

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Date of Elections: May 24, 1971

Reason for Elections

These legislative elections were organised as a result of Parliament being dissolved 6 months before the normal expiry of the legislature.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Trinidad and Tobago Parliament is bicameral.

The Senate consists of 24 members appointed by the Governor-General, 13 of whom are designated following an agreement between the Governor-General and the Prime-Minister, 4 by agreement between the Governor-General and the Leader of the Opposition. Nomination of the 7 others is dependent on an agreement between the Governor-General and the Prime-Minister, following consultation between the latter and economic, social and religious associations, or with other groups from which he is of the opinion that these Senators should be selected.

The House of Representatives has 36 members. The Senators and Representatives have 5-year terms of office.

Electoral System

Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who are at least 21 years of age, and Commonwealth citizens who have been resident in Trinidad and Tobago for at least one year before the date of the elections have the right to vote. To enjoy this right, they must be resident in their constituency for at least 2 months before the closing date for registration on the electoral rolls; they must be of sound mind, not under any prison sentence of more than 12 months and not convicted of electoral fraud.

An electoral committee registers the electors on the rolls and, each year, publishes a list of the electors for each electoral district. Voting is not compulsory.

Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who are more than 21 years of age, who are domiciled or resident in the country at election time, or have been resident there for at least 2 years before the elections, may be candidates to Parliament. Every candidate must be proposed by at least 6 electors in the constituency where he seeks a seat.

Parliament may consider the parliamentary mandate to be incompatible with offices in administrations, the armed forces of the Crown and police forces.

Representatives are elected in 36 single-member constituencies by simple plurality of vote.

A by-election may be organised to fill a vacant seat in the Parliament duly noted by the High Court.

General] Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The electoral campaign was opened by decree, as provided for under the terms of the electoral law, at the beginning of May.

Fifty eight candidates put forward by 3 political parties sought to canvass the votes of the electorate. The Governmental Party or People's National Movement, led by the outgoing Prime-Minister, Dr. Eric Williams, proposed candidates in the country's 36 constituencies; 8 were returned uncontested. The opposition parties represented by the Democratic Liberation Party, led by Mr. Bhadase Maraj, and the African National Congress, led by Mr. John Broome, proposed 21 and 7 candidates respectively. Lastly, 2 independent candidates also stood for election. The main Opposition party, the Democratic Labour Party (ACDC-DLP), led by Mr. Vernon Jamada, leader of the Opposition in the preceding Parliament, had decided to boycott the elections in protest at Parliament's refusal to meet the electoral reforms the party requested: lowering of the voting age to 18, better kept electoral registers and replacement of voting machines by ballot boxes.

In a manifesto entitled " Perspectives for a New Society " the governing party (PNM) had taken over some of the themes propounded by the Black Power movement, i.e. setting up of co-operatives, contracting works policy and struggle against unemployment.

The electoral campaign was calm compared to the pre-electoral period during which Black Power supporters had participated in a number of demonstrations; worthy of note was the hesitation of the different Opposition parties as regards a decision to participate in the voting. While observers were expecting the Opposition to win some seats in Parliament, the Governmental Party was totally victorious and won the 28 contested seats; this party now holds every seat in Parliament.

Dr. Eric Williams set up the new Government on May 28, 1971.

Statistics

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

Number of registered voters.	449,775
Voters in the 28 constituencies where elec- tions were held.	352,802
Valid votes.	118,519

Political Group	Number of Can- didates	,, . obtained	Number of Seats in House of Represent- atives
People's National Movement (PNM)	36	99,770	36 (+12)
Democratic Liberation Party (DLP)	21	14,891	— (—12)
African National Congress (ANC).	7	2,861	— (—)
Independent Parties.	2	997	— (—)

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