

WESTERN SAMOA

Date of Elections: February 21, 1976

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament on the normal expiry of their term of office. Previous general elections had taken place on February 25, 1973.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Western Samoa, the Legislative Assembly, consists of 47 members elected for 3 years. Forty-five of these members are elected from a like number of territorial constituencies on a franchise confined to *matais* (elected family leaders) and two are elected by persons outside the *matai* system and registered on the individual voters' roll.

Electoral System

Electors for representatives of *matais* chosen in constituencies must be at least 21 years of age, holders of a *matai* title and registered on the electoral roll of the constituency concerned. Citizens of Western Samoa at least 21 years of age may have their names entered on the individual voters' roll. No person's name can simultaneously appear both on the *matai* and individual voters' roll.

Candidates for the Legislative Assembly must be qualified electors who are not insane, undischarged bankrupts or persons who have been convicted, in Western Samoa or American Samoa, of an offense punishable by death or by imprisonment for a term of two years or more, or convicted, in Western Samoa, of a corrupt practice, unless such offenders have received a free pardon or have undergone their sentence or punishment. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with that of public servant.

Candidates must be nominated by two registered electors and make a monetary deposit of 40 *tola* (approximately US\$ 160), which sum is forfeited if the candidate obtains less than one-fourth of the total number of votes received by the successful candidate.

By-elections are held for Assembly seats which become vacant between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

As denned in the Constitution of 1960, Western Samoa's political institutions combine the forms of British-style parliamentary democracy with elements of the traditional Samoan social structure. Since there are no formally established political parties, parliamentary candidates campaign as individuals; 45 of the 47 MPs are elected by approximately 10,000 holders of *matai* titles (a *matai* being the head of an *aiga*, the traditional Samoan extended family unit).

On polling day, more than half of the sitting members lost their seats. The new Assembly subsequently elected Mr. Tupuola Taisi Efi as Prime Minister.