



AN ELECTION HANDBOOK FOR CARIBBEAN JOURNALISTS



EDITORS: LENNOX GRANT AND WESLEY GIBBINGS

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The publication is meant to serve as a practical resource in equipping journalists to meet public and professional expectations for superior election coverage.

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Foreword

This Handbook is part of an attempt to enhance the quality of media reportage of elections in the English-speaking Caribbean. It has been designed by journalists for journalists.

It is the work of the Association of Caribbean MediaWorkers (ACM) – a network of journalists spanning the Caribbean Basin, established in 2001 and currently headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago.

This effort recognises the ineluctable connection between democracy and the quality of journalism – a conclusion recorded by the 2005 Report of the Commission on the Media and Democracy in Central America and reflected in similar exercises in professional introspection in other parts of the world.

It is now generally recognised that an unfettered media play a critical role in promoting democratic values. The independent work of journalists in covering elections can also serve as a catalyst for promoting the democratic conduct and outcomes of such exercises.

There is increasing evidence of the validity of this assertion throughout the Caribbean as journalists confront new and persistent challenges to their professional independence.

The sections covered by the Handbook pay attention to areas of critical concern to journalists engaged in covering elections, the electoral contestants and the electorates that largely constitute the consumer base for media.

It is by no means a perfect or exhaustive journalistic resource and is meant to supplement other information reporters are able to access through other means.

Hopefully, media owners and managers will recognise the importance of the self-examination this work promotes and will encourage their newsrooms to pay attention to the main issues covered not only at election time.

Thanks to the editorial and design teams and special tribute to Angelica Hunt and Sheila Velez Martinez for their advice and wise counsel throughout the writing and editing processes.

Wesley Gibbings
President,
Association of Caribbean MediaWorkers

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1

ELECTIONS AND THE MEDIA

As imperfect as they often may be, elections constitute one of the more important features of the democratic process. If elections are free and transparent, and citizens have confidence in their execution, the results of the exercise are widely held to be representative of the will of the electorate. A government installed under such conditions will more likely than not enjoy the support and confidence needed to promote social cohesion and peace.

If, however, elections are not conducted in a manner that provides for the free exchange of ideas and solutions among candidates, their parties and the population, and if the process of voting and declaring results is not transparent, such elections will impact negatively on the ability of the eventual victor to govern under conditions that are widely accepted.

What are the marks of free and fair elections? For one thing, they must be conducted in a transparent and open way, with sufficient information made available for the advice of the electorate. For another, there must be real choice among candidates and parties who are able to campaign openly and without hindrance. Finally, rules must be known and respected by all.

Good election reporting means good journalism

The practice of journalism has the potential to reinforce the pre-requisites of properly run elections. The basic journalistic tenets of accuracy,

If elections are not conducted in a manner that provides for the free exchange of ideas and solutions, such elections will impact negatively on the ability of the eventual victor to govern under conditions that are widely accepted.

Following the phenomenon of longstanding incumbents in many countries in the post-independence era, electoral change has become a feature of regional politics.

impartiality and sound judgment are important assets within the framework of democratic elections. Good election reporting, then, simply means good journalism.

Perhaps more than ever before, a spotlight of critical scrutiny is falling upon journalists covering elections. Changes in the social, cultural and political environment in the Caribbean have brought into sharper focus the media's role in the reporting of election campaigns. For election campaigns themselves have been gaining a new and even dramatic historical significance.

Following the phenomenon of longstanding incumbents in many countries in the post-independence era, electoral change has become a feature of regional politics.

The late Sir John Compton's United Workers' Party (UWP) of St Lucia ruled for 14 consecutive years from 1982 to 1996. Eric Williams led People's National Movement (PNM) administrations between 1956 and 1981 when he died; Guyana's Forbes Burnham also died in office after serving as prime minister, then president of the country, between 1964 and 1985.

The late Sir Lynden Pindling of The Bahamas was prime minister for 23 consecutive years between 1969 and 1992; the Antigua Labour Party ran Antigua and Barbuda for 28 years between 1976 and 2004.

Between 2006 and 2008, however, regime changes occurred in St Lucia, Belize, Jamaica, Barbados, The Bahamas, and Grenada. This followed a series

of election results between the mid-1980s and 1990s that brought an end to several longstanding political administrations within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries.

Election results are generally accepted by the contestants and their supporters, and relative peace has followed. In some countries, however, where elections have served to exacerbate social and ethnic tensions, the voting exercise has been attended by conflict.

Doubts and partisan claims regarding the integrity of the electoral process have led to post-election disturbances in Grenada, Guyana and St Kitts and Nevis. Unstable political conditions followed the 18-18 election deadlock in Trinidad and Tobago in 2001.

Transformation of mass media landscape

These seasons of political change have paralleled a transformation of the mass media landscape. One change has been the declining role of state broadcast media in most countries.

The rise of the Internet and of online media content are among other changes. Moreover, in the sphere of public attitude, expectations have been growing for the regional media to perform as virtual watchdogs of the electoral process.

Participants and professional observers regard mass media performance and content as decisive factors in the holding and in the outcome of elections.

More importance is accordingly being attached to the actual and potential role of the Caribbean media

In some countries, however, where elections have served to exacerbate social and ethnic tensions, the voting exercise has been attended by conflict.

The media mandate includes, and is seen to include, the obligation to recognise and defeat prejudice and corruption, and equally to expose inadequate access to government or other political resources, and to denounce incompetence

not only in monitoring and validating the electoral process, but also in fostering untroubled campaign and polling activities.

The media are increasingly being called upon to monitor and report on issues related to voters' rights, the rights of candidates and political parties, and the election process.

Journalists are consequently expected to report accurately and fairly on election campaigns, to inform the public about the electoral process and, through vigilant oversight, to guard against abuses of power by the incumbent administration, and to assess the validity of complaints.

Media enterprises are held responsible for providing politicians with space and time to deliver their messages. The public assumes, justifiably, that the media are obliged impartially to reflect a diversity of opinion on election issues and to facilitate vigorous and informed public debate.

Election campaign coverage is seen to fall short when journalists and media enterprises fail to resist direct censorship by the authorities, or succumb to manipulation by officials, by partisan forces and private interests. Self-censorship, arising from fear of recrimination and threats, qualifies as further evidence of media failure.

The media mandate includes, and is seen to include, the obligation to recognise and defeat prejudice and corruption, and equally to expose inadequate access to government or other political resources, and to denounce incompetence.

Concern has centred on the potential for inaccurate or reckless reporting to inflame attitudes at times of high tension and controversy.

Practical know-how - theoretical grounding

Some media monitoring projects have lately been run to ensure, through empirical oversight, that the public interest is being served by media performance. (See *Guyana: A Case Study*).

In large measure, voters gain, or lose, confidence in the electoral process as a result of the information they receive about it via the media. In covering elections, media performance contributes invaluable to the legitimacy of the electoral process and, thus, to the maintenance of the democratic process.

This handbook is dedicated to the end of equipping colleagues with practical know-how and theoretical grounding effectively to discharge responsibilities for contributing toward the adequacy of election exercises, thereby strengthening democracy and sustaining peace in Caribbean societies.

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2 ELEMENTS OF AN ELECTION

The reporter must gain an adequate grasp of the very system under which the election is being held, and also its procedural rules.

“The will of the people shall be the basis for the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal adult suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.”

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

That declaration outlines the basic philosophy behind the holding of elections. But there are other practical elements of elections, general or local, that the reporter assigned to cover them needs to familiarise himself/herself with in order to do an adequate job of providing information to the public.

To do that job effectively, the reporter must focus on more than the pre-election public meetings of the political parties, or contestants, involved.

Understanding the system

The reporter must gain an adequate grasp of the very system under which the election is being held, and also its procedural rules. That system may vary from country to country. Most former British colonies in the Caribbean have adopted, from the United Kingdom, the first-past-the-post, or winner-take-all, electoral system.

Some opposition parties in the region continue to press for a proportional representation system (as exists in Guyana and Suriname), which they believe will give them a better chance of winning seats or indeed forming the government.

The first-past-the-post system is credited with several advantages, including its simplicity, its ability to provide clear majorities and stable governments. It fosters broad-based political parties. It requires the electorate to choose between people rather than parties and it allows for independent candidates.

Its disadvantages are that it denies fair representation to minority parties; it excludes minorities from fair representation. It is also credited with facilitating unfair delimitation of electoral boundaries. The Proportional Representation system is credited with getting rid of these weaknesses and is especially favoured because it gives minority parties a better chance at winning seats.

Election management boards

A key institution in the electoral process with which the reporter must familiarise himself/herself is the

The first-past-the-post system fosters broad-based political parties. It requires the electorate to choose between people rather than parties and it allows for independent candidates.



Party supporters on the way to political rally in Carriacou.

The first duty of the reporter in any electoral contest is to make and maintain contact with that media liaison department or officer.

Election Management Board (EMB), whose name may also vary from country to country. In Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Jamaica and other countries, the EMB is known as the Elections Commission or the Elections and Boundaries Commission or, for example, the Grenada Electoral Office.

These bodies have a wide and varying range of responsibilities, including:

- *Delimitation of boundaries of an electoral district, commonly known as a constituency*
- *Registration of voters and the maintenance of an up-to-date electoral register*
- *Registration of political parties, including independent candidates, where they exist*
- *Nomination (registration) of candidates contesting the election*
- *Training of electoral staff to ensure efficient operations. Efficiency in managing elections is critical to the smooth running, and fair results, of elections*
- *Conduct of polling*
- *Counting of the votes and declaration of the final results*

Some EMBs are authorised to adjudicate on electoral disputes, though in some other countries this dispute settling is left to the courts.

Media liaison office

Because of the critically important role the media play--in providing general information in the run-up to the polls and in reporting the final results--most EMBs have a media liaison office or department whose function is to be open to contact with the media.

The first duty of the reporter in any electoral contest is to make and maintain contact with that media liaison department or officer.

Out in the field, of course, the reporter must also familiarise himself/herself with as many of the participants as reasonably possible, including independents where they exist.

The participation of independents should never be dismissed as simply a lost cause. In a famous case, independent candidate James “Son” Mitchell of St Vincent and the Grenadines helped form a Government and eventually himself became Prime Minister.

Whatever his or her own political bias, the reporter must strive to report in a fair and balanced way on the electoral contest. Nothing so destroys the credibility of a reporter as the public perception of bias in coverage.

Reporters may also find themselves coming under attack on the political platform from contestants feeling aggrieved by their coverage. This is to be taken in stride but, again, fairness and balance in reporting are of critical importance.

Insight and feel

The reporter would find it useful and valuable to make and keep contact with the leaders, or media liaison officers, of all the parties. That kind of contact will provide the reporter with some insight into and a better feel for the contestants.

Political parties usually provide manifestoes, outlining their plans and programmes.

Nothing so destroys the credibility of a reporter as the public perception of bias in coverage.

While the reporter should feel free to cite polling data as indications of which way the wind is blowing, scepticism should be the guiding rule here.

The reporter should also become familiar with the content of those manifestoes. Get hold of them early and report on them in adequate detail; the public want and need to know what their would-be legislative representatives are offering or planning.

The information in those manifestoes can also serve as the basis on which reporters can interview the leaders/contestants involved in the poll.

In most electoral contests, voting in certain constituencies is crucial to the final outcome. The reporter should make himself/herself familiar with those constituencies (sometimes called “battleground” or “marginal”), including their history, voting patterns and other indicators of or insight into how those constituents are likely to vote.

A more general grasp of public opinion provides insights into the electoral contest. Increasingly, public opinion polls are becoming a regular feature of electoral contests.

While the reporter should feel free to cite polling data as indications of which way the wind is blowing, a note of caution: it is not beyond the wiles of some political parties to orchestrate those polls in an attempt to swing public opinion in their favour. Scepticism should be the guiding rule here.

A recent example of public opinion polls being utterly off base was the 2008 general election in Grenada. Several polls had predicted an outright win for the ruling party. In fact, the opposition party won the election.

Fairness and balance

The importance of fair and balanced reporting cannot be over-emphasised. The public should be able to rely on reporters for a fair assessment of the electoral cut and thrust. It would be a great disservice to the public if biased reporting were to hold sway. And the public is quick to perceive such bias. A reporter without public credibility has no value whatsoever.

Campaign financing is another element of an electoral contest in which reporters should interest themselves. In the United States Presidential election, candidates' spending is seriously monitored. Some Caribbean EMBs have a modicum of control over such financing.

But in the absence of rigorous regulation and monitoring resources, Caribbean EMBs may not be capable of the same level of oversight. Finally, a term that reporters should familiarise themselves with is "gerrymandering." It stands for the practice of making changes in the boundaries of a constituency to favour one party - usually the ruling party - in an election.

This is also a familiar charge made by opposition parties, sometimes with no merit and sometimes with a great deal of justification. The best place to check on those charges is the EMB, which does have a list and a map outlining the borders of existing constituencies.

Observer missions

Another element of elections that reporters should be aware of - and look out for - is the presence of Electoral Observer Missions or teams participating in the election.

Reporters should interest themselves in campaign financing; and look out for gerrymandering.

Over a period of some 10 years, Commonwealth electoral observer teams have worked in about 36 Commonwealth countries, beginning with Malaysia in October 1990 and including Trinidad and Tobago in 2000.

These teams may be either home-grown or they may come from foreign countries; and sometimes they are mixed.

One such group that has played an active role in electoral observation is the Organisation of American States (OAS), which has observed in Guyana in 2006 and Grenada in 2008. But perhaps the most experienced of these teams have been drawn from the United Nations and the Commonwealth.

Watchlist for observers

Sometimes these teams are also involved in providing training for election officers prior to the poll. Over a period of some 10 years, Commonwealth electoral observer teams have worked in about 36 Commonwealth countries, beginning with Malaysia in October 1990 and including Trinidad and Tobago in 2000.

A Commonwealth observer team also played a critical role in the elections that followed immediately on the transition from apartheid in South Africa.

These teams often conduct a preliminary visit, and then follow up with missions, based on the recommendations of the preliminary team.

Observers come armed with a watch list of items:

- *Locations of polling stations*
- *Seating arrangements at polling stations*
- *Accuracy of the list of electors at polling stations*
- *Distances travelled by voters to polling stations in rural areas*
- *Time voters waited to cast their votes*

- *State of readiness of polling stations*
- *Availability or otherwise of adequate supplies of ballot papers, sealing wax, etc.*
- *Security of ballot papers prior to the elections*
- *Steps taken (if any) to ensure the secrecy of the ballot paper*
- *Performance of election officers at the polling stations visited*
- *Procedure followed at the opening of the polls*
- *Adequacy or otherwise of polling stations' facilities*
- *Comments of contesting party agents on the electoral arrangements*
- *Procedure for the use of indelible ink*
- *Incidence of loss of voters' cards*
- *Procedures in place to ensure proper security of ballot papers, ballot boxes and official seals*
- *General environment at the polling stations visited*
- *Intimidation of voters by security officers and/or others*

Getting around

Observers attend rallies of contesting political parties, making it clear that their presence is purely for the purpose of observation and not tied to any political party or other interest group.

Observers also pay attention to the degree of freedom of expression, noting whether balance obtains in radio and television broadcasts.

Reporters will find such observers valuable sources of information on the conduct of the poll and even on the final results.

Observer teams usually conclude their mission with a report, in which, of course, reporters can find a gold mine of information on the electoral process and assessments of fairness.

Reporters will find such observers valuable sources of information on the conduct of the poll and even on the final results. Observer teams usually conclude their mission with a report, in which, of course, reporters can find a gold mine of information.

Observer missions want media attention to their work. Reporters should find no problem in keeping contact with team members and gaining access to their observations and final report.

Fairness does not simply mean equal space and time for each of the parties.

Reporters write stories on the basis of news value - what readers, viewers and listeners are most likely to find interesting.



Election rallies in the Caribbean.



3

COVERING THE CAMPAIGN

At its best, election coverage captures the drama, colour and feel of the campaign, in addition to reporting fully and accurately on the voting and the results.

Fairness, reader interest

Reporting, in words and images, must be seen to be fair and unbiased.

Especially at election season, opinions must also be seen to reflect balance. This is especially needed in broadcast shows involving public participation.

Fairness does not simply mean equal space and time for each of the parties. Reporters write stories on the basis of news value--what readers, viewers and listeners are most likely to find interesting.

Still, it's necessary to give exposure to all contesting parties.

Nobody, least of all readers, viewers and listeners, needs a dull replay of repetitive speeches. Crowd reaction, the atmosphere--the colour--of a campaign rally, when captured by the media, add value to election coverage.

Clarity, accuracy

Issues should be clearly and factually stated.

Accuracy is the first law: get it right, first time.

Avoid reporting anonymous sources giving opinion on any aspect of the campaign. Nameless comment is worthless.

Campaign season is not open season.

Journalists have political views and preferences. Take care, however, not to give the impression, in what we report and how we display ourselves, of taking sides.

Remember that campaign rhetoric, like all talk, is subject to the laws of libel and slander. In reporting cut-and-thrust rhetoric by politicians, some leeway is allowed. Remember, however, it's the reporter and the media organization, that are always more likely to be sued.

Campaign season is not open season.

Information-opinion fire wall

Endeavour to keep opinion out of news reports. Let the reader, the listener, the viewer, be the judges.

Compare A and B below:

A: *"Ms So-and-So delivered an eloquent address which was well received by a mammoth, cheering crowd."*

B: *"Ms So-and-So's address, which went on for 30 minutes, was several times interrupted by applause from the crowd which spilled over from the square into the street."*



Jamaica Labour Party leader Bruce Golding votes.

Note how Version B reports information.

It says what happened in measurable, factual terms, without relying on editorializing adjectives that could fairly be interpreted as showing the speaker in a favourable light.

Size of crowd

Avoid estimates of crowd size, unless you have a reliable means of ascertaining size, for example, the known number of seats in an auditorium or a stadium.

Avoid giving figures.

Also refrain from saying “large”, “huge”, “massive”, “gigantic”, and “small”, “disappointing”, “paltry” or any term that suggests opinionating.

Indicate size more indirectly:

“The crowd was tightly packed into about two thirds of Heroes Square, and dozens of buses were parked in nearby city streets.”

Taking sides

Journalists have political views and preferences.

Take care, however, not to give the impression, in what we report and how we display ourselves, of taking sides.

Keep personal biases, prejudices and personal connections out of reports.

Do not wear apparel bearing party emblems or colours. Politely decline offers of party paraphernalia, giveaways and benefits.

Whether on duty or off, reporters should never heckle speakers.

Take no unnecessary risks with your personal safety.

Defined rules and regulations are important to the fair and orderly conduct of elections in democratic societies. Journalists covering elections must have a good idea of these rules and regulations.

Photographers should capture images showing the diversity in the make-up of audiences, where diversity exists.

Under attack

The media in general, specific media organizations, and even individual journalists, are sometimes attacked by political platform speakers.

Such statements are capable of inciting supporters to intimidate, threaten or attempt physical assault on media representatives.

If any of this happens, or looks like it is going to happen, at an event you are covering:

- *Stay calm*
- *Avoid shouting matches with fired-up supporters*
- *Do not be intimidated or give the impression that you are*
- *For as much as you can, continue your work of taking notes or recording sound or images*
- *If necessary, call the attention of security or police to the fact that you are being deliberately prevented from doing your job*
- *Take careful note of your surroundings and the people nearby*
- *Have your media pass with you, if necessary, wearing it so it can be seen*
- *Take no unnecessary risks with your personal safety*

4

ELECTION RULES AND REGULATIONS

Defined rules and regulations are important to the fair and orderly conduct of elections in democratic societies. Journalists covering elections must have a good idea of these rules and regulations if they are to spot discrepancies, loopholes and even corruption, and properly to weigh allegations.

The election rules and regulations in the various Caribbean territories are similar in many respects but there are also important differences. In preparing for coverage, journalists should make contact with officials at the local election management body.

Their guidance should prove valuable on the applicable rules which may be drawn from election laws, codes of political conduct and even conventions.

Journalists need to pay special attention to rules and regulations relating to three main issues:

1. The rights of voters
2. The election process
3. Restrictions on campaigning

Rights of voters

The right to vote sits at the centre of the democratic process. It is through the ballot that the voter participates in the collective decision about who should govern the country until the next election.

Election coverage must shine a bright light on violence and intimidation wherever they occur. If left unchecked, such abuses can thwart the will of the people.

Another critical element in the election process is the independence of the election management body, by whatever name called.

Look out, therefore, for problems that affect the rights of the voter. The first order of business is to ensure that the process of arriving at the voters' register is fair and transparent and does not disenfranchise electors.

Procedures exist everywhere to govern how a person's name enters the voters' register. In some countries, election workers go around to citizens' homes to register eligible voters. In others, citizens are required to go to set offices to register, once they reach the voting age and are otherwise qualified. Jamaica, for example, uses both methods of registration.

Be watchful of any attempt by candidates and political parties to bribe voters in the run-up to the polls. Not only is this prohibited by election rules and regulations everywhere, but it is also unethical and, when it appears, should be exposed by reporting.

Though prohibited by election laws, rules and regulations, the use of violence and intimidation as tools of voter suppression is still a problem in some places. Election coverage must shine a bright light on violence and intimidation wherever they occur. If left unchecked, such abuses can thwart the will of the people in electing the government of their choice.

The election process

The public at large and key players in the political process must have an opportunity to review the voters' register before it is final. Reviewing provides an opportunity to object to omissions or to challenge the inclusion of questionable names.

Across the region, election procedures provide for this to be done as a way of ensuring transparency. Journalists need to know local election requirements for publishing and checking the register, to ensure their integrity and to assess complaints.

Election rules across the territories often require the counting of ballots in some open forum where candidates and/or their representatives can observe the process. Procedures exist for candidates to seek recounts and to challenge official results. Journalists must be aware of these procedures if they are to provide adequate coverage of the election process.

Designated election observers are important to modern elections. They provide an independent voice in determining whether an election is free and fair. An increasing number of countries in the region have been inviting these observers to monitor their election cycles. Even though there are no election rules or regulations that require the presence of these groups, their monitoring activities should be covered. (See “*Covering the Campaign*”).

Another critical element in the election process is the independence of the election management body, by whatever name called. Since these bodies, to operate effectively, cannot be under undue influence of parties and candidates, journalists need a grasp of the process of appointing their members, and of the rules and regulations governing their work.

These election management bodies are important in dealing with complaints about voters’ registers, campaign tactics and election spending. (See “*Covering the Campaign*”).

Journalists should monitor the possible use by officials of state resources to influence the polls.

All territories have rules and regulations which prohibit intimidation. It is for journalists to be alert in reporting such instances whenever they occur.

Restrictions on campaigning

Journalists must get familiar with the process by which a candidate is nominated to contest an election. In all territories, some basic requirements relating to age and citizenship apply.

On nomination day, the candidate must also follow procedures to ensure he or she is actually put on the list of those contesting.

Journalists should monitor the possible use by officials of state resources to influence the polls.

The most obvious form this takes is the use of state-owned media to promote the governing party's agenda during the run-up to the polls. Journalists must keep this under watch; only a very fine line separates the legitimate showcasing of the work of government from subtle campaigning.

Are candidates or parties free to campaign wherever they choose, without being intimidated by political opponents? Here is another key question to focus the coverage.

All territories have rules and regulations which prohibit intimidation. It is for journalists to be alert in reporting such instances whenever they occur.

None of the countries in the Caribbean has comprehensive campaign finance laws. Still, some election rules and regulations require candidates to file reports on how much was spent on the campaign.

Such reports could provide meaty material for follow-up stories by those covering the election.

A checklist: Some key questions for journalists on the election beat:

The rights of voters

- *Are all eligible voters on the list or are there widespread omissions or padding?*
- *Are politicians trying to bribe voters with money and gifts?*
- *Is there the threat of violence against voters to influence their choice?*
- *Are voters given adequate information about where to vote?*

The election process

- *Is the voters' register vetted by the political parties and the public to satisfy questions about its completeness?*
- *Are voters who cannot read made fully aware of what the ballot papers contain?*
- *Are there adequate security arrangements to protect voters and ensure the security of ballots and ballot boxes?*
- *Is there a transparent system for counting ballots?*
- *Have independent local and international election observers been asked to monitor the polls?*
- *Can the media and observer groups cover and monitor the election without fear?*
- *Is the election management body free of undue political control?*
- *Is there an established procedure for political parties/candidates to make complaints about violation of election rules?*
- *Are responses to complaints quick and clear?*
- *Are all the parties or candidates given fair and reliable coverage?*

Are all eligible voters on the list or are there widespread omissions or padding?

Are government officials using their authority and power to undermine the interest of any particular candidate or party?

Restrictions on campaigning

- ▶ *Are all candidates allowed to contest the election once they are eligible?*
- ▶ *Are the candidates and parties allowed to hold public meetings without fear?*
- ▶ *Are government officials using state resources (including state-run media) to further the interest of any candidate or party?*
- ▶ *Are government officials using their authority and power to undermine the interest of any particular candidate or party?*
- ▶ *Are candidates or political parties observing regulations and rules relating to election spending such as the filing of returns or the disclosure of sources of funding?*
- ▶ *Is violence so widespread as to be capable of disrupting the campaign?*

5

OPINION POLLS AND POLLSTERS

Too many times, the simple truth that “The only poll that matters is that which emerges after the dust settles on Election Day,” remains too far from the top of the reporter’s mind. Emotions, and even partiality, are too often allowed to slip into everyday reporting.

Elections stir emotion, the better to garner support for one side or other seeking a chance to govern. Over the last generation, though, an election “downstream industry” of polls has been spawned.

Work in progress

Opinion polling, now a lucrative commercial endeavour, is also seen by some as an extension of the campaign platform, since each survey itself affects emotions politicians seek to sway.

As science and as art, opinion polling is a work in progress. Already, however, it has moved from filling out a clipboard on a street corner, to 800-number trackers and automated (“robot”) calling services that dial your number to pitch their candidate.

Structured, in-depth, questionnaires are sent to a sampling of people selected to adequately represent the demographics of the country.

In the Caribbean, one of the more famous polls has been that of the North American and Caribbean

Print media polls tend to enjoy greater acceptance, since the figures are usually accompanied by details of the demographic surveyed, as well as the questions that were posed.

But in 2007 – “the year of elections”—a veritable electoral wind of change blew through the region. Many multi-term leaders were relegated to the opposition.

Teachers’ Association (NACTA), conducted by New York-based Vishnu Bisram.

This poll has been criticized for its small sampling (288 persons in one instance). Allegations have been heard that the pollster may have allowed his own political preference to influence the people being polled.

Daily declining support

In Caribbean elections between 1998 and 2002, most of the regional leaders and ruling parties held on to power in their respective states. But in 2007 – “the year of elections”—a veritable electoral wind of change blew through the region. Many multi-term leaders were relegated to the opposition.

In Jamaica, pollsters noted that teenagers and young adults shunned the pre-election questionnaires, even though some of them undoubtedly voted eventually. Gleaner polls showed that the incumbent party may have paid a political price when, owing to Hurricane Deane, it postponed the polls for two weeks.

Jamaican pollster Bill Johnson’s figures indicated – almost on a daily basis – the declining support for Prime Minister Portia Simpson and her People’s National Party. That forced the party to schedule a slew of internal campaign meetings and to step up its advertising campaign.

While some newspapers continued to publish editorials warning the PNP of impending political disaster, Johnson’s figures accurately assessed growing confidence in Bruce Golding and the Jamaica Labour Party by the critical “undecided” electorate.

Popular print polls

Print media polls tend to enjoy greater acceptance, since the figures are usually accompanied by details of the demographic surveyed, as well as the questions that were posed.

Usually, television polls do not give comparable detail; the upside, however, is a certain amount of immediacy to the results.

Internet polls are still quite a novelty (many Caribbean nations remain low on the UN list of Internet/population density). Internet polls tend to show results in real time, as well as the number of respondents.

Some sites, however, tend to allow one person to vote from the same computer as many times as they want, thereby undermining credibility of results. Indeed, in the Caribbean, not many electors tend to log on first thing in the morning to get their daily dose of the political pulse.

Poor man's poll

For that, many turn to radio, and whilst in the gridlock of rush hour traffic commuters listen to the radio.

Each of the abundant talk show hosts tends to think himself/herself a qualified political analyst. Such programmes have been criticised for increasing polarisation in an already tense atmosphere.

Many hosts have their political preferences, and would go so far as to allow on air only those callers who agree with them.

Each of the abundant talk show hosts tends to think himself/herself a qualified political analyst.

Trinidad and Tobago
Prime Minister
Patrick Manning
in early 2007
commissioned
Jamaican pollster
Bill Johnson
to evaluate the
performance of his
party's MPs.

Some commentators note this is the time of the “poor man’s poll” which, though usually lacking real information, still influences an electorate.

In an almost unprecedented use of polling connected to an election, Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Patrick Manning in early 2007 commissioned Jamaican pollster Bill Johnson to evaluate the performance of his party’s MPs.

The result was that a number of party stalwarts were asked not to run again and were replaced on the ruling-party slate by newcomers.

But some critics argue that—like politicians—pollsters also play something of a popularity game in order to expand their trade.

6

RISE OF THE INTERNET IN CARIBBEAN ELECTIONS

Traditional media - print, radio and TV - have always played an important part in elections. Media are essential for letting the electorate know candidates' plans and promises, as well as their positions on current policies.

Media can also be utilized in elaborate smear campaigns and counter-campaigns against candidates. From it all, the careful journalist may be able to sift hard information that may expose impropriety or corruption. Reporting is, however, circumscribed by libel and defamation laws.

Social networks: blogs

The advent of new media--social networking and blogging especially—has opened up new possibilities. By means of a few mouse clicks, the Internet permits publication of free-expression online diaries (web logs, or blogs).

Seizing the advantage of new technologies, Caribbean campaign managers can derive the value of connecting directly to the people.

Possibilities extend beyond standing among thousands, listening to a politician speak for hours. Now, a short memo from the same politician may show up in your Email Inbox. On your mobile phone, text messages may appear, supplying updates on the campaign's progress.

The advent of new media--social networking and blogging especially—has opened up new possibilities.

The closer a candidate can get to an elector the more points he/she can potentially score toward winning that person's vote.

Up close and personal ...online

The closer a candidate can get to an elector the more points he/she can potentially score toward winning that person's vote. In a cumulative effect, online communication allows for people to discuss messages in self-selected groups convening in cyberspace at times they choose.

By the 2000 elections in Trinidad and Tobago, only the ruling United National Congress had established a relevant Web presence. In 2007, all parties had snazzy, visually appealing, websites that offered updates on the campaign trail, information about sitting MPs as well as biographical data on the candidates.

Some parties archived multimedia content on their web servers, allowing supporters - and reporters - access to transcripts and audio recordings of speeches, photos from rallies and election-related events, and even video snippets. Parties posted profiles of their political leaders on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, where huge communities and forums were built.

Regardless, however, of the sophistication of the technology, once critical sectors of the electorate aren't involved - or aren't comfortable using it - then the impact will be small.

YouTube as political war zone

Blogging has allowed the political commentator much more room than do traditional media in communicating sensitive propaganda statements. Blogs, however, can be the perfect pond for red herrings to breed.

In the run-up to the 2008 Grenada elections (where the incumbent eventually failed to secure a fourth term), a link to a YouTube video unfavourable to the opposition was being widely circulated.

Still, if the voters a party is trying to reach are not tech-savvy, all such efforts would amount to wasted bits, bytes and bandwidth.

Journalists should get ready for the future of the tech-wise election, a window to which opened with the 2008 US Presidential campaign in which Barack Obama launched an iPhone application to remind voters to get registered and support their candidate. Within minutes, it was headline news on CNN and BBC.

In that campaign, too, snippets of interviews were posted on YouTube, allowing political commentators to critique the response skills of one Vice-Presidential candidate.

Bluetooth campaign hot spot

Another avenue being explored, one that is cost-effective and easy to implement, is Bluetooth technology. Advertisers have set up Bluetooth “hot spots” in malls and public places in Europe and the US.

Once someone with a “discoverable” Bluetooth phone passes by (about six people in 10), his or her handset will receive a short message.

As new media become more widely available, through rapid advances in information and communication technology, they will play an ever-expanding role in how societies select their leaders.

Another avenue being explored, one that is cost-effective and easy to implement, is Bluetooth technology.

7

COVERING ELECTION RESULTS

The reporter covering election results must maintain close contact with the election management board (EMB) however named.

The climactic point of any election is the tallying, the counting, and announcement of the final results. It is the moment when all the political charges and counter-charges made by the contesting candidates--all the sound and fury of the electoral campaign — are finally settled by the public will.

The results are also likely to be the cause of the most controversy; losers seldom accept the results gracefully; charges of “fraud” and “thievery” fly thick and fast. Guyana’s past, until the 1990s, and modern-day Zimbabwe are two examples of places where charges of electoral cheating have been established in fact within recent years.

Zimbabwe’s 2008 Presidential electoral contest went so horribly wrong that it took weeks before the final results could be announced. There was little doubt that those declared results were a patent fraud.

But it should be noted that, even in as advanced a democracy as the United States, similar charges have been made at the end of Presidential elections less than a decade ago.

Early warning

The reporter covering election results must maintain close contact with the election management board (EMB) however named. This is the key institution responsible both for the tallying of votes and the announcement of final results.

Throughout the actual voting period, sporadic contact with various polling stations, especially in key constituencies, should also prove very useful to the reporter.

Such contacts would provide him/her a sense of which way the wind is blowing, plus valuable information on the polling process itself.

Operational procedures differ. In some countries, the ballots at each polling station are tallied on the spot then passed on to the main official electoral headquarters.

Elsewhere, all the ballots are forwarded from polling stations to the EMB for tallying and announcement of the final results.

Where the votes are tallied at the polling stations,

Throughout the actual voting period, sporadic contact with various polling stations should also prove very useful to the reporter.



Voting in Suriname.

No election, whether local or general, should be considered a foregone conclusion, no matter what the polls say.

“transparency” is given effect through requiring the presence of representatives of the candidates and/or political parties. Where the ballots are counted at a particular centre or centres, representatives of the candidates/political parties are allowed to accompany the ballot boxes being transported.

Never foregone conclusion

No election, whether local or general, should be considered a foregone conclusion, no matter what the polls say or the political pundits predict. Polls and pundits have proven to be far wrong in the past, and this will undoubtedly prove to be so in the future.

Final electoral results can both be surprising and unprecedented. In the 2001 general election in Trinidad and Tobago, contested in 36 constituencies, the final results were declared to be an 18-18 tie.

And, again in an unprecedented move, the two contesting parties agreed to leave it up to the then President to decide which party would form the government.

Of course, the moment this decision was announced, the losing party cried foul.

One other result of that election result, however, was a decision to expand the number of constituencies into the uneven number of 41, to avoid a repetition of the 2001 tie.

Calling winners

Reporters covering election results should be wary of projections or even the actual announcement of results from any or all of the contesting parties. For

all the contestants have a vested interest in declaring themselves the winner.

The only really reliable source of verifiable election results is the EMB in charge of the polling process, the tallying and announcement of the final results.

In his seminal work on the organisation of elections, the electoral expert, Carl Dundas, advises: “Election results should be announced in a timely manner where questions can be asked and answered. Interruptions in counting could send the wrong signal to the stakeholders and result in civil unrest.”

Charges of “fraud” or “thievery” at the announcement of the final results should also be meticulously investigated without prior assumptions or bias. Rigorous and timely investigation can help defuse the potential for civil unrest, should charges prove to have any merit.

Charges of “fraud” or “thievery” at the announcement of the final results should also be meticulously investigated.

8

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ELECTORAL LAWS

Westminster style of parliamentary democracy marks the most common distinctive feature of elections in the Caribbean.

The Caribbean electoral experience varies in accordance not only with the socio-political culture of each particular state but also with its electoral system.

The Westminster style of parliamentary democracy marks the most common distinctive feature of elections in the Caribbean where the legislative function of the state is vested in an elected assembly, also called Parliament.

With the exception of Guyana and Suriname, all states use a first-past-the-post election system that requires electors to vote for one candidate contesting one seat. The candidate with the most votes is declared the winner; the party securing the highest number of seats forms the government.

The constitution is the bedrock of the legal framework within which elections are conducted in Caribbean states. The constitutions in these territories are similar in substance and form and have a general scheme that sets out how the electoral system works.

For example, they specify how many people should make up the elected assembly, how they are to be elected, what age and citizenship qualifications they should have, the intervals between elections and the procedures which must be observed for holding those elections.

In addition to the constitution, several ordinary pieces of legislation in each territory govern the electoral process. Important similarities that these laws share have to do with voter registration, eligibility of candidates, voting operations and vote counting.

Voter registration

In Caribbean states, the citizen who wishes to vote must first make sure he/she is registered as an eligible voter. But what does it take to be registered? The most common eligibility criterion is age. All the countries have chosen 18 as the age at which a voter becomes eligible to vote.

Other eligibility criteria apply. Section 111 (3) of Jamaica's Representation of the People Act has the following provision that might be generally found throughout the Caribbean:

“No person shall be entitled to vote in any polling division if-
(a) he is under the age of eighteen years; or
(b) he is not a Commonwealth citizen resident in Jamaica; or
(c) he is a person who is disqualified from voting under
Subsection (3) of Section 5.”

Those disqualified under (c) include people under a death sentence and those who are insane.

Provisions in the laws of the various territories allow Commonwealth citizens to vote in elections. However, such a person would have to be ordinarily resident in the country up to 12 months before the polls.

In Caribbean states, the citizen who wishes to vote must first make sure he/she is registered as an eligible voter.

The other important issue is the process of registration. This task falls to the election management body set up under the laws of each territory.

The election management body is charged with the general management of the elections, including keeping an up-to-date voters' register.

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Registration is compulsory in nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of the countries worldwide. Less than half of African countries and very few former British colonies have compulsory registration.

In Caribbean countries, election laws do not mandate registration and, therefore, it is left up to citizens whether they want to be on the voters' register.



Political rally in Trinidad and Tobago.

Some countries like Belize and Jamaica have continuous registration while others have a set period within which people have to get on the register.

Eligibility of candidates

What are the legal qualifications to become a candidate in legislative elections? As in the case of a voter, there are age and citizenship/residency qualifications for persons putting themselves up for office in the various Caribbean territories.

Sections 43 and 44 of the Barbados Constitution capture the typical approach of Caribbean constitutions to the question of qualification and disqualification of persons to sit in the elected assembly.

Section 43 states that any person who is a Commonwealth citizen of the age of 21 years or upwards and is ordinarily resident in the country shall be qualified to be elected as a member of the House of Assembly.

However, Section 44 says, in part, that no person shall be qualified to be elected as a member of the House of Assembly who -

- (a) is, by virtue of his own act, under any acknowledgment of allegiance, obedience or adherence to a foreign Power or State;*
- (b) holds or is acting in the office of a Judge, the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Auditor General;*
- (c) is a clerk in holy orders or other minister of religion;*
- (d) is under sentence of death imposed by a court in any part of the Commonwealth or is serving*

Some countries like Belize and Jamaica have continuous registration while others have a set period within which people have to get on the register.

Persons who are citizens of non-Commonwealth countries are prohibited from being elected to the parliament.

a sentence of imprisonment (by whatever name called) exceeding six months imposed on him (e) is a person certified to be insane or otherwise adjudged to be of unsound mind under any law in force in Barbados;

(f) has been adjudged or otherwise declared bankrupt under any law in force in Barbados and has not been discharged.

Under (a) above, persons who are citizens of non-Commonwealth countries are prohibited from being elected to the parliament. This is a controversial issue that has been litigated in a number of Caribbean countries in recent years, most notably Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica.

Voting operations

Rules determine how registered voters can actually vote in each territory. We consider two specific aspects: where voters should go to vote and if and how registered voters who are outside the country are allowed to vote.

The first issue is where (and how) people vote. The most frequent option is at a specified polling station in the locality where they are registered. In many countries, however, it is also possible to vote at other polling stations. The election management bodies assign voters to particular polling stations based on where they are registered to vote. This is so in all the Caribbean territories.

In some countries, notably the United States, citizens may legally vote from outside the country. Former British colonies tend not to allow this practice, and in the Caribbean, no legislative provision enables it.

Persons who seek to commit voter fraud by voting outside their polling division or voting more than once commit a crime and are liable for punishment under the laws of the various territories.

Section 52 of the St Lucia House of Assembly (Election) Act states that no person shall at an election, vote as an elector in more than one Electoral District or more than once in the same electoral district; or knowing that he is not qualified so to do. Any person who contravenes the provision is liable for imprisonment for three months.

Vote counting

Vital provisions state where votes are counted and the conditions under which a recount is permitted.

Should votes be first sorted and counted at the local polling station where they were cast, or at a more central location? The advantage of the former is that the count can be completed more quickly and that there is less risk that “something” happening between the polling station and the place where the count takes place.

The counter-argument is that it may be easier to ensure a fair count when the process is more centralised, where it is easier for all the parties and international observers to watch.

Former British colonies, including those in the Caribbean, follow the UK example and opt for centralised counting.

The electoral laws in the various territories provide for the votes to be counted in the presence of the presiding/election officer and the candidates and/or

Voter fraud - voting outside the polling division or voting more than once - is a criminal offence.

their representatives in an effort to ensure fairness and transparency.

Under these laws, provision is also often made for recounts to be done if the candidate is not satisfied.

Should votes be first sorted and counted at the local polling station where they were cast, or at a more central location?

10

GUYANA

A CASE STUDY OF MEDIA SELF-REGULATION

Over two election seasons, in 2001 and 2006, the Guyanese media underwent an experience of oversight so intensive as to lack parallel elsewhere in the Caribbean. The oversight entailed detailed monitoring of performance and the “refereeing,” or adjudication, of alleged or observed violations of accepted standards.

Guyana has emerged as a special case not just for media coverage but also for the holding of elections in general. Relative, at least to the rest of CARICOM, elections in the English-speaking republic on the South American mainland present uniqueness and complexity.

Deep-rooted political and ethnic polarisation, past patterns of fraud, and of serious violence, have marked the history of Guyanese elections.

Guyanese have found need to take extra care in the planning and administration of elections. The republic accordingly adopted a rigorously structured electoral system, based on proportional representation and administered by an Elections Commission made up of political party representatives.

Guyana has also pursued intensive oversight of all aspects of its electoral machinery, and has received

Deep-rooted political and ethnic polarisation, past patterns of fraud, and of serious violence, have marked the history of Guyanese elections.

“The behaviour of the media has been a powerful factor in recent elections in Guyana and has had a major impact on the electoral process. There is a case for action to regulate the media in general.”

considerable international assistance to the end of ensuring that its elections are free, and fair, and recognised to be so.

For the Guyana elections in 2001 and 2006, observation missions came from the Organisation of American States, from the Commonwealth, and from CARICOM. A group of donor countries contributed organisational, funding and infrastructural assistance.

The general election oversight effort extended to the media which, in previous elections, local and foreign observers had accused of fomenting strife and even inciting violence.

As a Commonwealth report said, after the 2001 elections: “The behaviour of the media has been a powerful factor in recent elections in Guyana and has had a major impact on the electoral process. There is a case for action to regulate the media in general.”

Action had indeed been taken to regulate the Guyanese media for the purposes of the 2001 elections. The action took the form of self-regulation, which had been determined by all sides to be superior to state regulation.

Media organisations had signed on to their own Code of Conduct, and had recruited two senior journalists, Harry Mayers from Barbados and the late Dwight Whyllie from Jamaica to serve as Independent Media Monitors and as a Refereeing Panel.

In the judgment of Mayers and Whyllie, that 2001 experiment failed. They concluded: “The self-

regulation which the Media Code of Conduct represents failed dismally during the election campaign. It was ignored or violated far more than it was complied with.”

Guyana did not, however, give up on media self-regulation. As the 2006 elections approached, Guyanese media people came together again to draw up what they hoped would be an improved model of self-regulation.

In a historic January 2006 exercise, 39 media leaders and representatives signed their adherence to a Code of Conduct. Extensively debated beforehand, the document was formally titled, *“Code of Conduct for the Media for Reporting and Coverage of Guyana Elections 2006 for Owners, Publishers, Editors and Journalists, including Associated Guidelines”*.

Signatories included the publishers and editors of the three daily newspapers (of which one state-owned), and owners and leading figures of Guyana’s many television outlets.

Among them, the state-owned TV and radio media assets, and the Government Information Agency, represented a significant collaboration, for the purposes of self-regulation, between the public and the private sectors of the media.

The Code propounded a ringing media endorsement of the voluntary adoption of self-regulation. It affirmed a “clear and unqualified understanding” that no part of the government, or the electoral administration, would “impose or seek to impose any prior restraint or censorship.”

As the 2006 elections approached, Guyanese media people came together again to draw up what they hoped would be an improved model of self-regulation.

From the Code also, came a specific outline for the mechanics of self-regulation.

Beyond stating principles, the Code provided real-world guidance for upholding journalistic professionalism, assuring fairness and balance, and achieving accuracy and thoroughness.

The Code thus represented a collective pledge to pursue excellence in purposeful specifics that translated into do's and don'ts, and helpful directions toward achievement of best practice.

From the Code also, came a specific outline for the mechanics of self-regulation. This comprised:

- A Media Monitoring Unit to record and measure political news and commentary in broadcast and print. and to assess content for adherence to the Code; and
- An Independent Monitoring and Refereeing Panel to adjudicate on complaints of violations of the Code.

Both elements of the structure for self-regulation involved international participation. Commonwealth adviser Tim Neale, a former BBC broadcaster, supported and guided the efforts of the Media Monitoring Unit.

Two former editors-in-chief - Lennox Grant of Trinidad and Tobago, and Wyvolyn Gager of Jamaica - took on the assignment as the Independent Monitoring and Refereeing Panellists.

The Media Monitoring Unit surveyed print and broadcast output and analysed content in highly empirical and regular reports.

The unit issued reports highlighting shortcomings seen in media output. Often based on those reports,

the Independent Refereeing Panellists scrutinised problem areas, and issued public judgments on adherence by individual media organisations and journalists to the terms of the Code of Conduct.

Over a five-month period, climaxing in the weeks between nomination and voting days, the Independent Referees engaged in public advocacy and private diplomacy, meeting media heads and government officials.

Such outreach was aimed at promoting self-regulation under terms of the Code of Conduct and explaining the role of the Independent Referees.

The Code had been voluntarily adopted by the media, which committed to be bound by its provisions. Under the Code, the Independent Referees were mandated to exercise moral suasion, but were not empowered to impose sanctions against violations.

For their part, the media published the regular findings of the 18-member Media Monitoring Unit. Reports by the Unit delivered measurements of time and space devoted by media entities to politics, with empirical assessments of relative access afforded to the parties, and balance in the coverage.

The Unit thus made available a timely, quantitative and qualitative, documentation of media output in relation to provisions of the Code.

The media also published instances of whistle-blowing by the two Independent Referees, and their evaluations of complaints from political parties and members of the public.

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The Referees adopted the expedient of naming and shaming unsatisfactory performers, denouncing clear-cut violations of the Code.

Exercising a moral-authority function, the Referees adopted the expedient of naming and shaming unsatisfactory performers, after due investigation, and denouncing clear-cut violations of the Code. The Independent Referees also held up for praise what they judged to be exemplary media performance.

In proactive initiatives, the Referees ran two training workshops for Guyanese journalists, and took part in a third organised by the Association of Caribbean Media Workers.

Meeting a widely felt need for media training, the workshops sought to extend awareness of performance standards, such as would facilitate

compliance with the Code, and contribute to permanent enhancement of journalistic capacities. The workshops covered the following and other areas:

- *Media ethics;*
- *Techniques for ensuring balance;*
- *Brainstorming for story angles to build audience interest;*
- *Expanding the range of election-related coverage;*
- *Delivery of research to help producers and presenters;*
- *Recognising and suppressing unsupported assertions;*



Political party supporters in Guyana.

- *Avoidance of tendentious language capable of incitement;*
- *Exercising controls against unwanted expression; and*
- *Editorial alertness against damaging statements.*

After discussions with media people, the Referees issued for the use of Guyanese newsrooms a compendium of Guidelines for Election Coverage.

In a related initiative to raise public awareness of the existence and provisions of the Code, the Refereeing Panellists organised a “town meeting” for non-media people.

This event, attended by representatives of political parties, trade unions, business, churches, youth, professionals, non-government and other organisations, explored the opportunities offered by the Code of Conduct for public oversight of media behaviour.

Guyana’s 2006 general election campaign and voting took place in a climate of fear and tension. In the months preceding the campaign, multiple killings by mystery gunmen fed anxieties about the possibility of political passions being given effect to the detriment of peace and order.

Weeks before voting day, the killing of five pressroom workers of the daily, Kaieteur News, stirred apprehensions about the targeting of the media.

Meanwhile, actions by media practitioners, some of whom were subscribers to the Code of Conduct, presented challenges to the principle and the

Guyana’s 2006 general election campaign and voting took place in a climate of fear and tension.

The use of the media as vehicles for political messages, including questionable attack advertisements, raised questions about fairness, balance, and the danger of incitement.

practice of media self-regulation. Ten newsroom practitioners were nominated as party candidates.

Employees of the Government Information Agency attended at least one public meeting wearing ruling-party T-shirts.

The Independent Referees determined such actions to be violations of the Code in letter and in spirit. The Media Monitoring Unit continued to produce evidence of bias toward the ruling party in coverage by state-owned media, themselves signatories to the Code that prescribed balance.

As the campaign drew to a climax, the use of the media as vehicles for political messages, including questionable attack advertisements, raised questions about fairness, balance, and the danger of incitement.

Addressing such questions in relation to specifics, the Independent Referees issued determinations that, at the very least, drew attention to the existence and operation of an alert, and unattached, watchdog of media and related behaviour.

Tensions prevailed to the end. Despite the earlier conflicts over the rules and the process, however, and later frustrations over prolonged vote-counting, the elections remained notably free of violence. The results gained acceptance.

The model of media self-regulation had worked successfully.

The Media Monitoring Unit and the Independent Refereeing panellists concurred in a judgment that

media irresponsibility or incitement had sharply reduced by comparison with the experience of 2001.

The Media Monitoring Unit and the Independent Referees had even-handedly given credit where it was due, and fearlessly condemned or questioned violations when those had appeared.

In their final report, the Referees endorsed the call from Guyanese media people for a permanent, independent, press council, or complaints commission, which would continue oversight and self-regulation of the media.

An exercise of mature media self-regulation had won the day.

In their final report, the Referees endorsed the call for a permanent, independent commission, to continue oversight and self-regulation of the media.



On the campaign trail in St Lucia.

The media recognize that, whether state or privately run, they exist to serve all the people of Guyana.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE MEDIA For Reporting and Coverage of Guyana Elections 2006

FOR OWNERS, PUBLISHERS, EDITORS & JOURNALISTS INCLUDING ASSOCIATED GUIDELINES

I. Preamble

Given the desirability for a fair, peaceful and well-regulated election and the avoidance of the aggravation of ethnic tension and unnecessary political discord, ensuring that voters make an informed choice,

We agree and accept that a Code of Conduct for the Media – taken to mean newspapers and radio and television stations – generally respected and observed, will contribute to the holding of a free and fair election, ensuring the success of this democratic process.

We agree and accept to subscribe to, and, to the best of our ability, to comply with this Code of Conduct and to take all reasonable steps to ensure its observance.

We accept to subscribe to, this Code of Conduct on the clear and unqualified understanding that the government or any of its agencies and the Elections Commission, will not impose or seek to impose any prior restraint or censorship on any publication by the media.

II. The Code of Conduct

A. Common duty. The media recognize that, whether state or privately run, they exist to serve all the people of Guyana and to provide balanced and

accurate information including voter education to help deliver successful elections by enabling voters to make informed decisions at the ballot box.

B. Maintaining a stable society and journalistic integrity

The Media in its coverage and reporting of the elections during the period of campaigning agree:

1) to refrain from the publishing or broadcasting of any matter with the potential for, or likelihood of promoting or inciting racial hatred, bias or contempt or any matter with the potential for, or likelihood of, promoting or causing public disorder, posing or becoming a threat to the security of the nation.

2) where normal democratic editorial principles demand the reporting of such events;

a. the accuracy and authenticity of the report must be confirmed by at least 2 (two) independent sources;

b. extreme caution must be taken in the preparation of the report in the choice of pictures and words in order to avoid exacerbating the likelihood of incitement. Gratuitous publication of gruesome detail or inflammatory language for sensational purposes is unacceptable;

c. Media organisations may not censor, or edit any material or materials submitted by political parties, or their agents, for either free, or paid for, publication in newspapers or broadcast on radio or television stations.

However, media organizations observing the law and exercising editorial judgment in favour of good taste and a respect for public safety and decency should refuse any material submitted by

The accuracy and authenticity of the report must be confirmed by at least 2 (two) independent sources.

Refrain from ridiculing, stigmatizing or demonizing people on any grounds including gender, race, class, ethnicity, language, religion, age, place of origin, sexual orientation and physical or mental ability

political parties, or their agents, likely to be hateful, ethnically offensive, to promote public disorder or threaten the security of the State.

In all cases of such refusal, the concerned political party must be immediately informed of the reasons for rejection, and, assuming that time permits, the concerned party, or its agent, must be given the opportunity to modify the rejected material in order to conform to acceptable legal, moral and other standards.

3) to make crystal clear in editorials and/or analytical articles or commentaries its total rejection of hate speech.

4) to refrain from ridiculing, stigmatizing or demonizing people on any grounds including gender, race, class, ethnicity, language, religion, age, place of origin, sexual orientation and physical or mental ability;

This requirement includes the avoidance of ethnic or religious abuse by readers, listeners or viewers in letters columns or feedback programmes or during live or recorded broadcasts.

Proper editorial, presentation and production control skills and techniques must be used to minimize the possibility of incitement caused by allowing democratic free speech to lapse into the promotion of hatred and violence.

The media accept that they must share responsibility for the consequences of failure to introduce and exercise proper control methods in this crucial area.

5) to hold themselves independent and free of any, or all, political control and direction;

6) to hold themselves independent and free of any, or all, control and direction from any of the political parties officially registered to contest the elections;

7) to hold themselves free of any, or all, control and direction from any individual, group, or organization representing or promoting the special interests of any of the political parties officially registered to contest the elections.

C. Journalistic professionalism

The Media in the exercise of their constitutional right of free expression, and in recognition of their consequential social responsibility to the society which they serve, will at all times endeavour to:

1) provide a truthful, comprehensive, accurate, balanced and fair account of events in a context which gives them meaning;

2) serve as a forum for the exchange of public comment, opinion, discussion and criticism in a fundamentally fair, balanced and reasonable manner to promote principles of tolerance and respect for human dignity;

3) offer an accurate and valid picture of the constituent groups, organizations and parties contesting the elections and of the society in general;

4) present and clarify, as far as possible, the goals and values of the constituent groups, organizations and parties contesting the elections and of the society in general;

5) refrain from wearing any political party

Provide a truthful, comprehensive, accurate, balanced and fair account of events.

No story is fair, if it omits facts of major importance or significance and is therefore incomplete.

paraphernalia when reporting on the election campaign;

6) refrain from taking any individual inducement from a political party candidate or politician;

7) refrain from offering any promises to a politician or candidate with regard to the content of any political report

D. Fairness and balance

The Media, in accepting the principle of “fair and balanced” reporting in pursuit of the truth, recognize that:

1) no story is fair, if it omits facts of major importance or significance and is therefore incomplete;

2) no story is fair, if it includes essentially irrelevant information, rumor or unsubstantiated statements at the expense of significant facts;

3) no story is fair, if it consciously or unconsciously misleads or even deceives the reader, listener or viewer.

4) no balance exists in a series of political interviews if any party is favoured in the degree of probing questioning. Giving an “easy ride” selectively is unfair.

E. Accuracy and thoroughness

The Media, in accepting the principle of “accuracy and balance” in reporting, particularly during periods of campaigning for elections, acknowledge that these two main characteristics, accuracy and balance, seek to distinguish good journalism from

bad, and journalism from propaganda. From this perspective, we accept that:

1) accuracy requires the verification (to the fullest extent possible) and presentation of all facts that are pertinent and necessary to understand a particular event or issue, even if some of the facts conflict with a journalist's, or a broadcaster's particular beliefs and feelings.

2) good journalism involves positive news gathering, not just waiting for it to arrive in the "In" tray.

To that end, the media accepts the need to make a determined effort to draw in information about the activities of smaller, poorer parties in order to provide the readers, listeners and viewers with the full range of voting options open to them.

3) balance, or impartiality, requires the presentation of all the main points of view or interpretations of an event or an issue, regardless of whether the journalist, reporter, broadcaster, editor or the audience agrees with these views, enabling voters to make an informed choice.

4) news and comment must be clearly identified to avoid confusion amongst readers, viewers and listeners.

5) political activities of media functionaries and the likelihood of charges of bias.

Media organizations agree that individual owners, full-time staff members, part-time employees or other individuals contracted to write, produce or present articles, scripts, programmes, commentaries or other material intended for

Good journalism involves positive news gathering, not just waiting for it to arrive in the "In" tray

Accuracy and balance – are necessary for citizens to gain a full and realistic picture of the issues during election campaigns.

public dissemination and who:

- (a) are publicly identified as candidates for election to Parliament; or,
- (b) hold office in a political party, are likely to be open to charges of bias.

Accordingly, media organizations agree that such individuals will, in the performance of their functions, refrain from using their programmes for the purpose of promoting political objectives during the period beginning with the date of signature of this media Code of Conduct and ending the day after the results of elections will have been declared.

Since there is currently no law preventing the ownership of a media house by a party or a candidate, such publications or broadcasting stations/channels need to be especially sure to make clear what is news and what is political comment.

F. Full information

The Media further acknowledge that both these ingredients – accuracy and balance – are necessary for citizens to gain a full and realistic picture of the issues during election campaigns, as well as of the world around them.

Democracy, which requires the active participation of informed citizens, depends on journalists and broadcasters to keep citizens informed about major issues.

G. The sins of omission

The Media accept that omitting relevant facts and points of view from the reporting of major issues of public interest inevitably distorts the view of reality

a journalist, reporter or broadcaster presents and so misleads and misinforms the public.

H. The result of distortion

The Media acknowledge that the deliberate distortion of reality so as to lead the public to a particular understanding of events and issues, without regard for reality can poison the processes of democracy.

I. Management support for reporters

The media recognize the need for management support for the independence and integrity of the journalists.

- 1) Media managers and editors agree to support journalists in resisting outside pressure that might seek to censor or distort accurate, unbiased reporting.
- 2) Internally, managers and editors agree to provide a forum to respond to any journalists' concerns if they feel that they are subject to censorship.
- 3) Managers and editors recognize that without such internal dialogue, there is a likelihood of self-censorship to the detriment of accurate and balanced reporting and news writing.
- 4) Media houses recognize their duty to provide training support for young journalists new to election reporting and to seek support from outside where necessary. This should be an ongoing process at all times between elections. Media support the idea that this code should be included in the Journalism Courses at the University of Guyana.

The media recognize the need for management support for the independence and integrity of the journalists.

Make available an equal amount of free space and time for all political parties.

J. Equitable share of election coverage

The State and Private Media acknowledge the obligation, in the interest of even-handed treatment for all political parties, to provide an equitable share of election coverage, to all registered parties. In this context:

1) Minimum equal share of free time/space. In the period after Nomination Day, the media agree to make available an equal amount of free space and time for all political parties that have met the legal criteria for contesting the election.

This would amount to a minimum equal allocation of time /space per party of 5 minutes per week in the case of radio and TV and 200 words per week in the case of print.

Print and broadcast media will make available at their convenience, free of charge, their technical facilities such as layout and printing, basic studio, audio and video recordings for the production and presentation of articles and programmes, but not including the provision of editing, talent, or outside production or broadcast facilities, or reproduction and distribution for use of any other media organization.

2) Equal access to Paid Political Advertising. Media organizations acknowledge their obligation to provide equal access and opportunity to all political parties without discrimination, to purchase on equal terms space in newspapers and time on radio and television stations to promote their respective views during the period of electioneering. In this regard, the media will make available to contesting political parties full information about

space and time availability for advertising and their published advertising rates to be available to all public relations firms, advertising agencies and the proposed Independent Elections Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel to be established for the purpose of monitoring adherence to the Code of Conduct and these Guidelines.

3) News reports and Current Affairs programmes. All media organizations agree that news reports and current affairs programmes may, at any time, subject to the Media Code of Conduct, deal with any issue, cause, organization or individual.

However, given the large number of contesting parties, coverage of election campaign events and other related issues will be limited by the capacity of media organizations to assign staff for these activities. The allocation of free and paid-for time and space for political parties to present their views in the media is a response to this constraint.

Editorial judgments therefore continue to rest solely with the respective organizations. These judgments aim to subscribe to the highest principles of impartiality, fairness and integrity, always separating fact from inference in matters of political and other controversy and supported by eye-witnessed and attributable official statements and other sources to corroborate facts in particular stories.

4) Aiming for equitable overall coverage. While acknowledging these professional considerations, the media accepts the need to provide over the period of campaigning, equitable coverage in all election-related news reports and articles.

Editorial judgments aim to subscribe to the highest principles of impartiality, fairness and integrity.

The media recognize that inaccurate, unprofessional, sometimes deliberately false opinion polls give a totally distorted view of the truth.

This balance cannot necessarily be achieved over each day but should be apparent over each week.

The media will aim to ensure that the activities and declared policies of each party (proportionate to its size and prominence) are presented to the electorate to enable them to make their choice at the ballot box.

5) Use of official events for electioneering purposes. Should such occasions occur, the media has little if any direct control over them. However, when calculating their own level of equitable balance between parties, editors will take any electioneering element of these events into account.

K. Opinion polls

Opinion polls need very careful handling. The media recognize that inaccurate, unprofessional, sometimes deliberately false opinion polls give a totally distorted view of the truth of public opinion or voting intentions.

1) The publication of them without investigation of their accuracy is the antithesis of good journalism.

The media recognize the need to discover the date, location, financial backing and methodology of such surveys, including the organisation or person commissioning the poll and the organisation conducting the survey, the number of persons interviewed, the questions asked and the margin of error.

Only when satisfied with the validity of the poll should it be published giving those facts along with the poll results itself.

2) We understand that because of the problems with such polls, many countries ban them altogether during election periods, but we choose to trust the judgment of our profession.

L. Dealing with complaints

The media recognize the need to respond promptly to complaints of mistakes in election coverage.

1) The media undertakes to respond promptly and responsibly with any complaints received in respect to reports published or broadcast and containing errors of fact, and where, in their opinion, these are justified to publish or broadcast appropriate corrections. Obviously a media house cannot respond to anonymous complaints.

2) In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to provide the opportunity to reply. In any case, if a correction or an opportunity to reply is thought necessary by the editor or media manager, the media agree that it be placed in an equally prominent position to the original error.

3) All complaints received will be passed for information and assessment to the GECOM Media Monitoring Unit and the Independent Refereeing Panel.

M. Coverage on Polling Day

Media organizations agree that no coverage of any activity by the political parties shall take place for a period to begin 24 (twenty-four) hours prior to the opening of Polling Stations on the day of Polling.

This ban will continue to the close of Polling Stations.

The media recognize the need to respond promptly to complaints of mistakes in election coverage.

Media recognize the great importance of the speedy and accurate broadcasting and publication of results.

N. Publication of results

Media recognize the great importance of the speedy and accurate broadcasting and publication of results. Without this there is inevitably the risk of public disquiet and suspicion which could result in violence. The media will therefore cooperate with GECOM to develop an effective system for announcing the results at the earliest possible time.

O. The Monitoring of media performance

The media recognize the requirement to maintain complete records of election coverage so as to be constantly aware of the degree of balance being achieved. Each media house is prepared, if asked, to make those records available to the official Media Monitoring Unit at GECOM.

In addition to the agreement to conduct continuous self-monitoring, media organizations would welcome the establishment, as in 2001, of an Independent Refereeing Panel for the overall purpose of being a point of reference for the submission of complaints about performance in the reporting and coverage of events during the election campaign.

Media organizations however agreed that the terms of reference, functions and structure as well as the articulation of sanctions and other measures aimed at improving performance should be formulated by those media organizations which have signed this Media Code of Conduct.

The 2001 Media Code of Conduct was examined on Saturday, December 10th, 2005, at the 'Guyana Media Code of Conduct for 2006 Elections Workshop' at Cara Lodge, Quamina Street, Georgetown.

10

CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING IN THE CARIBBEAN CONTEXT

By Tony Deyal

Campaign advertising is the use of paid media to influence the political decisions, especially the voting behaviour, of individuals and groups.

Background:

Money is the mother's milk of politics. This often-quoted dictum of modern politics was coined by Jesse Unruh, Speaker of the California Assembly from 1961 to 1968.

It has been a truism of American politics for centuries but has increasingly become applicable to politics in countries where the distribution of political power is contested and where the majority of the money is spent on political advertising.

For example, in the American Presidential Elections of 2008, the Obama campaign raised US\$180 million in the month of September. Most of that was spent on advertising, especially on television. By the end of October, Barack Obama had raised US\$603million and spent US\$470million.

The John McCain campaign raised US\$358million and spent US\$262million during the same period. Campaign advertising is the use of paid media (newspapers, radio, television, etc.) to influence the political decisions, especially the voting behaviour, of individuals and groups.

It is a means through which candidates and parties present themselves to the electorate mainly through the mass media and can be defined as any controlled message communicated through any

channel designed to promote the political interests of individual, parties, groups, governments or other organisations.

There are major differences in the type and extent of campaign advertising throughout the world. While it is said that advertising politicians like commodities goes back to Ancient Greece and Rome, in America, the first fully mediated campaign was that of Dwight Eisenhower whose “I Like Ike” slogan set the tone for political branding.

Since then American politics, and more recently British politics, have developed, vehicles like “attack ads” in addition to the staples of campaign promises, bumper sticker, buttons, brochures and pamphlets.

Switzerland does not permit political advertising on television or radio during elections or referendum campaigns. While one of the reasons is the cost of advertising in the electronic media (Swiss parties do not receive State funding), advertising in the print media is allowed.

In Denmark the contending parties have agreed not to use television advertising. Sweden’s domestic channels do not carry political ads but these come in via foreign television channels.

Norway is planning to allow free time. In South Africa, only radio advertising is allowed. Generally it is found that in multi-party systems there is some restraint, especially in the use of negative or “attack” advertising since one of the parties might end up as coalition partner.

In America, the first fully mediated campaign was that of Dwight Eisenhower whose “I Like Ike” slogan set the tone for political branding.

However, two-party systems do not have this constraint.

Generally, there are three critical variables that determine whether political advertising is allowed and the way it is allowed in any country:

1. The political system
2. The electoral system
3. The media system.

The Caribbean political system

In the Caribbean, the political systems are decidedly democratic and based on a two-party system.

While more than two parties may contest, unless there is a merger or “accommodation” as happened in Trinidad in 1986 when one of the two parties merged with other groups, the seats are generally divided among the two major rivals.

There have been cases of independents winning elections in some of the smaller countries but they eventually use their bargaining power to join one of the two major parties.

The major issue is the extent to which the Government or ruling party controls the assets and resources of the country, particularly its media and communications assets.

Every country in the English-speaking Caribbean has a State information agency and controls at least one television and radio outlet.

This means that the party in government always has an edge in terms of exposure. However, around election time, the imbalance in terms of coverage (time allocated, prominence, emphasis and news

In the Caribbean, the political systems are decidedly democratic and based on a two-party system.

selection) between the governing party and the opposition party is particularly pronounced.

In some countries, there is a mechanism in place for time to be allocated to parties based on the number of seats they control in the Parliament.

This puts fledgling parties or movements at a disadvantage if one believes that political advertising has any real impact on voting. Some studies have shown that the effectiveness of political campaign ads is negligible.

The Caribbean electoral system

In all the countries of the Caribbean there is a Statutory Authority or other mechanism equivalent to an Elections and Boundaries Commission which conducts, manages and supervises the elections on behalf of the State.

However, this body has no control over political advertising except on election day when ads are forbidden especially in the precincts of polling stations.

Political candidates do not get financial support for advertising. However, there is no limit to how much they can spend or how they raise the money that they spend. Recently, as in Jamaica, organisations like “Friends” of parties contesting the elections, buy advertising space and time to run materials supporting their parties or candidates.

In the heated political environments that characterise Caribbean elections, apart from the normal laws governing libel, slander and defamation, there is no special mechanism that

Political candidates do not get financial support for advertising. However, there is no limit to how much they can spend or how they raise the money that they spend.

There are no stringent requirements for candidates to detail or limit their expenditure on campaign advertising, or to identify the sources of campaign funding.

regulates election advertising. Additionally, all the countries of the Caribbean except Guyana (which has a system of proportional representation) use a “first-past-the-post” system that makes each seat a battleground.

There have been cases (as in Trinidad) where parties have an equal number of seats but one party had a greater number of votes. What this means, in effect, is that campaigns are fought at both national and local levels and campaign advertising at both levels feature almost the full panoply of campaign-related phenomena including negative messages.

There are no stringent requirements for candidates to detail or limit their expenditure on campaign advertising, or to identify the sources of campaign funding.

The Caribbean media system

It has been said that freedom of the press belongs to who owns it. The print media in the Caribbean are privately owned. However, the frequency and circulation vary from the small weekly newspapers in some of the islands to the huge dailies with circulations averaging 60,000 in Jamaica and Trinidad.

Some countries still have major restrictions on broadcast media, permitting only state-owned television while allowing privately-owned radio. All the countries have laws and regulatory authorities for the allocation of channels and the supervision of content.

There is an increasing attempt by regional governments to suppress dissent or what is

perceived as opposition by the media through these agencies or by recourse to the courts. In Guyana, the allocation of government advertising has been used as a weapon to manage recalcitrant media.

During election times, the conglomerate or business-controlled media, in Trinidad and Jamaica particularly, have played a major political role through the selection of news, editorials and advertising.

In the absence of legislation that covers all aspects of campaign advertising, these organisations (and the Governments that are also media owners) make their own rules.

Suggestions and solutions

1. It is far too late especially in the larger countries of the region to set expenditure limits on campaign advertising or to restrict the media used to radio or print only. The most that could be expected from paid political advertising would be agreements on content and possibly formats, accuracy, frequency in particular time-slots and tastefulness.
2. The English-speaking Caribbean, in spite of its common language and heritage, is diverse and there is no “cookie-cutter” or “one-size-fits-all” solution or prescription for managing campaign advertising.
3. Fairness and equal time/space should be considerations in the period preceding an election. How these are negotiated, and whether they can be negotiated at all given the preponderance of government ownership of the media, are major issues facing the countries of the Caribbean. There is no institution, including the CARICOM

In Guyana, the allocation of government advertising has been used as a weapon to manage recalcitrant media.

There should be, in each country, a regulatory mechanism for campaign advertising that covers the important variables of message design.

Secretariat or the ACM, that can mandate countries and the parties involved, to agree on an acceptable formula.

4. There should be, in each country, a regulatory mechanism for campaign advertising that covers the important variables of message design including content, format, accuracy, duration, emphasis and adherence to the laws.

Even if it is established by the Government in discussion with the other political parties, the institution must be buffered and legally constituted to maintain a responsible distance from the party in power.

5. In Britain, the Advertising Standards Authority has always refused to control election campaigns on the grounds that this would constitute interfering with the democratic process.

In many Caribbean countries, there is no such body or the organisation that loosely reviews adherence to advertising standards is formed by the advertisers themselves and they profit most from the campaign advertising windfalls.

The problem, like the one in the old fairy tale, is “Who will bell the cat?” This should be seen as an opportunity for media organisations to work with other institutions (e.g. churches, business organisations, as well as the political parties and advertising agencies etc) to develop guidelines and establish an independent multi-partite group to supervise campaign advertising.

While this group will not have more power than

mere moral suasion, it would have the means of drawing to the attention of the public any breaches of the guidelines.

6. There should be very strictly enforced laws mandating the reporting of funding sources and expenditure on campaign advertising.

7. People get the government they deserve. While this is an extremely cynical view of the political process, it is rooted in reality.

Unless the majority of the people of any country believe that management of campaign advertising is essential to preserving and protecting democracy in their country, unless they value fairness and freedom and see them as mutually reinforcing pillars on which to build political progress, they will see the trivialisation of politics where ideology gives way to entertainment engineered to sell individuals the same way competing brands of soap is sold.

They will experience the negativity of campaigns based on the shortcomings of parties and people and not what either of the competing groups could do for their country.

People get the government they deserve.

APPENDIX 1

CONTACT DETAILS

Electoral Commission of Antigua
Queen Elizabeth's Highway,
P.O. Box 664,
St. Johns,
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA.
Tel: (268) 562-4191-5
Fax: (268) 562-4331
Email: elecocom@candw.ag
Website: www.abec.gob.ag

Barbados Electoral and Boundaries Commission
National Insurance Building,
Fairchild Street,
Bridgetown,
BARBADOS.
Tel: (246) 426-5909
Fax: (246) 228-8132

Belize Elections and Boundaries Department
P.O. Box 913,
Mahogany Street Extension,
Belize City,
BELIZE.
Email: electbound@btl.net
Website: www.belize-elections.org/

Electoral Office of Dominica
Turket Lane,
Roseau,
DOMINICA.
Tel: (767) 266-3336
Website: elections@cwdom.dm

Guyana Elections Commission
41 High & Cowan Streets,
Kingston,
Georgetown,
GUYANA.

Tel: (592) 225-0277/8

Hotlines: (592) 226-1651, (592) 226-1652 & (592)
223-9650

Email: gecomfeedback@webworksgy.com

Website: www.sdn.org.gy/elections/

Parliamentary Elections Office
Archibald Avenue,
St. George's,
GRENADA.

Tel: (473) 440-2698

Fax: (473) 440-2357

Electoral Office of Jamaica
43 Duke Street,
Kingston,
JAMAICA.

Tel: (876) 922-0425-9

Email: ejinfo@oej.com.jm

Website: www.eoj.com.jm/elections/elect_sum.htm

The Clerk of Council's Office
P.O Box 292,
Government Headquarters,
Brades,
MONTSERRAT.

Tel: (664) 491-2195

Fax: (664) 491-6885

Electoral Commission of St. Kitts & Nevis
Paragon Building,
Central Street,
Basseterre,
ST. KITTS.
Tel: (869) 465-2873
Website: www.newelectoralframework.gov.kn

Saint Lucia Electoral Commission
High Street,
P.O. Box 1074,
Castries,
SAINT LUCIA.
Tel: (758) 451-6339
Fax: (758) 451-6513
Website: www.electoral.gov.lc
Email: electoral@candw.lc

Electoral Office of St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Kingstown,
ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
Tel: (784) 457-1762/1502
Fax: (784) 457-6488
Email: srgelec@vincysurf.com

Trinidad and Tobago Elections and Boundaries
Commission
Scott House,
134-138 Frederick Street,
Port of Spain,
TRINIDAD
Tel: (868) 623-4622

APPENDIX 2

ABOUT THE ACM

The Association of Caribbean Media Workers (ACM) is a network of journalists, media workers and media associations spanning the Caribbean Basin.

It was established in Barbados in 2001 and is currently headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago. Its membership includes media professionals and their representative organisations from countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Dutch, Spanish and French-speaking Caribbean.

It holds membership of the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) and the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) and is represented on the Latin American and Caribbean Forum for Media Development.

The ACM has also been responsible for the publication of bi-annual State of the Caribbean Media Reports and a Handbook for Caribbean Journalists on Climate Change.

The ACM was established to:

- *Collaborate with national media associations and related organisations in promoting professional and ethical standards, safeguarding and promoting the rights and privileges of the media in all Caribbean countries;*
- *Respect and promote freedom of information, media freedom, and the independence of journalism;*

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- ▶ *Encourage the formation and strengthening of national groupings and associations;*
 - ▶ *Maintain and improve the professional status of its members and member associations;*
 - ▶ *Protect and advance the interests of journalists and media workers at the national and regional levels;*
 - ▶ *Facilitate the exchange of information about the media in the region;*
 - ▶ *Undertake educational programmes for the furtherance of the professional skills of journalists and media workers in the Caribbean region;*
 - ▶ *Promote greater understanding of media issues through research, seminars, and conferences;*
 - ▶ *Promote co-operation and collaboration among members.*

The website of the ACM can be found at:
www.acmediaworkers.com and you can contact us
via email at: ***acmmail@gmail.com***.

SUGGESTED READING

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United Nations
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