



Eighteenth session

INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION ON
CARIBBEAN AND WESTERN ATLANTIC TERRITORIES
UNDER UNITED KINGDOM ADMINISTRATION

Note by the Secretary-General

BRITISH HONDURAS

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 of the Territory of British Honduras.

This information, which was received on 26 February 1963, is herewith submitted to the General Assembly at its eighteenth session.^{1/}

^{1/} 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.

BRITISH HONDURAS

POPULATION

1. The population of British Honduras at the census of April 1960 was 90,343. Most of the population is of African descent; the next largest community is that of the Maya Indians (17 per cent) and the Caribs (7 per cent). There is also a small community of East Indian origin and a very small number of Europeans.

CONSTITUTION

2. The present Constitution of British Honduras dates from 1961 and followed discussions between the British Government and representatives of the local population. Prior to 1961, the Constitution provided for an Executive Council composed of three official members and six non-official members, while the Legislative Assembly consisted of a Speaker, three official members and twelve non-official members, of whom nine were elected. As the result of the constitutional talks in 1960 a ministerial system was introduced, the number of official members in the Executive Council was reduced to two, and the number of elected members of the Legislative Assembly was increased from nine to eighteen. During 1961, a first Minister of British Honduras was appointed to co-ordinate the full range of ministerial activity.

3. The main features of the present Constitution are as follows:

Governor

4. The Governor (at present Sir Peter Stallard) is the Queen's representative and head of the administration. As such he is required to consult the Executive Council and normally follows its advice, although he has discretion to do otherwise in certain special circumstances. His assent is required to laws passed by the Legislative Assembly and is normally given.

Executive Council

5. The Executive Council is the principal executive body of the Territory. Its composition, under the chairmanship of the Governor, is as follows:

Mr. George Price First Minister and Minister of Finance and Development
Mr. J.W. Macmillan .. Minister of Education, Health and Housing
Mr. A.E. Cattouse ... Minister of Public Works, Power and Communications
Mr. L.S. Sylvestre .. Minister of Local Government, Social Welfare and
Co-operatives
Mr. A.A. Hunter Minister of Natural Resources, Commerce and Industry
Mr. C.L.B. Rogers ... Minister of Labour
Mr. M.S. Porcher Chief Secretary
Mr. C.F. Henville ... Attorney General

All the above, except the last two, are local inhabitants.

Legislative Assembly

6. The Legislative Assembly consists of twenty-five members, under the chairmanship of a Speaker, of whom eighteen are elected, five are non-officials appointed by the Governor and two are ex officio civil servants. All members of the Legislative Assembly except the two ex officio members are local inhabitants.

ELECTORAL PROCEDURE

7. The elected members of the Legislative Assembly are elected on a basis of universal adult suffrage; elections are held every four years. The last elections were held in March 1961 and all eighteen seats were won by the People's United Party, led by Mr. George Price, who accordingly became First Minister. Three political parties, the People's United Party, the National Independence Party and the Christian Democratic Party, contested the elections. The People's United Party has stated its aim to be the attainment of full independence for British Honduras within the British Commonwealth. The aims of the other two parties are not markedly dissimilar.

JUDICIARY

8. British Honduras has a Supreme Court which is a Superior Court of Record and has similar jurisdiction to that of the High Court of Justice in England. Sessions are held quarterly in Belize and in Corozal. Appeal lies in certain instances from

the Supreme Court to the Judiciary Committee of the Privy Council. There are also courts of summary jurisdiction, which deal with criminal and quasi-criminal matters, and district civil courts which deal with civil matters. The judiciary consists of a Chief Justice, a puisne judge and two magistrates. Some district villages have an Alcalde (in effect a Headman) appointed by the Governor from among the villagers. Each Alcalde has a limited jurisdiction in criminal and civil matters.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

9. Belize (the capital) has a City Council consisting of nine elected members, while the seven main towns of the Territory have town boards, most of whose members are elected. The Belize City Council and the various town boards exercise the normal local government functions such as maintenance of markets, baths, roads, street lighting, electricity services etc. They derive their revenue from property taxes, licenses, fees and income from electricity supply and other utilities.
