elections: 26 July 1984

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the Representatives in the House of Assembly following premature dissolution of Parliament. General elections had previously been held in December 1979.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 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 and the Grenadines 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 and the Grenadines is divided into 13 constituencies which each return one Representative by simple majority. Vacancies are filled through by-election or appointment within 90 days.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Main contenders for the 13 Representatives seats were the ruling Saint Vincent Labour Party (SVLP), headed by outgoing Prime Minister Milton Cato and the National Democratic Party (NDP), led by Mr. James Mitchell; the NDP had been in the opposition for 10 years.

Both parties fielded candidates in all constituencies. The election campaign lasted five weeks, and was marked by debate over issues involving tax, a contempt of court ruling against the Attorney General and a shooting incident by a senior civil servant whose arrest seemed unduly delayed.

On polling day, the centrist NDP won nine seats compared with its previous total of two, while the conservative SVLP picked up the rest. Mr. Mitchell became Prime Minister and subsequently named his seven-member Cabinet.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	47,863	
Voters.	42,507	(88.8%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	298	
Valid votes.	42,209	

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
National Democratic Party (NDP)	13	21,700	51.4	9	1	2
Saint Vincent Labour Party (SVLP)	13	17,493	41.4	4	10	11
United People's Movement (UPM)	8	1,350	3.2	—	—	
Movement for National Unity (MNU)	4	856	2.0	—	—	
People's Democratic Movement (PDM)	4	810	1.9	—	2	
				13	13	13

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

Businessmen and women.7
Lawyers.	3
Ex-civil servants.	3
Accountants.	2
Agronomist.1
Electrician.1
Secretary.1
Ex-teacher.	1
	19

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

Men.	18
Women.	1
	19

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

30-40 years.	10
41-49 ».	4
50-60 ».	3
61-69 ».	2
	19