

## SURINAM

**Date of Elections:** October 31, 1977

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament for the first time since Surinam became independent in November 1975 \*.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The unicameral Parliament of Surinam, the Legislative Assembly (*Staten*), consists of 39 members elected for 4 years.

### **Electoral System**

All citizens of Surinam aged 21 years or above are entitled to vote unless they are insane or have been deprived of their freedom of movement by court decision.

Citizens who are at least 23 years of age and residing in Surinam are eligible to be elected to the *Staten*. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with membership of the armed forces.

Twenty-seven members (including 10 from Paramaribo, the capital) of the *Staten* are directly elected in the various constituencies by simple majority **vote** and the 12 remaining members, from the rural areas, are chosen according to proportional representation.

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

The 1977 election date was announced by Prime Minister Henck Arron on July 15. This decision followed various political disputes and party realignments which had taken place throughout the year.

Vying for the 39 parliamentary seats were the centre-left National Party Alliance (Surinam National Party, Progressive Surinam People's Party, *Kaum-Tani Persuatan Indonesia* (KTPI), and the Reformed Progressive Party), the conservative opposition United Democratic Parties (four parties) and the leftist Nationalist Republican Party (which had been dropped from the governing coalition on August 17, 1977). The National Party Alliance was formed on

\* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections X* (1975-1976), p. 12.

August 20. Economic questions (unemployment, housing, food production) and the role of bauxite in the economy (Surinam is the world's fourth leading exporter of bauxite) were debated during the campaign, in which 150 candidates and 22 parties took part.

On a polling day which saw a turnout of approximately 90%, the National Party Alliance (*National Partij Kombinatie*) captured 22 seats to 17 for the United Democratic Parties (*Verenigde Democratische Partijen*). Members of the victorious coalition figured in the new 12-man Cabinet sworn in on December 28. Mr. Arron, of the Surinam National Party, remained Prime Minister.

## Statistics

### 1. *Distribution of Seats in the Legislative Assembly*

Political Group	Number of Seats
National Party Alliance .	22
United Democratic Parties	<u>17</u>
	<b>30</b>