Towards a Democratic Franchise

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Published by Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory

Vogenauer, Stefan, et al.
Towards a Democratic Franchise: Suffrage Reform in the Twentieth-Century Bahamas.
1 ed. Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory, 2022.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

When the members of the electorate in a nominally liberal and democratic system exercise their right to vote mainly as a means to penalise incumbent governments, then their political system no longer lives up to the ideas and ideals it is based upon. In the case of the Bahamas, there have been four general elections in the twenty-first century thus far, but the last time an incumbent governing party succeeded in its bid for re-election was in 1997. In addition, there have been two binding constitutional referenda, one in 2002 and one in 2016, and one non-constitutional referendum in 2013. Legally, the latter amounted to nothing more than a non-binding opinion poll, and it was politically treated as such, too, when the outcome did not suit the agenda of the government of the day.\(^1\) All of the elections and referenda resulted in clear defeats of the then governments or of the proposals they had put forward. Three of the four general elections resulted in supermajorities reducing the outgoing governing party to the role of official opposition with only 17.5\% of the seats in the House of Assembly in 2002, 24\% in 2012, and a mere 10\% in 2017, respectively. The constitutional referenda were both put to the electorate in the late stages of by then deeply unpopular governments, and in both instances, Bahamians voters, the majority of whom are women, voted – amongst other things – against equal rights for women.\(^2\) It is not far-fetched to interpret the results of these referenda and general elections as polls on the popularity of the government of the day rather than as carefully considered decisions on the issues at hand or choices between the governing and opposition parties’ platforms as carefully articulated plans for the future. As Upendra Baxi observes, often “post-colonial ‘citizens’ are hapless victims of ‘governance’ beyond the pale of

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1 Aranha (2016) 27.
accountability.” Bahamians’ hapless exercise of their vote is one manifestation of this.

This is not just a Bahamian phenomenon. However, while the rise of populist parties and demagogic candidates in many western democracies may similarly be interpreted as an expression of political apathy or as disenfranchised electorates expressing sentiments of figurative disenfranchisement, the political pendulum in the Bahamas has thus far swung back and forth between the same two parties that have dominated the political scene since before independence: the so-called Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) and the so-called Free National Movement (FNM). The 2012 election was in fact contested by a new party, the so-called Democratic National Alliance (DNA), which attracted enough votes that it may have acted as a spoiler and perhaps caused, but in any case exacerbated the extent of the incumbent government party’s defeat. That party also undoubtedly exhibited some signs of a populist political movement. Nonetheless, all thirty-nine seats in the House of Assembly were won by one of the two established parties, and they have not yet deemed it necessary to react to any such development in the political landscape. For them, it appears, it is business as usual. In the 2017 election the pendulum swung to the other side again, and even harder than before, and the DNA was not even a spoiler anymore but returned to obscurity.

In democracies, frequent changes in government are not unusual, nor are they per se reason for concern. Even the supermajorities yielded by elections in a jurisdiction as small as the Bahamas are first and foremost caused by the first-past-the-post system of elections, and its results pale in comparison to other recent elections in Commonwealth Caribbean countries, for instance in Barbados in 2018 or Grenada in both 2013 and 2018, where opposition parties were not able to win even one seat in the respective parliaments. However, all the factors combined and the regularity with which they occur suggest that there is a deep dissatisfaction amongst Bahamian voters with their democracy, and a sense of helplessness in how to exercise their citizenship in an effort to seek relief. In a nominally independent nation, they continue to act as dependent subjects.

To expect a monocausal explanation and thus a simple remedy for this dilemma would be presumptuous. Bearing this in mind, however, I posit

that a better understanding of the historical development of Bahamian
democracy can contribute to a better understanding of at least some aspects
of present problems. Beginning with Colin Hughes’ groundbreaking Race
and Politics in the Bahamas, the political story of the Bahamas during the
twentieth century has been told and retold. However, at its centre were
politicians and parties. Later scholars have shifted their focus to studying
the everyday experiences of ordinary Bahamians. Most notably, Michael
Craton and Gail Saunders explicitly declare their comprehensive, two-vol-
ume work Islanders in the Stream to be “a social history, strongly influenced
by the cross-disciplinary and cliometric approaches.” The constitutional and
statutory framework that shaped much of the political process, however, was
usually treated as merely ancillary. I intend to move this framework and its
historical development to the centre of this book, and by doing so hope to
add an additional element that will enable a broader analysis of the relation-
ship of Bahamian citizens and their democracy going forward. Therefore, in
this book I will examine the numerous reform steps, constitutional and
statutory, that expanded the suffrage in the Bahamas from one enfranchising
propertied men only to a universal and equal one.

This development began in the aftermath of World War I, and most of
the pertinent reforms were completed before the achievement of national
independence from the United Kingdom in 1973. Nonetheless, where nec-
essary, I will also discuss developments up to the present. My primary focus
will be on the legislative measures passed, either the substantive election acts
or the various amendments to these acts, as well as on the underlying
processes that took place from when these measures were first being imag-
ined in a Bahamian context, and that led to their being enacted into law. For
most of the period of investigation, these processes were shaped by three
main actors. First, there was the political and economic elite of the colonial
Bahamas’ white minority, often referred to as the Bay Street Boys or simply
Bay Street, after the main street in the historic and commercial centre of the
Bahamian capital Nassau, where many of these men’s businesses were
located. If, as has been suggested, this group succeeded in perpetuating its
oligarchic rule by exploiting the weaknesses of an unreformed electoral

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5 Craton/Saunders (1998) XIII.
6 For an overview of the main pieces of legislation examined, see figure 1.
system, then it stands to reason that the Bay Street Boys had little to gain from democratising the franchise, and would thus stand opposed to reform proposals. Second, long before the advent of party politics there were individuals and, organised by and around them, sometimes shifting alliances that could be described as a progressive vanguard that sought to give a voice to the disenfranchised, or at least politically underrepresented, majority of predominantly Black Bahamians. In doing so, these individuals and groups time and again provided the initial impetus for electoral reform. Third, there was the colonial power of the United Kingdom, usually represented locally by the British-appointed Governor and more broadly by the West India Department of the Colonial, later Commonwealth and then Foreign and Commonwealth Office at Whitehall in London. The analysis of these historical developments and their effects, and of the various protagonists’ roles will contribute to our understanding of the relationship of the postcolonial Bahamian state and its citizens today.

In examining the process of decolonisation in general and the transition from oligarchy to formal democracy, Bahamian historiography has focussed heavily on the sociopolitical aspects of what it came to dub the Quiet Revolution in the Bahamas. For this so-called revolution it has defined a narrow time frame of about two decades, spanning roughly the period from the formation of the PLP in 1953 to the attainment of national independence in 1973. I submit that extending this time frame to include both the pre-World War II and the present-day Bahamas, and shifting the focus towards constitutional and other legal developments will demonstrate that the Quiet Revolution was never finished, but rather abandoned once political power had been wrested from the colony’s white oligarchy, and that its champions were a vastly more heterogeneous group than the particular subset that ultimately prevailed to form the new political elite.

Craton and Saunders have argued that the experiences of World War I had shattered the illusion of Britishness amongst the colonial subjects of the Bahamas, indeed throughout the British West Indies. This discontent was the seed of a nascent national consciousness. Arguably then, this watershed moment in world history also marks an opportune point in time to begin

7 Hillebrands/Schwehm (2005) 73.
8 Johnson (1972) 25.
the examination of any topic closely intertwined with the decolonisation process in a British colony such as the Bahamas. It is with this in mind that I have chosen the end of World War I as the starting point of my period of investigation.

Around the same time, and in some, albeit not all cases as a result of the war, too, many other countries – including the Bahamas’ colonial power, the United Kingdom – were accelerating their moves towards a universal suffrage. This meant breaking down long-existing barriers such as property qualifications and sex. Some countries had in fact completed this process already; the United Kingdom would conclude it in 1928, bringing a century of electoral reforms there to an end. The Bahamas, however, while passing a General Assembly Elections Act and a General Elections Voters Act in 1919, did not yet move towards a more democratic franchise. These new laws contained no progressive reform measures. Rather, they were of a purely consolidatory nature and as such reaffirmed a suffrage restricted to property-tied men. They would be the last substantive election acts in the colonial Bahamas containing not a single measure of progressive reform. While there had been voices that had already proposed or demanded reform in the colony’s election laws, they were as of now too few and too quiet. However, this was about to change. A growing number of Bahamians would demand the democratisation of their election laws, until eventually after a series of hard-won reforms the first elections were held in which every adult citizen could cast one – and only one – vote. Depending on one’s definition of only one vote, this was de facto realised in the general elections of either 1967 or 1968, or de jure either by the Constitution of 1963 or by the Constitution of 1969, as will be discussed in the chapter on the abolition of plural voting. The Bahamas began this process of democratic reform of its election system decidedly later than not only the metropole but many other jurisdictions throughout the British Empire. Hence, one question will be whether there were formal mechanisms in the administration of the Empire that enabled the Bahamas to benefit from the experiences these other jurisdictions had made on their journeys, and if so, to what extent the Bahamas drew on these experiences, for instance in the process of drafting its legislation.

The year 1975 marks the end of my period of investigation. That year, an amendment to the then substantive election act, the Representation of the People Act of 1969, was passed in order to reflect the new reality of the Bahamas having achieved national independence two years earlier. It rede-
fined the electorate accordingly. Eligible to vote – and to stand for election – were henceforth only Bahamian citizens, and no longer British subjects ordinarily resident in the colony. To most Bahamian voters, this essentially established the way they cast their ballots and perceive their elections to this day. Until very recently, any subsequent changes have made an at best minimal impact on their election experience and the amendments of 2020, which will undoubtedly have a somewhat greater impact on this experience, have not been tested in an actual election. Nonetheless, there have been some changes since 1975, and there are still areas of concern that, as Bahamians grapple with their democracy in general and their system of elections in particular, will eventually come to boil and require additional reforms. Some of these recent or potentially future developments will be summarily highlighted, too.

Thematically, I have dedicated each of the following chapters to one reform step, and I have arranged these chapters chronologically depending on when that particular milestone was completed. However, a certain amount of overlap between the chapters is going to prove inevitable. The reforms were processes rather than events. Years could go by from the time that would-be voters first demanded a particular reform of their often hesitant legislators to its implementation by the same. In many instances, therefore, one reform had not yet been completed while another one was already being discussed.

In chapter two, I will describe the suffrage at the beginning of the examination period, and, where necessary, I will also outline the earlier historical developments leading to this state of affairs. Readers who are somewhat unfamiliar with the Bahamas and its history will understand the need for additional information, but given that Harcourt Malcolm’s 1921 History of the Bahamas House of Assembly is not widely read even amongst Bahamian scholars and, given that there is no established corpus of historiography on Bahamian election law, even readers otherwise well-versed in Bahamian history may appreciate the excursus. I will conclude the chapter with an examination of the General Assembly Elections Act and the General Assembly Voters Act of 1919, which reaffirmed the Bahamian status quo. Regardless of the adjustments made to the electoral system since the first election for a Bahamian General Assembly in 1729, the basic premise remained the same: voting in 1919 was still a privilege reserved for propertied men. The two
1919 Acts represented an unreformed electoral system – the *status quo* which future reformers would have to challenge.

The 1919 Acts also left unchanged the historically evolved distribution of seats across electoral districts, which would become the subject of great controversy in the late 1950s and 1960s. By then, political representation in the House of Assembly had become inherently uneven as a consequence of the massive internal migration the Bahamas experienced, which began even before but accelerated in the 1920s and continues to the present.\(^\text{10}\) It shifted the centre of population more and more towards the island of New Providence with the capital city of Nassau. New Providence represents a mere 1.5\% of the Bahamas’ landmass. At the beginning of the period of investigation, it was home to a little over 24\% of the colony’s population, but in 2010, the year of the most recent census, that number had increased to over 70\%.\(^\text{11}\) In turn, the percentage of the population living on the other islands, historically known as the Out Islands, nowadays referred to as the Family Islands, shrank accordingly. The distribution of seats, however, remained the same for decades after this migration had begun. Eventually, the Bahamas adopted a system of regular review of the country’s constituencies between election cycles. Obvious differences in constituency sizes remain, and the current system of quinquennial review made delimitation subject to more direct political influence. This topic will surface throughout this book, and in the conclusion, I will revisit it with a view to examining to what extent gerrymandering has been an influence in the Bahamian electoral system.

In chapter three I will examine the long process of more than thirty years that led to the utilisation of the secret ballot in Bahamian elections. Unlike the other key reforms in this examination, the question of whether elections are conducted by open declaration or by secret ballot is not directly one of who is or is not enfranchised. However, it strongly influences the manner in which voters cast their votes, especially in small face-to-face societies such as

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\(^{10}\) N.B.: The 1920s saw an acceleration of the internal migration towards New Providence because economic activities became available in the capital and its harbour as a result of the prohibition of alcohol in the nearby United States in 1919 and the Bahamas’ involvement in rum running, i.e., the smuggling of liquor into US ports, particularly into those of the south-east.

the early- and mid-twentieth-century Bahamian election regime, but also because it established certain patterns of who acted upon reform demands, when and why that we will recognise throughout the later chapters, too.

After years of intermittent demands from various quarters for the introduction of the secret ballot, the matter gained momentum after a 1938 by-election. The candidates had bribed and treated voters so brazenly that colonial administrators could no longer turn a blind eye to what was happening. Only a short time later, the secret ballot was first introduced as a limited trial by the Voting by Ballot (New Providence) Act of 1939. However, it was only made permanent – and introduced colony-wide – by the General Assembly Elections Act of 1946. This Act concludes this particular aspect of electoral reform and therefore this chapter, but because it also introduced what would infamously become known as the company vote in the Bahamas, and because this provision would cause much controversy in the years to come, it will be revisited in the following chapter.

In chapter four, I will examine the developments leading to the introduction of universal male suffrage in 1959. This was the direct result of a political compromise brokered after a general strike the year before, even though the strike’s immediate cause was ostensibly the question of access to the business of tourist transportation to and from Nassau’s new airport for taxi cab drivers. 1956 had been the first election contested by organised political parties, and although the majority of seats was won by nominally independent candidates, most of these, too, had become organised in a political party of their own by the time of the general strike. Hence, the politicisation of this strike, perhaps expected under any circumstances, now offered these budding parties a first chance at making a mark on the national stage during a crisis. If passing an act to ensure voting by secret ballot had been the success of the efforts of barely organised and only loosely allied politically conscious citizens and a small number of supportive legislators, the cast of protagonists was now being supplemented by the addition of political parties and their representatives. However, this did not change the dynamics of the reform processes. Rather, we will see that despite these new actors, the same patterns that led to the secret ballot’s adoption were in fact now being reaffirmed.
In chapter four we will also see how around the same time plural voting came under attack. While the Act of 1959 now gave one vote to every adult male British subject by virtue of being ordinarily resident in the Bahamas, it retained additional votes for property owners under certain conditions, albeit in a more limited way than before. The ultimate abolition of the property-based plural vote was therefore a distinctly separate reform. As such, it will be discussed mainly in chapter six. However, one particularly contentious expression of plural voting, the company vote, was already abolished entirely by the 1959 Act. Its mechanism was different, and it was shorter lived than the plural vote based on real property. This warrants its inclusion here. This feature, loathed by the masses, had been introduced by the white oligarchy at the same time as the secret ballot became permanent in 1946, to offset its effect, yet its true meaning and ramifications were not immediately recognised by all stakeholders. The oligarchy’s repeated attempts to weaken the impact that the reluctantly conceded democratic reforms of the colony’s election laws might have at the polls is another recurring theme throughout this book. The 1959 Act also included first measures to address the aforementioned historically grown disparity between the colony’s electoral districts. Nonetheless, questions of delimitation will be examined as part of the conclusion, because their discussion must take into consideration additional changes made to the system in the 1960s and 1970s, and it benefits from a comparison to current practices.

In chapter five, I will examine the process leading to the enfranchisement of women. Of all the electoral reforms of the twentieth-century Bahamas, this is arguably the one that has attracted the most attention, not only scholarly. It is an integral element of the Bahamas’ shared national memory. However, it is probably also the chapter where the discrepancy between the archival record and the prevalent public perception heavily influenced by a politically spun narrative becomes most apparent. Hence, while the basic patterns of reform may by now seem familiar, this chapter is uniquely suited to highlight the need for a broader re-examination of our understanding of what Bahamians call the *Quiet Revolution*, and which the nation nowadays commemorates through public holidays such as Majority Rule Day. Perhaps it is also the very nature of these recurring patterns of reform that explain why, even by the standards of the Commonwealth Caribbean, the Bahamas granted women the right to vote so extraordinarily late: in 1961.
Whereas previous chapters’ reforms had culminated in the passage of new substantive election acts for the colony, women’s suffrage was not introduced as part of a new substantive act, the most recent one being but two years old when the Votes for Women Act of 1961 was passed. Because of the timing of the general election, the commencement date of the Votes for Women Act, and the timelines for voter registration stipulated by the substantive act, additional amendments became necessary. Otherwise, women would have been precluded from voting in the 1962 general election despite being legally enfranchised. It is these amendments and an outlook at the immediate political ramifications of women’s suffrage that complete chapter five.

In chapter six, I will examine how, after the introduction of universal suffrage, the remaining distortions caused by plural voting for property owners were abolished in order to make the suffrage more equal. The question of an equal suffrage is also closely intertwined with the issue of the delimitation of electoral districts or constituencies. It therefore played an important part in the overall transition of the Bahamas from a colony ruled by a party representing mainly its white minority to one ruled by a party representing mainly its Black majority. These developments occurred, not coincidentally, simultaneously with the transition of the colony from the Old Representative System, under which there was no constitutional connection and thus often no cohesion between the executive and the legislature, to so-called responsible government, featuring a new Constitution akin to the Westminster model under which a cabinet with executive functions was responsible to an elected chamber of parliament. Unlike previous reforms, this change was not introduced by statute law passed by the Bahamian House of Assembly. Rather, it was the result of the introduction of a Constitution, passed by Parliament in Westminster in 1963 and commencing in 1964. Nonetheless, the Constitution, while procedurally legislated in and then handed down from the metropole, was the result of a constitutional conference at which both majority and minority parties represented in the Bahamian House of Assembly after the 1962 general election participated.

A central question in this chapter is the question of what constitutes plural voting. This was disputed politically, because whereas some constituencies sent one member to the House of Assembly, others sent two or more, and in those constituencies voters had as many votes as their constituency
had members. A ruling of the Bahamian Supreme Court sanctioned this practice, but this did not satisfy critics. In 1968, the new government called a snap election, which would be the first election in Bahamian history to feature all single-member constituencies and universal suffrage. Every adult British subject had one vote, and one vote for one candidate only. The 1963 Constitution, which had allowed for a mix of multi- and single-member constituencies in the 1967 general election, of course also allowed for all single-member constituencies in 1968. However, as this proved a matter of principle for the new government, the practice became constitutionally mandated in 1969 and remains constitutionally entrenched to this day.\(^\text{12}\)

This development thus marks the end of chapter six.

In chapter seven, I will look at the development that began even before the introduction of internal self-government in 1964 and ended shortly after the achievement of national independence in 1973, and that is the process of adjusting the franchise to reflect the progress the Bahamas was making towards or beyond independence. In the colonial setting, all British subjects ordinarily resident in the colony were once enfranchised. In a sovereign nation, the franchise was eventually restricted to nationals of that nation. It is tempting to imagine this development as a single step consisting of a mere technical adjustment necessitated by and coinciding with the severing of ties with the United Kingdom. Indeed, this time we will not find the previously established pattern of popular demand for reform becoming more focussed before eventually being picked up by political allies who then exerted pressure on the oligarchy until their parliamentary majority finally yielded and passed the reform. We will, however, glimpse an idea of the Bahamian imagination of concepts of nationality and belonging and the limited understanding of citizenship prevailing to this day, and we will see that, just as decolonisation was not a single event but a process, this redefining of the electorate was, too.

An examination of this process includes first and foremost the two colonial Constitutions of 1963 and 1969, and the independence Constitution of 1973, all of which were passed at Westminster whilst reducing Bahamian participation to a consultative role during the drafting stages. However, Bahamian citizenship and access thereto as defined by the independence Constitution developed out of a category called *Belongers*, which was first

\(^{12}\) *Constitution 1969* (Bahamas), s 60(3); *Constitution 1973* (Bahamas), arts 54(3), 68.
introduced in immigration law even prior to 1964. Furthermore, the process of redefining the electorate was not completed until post-independence amendments to the substantive act were passed in 1975. Therefore, the cornerstones of chapter seven are the Immigration Act of 1963 for the beginning, and the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act of 1975 for the end.

Finally, in chapter eight, I will summarise the main findings and revisit the main observations made and questions posed. These fall into different categories. Most obviously, there are the questions directly related to the process of electoral reform, particularly the extension of the franchise. What were the roles of the various actors, and who was the driving force? Is there a general recurring pattern that can be discerned? How did the reform process and its outcome shape Bahamian democracy in a broad sense, and, more narrowly, how did it change the outcome of elections? Then there are those observations that challenge the national narrative and the understanding Bahamians have of their genesis as a nation. One example is the question whether, apart from an undemocratic franchise, it was ultimately active gerrymandering that allowed the white minority to retain a parliamentary majority even after the introduction of universal adult suffrage. After examining the archival record, instead of a streamlined tale of righteousness, we are faced with a more complicated story that leaves far less room for heroes. Additionally, there are also findings that go beyond the Bahamian context, a context in which this book may play the part of a case study: does the involvement of the Colonial Office and its successors in the process of electoral reform in the twentieth-century Bahamas allow us to draw conclusions regarding Whitehall’s role in the development of law throughout the British Empire?

Apart from the various pieces of legislation passed in the Bahamas over the course of the period of investigation, this book relies heavily on archival sources, primarily those from the Colonial Office and its successors. These documents go beyond the mere correspondence between the Governor and Whitehall. Government House in Nassau closely observed the political activities in the colony, at times clandestinely, and meticulously reported these to London. As a result, the files of the Colonial Office include not only both the Governor’s and the West India Department’s regular assessments of the situation in the Bahamas, but also a treasure trove containing intelligence reports, local newspaper clippings, petitions and pamphlets by colonial sub-
jects and organisations, etc., which have been preserved at the National Archives of the United Kingdom in Kew. Unfortunately, no indigenously Bahamian primary sources of such immediacy are available. A number of the protagonists discussed in this book, however, have since published their memoirs. As contemporary actors, however, they are not neutral witnesses, and therefore these memoirs must be read with the proper caution.

Another important source, not just of information but for contemporary commentary, has been the Bahamian press, primarily the two largest newspapers, *The Nassau Guardian* and *The Nassau Daily Tribune*, later simply *The Tribune*. Unfortunately, while for much of their history these newspapers were not shy to publish political commentary, at times frank and straightforward, at other times obscure and accessible only to the initiated, their reporting missed some crucial events altogether, such as parliamentary debates or court decisions that would have been relevant to this book, and regularly lacked even the most basic background information. To this day, readers will be disappointed to find that both newspapers too often satisfy themselves with allowing quotes provided by politicians to constitute the entirety of their reporting.

Throughout the book, the Bahamian secondary literature cited, will inevitably appear limited. To understand this, it is important to bear in mind that even today’s Bahamas still has a population of less than 400,000. Furthermore, opportunities even for secondary education had been scarce and restricted throughout history, and opportunities for tertiary education within the country have only developed since the attainment of national independence in 1973 and are still limited. To this day, the vast majority of the University of the Bahamas’ students are enrolled in undergraduate programmes only. Of the handful of graduate programmes the university offers, none are in the social sciences or humanities. Hence, it is not surprising that the Bahamas in general, and historical topics in particular, have only received limited scholarly attention, despite prolific scholars such as Bahamian Gail Saunders or Canadian Michael Craton, both of whom dedicated much of their careers to Bahamian history.

13 At the time of the last census, the country’s overall population numbered 351,461 persons. See: Bahamas Department of Statistics (2012) 1.

14 At the University of the Bahamas, both the History and Law Departments fall within the School of Social Sciences.
1919  ◆  General Assembly Elections Act & General Assembly Voters Act
       Consolidatory acts reaffirming suffrage limited to propertied men.

1939  ◆  Voting by Ballot (New Providence) Act
       First act to introduce voting by secret ballot; applied to the
       island of New Providence only; limited to five years.

1946  ◆  General Assembly Elections Act
       Introduced voting by secret ballot to the entire Bahamas
       and made it permanent; introduced company vote.

1946  ◆  General Assembly Elections Act
       Introduced universal adult male suffrage; abolished company vote;
       limited real-property based plural voting.

1959  ◆  Votes for Women Act
       Introduced women’s suffrage.

1961  ◆  Constitution
       Introduced internal self-government; phased out plural voting.

1963  ◆  Constitution
       Mandated all single-seat constituencies.

1969  ◆  Representation of the People Act
       Restricted suffrage of British subjects to
       those possessing Bahamian status.

1973  ◆  Constitution
       Attainment of national sovereignty.

1975  ◆  Representation of the People (Amendment) Act
       Changed electorate from British subjects with Bahamian status
       to Bahamian citizens.

1992  ◆  Parliamentary Elections Act
       Current substantive act, signed into law on the twenty-fifth anniversary
       of Majority Rule.

2020  ◆  Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act
       Introduced permanent voters’ register.

Figure 1: Chronology of Milestones in Bahamian Electoral Reform