Political Situation

The Turks and Caicos Islands are a British Dependent Territory and the Governor, who is the personal representative of the British monarch, presides over the Executive Council. The Governor is responsible for external affairs, internal security, defence and the appointment of public officers.

Under the 1976 constitution (amended in 1988) executive power is vested in the Governor. The Governor is President of the Executive Council, which is comprised of eight members, three ex-officio and five appointed by the Governor from among the elected members of the Legislative Council. The Legislative Council is comprised of: a Speaker; three nominated members; the ex-officio members of the Executive Council and 13 members elected by universal adult suffrage.

In the March 1988 general election the PDM won 11 seats with almost 60% of the vote. Oswald Skippings was appointed Chief Minister. The PNP won two seats with about 30% of the vote, while the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which is a splinter group of the PNP, did not elect any members but received almost 11% of the votes. The constitutional question, including, independence was not an issue during the 1988 campaign.

Defence and Internal Security

Britain is responsible for the Islands' defence. The 100 man police force is responsible for maintaining law and order in coastal areas and on-shore.

The Economy

The traditional economic activity of the Islands, salt production, ceased in 1964. Subsequently, the economy has been based mainly on tourism, the off-shore financial industry and fishing. Agricultural possibilities are limited and most foodstuffs are imported. Manufacturing is virtually non-existent. In 1989 one of the smaller salt ponds re-opened on Salt Cay to provide salt for the US health food market. While the economy is growing it tends to be highly susceptible to changes in the international climate, especially with regard to flows of investment capital and to regional competition for tourists. The Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands is updating its development plan and, in order to achieve economic viability, is promoting diversification of development activity and foreign investment. Changes in legislation are being considered in several fields (e.g., banking, the off-shore financial industry, land tenure, gambling, immigration, etc.). GDP (at factor cost) per capita in 1986 was estimated at more than US $2,700. The labour force is estimated at 5,000.