

COLOMBIA

Date of Elections: April 19, 1970

Characteristics of Parliament

The Colombian Congress consists of 2 Houses:

— The Senate, composed of 118 members elected for 4 years on the basis of 1 member for each 200,000 inhabitants or fraction of 100,000, with the reservation that no department be represented by less than 2 Senators.

— The House of Representatives, with 210 members henceforth elected for 4 years on the basis of 1 for each 100,000 inhabitants or fraction of 50,000, with the reservation that no department shall have less than 2 Representatives.

Colombian citizens went to the polls on April 19 to renew the entire Senate and House of Representatives whose mandate had expired.

Electoral System

Persons who have the right to vote are all citizens of either sex, 21 or over, duly registered as electors in their municipality and who enjoy their civil and political rights. Members of the armed forces on active service and members of the national police force are debarred from participating in the poll. Voting is a legal right but not a duty.

All registered electors who are at least 25 years of age and have never been sentenced to imprisonment for an offence against common law are eligible for the House of Representatives.

To stand for the Senate a candidate must, in addition to the last condition mentioned above, be at least 35 years of age, Colombian by birth and have held certain high offices (President of the Republic, member of the House of Representatives, Cabinet Minister, head of administrative department, chief of a diplomatic mission, governor, magistrate of the superior court, Councillor of State, Attorney General of the Nation, university professor of at least 5 years' standing), or have practised a profession for 5 years with a university degree.

Representatives and Senators are elected in each constituency on a closed-list proportional representation system. 22 constituencies consist of 1 single department; other less densely populated regions are grouped together to form 4 more constituencies. Voting for both Houses takes place on the same day as the election of the President of the Republic.

Under the terms of an amendment to the 1886 Constitution, approved by plebiscite on December 1, 1957, the seats in both Houses, like all elective offices in the country, are shared on a half-and-half basis between the two traditional parties: Conservative and Liberal.

Furthermore, if one of these two political parties submits two or more lists in an electoral district in which there are more than 2 seats to be filled, the latter are distributed as follows:

— The total votes obtained by the concurrent lists of each traditional party are divided by the number of seats allotted to the party according to the Constitution.

— Lists whose total votes do not equal at least half this electoral quotient are eliminated and their votes are added to those of the party which has already obtained the largest number of votes.

— By dividing the total number of votes for each remaining list by the above-mentioned quotient, the number of candidates elected on each list is then calculated. Any remaining seat or seats are attributed to the list which has the largest residue of votes as a result of this division.

A substitute is elected with each Deputy or Senator to replace either of the latter in the event of resignation or possible death during a legislature.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

As mentioned above, the constitutional amendment of December 1957 instituted a system of sharing the elective offices between the Conservative and Liberal Parties, and made provision for alternating the Presidency of the Republic every 4 years, until 1974, between a Conservative and a Liberal, both parties agreeing to one candidate.

Opposition lists thereupon started to be formed within the two official parties combined as a National Government Front. Elections thus became an expression of opposition between the factions centred around "dissident" candidates for the Presidency which, within the Conservative and Liberal Parties, submit competitive lists, rather than between the two major parties themselves.

As the outgoing Head of State, Mr. Carlos Lleras Restrepo, was a member of the Liberal Party, it lay with the Conservative Party to present the National Front's candidate for the Presidency. It put forward Mr. Misael Pastrana Borrero; but two Conservatives, Mr. Belisario Betancur and Mr. Evaristo Sourdis, as well as the former dictator, General Rojas Pinilla, decided to contest the Presidency and recruited supporters in the two traditional parties.

For both the presidential and congressional elections, opposition to the Conservative Unionist and official Liberal Parties (*Pastranistas*) was divided

between *Bdisaristas*, *Sourdistas* and *Rojistas* (or *Anapistas*, derived **from** the name of the National Popular Alliance (ANAPO), founded by General Rojas Pinilla and led by his daughter, Maria Eugenia).

Opposing Mr. Pastrana, who promised a change without disturbing the continuity of government and a complete agrarian reform to redress the balance between the towns and the under-developed rural areas, was Mr. Betancur, a moderate and former Minister of Labour, who stressed the need to transform economic and social structures, and Mr. Sourdis, who was opposed to the National Front agreement and expressed his support for decentralization. General Rojas Pinilla adopted the slogan " the President of the Poor " and strove by many promises that were often demagogic to direct the Colombian people's wish for change to his advantage.

All the candidates strongly urged the people to take part in the voting, since abstentionism is a chronic symptom in Colombia and was advocated by the various guerrilla movements which have maintained a state of insecurity in the country's mountain regions for many years.

The campaign was lively, and the elections held in a tense atmosphere. With the announcement of the results, revealing the considerable success of General Rojas Pinilla, over whom the Government candidate in the presidential race won a very narrow victory, came demonstrations that were both enthusiastic and violent, and a state of siege had to be declared to maintain order in the country. Finally, under pressure from the ANAPO, a second count was held under the supervision of a four-party commission before the results were officially proclaimed.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Congress

	Senate	„ Home of Representatives
Number of registered voters . . .	7,394,515	7,394,515
Voters.	3,966,313	3,977,989 (53.8 %)
Blank ballot papers.	8,327	7,830
Void ballot papers.	6,411	4,690
Valid votes.	3,951,575	3,965,469

Political Group	Senate			House of Representatives		
	Votes obtained	o/ /o	Number of Seats	Votes obtained	o/ /o	Number of Seats
Conservative Party						
Conservative Unionists						
<i>(Pastranistas)</i>	586,131	14.8	37	589,234	14.4	30
<i>Anapistas . . .</i>	1,036,650	26.2	12	849,138	21.4	43
<i>Belisaristas . . .</i>	294,185	7.4	3	300,878	7.6	19
<i>Sourdistas . . .</i>	185,206	4.7		184,945	4.7	13
Independents .				7,967	0.2	
Liberal Party						
Official Liberals						
<i>(Pastranistas)</i>	1,074,037	27.1	18	1,051,666	26.5	57
<i>Anapistas . . .</i>	382,777	9.7	26	563,589	14.2	28
<i>Belisaristas . . .</i>	131,430	3.4	9	137,069	3.5	6
<i>Sourdistas . . .</i>	152,506	3.9	6	155,667	3.9	9
Independents .	108,653	2.7	2	125,316	3.2	5
			118			210

2. Distribution of Parliamentarians according to Sex

	Senate	House of Representatives
Men. .	114	198
Women	4	12
	118	210

3. Average Age of Representatives: 50