

Part IV

The Parliament

Composition

- 25 There shall be a Parliament of the Virgin Islands which shall consist of Her Majesty, a House of Representatives and a Senate
- 26 The House of Representatives shall consist of 13 elected members, one of whom shall be the Speaker.
- 26 a The Senate of the Virgin Islands shall consist of a President and 6 other elected members.
- b Each House of Parliament shall be equal in respect of their Legislative role. Any member of either house can introduce a Bill in their respective houses. A bill other than a Money Bill can originate in either House, however, in order to be considered passed by Parliament, it must be passed by both houses, except.
- i) That the House of Assembly may pass a Bill which originated in the House of Assembly but failed to gain approval of the Senate after two attempts.
- c A failed Bill can be reintroduced by any member in either House for the purposes of entertaining the amendments of another house.
- d Joint Sessions of Parliament for the purposes of passing a previously failed Bill shall require a 2/3 majority of the membership present for passage.
- e (i) Joint Sessions of Parliament can occur by resolution passed in the House of Assembly.
- (ii) Joint Sessions of Parliament can also occur by order of the Governor upon request of the Premier.
- 27 (2) For the purposes of elections to the **House of Representatives** the Virgin Islands shall be divided into 9 Electoral Districts..... Which shall return 9 Representatives, one for each District. And in addition

- i) For the purposes of elections to the House of Representatives the Virgin Islands shall be further divided into 3 Regions – see Sec 27(3) Which shall return 3 Representatives, one for each Region, and there shall be elected through at-large balloting from among all three regions a 4th Representative who shall be a full Member and the Speaker. And
 - ii) No Regional Candidates standing for election to the House of Representatives can be associated with, or be a part of any Political Party that is represented by any person contesting or has contested any of the other Seats in either the House of Representatives or the Senate.
- (3) For the purpose of elections to the Senate of the Virgin Islands, in the case of 6 of the members the Virgin Islands shall be divided into 3 Regions, namely: Eastern, Central and Western Regions. These regions shall reflect by proportion, the 9 electoral districts and they shall be constituted as follows:

Eastern Region (Districts 7, 8 & 9)

Central Region (Districts 4, 5 & 6)

Western Region (Districts 1, 2 & 3)

- iii) After a General election, each region shall return to the Senate, 2 Senators, for a total of 6.
- iv) In the case of the Senate President however, who in addition to being president is a full member, he shall be elected from at large balloting from among all three regions.

XX (3) The Governor shall dissolve the House of Assembly at the expiration of 5 years

XX (4) The Governor shall dissolve the Senate of the Virgin Islands at the expiration of 5 years from the date when the Senate first meets after a general election unless it has been sooner dissolved.

- (4) i) In the case of the Senate, except where there is a snap election after a request for Dissolution which is premature of the expected 5 years term of a member, only members elected in the election prior to the last election, shall vacate their seats.

THIS WOULD AMEND SECTION XX

- A) The Premier must be from among the Membership of the House of Representatives, provided he is recommended by a majority of the members of the house.

- B) In order to strengthen the Senate as a reviewing house, it shall have a continuing but rotating membership. “ROTATION OF SENATORS AND HALF SENATE ELECTIONS”.

At the end of each 2 1/2 years there shall be elections held in each region for the election of half the number of senators excluding the president in the Senate.

OBJECTS AND REASONS

Commissioner, the views expressed are based on firsthand knowledge of the inner workings of Two of the Three branches of Government, 8 years of which was as a Minister on the Executive, and 14 years as a member of the Opposition. All for a total of 22 years in the Legislative.

Commissioner, the primary objective of the Legislature is to provide oversight for the Executive, to hold the Government accountable, *if you will*. Under our current system, where more than half the government representatives are members of the Executive, and because of the whip system, the legislature is merely a Rubber Stamp for the Executive. This has been observed by Parliaments throughout the world, and unlike the Virgin Islands, most countries have sought means to overcome the problem.

In the Virgin Islands it is high time that we step up to the plate by doing something. Because this situation persists, the Legislature is the only arm of government which lacks any independence, so is certainly powerless, and fails to serve the people as intended.

Commissioner, I wish to offer for inclusion as part of your recommendations for reform, a BICAMERAL PARLIAMENT as a solution to the problem as stated.

If it means anything, Bermuda is an Overseas Territory like us, and they have a Bicameral System.

Commissioner, I am aware that this is a new and somewhat complex concept, so I am prepared to work with you to further clear any lack of understanding.