



Seventeenth session

INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES: SUMMARIES  
OF INFORMATION TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

CARIBBEAN AND WESTERN ATLANTIC TERRITORIES

Bahamas

In accordance with the statement of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on 27 September 1961, the Government of the United Kingdom has transmitted to the Secretary-General the following political and constitutional information on the Territory of the Bahamas.

This information, which was received on 10 April 1962, is herewith submitted to the General Assembly at its seventeenth session.<sup>1/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> In accordance with General Assembly resolution 1700 (XVI) of 19 December 1961, this information is also submitted to the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories.

## BAHAMAS

### POPULATION

The territory is an archipelago of some twenty inhabited and numerous small uninhabited islands. Most of the population lives on New Providence, which contains the capital. The remaining islands are known as the Out Islands. The estimated population at 31 December 1959 was 104,000. At the last census, approximately 74 per cent were of African descent, 14 per cent of European descent and 12 per cent of mixed origin.

### CONSTITUTION

The present Constitution of the Bahamas is similar to that of the former North American colonies prior to the War of Independence, and has existed virtually unchanged since 1729. The Government is modelled upon that of England, the Governor representing the Queen, and the nominated Legislative Council and the elected House of Assembly representing, respectively, the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

### EXECUTIVE

The executive government is in the hands of the Governor (at present Sir R. Stapledon), who is advised in the exercise of his powers by an Executive Council. He is not bound to accept the Council's advice but in practice invariably does so. The present membership of the Council, under the chairmanship of the Governor, consists of five elected members of the House of Assembly, one member of the Legislative Council, and three civil servants. Those at present holding office are:

- Sir R.T. Symonette
  - Mr. R.R.A. Farrington
  - Mr. R.W. Sawyer
  - Mr. E.A.P. Dupuch
  - Mr. E.T. Bethell
  - Mr. G.C. Cash
  - Mr. W.H. Sydney (Receiver-General and Treasurer)
  - Mr. K.M. Walmsley (Colonial Secretary)
  - Mr. L.A.W. Orr (Attorney-General)
- All except the last two named are Bahamians.

## LEGISLATURE

The Bahamas legislature is bicameral and consists of a Legislative Council and a House of Assembly. The Legislative Council (Upper House) has 11 members, 3 of whom are civil servants while the remaining 8 are prominent citizens of the Bahamas appointed by the Governor. The Legislative Council reviews legislation passed by the House of Assembly.

The House of Assembly (Lower House) consists of 33 members, all of whom are elected on a basis of adult male suffrage. The normal life of the House is seven years, but it may be dissolved earlier by the Governor.

In addition to its legislative functions, the House of Assembly is associated with the administration of New Providence through a system of public boards, normally of 5 members, 2 of whom are required to be members of the House of Assembly. Public boards exist at present for such subjects as works, education, health, agriculture, telephones, etc.

## ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The Elections Act of 1959 provided for adult male suffrage and a limited second vote in respect of ownership and/or rental of real property, the latter to be exercised only in a constituency other than that in which an elector resides. The Act also provided for the creation of two additional seats for the southern and eastern districts of New Providence, and the redistribution of the New Providence seats after by-elections to fill the new seats. The right to vote will be extended to women in the course of 1962. The last elections took place in June 1956. At present, the House of Assembly consists of 18 members of the United Bahamian Party, 10 members of the Progressive Liberal Party, and 5 independents.

## JUDICIARY

The Judiciary consists of a Chief Justice, a puisne judge and two stipendiary magistrates. The Supreme Court, presided over by the Chief Justice, exercises jurisdiction similar to that of a High Court of England, and appeal in certain matters lies to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The two stipendiary and circuit magistrates reside in Nassau (the capital), but conduct a circuit from time to time in the Out Islands.

LOCAL PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT

All junior posts, and many of the senior posts in the Administration, are filled by local inhabitants, including the posts of Treasurer and Solicitor General, and the Directors of Agriculture, Civil Aviation and Telecommunications. Most members of the Executive Council, and all members of the House of Assembly, are Bahamians.

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