

DOMINICA

Date of Elections: 21 July 1980

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for 21 Representatives of the House of Assembly in the first general elections since Dominica became fully independent in November 1978*.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Dominica, the House of Assembly, is composed of 21 elected Representatives and 9 Senators. The latter are appointed by the President of the Republic—5 on the advice of the Prime Minister and 4 on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition. The normal duration of the legislature is 5 years.

Electoral System

Every citizen of the British Commonwealth who is at least 18 years of age and possesses such qualifications relating to residence or domicile as Parliament may prescribe is entitled to vote.

Citizens of Dominica aged 21 years or over who have resided in the country for 12 months immediately before the date of nomination, or are domiciled and resident in Dominica at that date, and who are able to speak and read the English language with sufficient proficiency to enable them to take an active part in House proceedings are qualified to be elected as Representatives. This last condition also applies to Senate candidates, who must moreover be Commonwealth citizens, 21 years old, and domiciled and resident in Dominica at the time of their appointment or nomination for election.

Disqualified for election or appointment as a Representative or Senator are persons under allegiance to a foreign State, ministers of religion, undischarged bankrupts, the insane, certain government contractors, and persons under sentence of death or serving a sentence of imprisonment exceeding 12 months.

Representatives are elected in 21 single-member constituencies.

By-elections are held to fill vacant Representatives' seats. Vacant Senate seats are filled either by appointment or election, as the case may be. All these actions are to be undertaken within three months of the occurrence of the vacancy.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Following independence in 1978, political turmoil between the Dominica Labour Party (DLP) Government and opposition groups united in a Committee for National Salvation

* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XIII* (1978-1979), pp. 11-12.

(CNS) plagued the country. An interim CNS Government was formed in June 1979, subsequent to a 25-day general strike.

Major parties contesting the House seats were the conservative Dominica Freedom Party (DFP), led by Miss Mary Eugenia Charles; the DLP, headed by former Prime Minister Patrick John; and the newly-formed Democratic Labour Party of Dominica (DLDP), led by Mr. Oliver Seraphine, the former CNS Prime Minister. On polling day, the DFP gained a convincing victory, winning all but four of the Representatives' seats. Observers ascribed the poor showing of the other parties to the political scandals of which they had been victims. Miss Charles became the Caribbean's first woman Prime Minister.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors		38,452	
Voters		30,729 (79.9%)	
Political Group	Votes obtained		Seats
Dominica Freedom Party (DFP)	16,083	52.34	17
Democratic Labour Party of Dominica (DLDP)	5,944	19.34	2
Democratic Labour Party (DLP)	5,195	16.91	—
Independents	1,043	3.39	2
			21

* Excluding Senators.