

Cost of General Elections

To the State

The eighth General Elections to be held on July 21, 1977 would cost the State over Rs. 3/- per elector as compared with Rs. 1.53 per elector in the 1960 General Elections and 76 cents per elector in the General Elections of 1956. This would mean that the cost per elector to the State has increased by 100 percent between the 1956 and the 1970 elections and again in the period between the 1970 elections and the present one. The Commissioner of Elections has made an analysis of the expenditure of previous general elections on the basis of what it would cost the State per elector. This analysis has been worked on the basis of total government expenditure on the general elections divided by the total number on the electoral lists for that particular general elections. The breakdown arrived at by the Commissioner of Elections for 4 previous polls is as follows:

Cost of General Elections (Analysed as Cost to State per Elector)

	Rs. c.	
1956 General Election	0.76	— do —
1960 Mar. Gen. Election	1.07	— do —
1965 General Election	1.21	— do —
1970 General Election	1.53	— do —

No breakdown for the July 1960 General Election is possible as part of the expenditure of this election was met from each department's votes.

It would be seen that whilst the 1956 elections cost 76 cents per elector, the 1970 election cost Rs. 1.53. The reason for the more than 100% increase in the cost to the State has been ascribed not only to the general increase in costs, over these years, and the large increase in the voting population but also to the fact that one of the aims of the radical changes in the election law in 1959 was to make elections cheaper to the contesting candidates and parties and for the State to bear certain items of expenditure which upto then had been borne by candidates. For instance, prior to 1960 candidates used to issue voting cards to voters at considerable expense to themselves. From 1960 onwards official poll cards were issued by the State, saving candidates much money. Thus in the election of 1970, the writing of poll cards cost the State Rs. 214,754/-. Likewise the ban on transport of voters to the polls reduced expenditure to the candidates,

but it increased expenditure to the State. Since the amendments in this direction induced voters generally to walk to the polls or use public transport, it led to a large increase of polling stations and between the 1956 and 1970 elections there had been an increase of 3,180 polling stations. More polling stations means the use of more personnel for conducting the polls with an attendant increase of expenditure to government. The number of polling stations has now increased to 6,530 over 900 more than in the 1970 election.

Increase in Polling Districts and Polling Stations— General Elections, 1956 - 1977

	No. of Electorate Districts	Electorate	No. of Polling Districts	No. of Polling Stations	Average No. of voters per Polling Station
1956	89	3,464,159	2,258	2,433	1,424
March 1960	145	3,724,507	3,532	3,659	1,018
July 1960	145	3,724,507	3,532	3,664	1,017
1965	145	4,710,887**	4,647	4,771**	975**
1970	145	5,505,028	5,485	5,613	977
1977	160	6,667,585	6,033	6,312	1,056

*Including the Two-Member Electoral District of Colombo South, candidates for which were returned uncontested.

**Excluding the Two-Member Electoral District of Colombo South.

Over a million voters have been added to the polling lists. The numbers increasing from 5,505,028 in 1970 to 6,667,585 in 1977. It is expected that there would be approximately one polling station for every 1,000 voters. But not only has the number of polling stations increased, the corresponding increase in connected expenditure has also risen rapidly in recent years.

The 1970 General Elections cost the State Rs. 8,444,541. The 1977 General Elections is expected to cost the State nearly three times more than what it did in 1970. The estimated expenditure of the Elections Department for the coming election is Rs. 21.3 million.

In 1970 the printing of ballot papers, notices etc. by the Government Printer amounted to Rs. 1,011,871 as against Rs. 260,000 for the 1965 elections. In 1977 these same printing expenses are estimated to cost nearly Rs. 2.8 million.

From the Election Department's Votes a sum of Rs. 6.5 million was

spent in 1970 on expenses such as overtime and travelling of staff for election work, polling booth arrangements, stores and stationery, transportation expenses, lighting, advertisements and miscellaneous expenses at nominations and counting, hire of furniture, refreshments for staff at counting etc. These same items of expenditure are expected to cost the state approximately Rs. 16 million in the 1977 election. At the 1965 election these same costs amounted to Rs. 4.7 million.

As the Elections Commissioner stated in connection with the 1970 elections expenses "an election runs

on wheels, for large numbers of public servants have to be moved to and fro in connection with the poll". The amount spent on the hiring of vehicles from the CTB and for the reimbursement of cost of petrol and oil used by Government vehicles loaned for the election in 1970 totalled Rs. 386,081. In between 1970 and now there have been four price hikes in the cost of petroleum and this expense alone is expected to show a four-fold increase.

The Postmaster-General spent Rs. 471,428 on work connected with the handling of postal voting packets, distribution of polls cards and other literature in 1970. These expenses are estimated to increase to about Rs. 800,000 for the 1977 election. Along with the costs of maintaining law and order and security aspects of the Police Department—from Rs. 269,312 in 1965 and Rs. 489,126 in 1970 these expenses are expected to be in the region of Rs. 1,000,000 for the 1977 election.

That the cost of election and maintenance of an Election Department

**ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF THE GENERAL ELECTIONS
IN 1965 & 1970**

	1969	1970
A. Expenses incurred by the Government Printer in printing of ballot papers, notices, forms etc.	260,000	1,011,871
B. Expenses incurred by the Department of Elections on:		
1. Extra clerical assistance and overtime ...	717,959	1,027,806
2. Overtime to staff engaged on polling and counting duties ...	626,293	3,351,470
3. Travelling expenses of polling staff ...	1,740,886	
4. Construction of temporary polling stations and cubicles and rent of buildings used as polling stations ...	481,690	464,394
5. Lighting of buildings used for counting ...		73,346
6. Advertisements ...	88,440	97,601
7. Stores and Stationery ...	482,002	771,664
8. Hire of vehicles and petrol used by Government vehicles ...	206,560	386,081
9. P.M.G. (Postal voting official poll cards etc.)	448,839	471,428
10. I.G.P. (Travelling Expenses etc.) ...	269,312	489,126
11. Miscellaneous expenses (including issue of official Poll cards, Postal votes, nomination and counting arrangements, hire of furniture etc.)	374,159	299,854
Total Cost ...	5,696,140	8,444,541

has been rising steadily is apparent from the allocation voted each year for these expenses. The total sum voted for the Department of Elections for the current year is Rs. 27.3 million of which about Rs. 1.5 million is expected to be spent on Local Government elections and Rs. 4.5 million on the Department's Recurrent Expenditure. In the year of the 1965 elections the actual expenditure of this Department as listed on the Government's estimates of Revenue

and Expenditure was Rs. 4.7m. while in 1969-70, the year of 1970 elections actual expenditure of the Department was Rs. 10.7 million. The vote of the Department which covers expenses of elections to both Parliamentary and Local Bodies, over the six years 1972-77 is as follows.

1972 (Actual) ...	Rs. 3,060,120
1973 (Actual) ...	Rs. 3,187,984
1974 (Actual) ...	Rs. 3,466,142
1975 (Actual) ...	Rs. 3,974,510
1976 (Est.) ...	Rs. 6,983,800
1977 (Est.) ...	Rs. 27,300,000

Cost to the Candidates

The average amount spent by a candidate in 1970 was Rs. 3,442.98, according to the returns sent by contesting candidates to the Elections Commissioner at the close of the 1970 General Election. The average amount spent by a candidate in the 1965 general election was Rs. 3,033.81. These expenses include only those amounts permissible to a candidate under the law and which fall into three main groups: (1) On account of the conduct or management of the election—a sum not exceeding Rs. 5,000 or 20 cents per registered elector, whichever is less; (2) Fee to the election agent—a sum not exceeding Rs. 1,000; and (3) Personal expenses of a candidate—a sum not exceeding Rs. 2,000.

The Elections Commissioner showed in the average expenditure computed from the returns of election expenses furnished by candidates in

1970 that the highest expenditure was by candidates in the Kegalle district which averaged Rs. 4,235.18 per candidate; followed by candidates in the Polonnaruwa district averaging Rs. 4,099.97. The lowest expenditure was by the candidates in the Vavuniya district averaging Rs. 1,940.47 per candidate; followed by Anuradhapura district where expenses of candidates averaged Rs. 2,476.11. Further details are seen in the table at right above.

One feature in the previous polls expenditure of candidates is that in the 1965 general elections too, average expenses per candidate in the Polonnaruwa district was among the highest at this election. In 1965 the highest expenditure per candidate was in the Colombo district (excluding the Municipal Council areas of Colombo and Dehiwala-Mt. Lavinia) where expenses per candidate averaged Rs. 4,819.33. It is noteworthy that this sum exceeded the maximum averaged in 1970.

In 1965 the Colombo District maximum was followed by Jaffna District where expenditure per candidate averaged Rs. 3,663.63. The lowest expenditure per candidate at this election was recorded in the Trincomalee district where expenses amounted to only Rs. 1,613.59 for a candidate. Next lowest was the Mannar district where the average expenditure per candidate was Rs. 2,032.

Average Election Expenditure per Candidate by Provinces and Districts 1965 - 1970

N.B.: This is only an average expenditure computed from the returns of election expenses furnished by candidates.

	1965	1970
Kegalle District ...	3,647.81	4,235.18
Polonnaruwa District ...	2,107.44	2,476.11
Puttalam District ...	2,519.26	4,009.74
Colombo District ... (excluding m.c. areas)	4,819.33	3,973.61
Nuwara Eliya District Colombo and Dehiwala- Mt. Lavinia M.C. areas	3,434.93	3,524.50
Kandy District ...	2,804.34	3,699.56
Moneragala District ...	3,500.00	3,559.29
Matale District ...	2,631.69	3,557.07
Matura District ...	2,804.34	3,524.50
Galle District ...	3,442.68	3,499.05
Kurunegala District ...	3,318.57	3,442.90
Jaffna District ...	2,515.56	3,434.35
Amparai District ...	3,663.63	3,393.93
Hambantota District ...	2,976.70	3,360.84
Kalutara District ...	3,100.00	3,306.86
Ratnapura District ...	3,653.82	3,258.04
Batticaloa District ...	3,091.91	3,230.29
Trincomalee District ...	3,007.93	3,171.37
Mannar District ...	1,613.50	3,156.73
Badulla District ...	2,032.00	3,131.52
Anuradhapura District ...	2,445.90	2,491.99
Vavuniya District ...	2,107.44	2,476.11
	3,041.46	1,940.47

Party-wise, however, the average election expenses per candidate in 1970 showed that the MEP spent the highest per candidate (Rs. 4,370/-); followed by the UNP (Rs. 4,228/-); and the L.S.S.P. (Rs. 4,118/-). The average expenditure per candidate in 1970, as computed by the Elections Commissioner from returns of candidates is shown below.

Average Election Expenses per Candidate Party-wise

	Rs.	
Tamil Congress ...	3,580	per elector
Communist Party ...	3,907	— do —
Federal Party ...	3,357	— do —
Lanka Sama Samaja Party	4,118	— do —
Mahajana Eksath Peramuna ...	4,370	— do —
Sri Lanka Freedom Party	3,802	— do —
United National Party	4,228	— do —
Independent ...	2,169	— do —