

GOVERNMENT

The Government of Ethiopia is a constitutional hereditary monarchy. Ethiopia's first Constitution was promulgated by the Emperor in 1931. Although it provides for a Senate and Chamber of Deputies, sovereignty is vested in the person of the Emperor, who has supreme authority and combines the powers and duties of chief of state and head of government. Members of the Senate are appointed by the Emperor, as were members of the Chamber of Deputies until 1955 when the Emperor promulgated a revised Constitution, which provides for the popular election of members of the lower House. The third nationwide election was held in the fall of 1965. There are 125 Senators and 251 Deputies.

Members are elected to the lower House, the Chamber of Deputies, by universal adult suffrage from candidates, male or female, who are Ethiopian citizens by birth and not less than 25 years of age. All candidates must be residents of their respective electoral districts.

All Ethiopians by birth, regardless of sex, who have reached the age of 21 years are entitled to vote for Deputies from the electoral district where they reside. Elections are held every 4 years. Voting is secret and direct.

The Empire of Ethiopia is divided into 100 electoral constituencies, each having approximately 200,000 inhabitants. Each electoral district is represented by two Deputies. Each town with 30,000 inhabitants or more has one Deputy and one additional Deputy for every 50,000 of the population in excess of 30,000.

Members of the upper House, the Senate, are appointed by the Emperor for 6 years from among Ethiopians by birth who have rendered outstanding service to the country. A Senator's minimum age is 35 years. The number of Senators shall not exceed one-half of the total number of Deputies.

Both Houses are in session from November until June of the following year.

The Constitution may be amended by joint resolution adopted by three-fourths of the members of each Chamber in two separate sessions of Parliament and proclaimed with the approval and authority of the Emperor.

The Prime Minister and members of the Council of Ministers are appointed by the Emperor and are directly responsible to him and not to the Parliament. Moreover, ministerial appointments are not subject to parliamentary approval. The day-to-day administration of the Empire is conducted by the Council of Ministers, which is presided over by the Prime Minister.

Certain of the functions usually performed by a Cabinet in forming Government policy are carried out by the Crown Council, a traditional institution composed of the Crown Prince, the Archbishop of the Ethiopian Church, the President of the Senate, and other dignitaries the Emperor designates. The Crown Council is convened from time to time by the Emperor to consider important policy measures.

The revised Constitution provides for the succession to the throne by the eldest male son. Previously, in the absence of a clear rule of succession, several claimants to the throne have been known to appear on the death of an Emperor, with civil disorder as a result. Emperor Haile Selassie's oldest and only surviving son, Asfaw Wossen is the present Crown Prince and heir apparent.

The Constitution provides for a Supreme Imperial Court. A system of courts had already been established by the Administration of Justice Proclamation of 1942. Judges are appointed by the Emperor. The revised Constitution of 1955 makes no provision for judicial interpretation of the Constitution or for judicial determination of the constitutionality of laws, proclamations, and decrees.

The status of federation between Eritrea and Ethiopia, established by resolution of the U.N. General Assembly in 1950 and effected on September 15, 1952, by decree of the Emperor, was dissolved on November 14, 1962, when the Eritrean National Assembly voted for union with Ethiopia. Eritrea is now a province of Ethiopia.

The 14 provinces of the Empire are administered by Governors General appointed by the Emperor.

On the whole the people show devotion to their Emperor, who has been striving to improve their standard of living and develop the beginnings of a parliamentary system of government. There is, however, some discontent with the rate of political, economic, and social progress, and in December 1960, while the Emperor was on a state visit to Brazil, the imperial bodyguard staged a short-lived coup in an effort to bring about certain changes. During 1961 the Emperor established various committees to recommend judicial, economic, and other reforms, from which progressive legislation in such fields as land tenure and trade union organization has resulted. There are no political parties in the country.