

FIJI

Date of Elections: April 15 to 29, 1972

Reason for Elections

Elections were held for all the members of the House of Representatives, organized anew pursuant to the Constitution of 1970. This was the first general election since independence in 1970.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Fijian Parliament is composed of:

— The Senate, consisting of 22 members appointed by the Governor-General, of whom:

- 8 nominated by the Council of Chiefs;
- 7 nominated by the Prime Minister;
- 6 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition;
- 1 nominated by the Council of the Island of Rotuma.

Appointments are for 6 years, 11 members retiring every 3 years.

— The House of Representatives, consisting of 52 members elected for 5 years on the following basis:

- *Fijian*: 12 members elected by voters on the Fijian Communal Roll; 10 members elected by voters on the National Roll.
- *Indian*: 12 members elected by voters on the Indian Communal Roll; 10 members elected by voters on the National Roll.
- *General* (persons neither Fijian, other Pacific Islanders, nor Indians; e.g., Europeans): 3 members elected by voters on the General Communal Roll; 5 members elected on the National Roll.

The "National Roll" consists of all registered electors on the 3 Communal Rolls.

Electoral System

Any person may be registered as voter on a Roll if he is a citizen of Fiji and has attained the age of 21 years. The insane, those owing allegiance to a State outside the British Commonwealth, those under sentence of death or imprisonment for a term exceeding 12 months, and those guilty of offenses connected with elections may not be registered.

Rolls are revised annually. Voting is not compulsory.

Any voter shall be qualified to be elected as member of the House of Representatives. Disqualified, however, is one who is an undischarged bankrupt;

who holds a public office; who has in the preceding 3 years held certain government posts; who is interested in certain government contracts; or who holds any office connected with an election to the House. Candidatures must be submitted on a nomination paper signed by 6 to 8 voters of the subject constituency, and accompanied by a deposit of \$100.

To be qualified to be appointed to the Senate one must be registered as a voter on one of the 3 Communal Rolls. The same disqualifications apply as for candidates to the House, except that of interest in government contracts. A prospective Senator further cannot also be a Representative.

Fiji is divided into 12 constituencies, each returning one communally-elected Fijian member; into 12 constituencies each returning one communally-elected Indian member; and into 3 constituencies each returning 1 communally-elected General member. For the National Roll elections there are 10 constituencies, each returning a Fijian and an Indian member, and these are combined into 5 pairs for the purpose of each returning 1 General member. Constituency boundaries are delimited by a Constituency Boundaries Commission.

Each voter is entitled to cast 4 votes: 1 in respect of the Communal Roll constituency in which he is registered, and 3 in respect of the National Roll constituencies in which he is registered.

A by-election is held to fill a seat which becomes vacant between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The Alliance Party, led by the Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, was returned to power in Fiji's first general election since independence. It gained a majority of 14 in the 52-seat House of Representatives, as opposed to its majority of 18 in the old 36-seat House.

In Indian Communal constituencies, the National Federation Party polled about three-quarters of the valid votes cast, but the Alliance share of just over 24 % was slightly higher than in the general election of 1966 and by-elections of 1968. In Fijian Communal constituencies, National Federation Party candidates polled a total of 1,545 votes, about 2 % of the valid votes cast.

Candidates independent of the 2 main parties took a beating. Thirty-two of them contested the election, not one was elected and 13 lost their deposits.

The Prime Minister expressed gratitude to the Opposition for its part in making the election a peaceful one, and hailed the results as a triumph for the Alliance policy of multi-racial harmony.

The next session of Parliament was to begin on May 12, with one of the first tasks of the House of Representatives to elect a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker. Under the Constitution both must be members of the House.

Statistics

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

Number of registered voters.	205,002
Votes cast.	689,673 (99.3 %) *
Blank or void ballot papers.	14,201
Valid votes.	675,472

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats in the House of Representatives
Alliance Party.	52	388,550	57.5	33
National Federation Party	10	241,866	35.9	11)
Independents.	26	43,521	6.4	—
Fijian Independent Party	(i)	1,535	0.2	—
				52

Distribution of Representatives according to Professional Category

Lawyers.	10
Politicians.	10
Farmers.	8
Ministers.	4
Teachers.	3
Retired civil servants.	3
Company directors.	2
Trade Union secretaries.	2
Engineer.	1
Others.	9
	52

3. *Distribution of Representatives according to Sex*

Men	50
Women	2
	52

* Voters were issued 4 ballot papers each, except in 2 constituencies where candidates were unopposed, in which case 3 ballot papers each.