

## CHAPTER 4

### Poll, Count and Results Process

The majority of voters cast their ballots on election day, Monday, 19 March, at some 1,894 polling stations. Approximately 7,000 members of the 'Disciplined Forces' were entitled to vote a week earlier, on 12 March.

#### Introduction

Polling hours were from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., though many of the voters had already cast their ballots by lunchtime. The day was declared a school holiday, alcohol sales were banned, but some shops were open, more so outside Georgetown. The weather was good: queues formed at many of the larger stations, but the fierce sun did not appear to deter voters.



**READY, STEADY . . .** immediately prior to election day polling officials prepare for deployment: (*left*) in Georgetown and (*overleaf*) in District One, at the other end of the coastal strip . . .

When the poll closed officials set about determining the number of votes cast and cross-checking unused Master Registration Cards (MRCs) against those on the list who had not voted. Preparations were then made to open the ballot box, sort the ballot papers and used MRCs, and count the ballot papers. For counting purposes votes cast by the Disciplined Forces would be mixed in with those actually cast at specified polling stations in each district.

The results were then transmitted to Deputy Returning Officers, each of whom covered some 20 or so stations. They sent the results to the Returning Officers at their district centres, who in turn reported on the whole district to the Acting Chief Elections Officer, Mr Gocool Boodoo, in Georgetown.

Prior to election day it was anticipated that most of the preliminary results would be known in Georgetown during the afternoon of Tuesday, 20 March. The Acting Chief Elections Officer was expected to be in a position to formally advise the Elections Commission of the results on the morning of Thursday, 22 March. The official announcement of the results, including the

. . . The Observers noted that “most of the officials had been well trained, were competent and efficient and displayed a high level of commitment”



allocation of seats, was expected to be made later that day. There was provision for the recounting of votes, but only if applications were made before noon on Tuesday, 20 March.

### **Disciplined Forces Voting – 12 March 2001**

The ‘Disciplined Forces’ – the police, defence force and prison service – had submitted to the Elections Commission lists of those of their personnel who should have been able to vote on ‘Disciplined Forces Voting Day’, Monday, 12 March. Those on the lists were entitled to vote at polling stations especially established at selected bases in each district. Members of the Observer Group were present at some of these in District Four.

For the Disciplined Forces new arrangements had been made for these elections. The voter was to be given an envelope marked with her/his name, containing an unmarked ballot. After destroying the outer envelope the voter would cast her/his ballot in the normal way, and the ballot would be placed in a new envelope marked with the appropriate district number. This would then be placed in the ballot box.

After voting, all the ballot boxes would be brought to the Elections Commission Headquarters in Georgetown, where the ballot envelopes would be sorted according to district. The ballots would then be sent out in fresh envelopes to the appropriate District Returning Officers two days prior to the poll. There they would be opened under scrutiny, and after the voting on 19 March they would be mixed and counted with the ballot papers at one specified polling station in each district. The Observer Group welcomed these new arrangements as they avoided the situation that occurred in 1997, when the results of the ‘Disciplined Forces’ voting were declared and published separately.

In order to vote, the names of the members of the ‘Disciplined Forces’ needed to be on the list. To identify themselves they could present their National Identification Card, their ‘service identification card’ identifying them as a member of the appropriate force, or their passport. Those without

these forms of identification could still vote if they were identified by a senior officer and took an oath of identity.

As the press put it in the following day's newspapers, there were some 'hiccups'. Some voters could not find their names on the lists. It emerged later that the names of some police service personnel had not been 'extracted' from the Official List of Electors. Others had a long wait before voting – the polling process took as long as ten minutes for some voters. In some places the 'service card' was initially not accepted as adequate identification. A 'Supplementary List' of voters was delivered in one place only after voting had been under way for several hours, and in another its late delivery delayed the opening of the poll.

Some days later, when the Disciplined Forces ballot boxes were opened at the Elections Commission Headquarters in Georgetown, our Observers noticed that mistakes had sometimes been made when the names of the districts on the envelopes containing the ballots had been written out by hand: pre-printed envelopes would have been better. They also noted that the envelopes were not counted.

Following the Disciplined Forces voting the Chairman of the Elections Commission announced that 5,971 members of the relevant services whose names appeared on the list had voted on 12 March. (The remaining 1,051 who did not vote would not be able to vote on 19 March since their names would not appear on either the Official List of Electors or the Addendum). He expressed concern that two of the forces had provided their lists late and that many of the service personnel did not have service identification cards. Some personnel were also at different locations than had been indicated on the list.

Voting was held the same day for diplomats and their families at Guyana's diplomatic missions abroad. There seem to have been difficulties at two: the Elections Commission explained that the Brussels embassy was closed and materials could not be delivered, while in Beijing due to customs requirements voting materials did not arrive until too late.

The PPP/C protested on 12 March against the Elections Commission's decision to allow the Disciplined Forces to vote without pictorial identification. A week after the Disciplined Forces voting the PNC/R complained that in the process of compiling the Disciplined Forces List the forces had inadvertently listed names of former members, with the effect that they would not be on the list to be used on 19 March and therefore could not vote.

This was not a perfect start, but the numbers affected were small and the parties appeared to concede that the problems were organisational rather than the result of any mischievous or fraudulent intent.

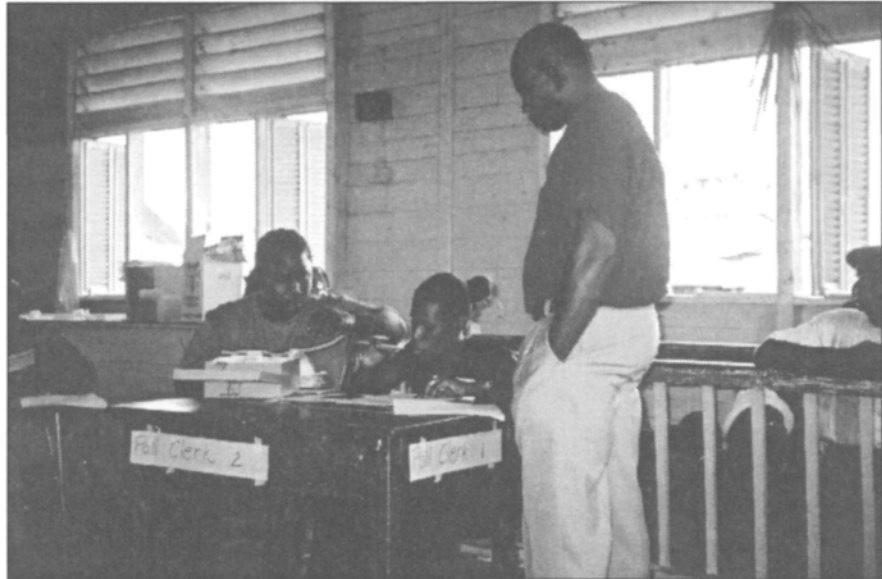
## **Voting – 19 March 2001**

### **Fears About the Process**

Prior to polling day a number of fears had been expressed about aspects of the process:

- **The Register:** During and after the voter registration period several parties, most notably the PNC/R, had expressed concern about the adequacy of the registration arrangements. In particular, they highlighted: the decision to

**JUST CHECKING . . .** polling officials check the register at the opening of the poll. But there were errors, which the Observers said “reduced public confidence in the voting process”



use the 1996/97 register as the basis for these elections' register, rather than starting from scratch; the presence of the names of people who had died or left the country; omissions from the list; inexplicable transfers from one district to another; and 'dislocation', where a person living in one district was listed in a quite different district. Underlying the complaints was concern at the security, adequacy and overall integrity of the computerised process employed in compiling the register.

The Elections Commission had assured the parties that their representations would be taken into account in the preparation of the Revised and Final Voters Lists and the Addendum, published on 16 March. The Elections Commission stated that in their view the list to be used on polling day would be at least 95 per cent accurate. However, we noted that even after the publication of the Addendum the parties did not express satisfaction with the list as it then stood.

Following the publication of the Official List of Electors (OLE) and then, on Friday, 16 March, an Addendum (whose effect was to increase the size of the final list by 1,245 names) 440,185 people were on the register by election day, 19 March. On the eve of poll the Elections Commission made clear again that only those whose names were on the list would be able to vote: it said it was unable to accede to representations by political parties to include on the Official List of Electors the names of people in possession of 'stubs' from the taking of official photographs, but whose names were not on the list.

- **National Identification Cards:** As election day drew near the parties and elements in the media continuously voiced concern at the possibility that electors would not receive their National Identification Cards in time for voting. On 16 March, three days before voting, the Chairman of the Elections Commission said that as of the previous morning the Commission's staff had printed 426,809 cards and had distributed 378,322. On election day there would be 440,185 people on the register. Clearly, some people on the register would be without their cards on election day, though it was not clear exactly how many since there was no way of

knowing how many cards would have been 'uplifted' by then. There was a subsidiary concern: that the information on the lists and the cards might not always coincide.

- **Master Registration Cards:** The Commission announced on 16 March that voters without either a National Identification Card, a Special ID card or a valid or recently expired passport (of not more than five years), would be able to vote as long as they were on the list and there was a Master Registration Card (MRC) for them at the polling station, bearing their photograph and other details. This aroused concern in some quarters that the MRCs might not themselves be at every polling station. Observers saw the MRC canisters being distributed from the Elections Commission Headquarters as late as mid-afternoon the day before the poll.
- **Oaths:** In the case of those who were on the register, but without the three forms of identification referred to above and where there was no MRC for them at the polling station, the elector would be allowed to vote on the swearing of an Oath of Identity. However, at least one political party believed that in light of past experience the oath-taking process would be open to abuse on the day. And there was concern that in some places oath-taking might be on such a large scale as to provoke challenges, or non-acceptance of the results after the elections.



**VOTING DAY . . .** where several polling stations were housed in one building the queues were often long: in some cases the (alphabetical) sub-division had been done only that morning and there was sometimes confusion. But the voters cast their votes freely and the secrecy of the ballot was assured

- **District Four:** 50 per cent of the electorate are to be found in District Four, which includes the capital Georgetown. It is therefore a key electoral battleground and probably the most volatile part of the country. This region was at the centre of allegations of serious electoral malpractice at the 1997 General and Regional Elections. This time Elections Commission strategy had from the very beginning been to ensure that election preparations in Region 4 were thorough. However, doubts persisted to the end in some quarters about whether the Commission would be ready in this crucial region. On 17 March the District Returning Officer was replaced with an officer from the Elections Commission Headquarters: his predecessor had

been involved in an incident some days earlier and it appeared that he had not been able fully to resume his duties.

- **Staffing:** Following an Elections Commission decision to increase the number of polling stations for these elections there were fears that there would be too few properly trained staff for the expanded number of stations. These fears were enhanced when party objections sometimes eliminated relatively large numbers of staff and the Elections Commission promoted officials upwards. On election-eve one region had only five spare staff to deploy in case those attached to polling stations did not turn up on the day itself.
- **General Organisational Preparations:** There was a fear that there might be a number of organisational problems on the day, including with the result-reporting procedures.

This was the background as our teams set out to observe the opening of polling stations at 6 a.m.

### Opening of the Polls

Polling stations were scheduled to be open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Our two-person teams were present for the opening by 5.45 a.m. at polling stations in seven of Guyana's ten regions. All the polling stations we observed opened on time and the correct procedures were followed, although we did hear of other stations which opened late because staff were not present at the appointed hour and/or because some materials were missing. Everywhere there was an adequate complement of staff. Queues were often long and sometimes noisy, with voters eager to complete the process. At several of the polling places we visited there was more than one station and some confusion as to exactly where each voter should go. Information desks established to assist the voters before they got to their polling station were overwhelmed. We observed this more often in District Four than elsewhere. However, we noted that these problems were resolved as the day went on. We did not observe any violence at the opening anywhere.

### Procedures

The voting method was straightforward. If a person had a National Identification Card the voter presented this to the first polling station official, who then checked the voter's name against the list and called out both the serial number and the voter's name to the officials and party agents. If everything was in order, the second official checked the voter's fingers for electoral ink, verified the ID and matched the voter with her/his Master Registration Card, which bore a photograph and other details recorded at the time of registration. The voter then took the card and MRC to a third official who, after checking on the list one more time, issued a ballot paper and gave directions on how it should be marked and folded. The paper was in each case stamped at both ends with a rubber stamp bearing an official six-digit number which had been randomly selected at the opening of the polling station.

We noted that the voter's number was written on the counterfoil of the ballot paper, which was retained. (The used part of the ballot paper, however, was not numbered, so voters could not be traced.)

The voter was entitled to make two marks: one at the top in the white section for the General Election and one at the bottom on the blue section for the Regional Election. These were made in secret at a screened polling booth. After marking the paper the voter folded it so that the official marks were visible but her/his mark could not be seen, and took it to the ballot clerk. She/he showed the official marks, then had her/his right index finger dipped in indelible electoral ink. The ballot box clerk then allowed the voter to drop the ballot paper into the box, while the Presiding Officer put the voter's MRC into the ballot box. The voter then left the polling station.

The voting mechanism – and other procedures – seemed to be well understood by the voters.<sup>1</sup> The repeated checking of the register by officials to ensure that the voter was listed there and the checking of the MRC in the case of every voter was a cumbersome process, but it was commendably thorough.

### Arrangements at the Polling Station

We were impressed with the calibre and commitment of polling station staff, many of whom were women. Our teams observed only one irregularity (a case of attempted personation) and were told of only a few at the stations we visited – for instance, one case of attempted double-voting. Nowhere did we come across evidence of organised election fraud. Everywhere we went the secrecy of the ballot was assured. Facilities were sometimes rudimentary but generally adequate: there was sufficient space and the layout of and signage at the stations was clear. Those with disabilities were assisted by the Presiding Officer. We noted, however, that the 200 yard limit (within which there was supposed to be no party campaigning) was not always fully observed and that, given the location of polling stations right on the street or at a riverbank, it was difficult to enforce.

In a number of polling stations visited by our teams, we noticed photographs of the President and Prime Minister inside those polling stations, which were mostly public buildings, sometimes near the screened area in which the voter marked her/his ballot paper.

There was often a problem at larger polling places, where the polling stations had been sub-divided. In some cases the (alphabetical) sub-division had only been made on the morning of the poll and the voters did not realise and were not adequately informed in advance. Voters reached the head of the queue only to find that they were not in the right place. In some Georgetown polling stations this led to noisy protests, which raised the tension to a point where in one instance the Presiding Officer threatened to close the station.

### Agents, Domestic Observers and Police

Party agents for the two main parties were present at all stations we visited, and at many there were representatives of several of the others too. We received few complaints from these agents. We also met representatives of the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB), a domestic observer group which fielded about 1,000 observers. They were well informed and clearly identifiable as EAB observers; some of their observers complained that they had not been given copies of the Addendum. Security was unintrusive: when we met the Police Commissioner

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<sup>1</sup> See page 13 on voter education.

he had told us that the police on duty at the polling stations would not be armed and everywhere we went this was the case. The police presence was either welcomed or attracted no comment. At several places, however, we noted that the police presence was insufficient to maintain order. Especially where there were several stations at one polling place and confusion or anger about arrangements one policeman was not enough. Although allegations were made by the two major parties on the one hand that voters and officials at polling stations had been intimidated and, on the other, that inducements had been offered to voters, we did not observe any instances of either.

## The Voters

There appeared to have been a high voter turnout, with people of all ages (but particularly the young) eager to vote early. As a result of this queues formed outside a number of polling places we visited, but in the majority of places we visited voters were processed reasonably quickly.

We were impressed with how well informed voters were about the process. They were also familiar with the location of the stations, which were mostly in schools. There were 500 or fewer electors on the list at each polling station so, in towns at least, voters did not have to travel far to exercise their franchise: in rural areas the journey was longer, in parts of District Nine as long as 45 minutes by car.

Voter behaviour was generally good and we witnessed no violence. Outside Georgetown, and often in the capital itself too, the atmosphere was cordial at the stations we visited, although there were exceptions in Georgetown with some tension as the day wore on (see below). The Elections Commission had claimed in advance that it would take around three minutes for each voter to be processed; at most polling stations we visited this was confirmed by the experience on the day. Many of the voters were women: we did not detect any impediments to their freedom to vote as they wished.

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## Pre-Election Fears

So far as the five main pre-election fears were concerned:

- **Adequacy of the Register:** Everywhere we went polling stations had both the OLE and the Addendum. However, there were clearly errors in the Voters' List. In contrast to the rural areas, in District Four – Georgetown in particular – the number of people protesting (that their names were missing from the register being used at the polling station, even when they had been on earlier versions) suggests that mistakes had been made. Numbers of people with either National Identification Cards or the stubs from the photographic process, but who were not on the register, turned up at polling stations anyway and in several cases stayed either to complain or in the hope that the Elections Commission would reverse its earlier decision that only those on the register could vote.

At a press briefing after the closure of the polls the Chairman of the Elections Commission was questioned about the register. He said that he regarded 5 per cent as a reasonable percentage of error in the list which, he said, would suggest that there might be up to 9,000 errors in the list for District Four. In his view such an error rate did not put the integrity of the

list in jeopardy. It was the best that could be done in the circumstances, reflecting the limitations of human beings and equipment. He said that the Commission needed to look at its information systems arrangements and that he preferred a 'sustained' voter registration arrangement, rather than registration immediately prior to elections.

- **Identification Process:** National Identification Cards which had not been distributed by election day were available from special centres near clusters of polling stations. Most of those we saw voting had their Cards, except in one sub-district where no cards appeared to have been issued. Since the Master Registration Certificates were generally present there was relatively little recourse to the swearing of oaths for identification purposes. Voters appeared to be aware of the appropriate forms of identification.
- **District Four:** The election seemed to us to have gone very smoothly outside Georgetown. But in Georgetown itself there was some tension in parts of the city when people who thought they should have been able to vote found that because they were not on the register in use at the polling stations they would not be able to do so. Frustrated and upset individuals protested and shouted. Crowds gathered outside some polling stations and in the centre of the city. There were some disturbances.

There also seems to have been a problem in Georgetown with the proxy voting system, with claims that even on voting day itself 'hundreds' of proxy forms had not been signed by the appropriate Elections Commission officials.

- **Staffing:** On the day there were sufficient staff for the number of polling stations, with some Returning Officers shifting staff from place to place according to the pressure on particular stations. However, there was a shortage of information clerks at some polling places with more than one polling station, resulting in a certain amount of confusion. Most of the officials had been well trained, were competent and efficient and displayed a high level of commitment. We were impressed by their professionalism, good humour and dignity. Procedures were implemented in a relatively uniform way.
- **Organisational Preparations:** Elections in Guyana present a formidable logistical challenge, with long distances, difficult terrain and outside the coastal strip a relatively undeveloped infrastructure. Materials often have to be carried on foot or by river, and in some places the journey is so difficult and long that the movement of some ballot boxes from the District Returning Officer's office had to begin on the Friday or Saturday in readiness for Monday's elections. To hold these elections at all represented something of a logistical triumph. Generally the necessary items were present.<sup>2</sup> At some stations in District Four there were shortages of materials – for instance, of indelible ink, or the six-digit stamp – but these were generally dealt with fairly quickly after the opening.

## Extension of Hours

Although several of the pre-election fears were not fulfilled, the perception that people in District Four had been 'disenfranchised' did lead to a dramatic and confusing situation at the end of the day.

<sup>2</sup> We should note, however, that while in some Districts the Elections Commission's provision of food for its staff was good, in others lunch and dinner was not provided.

Renewed representations were made to the Elections Commission after 5 p.m. on election day by the PNC/Reform, which drew attention to three categories: persons with National Identification Cards whose names were not on the OLE or Addendum; those who were 'displaced' (i.e. on the list but for areas other than those where they lived); those who had been photographed and had the stubs to prove it, but whose names were not on the register.

The Chairman of the Elections Commission decided that even though the Commission had discussed this issue into the early morning on election day itself (and decided that only those on the register would be able to vote) there should be a further special meeting of the Commission. To allow time for the meeting to take place it was decided that the polls should remain open. An announcement was made from the Elections Commission Media Centre in Georgetown at 6 p.m. – the exact moment at which the polling stations were due to close – that the polls would stay open until a time to be determined by the Commission. By the time this directive reached polling stations many had already stopped voting, broken the seals on their ballot boxes and begun their counts.

As darkness fell there was uncertainty, and no public explanation from the Commission centrally. Communications were not improved by the sudden and complete congestion of the mobile telephone network. Media outlets took time to catch up with events, with some reporting the extension and others not. Meanwhile, at least one major party machine was in action ensuring that its supporters knew of the Commission's decision to keep the polls open. Although no public announcement was made to this effect by the Commission, in some places people believed that they could now vote even if they were not on the list, so long as they had their National Identification Cards or the stub from the Identification Card photographic process.

In the event, the Commission confirmed its earlier decisions that only those on the OLE or the Addendum could vote, and that those who were not on either could not do so, even if they had their National Identification Cards and stubs from the photographic process. A further announcement was made at the Elections Commission Media Centre at 6.45 p.m. stating that the polls would close "at the specified time", with the proviso that those waiting to vote would be able to do so. From the public announcements it was not clear as to what the specified time was. However, it seems that the instructions provided to the Returning Officers, and through them to the Presiding Officers, were that the polls should close at 7 p.m. The instructions from the Commission to Returning Officers and in turn from them to Presiding Officers took some time to get to the polling stations. In Georgetown one polling station was still open as late as 9.30 p.m. We cannot say how many people voted in the 'extended voting period'.

It was dark, staff were tired, communications were poor, the situation was confused and at some polling stations there was a suspicious, vigorous and volatile crowd outside the polling station. However justifiable the reasons for extending the voting hours it created difficulties and uncertainty at the polling stations. The public announcements were not sufficiently informative. The whole episode was unfortunate.

## The Counting of Votes

At the end of the day, wherever we were present, the closure procedures were scrupulously followed, although there were sometimes delays because of shortages of the correct forms. The unfolding, sorting, separation and counting of votes followed, in the presence of party agents.

It was slow, but transparent. Officials followed the procedures to the letter, and there was no cutting of corners: each ballot paper was held up for the officials, party agents and observers to see. The percentage of rejected ballots seemed to us to be relatively low. The voting and counting was generally done in schools, where facilities were reasonable.



**ALL DONE . . .** after the count: ballot boxes being transferred to the Returning Officer's office. The Observers were impressed by the counting process, but the long delay in issuing the district and constituency results in Georgetown resulted in public concern and rising tension

After the completion of the count the Statement of Poll was signed by the officials and party agents present – except in one place, where the Presiding Officer forgot to do so. There were some shortages of printed envelopes. There were also some small errors, but given the tiredness all round we were impressed by how few these were. A copy of the Statement of Poll was posted at the polling station itself and all the materials packed. Sometimes there was some confusion as to procedures at this stage, which were very bureaucratic.

The materials – ballot boxes, envelopes, papers, etc. – were then taken to a safe location under police escort, usually to the District Elections Commission headquarters, where the ballot boxes were stored overnight in containers under the protection of the police. Party agents were allowed to be present for this transfer process. Although it was time-consuming we were impressed by the counting process and the security arrangements for the transfer of materials to a safe location, all the more so in view of the long hours that had been put in by the officials and the resulting tiredness.

## The Results Process

In addition to the various pre-election fears concerning the voting process which were listed earlier, there had been concern prior to election day regarding the transmission of results. In 1997 this had not gone well and the Elections Commission stated in advance of these elections that considerable efforts would be made this time to ensure that the procedures worked effectively. It was always clear that, for logistical reasons, in some places some delay would be inevitable. But it was hoped that with thorough training, clear instructions, additional land telephone lines, fax machines, mobile telephones, UHF and VHF radios and – in one region – a full dress rehearsal beforehand, the results would be transmitted accurately and as rapidly and efficiently as possible.

The method – changed shortly before the elections, after the rehearsal revealed shortcomings – was for the Deputy Returning Officer to contact the polling station Presiding Officers in her/his area to obtain the results of the individual polling station counts. The Deputy Returning Officer would then pass these on in batches to the Returning Officer at the Elections Commission's district headquarters, who would in turn fax the batches of results to the Elections Commission's Georgetown Headquarters. As Statements of Poll became available these too would be passed on.

Regional totals of these 'official preliminary results' (*not* individual polling station results) and the distribution of votes between the parties were then displayed at the Elections Commission's Media Centre and broadcast on a dedicated television channel. Later in the process the results from individual polling stations were displayed.

The Elections Commission had assembled at its Georgetown headquarters an impressive computerised results system, with several checks and balances to prevent manipulation of the figures by those inputting the data. However, while international observers were present in the Commission's 'Special Operations Room' we noted that no party agents were present while we were there.

There were some problems with the transmission of results. For instance, the telephone reporting system in District Four did not work as expected. Results from that district were also delayed because of the extension in polling hours and the closure of some polling stations even later than had been decided. There were relatively few reports from the Returning Officers until breakfast-time on the day after the elections. However, even after the results had been received in the 'Special Operations Room' there was sometimes a considerable delay in 'publishing' them via the Commission's Media Centre. Relatively few results had been published by lunchtime on the day after polling.

Delays in the announcement of results can stimulate concern among a suspicious and tense electorate, and there were fears that there might be trouble on the streets of Georgetown if – however good the reason – delays continued. The PNC/Reform did indeed protest at the slowness of the results process.

The results started to come through in significant numbers on the afternoon and evening of 20 March and at an Elections Commission press conference at

8 p.m. that night partial preliminary figures were announced for most of the districts. Additional information was released thereafter on the Elections Commission's dedicated television channel. By 10.35 a.m. on 21 March the preliminary results which had been produced accounted for 295,264 of the votes cast, 67 per cent of the registered voters. By 1.04 p.m. the preliminary results available accounted for 325,200 voters (70 per cent). At 3.22 p.m. the figure was 325,977 (74 per cent). At 8 p.m. that evening, the Chief Elections Officer announced the preliminary results that were then available, which he said were for all Districts except part of District Four. These indicated an 88 per cent turnout for the General Election.

Up to the afternoon of Wednesday, 21 March the results were being entered into the Elections Commission Special Operations Room computers directly, first from phone calls and later from Statements of Poll. However, following a meeting of the Elections Commission that afternoon it was decided to reconcile the figures manually from the Statements of Poll and then compare them with the figures previously entered into the computer. This followed representations from one of the political parties, which said that it did not have confidence in the computer system. All the Returning Officers were brought in to the Elections Commission's headquarters, apart from the Returning Officer for District Four. It emerged during the course of the day that four Statements of Poll were missing.

On Thursday, 22 March it was reported that a number of Statements of Poll had been mislaid in the Elections Commission headquarters overnight. The figures had already been entered into the computer system.

The manual reconciliation process continued through the day. By 3 p.m. it had been completed for all Districts except 4, 6 and 10. At 4 p.m. the Returning Officer and staff from Region 4 were brought to the Elections Commission headquarters to assist in the reconciliation process.

According to earlier statements by the Elections Commission, the Acting Chief Elections Officer had been due to advise the Elections Commission of the results on the morning of Thursday, 22 March. The official announcement of the results, including the allocation of seats, had been expected later that day. Neither took place that day. The official announcement was eventually made at 4.20 a.m. on the morning of Friday, 23 March. The figures showed that 393,709 valid votes had been cast in the General Election.

We paid visits to the Operations Room at various times throughout each day of the results process in order to observe the process of entering the results into the computer system. Although the delay was regrettable, we saw no evidence of malpractice.

In parallel there were developments on the outskirts of Georgetown. After a Statement of Poll was reportedly removed from outside a polling station in Buxton a crowd gathered and clashed with police. There was increased tension in Georgetown.

## Observers

Earlier in this chapter, we noted that we encountered EAB domestic observers at polling stations. We also saw international observers from the Carter

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Center, Organisation of American States (OAS), CARICOM, the Long-Term and the European Union observer groups. Indeed, while maintaining our separate identity we worked closely with other international observers to ensure that there was no unnecessary duplication of effort. Commonwealth Observers appeared to be welcome wherever we went. Once accredited, we were allowed to go wherever and see whatever we wanted.