

SIERRA LEONE

Date of Elections: 1 May 1982

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the elective seats in Parliament for the first time after the 1978 constitutional changes*. General elections had previously been held in May 1977. Parliament was dissolved by the President on 2 April 1982.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Sierra Leone, the House of Representatives, consists of the President, the Speaker and 104 members of Parliament. Of these Representatives, 85 are elected for 5 years by universal suffrage, 12 are Paramount Chiefs who represent Districts and are elected by members of the Tribal Authority of the specific District, and 7 are appointed by the President of the Republic.

Electoral System

Citizens who have attained the age of 21 and are ordinarily resident and registered in a particular ward (the territorial division for election purposes) are entitled to vote for popularly-elected members of the House. No person may be registered who is insane, serving a sentence of imprisonment or disqualified under any law relating to electoral offences.

Any citizen (otherwise than by naturalization) who has attained the age of 21 years, is a registered elector, is a member of a recognized party and is able to speak and read the English language with a degree of proficiency sufficient to enable him to take an active part in parliamentary proceedings may be elected to Parliament. The All People's Congress is the only party officially recognized. Under a 1981 amendment to the Constitution**, elections are preceded by a system of primaries in which the executive committees of the ruling All People's Congress (APC) party select up to three candidates to run for election in each of the 85 constituencies. In the primaries, the voters choose between the APC-selected candidates. The 1981 amendment permits civil servants who were previously barred from office to stand for election provided they resign their jobs three months beforehand. A person who has become a citizen by naturalization is qualified only once he has resided continuously in the country for 25 years after such registration, or has served in the civil or regular armed services for a continuous period of 25 years.

No person may be elected to Parliament if he owes allegiance to a foreign State, is disqualified from practising his profession within the country, is under a sentence of death or imprisonment exceeding 12 months, or has within the five previous years been sentenced

*See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XII (1977-1978)*, p. 11.

**See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 21.

to imprisonment for an offence involving dishonesty, for which he was not pardoned. Also disqualified are persons who are, or have been within 12 months prior to the election date, members of any commission established under the Constitution, or members of the armed forces.

Electoral constituencies are established by an Electoral Commission. Each constituency returns one member by simple majority vote.

By-elections are held to fill elective seats of the House which fall vacant between general elections.

General Considerations **and** Conduct of the Elections

President of the Republic Siaka Stevens was elected in 1977 for a further 7-year term. His position was therefore not at stake.

The campaign was marred by violence. Elections in 13 constituencies were annulled on grounds of "serious irregularities". The election results showed that 40 former MPs had lost their seats, two Cabinet Ministers had been defeated while 13 Ministers and six others had got elected unopposed. The elected included 17 members of the old Parliament and 37 persons elected as members for the first time. Also, for the first time, a woman was elected a member.