

WESTERN SAMOA

Date of Elections: 27 February 1982

Purpose of Elections

Parliament was dissolved on 1 February 1982 and elections held for all the seats in Parliament on the expiry of its prescribed term. Previous elections had taken place on 24 February 1979.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Western Samoa—the Legislative Assembly—consists of 47 members elected for 3 years. Forty-five of these are Samoans elected from 42 territorial constituencies on a franchise confined to *matais* (elected family leaders *matai* being the head of an *aiga*, which is the traditional Samoan extended family unit) and two are elected by universal suffrage of those outside the *matai* system (mainly Europeans) and registered on the individual voters' rolls.

Electoral System

Elections are held under the simple majority system. To be a voter, a person must be a citizen of Western Samoa, 21 years of age and a resident. Persons who are insane, undischarged bankrupts or who have been convicted, in Western Samoa or American Samoa, of an offence 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 of punishment) are disqualified from voting.

Electors for representatives of *matais* chosen from constituencies must be holders of a *matai* (chief) title—male or female—and registered on the electoral roll of the constituency concerned. Other citizens of Western Samoa—descendants of non-Samoan races—may have their names entered on the individual voters' rolls. No name can simultaneously appear both on the *matai* and the individual voters' rolls.

Electoral rolls are revised yearly. Voting at elections is not compulsory.

Candidates for the Legislative Assembly must be qualified voters. A member is not allowed to hold any office of profit. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with that of a public servant. Public servants who become members must resign.

Candidates must be nominated by two registered electors and make a monetary deposit of an amount equivalent to US\$ 35, which is forfeited if the candidate obtains less than one-half of the total number of votes polled by the successful candidate.

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

General Political Considerations and Conduct of Elections

Under the Independence Constitution of 1960, Western Samoa's political institutions combine the forms of British-style parliamentary democracy with elements of the traditional Samoan social structure. While the present Head of State shall hold office for life, the Constitution provides for a Head of State elected by the Legislative Assembly for a five-year term. Since till very recently there were no formally established political parties in Western Samoa, all parliamentary candidates campaigned as individuals. In 1979, however, the opposition members formed the Human Rights Protection Party. Another party—*Vaega o le Tautua*—was formed in 1981.

On polling day, of the approximately 14,000 *matai* and 1,500 individual electors, about 12,000 *matais* and 1,200 individuals actually voted. The Human Rights Protection Party won 23 seats. The same number was won by independents while one seat was declared a draw.

Statistics

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

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Accountants | 10 |
| Academics . | 4 |
| Economists . | 2 |
| Lawyer . . . | 1 |
| Others | 30 |
| | 47 |

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

| | |
|----------|-----------|
| Men. . . | 46 |
| Woman | 1 |
| | 47 |

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

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 35-50 years | 25 |
| 50-70 years | 22 |
| | ~47~ |