

NOTES ON SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT IN  
OTHER COUNTRIES WITH HETEROGENEOUS POPULATIONS

Countries where the principle of the common roll is accepted

In several countries with heterogeneous populations there is full adult suffrage, with all voters listed on a common roll. The United States is a notable example. In Israel, in spite of the tension there has been between Jews and Arabs, the latter have been enfranchised on the same basis as the Jews, Christians and Druzes. The population of Jamaica consists (1951 estimates) of 966,000 Africans, 227,000 of mixed descent, 21,000 East Indians, 14,000 Europeans and 9,000 others: in elections for the lower house (House of Representatives) all vote on a common roll. Adult suffrage has recently been introduced in Burma.

There are other countries in which the aim is an eventual common roll of voters but, for various reasons, this has not yet been fully achieved. In India, for example, where certain fundamental rights are entrenched in the constitution, it has been considered necessary to arrange that, for a period of ten years, certain seats in the House of the People shall be reserved for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in proportion to their numbers. Further, ten of the total of 489 members are nominated to represent such areas as Kashmir, the tribal areas of Assam, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where it has not been feasible to hold elections.

In other territories where certain population groups, or portions of these, are less experienced than the rest in the ways of Western democracy, modifications of the common roll are at present employed. In the Gold Coast, while all adults get the vote, direct elections have been so far held in urban areas only: in rural areas they take place through electoral colleges. In French African territories, Europeans and those Africans who have been granted French citizenship vote on one roll and African local citizens who can produce proof of identity vote on another; but both groups vote for members of the same legislative body, and may

/ elect .....

elect members of any racial group. Full Maoris of New Zealand are registered on a separate roll and elect four Maoris to the House of Representatives; half Maoris can register on the Maori roll or the general roll, entirely at their option, and all who are less than half Maori vote on the common roll with the Whites. Further, Maoris can stand for Parliament in common roll constituencies: Sir James Carroll, a Maori who has been Acting Prime Minister, represented a predominantly White constituency.

Certain other countries require members of groups so far inexperienced in Western democratic government to qualify for the franchise. This applies in French African territories, where, to obtain the vote, Africans must be able to establish their identity by being in possession of labour cards or certain licences. It applies, too, in the Portuguese territories of Angola and Mocambique: here decision as to the fitness of an African for assimilated status, and the franchise on the common roll which is consequent on this, rests with the local administrator. A common voters' roll with a qualified franchise, the same for all racial groups, has been adopted in Southern Rhodesia, where the franchise qualification includes residential and literacy requirements together with an income qualification of £240 per annum or a property qualification of £500.

Ceylon is of particular interest in that, as result of the Donoughmore recommendations of 1928, the system of communal representation was replaced by common roll elections based on adult suffrage. Difficulties arose, however, over representation of minorities; and to safeguard the interests of minority groups such as Tamils, Moors and Malays, the constitution of 1947 provided for the Delimitation Commissions to take into account the racial and religious as well as the territorial distribution of the population.

/ Other systems of representation

Other systems of representation

In certain British African territories, for example Kenya, Uganda, Northern Rhodesia, Sierra Leone, etc., a flexible system of group, or communal representation, has been adopted, the unofficial members of Legislative Councils being nominated or elected to represent specific racial groups.

Two facts which are particularly noteworthy in regard to the communal representation system in these territories are, firstly, that Non-Europeans are represented in the central legislative body by members of their own racial groups, and secondly, that as Non-Europeans attain increasing political maturity their representation becomes larger in proportion to that of the Europeans. As recently as 1943 in Kenya, for example, there was an official majority in the Legislative Council, and of the unofficial members, 11 were elected Europeans, 5 were elected Asians, and 2 were ex-officials or missionaries nominated to represent Africans. Today there are 26 official and 28 unofficial members in the Council, the latter consisting of 14 elected Europeans, 6 elected Asians, 1 elected Arab, 1 nominated Arab and 6 nominated Africans.

In the constitution at present under discussion in Pakistan, it is suggested that certain seats in the House of the People should be reserved for Caste Hindus, Scheduled Castes, and Christians, who would vote on separate registers. The number of seats would be determined in accordance with the proportion these groups form of the total population. Hindu members of the Constituent Assembly are opposing this suggestion strenuously.

In some British colonies the system of communal representation is being developed and combined with common roll elections. The

/ Singapore .....

Singapore Legislative Council, for example, has 10 official members, up to 4 nominated unofficial members, and up to 12 elected members. Of these last members, 3 are elected by Chambers of Commerce and 9 by popular franchise, voters of all races (Chinese, Malaysians, Indians, Pakistanis, Europeans and Eurasians) being placed on a common roll.

Interesting developments are under discussion in Tanganyika, where, according to the Mackenzie proposals, equal numbers of seats in the legislative body would be reserved for Europeans, Asians and Africans, and, as an experiment in certain constituencies, there would be common voters' rolls, each voter would have three votes, and "cross-voting" between the racial groups would take place.

**Collection Number: AD1715**

**SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974**

**PUBLISHER:**

*Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation*

*Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive*

*Location:- Johannesburg*

©2013

**LEGAL NOTICES:**

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.