

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

**Date of Elections:** 15 December 1986

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the seats of the House of Representatives on the normal expiry of the members' term of office.

### **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, of whom 34 are from Trinidad and 2 from Tobago. Parliament's normal term is 5 years.

### **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 electoral 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 qualified to be elected as a member of the House, or appointed Senator, who owes allegiance to a foreign State, is an undischarged bankrupt, mentally ill, 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 TT\$ 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 TT\$ 5,000.

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

By-elections are held within 90 days to fill vacancies in the House which occur within the first four years of the life of the Parliament. Senate vacancies are filled through appointment.

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

In the 1986 elections, the ruling People's National Movement - in power since 1956 - was for the first time confronted by a unified and broadly-based opposition, known as the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR). The moderate NAR comprised four parties (the United Labour Front, the Organization for National Reconstruction, the Democratic Action Congress and the Tapia House Movement) and was led by Mr. Arthur N.R. Robinson.

Key issues in the campaign pertained mainly to the economy and alleged corruption in high places. The opposition charged that the country's oil-based economy, hurt by a general drop in world oil prices, was hurt by government mismanagement; it underlined the growing unemployment rate, stressed the desirability of change and the need to restructure the economy, and pledged a moral crusade against corruption, waste and inefficiency. The PNM, headed by Prime Minister George Chambers, rested largely on its achievements over the past years.

On polling day, the NAR swept to an unexpectedly large victory, capturing 33 of the 36 Representatives' seats. Mr. Robinson was sworn in as Prime Minister on 16 December and announced his 13-member Cabinet.

## Statistics

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

Number of registered electors	882,000	(approx.)
Voters . . . . .	63%	(approx.)

Political Group	% of Votes obtained	Number of Seats
National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) . . . . .	67.3	<b>33</b>
People's National Movement (PNM) . . . . .	31.1	<b>3</b>
National Joint Action Committee . . . . .	1.46	
People's Popular Movement . . . . .	0.14	
		<b>36</b>

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

	Senate	House of Representatives
Men	27	30
Women		_6
	31	36