

**GRADE 5**  
**SOCIAL STUDIES LESSON 8 NOTES**  
**OUR GOVERNMENT SINCE INDEPENDENCE**

September 16<sup>th</sup> 2021

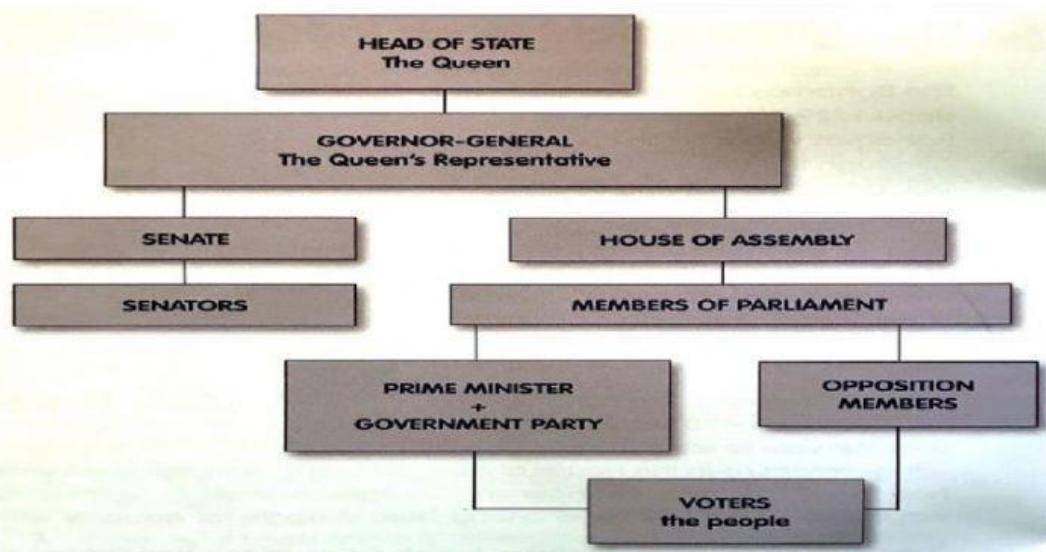


Prime Minister Philip "Brave" Davis

The Bahamas has had a Parliament since 1729. For centuries, The Bahamas was a British colony and although the House of Assembly could suggest how the country should be run, all laws had to be approved by Britain.

The Bahamas finally became an independent nation on 10th July 1973. Now, as an independent nation, the people of The Bahamas make their own laws.

Today everyone in The Bahamas over the age of 18 has the right to vote. We vote to elect people who will represent us in the House of Assembly. Until 1958, however, voters had to own property, be aged at least 21 – and male. Women did not win the vote until 1962, after a long, hard struggle for equality with the men. The diagram below shows the structure of our Parliament today.



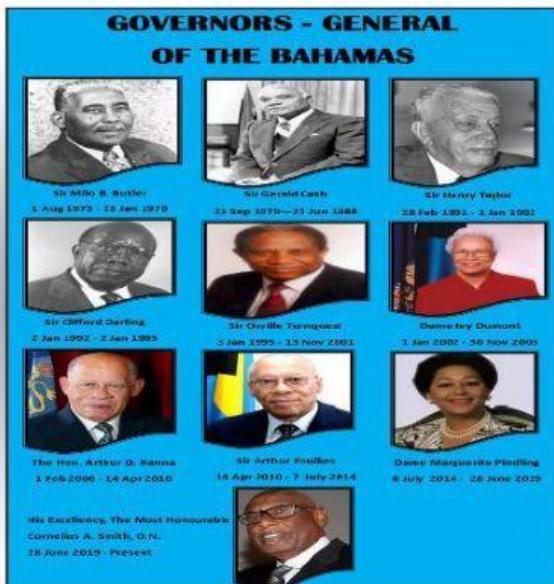
Although The Bahamas is an independent country, Queen Elizabeth is still the Head of State. Her representative in The Bahamas is called the Governor-General. The Queen no longer has the power to make laws in The Bahamas, but she – or the Governor-General- still signs every Law that is passed in our Parliament.

There are two houses or chambers of Parliament. Currently there are 39 members of the House of Assembly who are the Members of Parliament (MPs) elected by the people in a general election. You will learn more about elections in Book 6. The other chamber in Parliament is the Senate. The members of the Senate/ Senators – are appointed by the Governor-General, on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

A general election is held every five years. In an election, people choose their representative from the different political parties. Each party has its own ideas about how the country should be run. The party that wins most seats in the House of Assembly forms the Government. The Leader of the winning party becomes the Prime Minister. The party with fewer seats is the opposition Party, headed by the Leader of the Opposition.

This form of government is called a democracy. The way our country is run is set out in a special document called The Constitution.

The main purpose of government is to pass laws so that the country can function well. The wording of any law is discussed first in the House of Assembly, and then in the Senate. Each law is looked at in detail by two sets people. This ensures that the law is as flawless as it can be, and that it is stated as clearly as possible. Only when both chambers have discussed and agreed on the new law, and it has been signed by the Governor-General, does it actually come into effect. It is through the laws of the land that the rights of all citizens are protected. Our laws are enforced by the police and by the law courts.



Governor General Sir Cornelius A. Smith



Former Prime Ministers: Sir Lynden O. Pindling, Hon. Hubert A. Ingraham, Hon. Perry G. Christie, Hon. Hubert A. Minnis