

SOUTH AFRICA

Date of Elections: November 30, 1977

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of the House of Assembly, which was dissolved nearly two years before the normal expiry of its term. Previous general elections had been held in April 1974.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of South Africa consists of the Senate and the House of Assembly.

Since the last elections, various changes in the number of members of the two Houses have taken place as a result of the projected independence of the Territory of South West Africa *,

The Senate consists of 51 members: 43 elected by the electoral colleges of the country's four provinces (16 for the Transvaal, 11 for the Cape Province, and 8 each for the Orange Free State and Natal) and 8 appointed by the State President (2 for each province). Senators hold office for 5 years.

The House of Assembly is now composed of 165 members, elected for 5 years. Of these, 76 represent the Transvaal, 55 the Cape Province, 20 Natal and 14 the Orange Free State.

Electoral System

In order to be eligible to be registered as a voter in any electoral division, a person must be a South African citizen at least 18 years of age who is actually resident in that division on the date of completion of his application for registration. He must, in addition, be a white person of sound mind. Persons convicted of treason (after 1950) and murder, as well as certain persons convicted of a corrupt or illegal practice under the Electoral Act, of an offence under the Suppression of Communism Act (1950) or the Terrorism Act (1967), or of any other offence in respect of which imprisonment has been imposed and such sentence has not expired are not entitled to registration.

Electoral registers are drawn up at the constituency level and are kept up to date by means of a system of continuous registration of voters and supplementation of lists; general registrations of voters take place at intervals of not more than five years. Voting is not compulsory.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 9.

In order to be eligible for either House, it is necessary to be a white person and South African citizen who has resided for at least five years within the territory of the Republic. A person must be at least 30 years old to be elected Senator and at least 18 to be elected to the House of Assembly.

Undischarged bankrupts, persons declared of unsound mind by a competent court, certain persons holding an office of profit under the Republic, as well as certain persons who have at one time been sentenced to imprisonment for at least 12 months are ineligible to be candidates to Parliament.

Nominations must be supported by two electors (proposer and seconder) from the division concerned and be accompanied by a deposit equivalent to US\$ 840. This sum is returned to the candidate if he polls more than one-fifth of the number of votes received by the successful candidate.

House of Assembly members in each of the 165 single-member constituencies are elected by simple majority. Electors vote for a single candidate to the exclusion of all others.

As stated above, elected Senators are chosen in each of the four provinces by electoral colleges consisting of members of the House of Assembly and the provincial councillors.

By-elections are held to fill elective parliamentary seats which become vacant between general elections. Seats of appointed Senators are filled by persons likewise appointed until the end of the term concerned.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The House of Assembly was prematurely dissolved on September 24, 1977. Prime Minister John Vorster explained that he thus wished to give the electorate an opportunity to express its opinion on:

- (1) The allegations that the South African Government no longer reflected the feelings of the electorate on the question of " the meddling in South Africa's affairs by certain Governments and outside organizations ";
- (2) New constitutional dispensations for the Coloured and Indian people which had been approved by the congresses of the ruling National Party (NP);
- (3) The changes that had arisen within the ranks of the Opposition since the previous general elections.

Prior to the 1977 poll, an attempt was made by the three main white opposition parties to form a united liberal opposition to the NP. This was marked by the dissolution, in June 1977, of the United Party and the creation of the middle-of-the-road New Republican Party. Subsequent disagreements in policy led to the formation of a second group, the liberal-leaning Progressive Federal Party (PFP).

The elections (in which only the country's white citizens cast votes) nevertheless strengthened the parliamentary majority of the NP — in power since 1948 — to an unprecedented degree, with the PFP becoming the official opposition in the House. Mr. Vorster continued as Prime Minister.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors	2,209,223
Voters	1,063,774*
Blank or void ballot papers	21,273
Valid votes	1,042,501

* Results apply to contested constituencies.

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes	%	Number of Seats	Number held at O	Number of Seats won at > 15 previous Elections
National Party (NP)	149 (1)	689,108	64.8	134	123	123
Progressive Federal Party (PFP)	58 (2)	177,705	16.7	17	12	7 (3)
New Republic Party (NRP)	43	123,245	11.6	10	30 (4)	41 0
Herstigte Nasionale Party .	66	34,161	3.2	—	—	—
South African Party (SAP)	7	17,915	1.7	3	6	-(•)
	5	6,171	0.6			
				164 (7)	171	171

(1) Including 43 uncontested seats.

(2) Including 2 uncontested seats.

(3) These seats were won by the Progressive Party, which later merged with elements of the United Party to form the PFP.

(4) Seats held by the United Party.

(5) These seats were won by the United Party, which in 1977 disbanded and merged with the Democratic Party to form the NRP.

(6) The SAP was formed in 1977 from elements of the United Party.

(7) One vacancy. Total number is 6 less since last elections when South West African candidates participated.

*2. Distribution of Members of the House of Assembly
according to Professional Category*

Politicians.	43
Farmers.	40
Lawyers.	35
Company directors.	12
Businessmen.	12
Doctors.	7
Teachers.	2
Consultants.	2
Representatives.	1
Salaried clerks.	1
Journalists.	1
Others.	9

*3. Distribution of Members of the House of Assembly
according to Sex*

Men.	164
Women.	1
	165

*4. Distribution of Members of the House of Assembly
according to Age Group*

30-39 years.	17
40-49.	50
50-59.	73
60 and over.	25