

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

**Date of Elections:** September 13, 1976

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the members of the House of Representatives on the normal expiry of their term of office. Previous general elections had taken place on May 24, **1971**.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The bicameral Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago comprises a Senate and a House of Representatives.

The Senate consists of 31 members appointed by the President of the Republic: 16 on the advice of the Prime Minister, 6 on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and 9 at the President's own discretion " from outstanding persons from economic, social or community organizations and other major fields of endeavour ".

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

### **Electoral System**

All citizens of Trinidad and Tobago or citizens of the British Commonwealth who have resided in the country for at least one year immediately preceding the date of the elections are entitled to vote provided they are 18 years of age or above\* and have lived in their electoral district for at least two months prior to the election date. Disqualified from being electors are the insane, persons convicted of an election offence, and persons under sentence of death or imprisonment in excess of 12 months.

Electoral registers are revised and published annually. Voting is not compulsory. Postal voting is allowed for certain categories of citizens.

A candidate for the House of Representatives must be a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who is at least 18 years of age and who has either resided in the country for a period of two years immediately before the date of his nomination for election or is domiciled and resident in Trinidad and Tobago at that date; the minimum age for candidates for the Senate is 25. No person is

\* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 13.

qualified to be elected as a member of the House, or appointed Senator, who owes allegiance to a foreign State, is an undischarged bankrupt, is mentally ill, is under sentence of death or imprisonment exceeding 12 months or has been convicted of an offence relating to elections. Also disqualified from membership of the House are persons holding any office connected with elections.

Membership of Parliament is considered incompatible with a number of public offices and posts connected with administration of elections. The Speaker or Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives may not be a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary; the same applies to the President and Deputy President of the Senate.

Every candidate for election must be nominated by six or more registered electors of his district, and deposit a sum of TTJ 250, which is reimbursed if he polls not less than one-eighth of the total vote in his district. Individual campaign expenses may not exceed TTT 5,000.

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

By-elections are held to fill vacancies in the House which occur within the first four years of the life of the Parliament. Senate vacancies are filled through nomination.

### General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The September 1976 election was the first since Trinidad and Tobago became a Republic within the British Commonwealth under a new Constitution on August 1, 1976\*.

As opposed to the previous election in 1971, which had been boycotted by the main opposition parties and had thus resulted in the total success of the People's National Movement (PNM) party, the 1976 poll was contested by nine political parties and a number of independent candidates. Among these figured prominently the newly-founded leftist United Labour Front (ULF) and the Democratic Action Congress.

Eligible voters included about 70,000 persons aged 18 to 21 who were enfranchised for the first time. Final results gave the PNM 24 seats, the same number it had won in 1966 when the last fully contested election was held in the country. The Democratic Action Congress won the two seats from Tobago.

The New PNM Cabinet formed by Mr. Eric Williams, Prime Minister since 1956, was sworn in on September 22.

• See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 13.

## Statistics

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

Number of registered voters. . . . .	565,646
Voters. . . . .	315,809 (55.83%)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	3,824
Valid votes. . . . .	311,985

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dis- solution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
People's National Movement (PNM) . . . . .	36	169,194	53.57	24	<b>34*</b>	<b>36</b>
United Labour Front (ULF). . . . .	26	84,780	26.85	10		
Democratic Action Congress. . . . .	36	25,586	8.10	2		
Tapia House Movement	29	12,021	3.81			
Democratic Labour Party. . . . .	35	9,404	2.98			
Social Democratic Labour Party. . . . .	34	5,928	1.88			
West Indian National Party. . . . .	26	1,242	0.42			
United Freedom Party	21	1,047	0.33			
Liberation Action Party	19	872	0.28			
National Trinidad and Tobago Party. . . . .	1	115	0.04			
Young People's Natio- nal Party. . . . .	1	104	0.03			
Independent (no party affiliation). . . . .	5	1,692	0.50			
				36	<b>34</b>	36

\* Two of the PNM Members ceased to associate themselves with the party during its term of office and at the time of dissolution the party had only 34 seats.

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

Public servants, teachers. . . . .	12
Lawyers. . . . .	10
Business executives. . . . .	7
Trade union officials. . . . .	5
Public relations officers. . . . .	4
Doctors. . . . .	3
University lecturers. . . . .	3
Farmers. . . . .	3
Engineers. . . . .	3
Accounts clerks. . . . .	2
Others. . . . .	15
	<b>67</b>

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

Men . . . . .	59
Women. . . . .	8
	<b>67</b>

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

House of Representatives		Senate	
20-25 years . . . . .	2	25-30 years . . . . .	1
25-30. . . . .	2	30-35. . . . .	1
30-35. . . . .	6	35-40. . . . .	2
35-40. . . . .	3	40-45. . . . .	4
40-45. . . . .	8	45-50. . . . .	13
45-50. . . . .	6	50-55. . . . .	2
50-55. . . . .	5	55-60. . . . .	4
55-60. . . . .	1	60-65. . . . .	4
60-65. . . . .	1		31
65-70. . . . .	1		
70 and over . . . . .	1		