Chapter IX

ELECTIONS TO THE PROVINCIAL OR STATE LEGISLATURE AND TO PARLIAMENT

Representation of the Garo Hills and the Khasi and Jaintia Hills in the Assam Legislature: Before 1920 both the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills like all the other tribal areas in the North-East India were classified as backward areas. Therefore, they were excluded from the membership of a Legislature. Even Shillong which had become the capital of Assam since 1874 did not have any representation in the provincial Legislature. But in 1921, the Shillong Urban Constituency was created. In the general election 1921, Rev. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy was elected to the Assam Legislative Council from the Shillong Urban Constituency. He was the only tribal who was elected continuously to the Legislature from 1921 to 1957.

In order to give representation to the other backward areas, in 1921, the Governor nominated Jaggin Sangma Laskar, the best available Garo to the Assam Legislative Council. But Jaggin Laskar could not understand the language in which the proceedings of the Council were conducted. Therefore, he did not attend the sessions and ultimately he resigned his membership of the Council. The Governor, therefore nominated a Welsh Missionary, Rev. Robert Evans to represent the backward tribes. But since his experience was confined only to the Khasi Hills, it must be said, that the Hill areas were practically unrepresented.
In the General elections held in 1926, Rev. J. J. M. Nichols-Roy was once again elected. This time, he defeated Sibnath Dutta and A. Macdonald Kongor by a thumping majority.

Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the Garo Hills and the Khasi and Jaintia Hills were declared as Partially Excluded Areas and therefore they were represented in the Assam Legislative Assembly. Four seats were reserved for these two districts and one seat for women (Shillong) in the Legislative Assembly and one seat for all the tribal areas in the Legislative Council.

The Garo Hills District: Under the Government of India Act, 1919, Garo Hills was declared as a backward area. Like all other backward areas, the Garo Hills District was not represented in the Assam Legislative Council. But Jaggin Sangma Laskar as we had already noted was nominated by the Governor. However, he resigned his membership.

Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the Garo Hills was declared a Partially Excluded Area and was entitled to elect two members to the Assam Legislative Assembly. The first general election to the Assam Legislative Assembly under this Act was held in February 1937. For the Garo Hills North constituency there was a straight contest between Benjamin Momin and Jaggin Laskar. Franchise was limited to Goanburas and those who had passed the Middle School Examination. Of the 539 registered voters, as many as 422 exercised their franchise. Benjamin Momin polled 242 votes whereas Jaggin Laskar polled 180 votes. Hence Benjamin Momin was declared elected. For the Garo Hills South constituency, there were three candidates, Jobang D. Marak, Muniram Karak and Ramsing Sangma. Out of the 767 registered voters, 552 exercised their franchise. Jobang D. Marak polled 276 votes, Muniram Marak 164 votes and Ramsing Sangma 112 votes. Jobang D. Marak was elected. Hence Benjamin and Jobang Marak represented the
Due to the outbreak of the Second World War, the general election which was due to be held in 1942 could not be held at all. Hence the general election was held only in the winter of 1945-46. This time there were five candidates in each of the two constituencies. For the Garo Hills North Constituency the five candidates were Mody K. Marak, Aaron Sangma, Benjamin C. Momin, Jaggin Laskar and Bronson Momin. It may be recalled that Benjamin C. Momin and Jaggin Laskar contested each other in 1937 and Benjamin Momin was elected. In 1945-46, both of them fought again, but both were defeated. The number of registered voters was increased from 539 to 1383. But the percentage of poll was very poor. Only 46 percent of the voters turned out to elect their representative. Mody K. Marak was duly elected by a minority vote.

There were five candidates who contested for the Garo Hills South constituency. Phukan Sangma was set up by the Congress. But the other four candidates contested as independents. This was the first time that a National political party entered the field. It may be noted that Jobang Marak and Muniram Sangma contested each other in 1937 and the former was elected. But in 1945-46, Muniram Marak avenged the defeat that he suffered in the hands of Jobang Marak in 1937. Muniram Marak polled 330 of the 794 votes polled and the rest of the votes were more or less evenly distributed to the other four candidates. Thus Muniram Marak was elected by a minority vote.

The first general election to the Assam Legislative Assembly under the Indian constitution was held in 1952. This time, the Garo Hills was allotted four Assembly constituencies. The Garo National Council set up candidates for all the four constituencies. Harrison Momin, a Garo National Council candidate was returned
unopposed from the Bagmara constituency. In all the other three constituencies, there were three candidates in each. For the Tura seat, the G.N.C. candidate, Emerson Momin was elected by a minority vote after defeating Noho Sangma and Jenden Marak. The three candidates who contested from Phulbari constituency were Emonsingh Sangma, Bronson Momin and Phukan Sangma. Emonsingh Sangma contests unsuccessfully in 1945 as an independent candidate contested again in 1952 as an independent candidate and was elected. Bronson Momin, once again, contested as an independent candidate. But Phukan Sangma who contested as a Congress candidate in 1945 contested the 1952 election as a GNC candidate. There were also three candidates for the Dainadubi constituency: Aaron Sangma, Prabodh Chandra Geison and Nallindra Sangma. Aaron Sangma, who forfeited his security deposit in 1945 was elected in 1952 as a GNC candidate, but he was elected by a minority vote.

Let us now examine the results of the Second General Election to the State Assembly which was held in 1957. It may be remembered that by 1957, the Hill State movement in the Garo Hills had become very strong and the Garo National Council as one of the component units of the Eastern India Tribal Union had to set up candidates for all the four constituencies. Since Phulbari constituency had the largest number of non-Tribal voters who were lively to vote against the Hill State demand, the GNC felt that it would be advisable for Capt. W.A. Sangma, the undisputed leader of the Hill State movement to contest from that seat so that it would be able to capture all the four seats. There were nine candidates for the four available seats. The issue before the electorate was also very clear. The voters were explained to vote not for the persons but for or against the Hill State demand.
Although Capt. W. A. Sangma hailed from Bagmara, he consented to contest from Phulbari seat. The GNC set up Emerson Momin, Capt. Sangma's own brother-in-law to contest the Bagmara seat. Emerson Momin who contested successfully as a GNC candidate from the Tura seat in 1952 had to shift to Bagmara. Muniram Marak who was elected to the Assembly seat in 1945 did not contest in 1952. But in 1957, he contested as an independent candidate from the Bagmara constituency where he was defeated by Emerson Momin. Mody K. Marak who was elected in 1945 did not contest in 1952. But in 1957, he was set up by the GNC from the Tura constituency and was elected after defeating a Congress candidate Noho Sangma who in 1952 contested as an independent candidate. Harrison Momin was set up by the GNC to contest from the Dainaubi constituency where he defeated Aaron Sangma and Nallindra Sangma. It may be recalled that Harrison Momin contested from Bagmara in 1952. It may also be recalled that Aaron Sangma contested in 1945 as an independent candidate, in 1952 as a GNC candidate and in 1957 as a Congress candidate. But Nallindra Sangma contested both the 1952 and 1957 elections as an independent candidate. Harrison Momin was elected by a majority of votes polled. The most interesting fight was for the Phulbari seat where Capt. W. A. Sangma of the GNC had straight contest against a Congress candidate, Emonsing Sangma. Emonsing Sangma contested for the Assembly Seat for the third time consecutively. In 1945 he contested as an independent candidate and lost, but in 1952 he won the election as an independent candidate. After he was elected he joined the Congress Party. In 1957, he contested the Phulbari seat in a neck to neck battle with Capt. W. A. Sangma and the latter was elected by a majority of 170 votes. Thus, the Garo National Council, as a branch of the Eastern India Tribal Union captured all the four seats in the Garo
Hills, and in all the constituencies, it captured a majority of votes. But the Congress which set up candidates from three constituencies lost all the seats it contested.

The third general election was held at the time when the APHLC had already been formed and when Capt. W.A. Sangma had been recognised as a undisputed leader of the party. Although the Hill State movement was very strong, the Phulbari seat was always a thorn to the APHLC. Since Bronson Momin, a Congress man who still remained in the APHLC was considered to have a stronghold among the non-Tribal Voters. He was selected to contest the Phulbari Seat. Some critics thought that Capt. W.A. Sangma had to shift to Bagmara because he considered that Emonsing Sangma would give him a tough fight in Phulbari, yet every person in the Garo Hills knew that Capt. W.A. Sangma could win from any seat in the Garo Hills. It was the echelons of the APHLC who thought that Bronson Momin could easily defeat Emonsing Sangma from the Phulbari constituency. A party candidate usually has no choice apart from the Party. The Party was wrong in not listening to Capt. W.A. Sangma who still wanted to contest from Phulbari. The party was wrong in the choice of a candidate for the Phulbari seat.

Capt. W.A. Sangma who contested from his home constituency, Bagmara, easily won the election by defeating a Congress candidate and an independent candidate. He polled an absolute majority of the votes polled. Nitar Marak, the independent candidate forfeited his deposit whereas the Congress candidate polled only one-third of the votes polled. For the Tura constituency, there were three candidates. It may be noted that in 1957, this seat was contested by Mody K Marak and Noho Sangma, but in 1962 Mody K Marak did not contest. In 1962, the APHLC set up Emerson Momin as its candidate,
who in 1957 was elected from the Bagmara seat. Emerson Momin had to face two rivals, Jenden Marak and Noho Sangma. It may be recalled that Noho Sangma was unsuccessful in the 1952 and 1957 elections. Emerson Momin was elected by an absolute majority of the votes polled. In Dainadubi constituency, there were three candidates. Nallindra Sangma who contested the 1952 and 1957 elections as an independent candidate was set up by the APHLC in 1962. He had two rivals, Aaron Sangma who had been contesting since 1945 was set up by the Congress in 1962 and Jonathan Sangma an independent candidate. Nallindra Sangma was at last elected by an absolute majority of votes polled. There were three candidates who contested from the Phulbari constituency. Bronson Momin who contested in 1952 as an independent candidate and who did not contest in 1957 was elected by the APHLC to contest in 1962. The Congress set up Emonsing Sangma who was elected in 1952 but was unsuccessful in 1957. There was also an independent candidate Hemson Marak. In 1957, Emonsing Sangma was defeated by Capt. W.A. Sangma. But in 1962, Emonsing Sangma defeated both Bronson Momin and Hemson Marak and was elected by an absolute majority of the votes polled. It may be recalled that the GNC captured all the four seats in the Garo Hills in 1957 but in 1962 it had to concede one seat to the Congress. Thus, for the first time, the Congress could win a seat from the Garo Hills.

In 1962 the APHLC fought the elections on the Hill State issue against the scottish pattern plan. In order to press its demand for the creation of separate hill state, the APHLC called upon the elected members of the state Assembly belonging to the APHLC to resign. Nallindra Sangma and Emerson Momin who were elected on the APHLC ticket defied the resolution of the party and refused to
resign. Capt. W.A.Sangma alone from the Garo Hills resigned. In the bye-election held in 1962, Capt. W.A.Sangma was again elected by defeating Dingmin Nengnuiza. In 1962 Capt. W.A.Sangma polled 60 percent of the votes polled and in 1963 the percentage was increased to 64.

Let us now review the 1967 general election to the State Assembly. For the Bagmara seat, Capt. W.A.Sangma contested as an APELC candidate for the third consecutive term. His two rivals were Singjan Sangma who was set up by the congress and Rodorsing Marak, a CPI candidate. Capt. W.A.Sangma once again, defeated his two rivals by an absolute majority of the votes polled. For the Dainadubi seat there were four candidates. Both Aaron Sangma and Nallindra Sangma who contested the same seat in 1952, 1957 and 1962 contested again in 1967. Aaron Sangma who was elected in 1952 as a GNC candidate was defeated in 1957 and in 1962 as a congress candidate. In 1967, the congress did not nominate him as its candidate, but it nominated another person. Nallindra Sangma who was defeated in 1952 and 1957 as an independent candidate was elected in 1962 as an APELC candidate. But since he did not resign his seat in 1962 when called upon by the party to do so on the issue of hill state, the APELC did not nominate him. Instead, it nominated Mody K. Marak who was elected by an absolute majority of votes polled. The congress candidate was defeated and both Nallindra Sangma and Aaron Sangma who contested as independent candidates lost their security deposit. There were three candidates for the Tura seat. Emerson Momin who was elected in 1952, 1957 and 1962 on GNC ticket was not nominated by the APELC in 1967 because he refused to resign in 1962 when directed by the party. This time, the APELC nominated Chorsing Marak who defeated Emerson Momin who
contested on the congress ticket by an absolute majority of votes polled. Jenden Karak who contested as an independent candidate lost his deposit. This was his second defeat. In Phulbari constituency there were four candidates. Once more, the APHLC set up Bronson Momin who was unsuccessful in 1962 on APHLC ticket and who was defeated in 1952 as an independent candidate. Emonsing Sangma again contested as a congress candidate, but he was defeated by Bronson Momin. Thus Bronson Momin avenged his defeat that he suffered in the hands of Emonsing Sangma in 1962. The other two candidates lost their deposit.

In 1967, the GNC as the constituent unit of the APHLC repeated its feats as it performed in 1957 as a component unit of the Eastern India Tribal Union. It captured all the four seats. The congress which won the Phulbari seat in 1962 had to concede this seat to the APHLC in 1967. The Communist party of India entered the Garo Hills for the first time in 1967 when it set up two candidates, but it was routed because both its candidates lost their security deposit. The GNC won three of the four seats in 1952 all the four seats in 1957, three of the four seats in 1962 and all the four in 1967. Emonsing Sangma alone had the distinction of defeating the GNC on two occasions from the Phulbari constituency.

The Assam Re-organisation (Meghalaya) Act, 1969 provided that the members of the Provisional Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous seat of Meghalaya should be indirectly elected. They were to be elected by the elected members of the District Council on the basis of proportional representation. The Garo Hills Autonomous District Council was called upon to elect 16 members to the Autonomous State Assembly in March, 1970. Through the initiative of Capt. Sangma, the APHLC agreed to nominate 12 members and the Congress 4. Thus all the 12 APHLC candidates and all the 4 congress
candidates were elected uncontested.


The first ever general election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly was held in February 1972. The Garo Hills was allotted 24 seats in a house of 60, out of the 24 seats 20 were reserved for the Scheduled Tribes. The total number of voters was 1,46,236, but the number of female voters was larger than the number of male voters. The overall percentage of votes polled was very poor. It recorded only 36'2 percent of the total number of voters. On the eve of the general election there was an understanding between the APHLC and the Congress for electoral adjustments. Hence, the APHLC had to set up only 18 candidates whereas the congress was to set up 6 candidates. Besides, there was one CPI candidate and 34 independent candidates.

Out of the 18 seats contested by the APHLC, there were three uncontested return. Out of 15 seats where it had a contest, the APHLC lost only one seat to an independent candidate. The Congress set up 6 candidates and won five. The one seat that it lost was captured by an independent candidate. Of the 34 independent candidates, only two were elected, and as many 16 lost their security deposit. Of the votes polled, the APHLC polled 39'4 percent, the congress 18'8 percent the CPI 0'9 percent and the independents 39'9 percent. But this statistical analysis is not wholly correct. If we take into account the three uncontested returns of the APHLC, the percentage would be much higher for the APHLC, and hence, the percentage of votes polled by others should have stood at a much lower level. Out of the twenty-one seats, there was a straight contest in then constituencies, there were three candidates in each of the eight constituencies, and four candidates in each of the three constituencies.

The highest vote was polled by Manindra Rava of the APHLC who secured
2801 votes, but the margin between him and his rival was not great. The second highest vote was polled by William Cecil Marak of the Congress who secured 2550 votes with the largest margin of 1769 votes. The lowest margin of votes was polled by H.R. Marak who secured only 63 votes. It may be mentioned here that the two independent candidates who were elected promised the people that in case they were elected they would join the APHLC. True to their promise, both of them joined the APHLC later. The most notable defeat was Bronson Momin who fought as an independent candidate from two Assembly constituency and also in the Parliamentary constituency. For the first time, the Garo Hills was formed into a Parliamentary constituency in which Karnesh Marak was elected by a thumping majority.

The Khasi and Jaintia Hills: Till 1937, with the exception of the Shillong Municipal and Cantonment areas, the whole of the British portion of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District was treated as a backward area. But under the Government of India Act, 1935, the British portions of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills were declared as partially excluded areas. Therefore, they were to be represented in the Assam Legislative Assembly by three members, elected from three single member constituencies, Shillong, Shillong-Women and Jowai Constituencies.

There were three candidates for the Shillong seat, Rev. J. J. M. Nichols-Roy, Ajra Singh Khongphai and A. Macdonald Kongor. Of the total number of 6154 electors 77.59 percent exercised their franchise. Rev. Nichols-Roy who polled 2372 was elected by a minority vote. For the Shillong-Women Seat there was a straight contest between Miss Mavis Dunn Lyngdoh and Berlina Diengdoh (Mrs. Taylor). Out of the total number of 2199 electors, 1228
exercised their franchise. Miss Mavis Dunn Lyngdoh secured 938 votes, and hence she was elected by an absolute majority of the votes polled. There were three candidates who contested for the Jowai seat, Rev. L. Gatphoh, Larsing Khyriem and Sorendra Bareh. Out of the total of 10,707 voters, 55.76 percent of them exercised their franchise. Rev. Gatphoh polled 75 percent of the votes polled and was elected by a thumping majority. Larsing Khyriem polled 926 votes and Sorendra Bareh polled 720 votes. All the three elected members contested as independents. The highest number of votes was polled by Rev. L. Gatphoh. Both Rev. Gatphoh and Miss Mavis Dunn Lyngdoh were elected by an absolute majority but Rev. Nichols-Roy was elected by a minority vote.

Due to the outbreak of the Second World War, the general election which was due to be held in 1942 could not be held. The general election was held in January 1946. For the first time the Indian National Congress set up its candidates in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. There was no other National Party which contested the elections. In 1946, there were three candidates who contested for the Jowai seat. Two of them, Rev. L. Gatphoh and Larsing Khyriem who contested in 1937 once again entered the field as independent candidates. The third candidate was Wiking Singh Shullai, a congress candidate. It may be recalled that in 1937, Rev. Gatphoh was elected, but in 1946 Larsing Khyriem defeated Rev. Gatphoh and thus avenged the defeat he suffered in the previous election in the hands of Rev. L. Gatphoh. But Larsing Khyriem was elected by a minority vote.

For the Shillong seat also there were three candidates. The same candidates who contested in 1937 entered the field. It must be noted that A. Macdonald Kongor was the President of the District Congress Committee, but the Congress selected Rev. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy
as its candidate. In complete disgust, A. Macdonald Kongor resigned from the congress and fought as an independent candidate for the third time. But A.S. Khongphai was set up by the Khasi-Jaintia Political Association. This time, the number of electors was double than in 1957 and the percentage of votes polled was quite good. Rev. Nichols-Roy was elected by an absolute majority of votes polled.

The Congress set up Mrs. Bonnily Khongmen as its candidate whereas the Khasi Jaintia Political Association set up Miss Mavis Dunn Lyngdoh as its candidate for the Shillong Women constituency. There were two other independent candidates, Selina Diengdoh and Mrs. T.W. Shadap. Bonnily Khongmen polled an absolute majority of the votes polled. She was elected to the post of Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly, the only lady who has ever been elected to the post. T.W. Shadap polled only six votes and thus she forfeited her deposit. The Indian National Congress which entered the elections in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills for the first time won two of the three Assembly Seats it contested.

The first election under the Indian Constitution was held in 1952. This time, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills (including the erstwhile Khasi State) was allotted five seats. Four seats, viz., Cherrapunjee, Nongpoh, Nongstoin and Jawai were reserved for members of the Scheduled Tribe, but Shillong was an open constituency though it was reserved for the district. Five National Parties and three regional parties contested the elections. There was no uncontested return. In two constituencies there was straight contest, in two other constituencies there were three candidates in each and in the Shillong constituency there were eleven candidates. Of the 21 candidates, 10 were independents. The congress set up only one
candidate, the Khasi-Jaintia Durbar four, and the Khasi Jaintia Federated State Conference which was an ally of the congress set up two candidates.

There were as many as eleven candidates who contested the Shillong seat. Of the total number of 27,370 voters, 14,188 exercised their franchise. Rev. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy a Congress candidate polled an absolute majority of vote. His immediate rival G.G. Swell of the Khasi-Jaintia Durbar polled 3172 votes. G.G. Swell lost his election to the District Council also in the same year from the Kawlong constituency. This was the reason perhaps that he went away to Abyssinia to serve under the Government of that country. Of the eleven candidates who contested for the Shillong seat, two were women, but both of them forfeited their security deposit. Two of the eleven candidates polled only 68 and 61 votes respectively. Again, two of the candidates - Rev. Nichols-Roy and Mavis Dunn Lyngdoh - were members of the old legislative council. Rev. Nichols-Roy won the election from the same constituency for the fifth consecutive term.

For the Jowai seats, there were three candidates who fought as independents. Larsing Khyriem was one of them. He contested for the third time from the same seat. It may be recalled that Larsing Khyriem was defeated by Rev. L. Gatphoh in 1937 but he defeated Gatphoh in 1945. But in 1952 he was defeated by Kistobin Rymbai who won the election by a minority vote.

In Nongstoin constituency there was a straight contest between Ajra Singh Khongphai and T.W. Roy of the Khasi-Jaintia Durbar. A.S. Khongphai who failed twice from the Shillong constituency found himself fortunate to have shifted to the Nongstoin seat. He defeated T.W. Roy by a big majority.
In Nongpoh constituency also there was a straight contest between A. Alley of the Khasi-Jaintia Federated State Conference and Sirendro Syiem of the Khasi-Jaintia Durbar. Alley won the election in a neck to neck contest.

For the Cherrapunjee seat there were three candidates, Maham Singh of the Khasi-Jaintia Durbar, Welson Khongmen of the Khasi-Jaintia Federated State Conference and C.Delington Khyllep who contested as an independent candidate. Maham Singh was elected by an absolute majority of the votes polled whereas C.D.Khyllep forfeited his deposit.

In 1952, the Congress set up one candidate and won it, the Khasi-Jaintia Durbar set up four candidates and won only one seat, the Khasi-Jaintia Federated State Conference contested two seats and won one seat. The other two seats were won by the independents.

For the first time, in 1952, there was one parliamentary seat for the autonomous hill districts. This constituency comprised of Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Mikir Hills, North Cachar Hills and Naga Hills. The congress set up Mrs. Bonnily Khongmen to contest for the seat, the Khasi-Jaintia Durbar nominated Mr. Wilson Reade as its candidate whereas L.I.D.Basan entered the field as an independent candidate. Bonnily Khongmen was supported by all parties excepting the Khasi-Jaintia Durbar and by the majority of the Assembly independent candidates. Further, being a Mikir lady, she was whole-heartedly supported by Mikir and North Cachar Hills. Further-more, the people of Naga Hills did not participate in the elections. Hence, Bonnily Khongmen was elected by an absolute majority of the votes polled.

Let us now consider the 1957 elections. For the five Assembly seats there were five seats. The Eastern India Tribal Union which had spearheaded the demand for Hill State set up candidates for all the
five constituencies. But one of its candidates, Wilson Reade, who was to contest for the Nongpoh seat was disqualified by the Returning Officer on the ground that he was not a Khasi, and hence he was not a member of the Scheduled Tribe. Therefore, the EITU had only four candidates in the field. The Congress set up candidates from all the five seats. For the Jowai seat, the EITU set up the veteran Larsing Khyriem whereas the Congress set up Kistobin Rymbai. Larsing Khyriem avenged his defeat that he suffered in the hands of Kistobin Rymbai in 1952. Larsing Khyriem was elected by a minority vote. H.Emowell Pohshna and Prosperly Chyne who contested as independent candidates lost their security deposit.

Since Wilson Reade of the EITU was disqualified from contesting the election, there was a straight contest for the Nongpoh constituency between Aaron Alley of the Congress and Jormanik Syiem who fought as an independent candidate. Since there was no EITU candidate the Hill State supporters worked for Jormanik Syiem who was elected for the first time.

There were four candidates for the Shillong seat. But the real contest was between B.M.Roy of the EITU and Bonnily Khongmen of the Congress. It may be noted that Bonnily Khongmen was elected to the Assembly in 1945. But in 1952 she was elected to the Lok Sabha. In 1957 she returned to State politics only to be defeated by B.M. Roy. However, after she failed to get elected, she was appointed as member of the Assam Public Service Commission. One of the four candidates who contested the Shillong seat forfeited his security deposit.

For the Nongstoin seat, there were four candidates. Three of them were new faces whereas the veteran A.S.Khongphai once again fought to retain the seat. Out of the four candidates, S.A.Chyne
lost his security deposit. Henry Cotton of the Eastern Indian Tribal Union was elected by an absolute majority of the votes polled.

There were three candidates who contested from the Cherrapunjee constituency. In 1952, Maham Singh was elected as a candidate of the Khasi-Jaintia Durbar, but in 1957 he was set up by the Congress. Maham Singh knew his fate, but he contested on principle. The EITU set up T. Cajee as its candidate. It may be recalled that in 1921, 1926, 1937, 1946 and 1952, Rev. J.J.M.Nichols-Roy successfully contested from the Shillong seat. In 1946 and 1952 he contested as a congress candidate. But in 1957 he contested as an independent candidate and shifted himself to Cherrapunjee constituency. Rev. Nichols-Roy found that Shillong had become the centre of the Hill State movement. He knew that the people of Shillong would have their doubt against him. He also knew that J.M.Roy was a strong candidate. Therefore he shifted himself to Cherrapunjee constituency. Since, the Hill State movement was strong in that constituency also, Rev. Nichols-Roy had to fight in favour of the Hill State demand. In a neck to neck battle with T.Cajee, Rev. Nichols-Roy was elected by a minority vote.

In 1957, the Congress lost all the five seats it contested. The EITU won three of the four seats it contested and two seats were captured by the independents.

For the Parliamentary seat there were three candidates. The EITU set up Hoover Hyniewta and the Congress set up G.G.Swell. It may be recalled that G.G.Swell was one of the Advisers of the Federation of Khasi States during the period 1946 to 1949. He was one of the founder of the Khasi States People Union. But after he lost the District Council and the Assembly elections in 1952, he left for Abyssinia. During his absence, the Hill State Supporters
were always waiting for his return. But when he returned in 1956, he joined the Congress and became the General Secretary of the District Congress Committee. During the 1957 election campaigns he threw a challenge to the EITU leaders that even if they would break the head, they would never get a Hill State. Once again, L.L.D.Basan contested as an independent candidate. Hoover Eynnievta was elected by an absolute majority of votes despite the fact that Mikir Hills and North Cachar Hills did not want a Hill State.

From 1957 to 1962 there were two bye-elections. But the EITU leaders were blamed by the people that they had abandoned the Hill State movement in view of the fact that the EITU had associated itself with the Congress Parliamentary Party. Hence, the EITU lost in both the bye-elections. The first bye-election was for the Nongpoh constituency. On the petition filed by Wilson Reade, the Honourable High Court upheld that the Returning Officer had wrongly disqualified Wilson Reade from contesting the election. It upheld that Wilson Reade was a Khani and hence, he was eligible to contest the election. An appeal against this judgement was rejected by the Honourable Supreme Court. Hence, a bye-election was held in the Nongpoh constituency in 1958. Jormanik Cylem was once again elected by defeating Wilson Reade, the EITU candidate. Again, consequent upon the death of Rev. J.J.M.Nichols-Roy in 1959, there was a bye-election from the Cherrapunjee constituency. Here also, the EITU candidate T.Cajee lost to Mahan Singh, a congress candidate. The third candidate, D.D.Pugh fought as an independent candidate. Thus Mahan Singh who fought on principle in 1957 was elected in the bye-election held in 1959.

The 1962 elections was held when the wave of the Hill State movement was at its high tide. It was held at the time when the
APHLC had rejected the Scottish Pattern Plan offered by Prime Minister Nehru. The Nomination Committee of the APHLC thought that the best leaders should contest the election so as to make the outside world realise the justness of the Hill State demand. It proposed that R.S.Iyngdoh should contest the Parliamentary seat; G.G.Swell should contest the Shillong seat; Hoover Hynniewta the Nongstoin seat; S.D.D.Nichols-Roy the Cherrapunjee seat; B.B. Lyngdoh, the Nongpoh seat; and H.Fnowell Pohshna, the Jowai seat. But R.S.Iyngdoh was not yet ready to contest the elections due to the passing away of his father and due to financial difficulties. Hoover Hynniewta declined to contest on grounds of health. Hence, G.G.Swell was selected to contest the Parliamentary seat; Wilson Reade, the Shillong seat; and Hopingstone Lyngdoh, the Nongstoin seat. The Congress which had accepted the Scottish Pattern plan thought that the plan would be acceptable to the people. Hence it set up candidates from all the available seats, both Assembly and Parliamentary seats. The two parties contested on specific issues. The APHLC fought on the issue of separate State for the Tribal areas whereas the Congress fought on the issue of the Scottish Pattern plan.

The 1962 election was the most unforgeable and the most interesting election ever recorded so far in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. First, the election was fought on real constitutional issues and hence the election campaigns touched the innermost core of the sentiments of the people. Secondly, both sides were equally vigourous in campaigning in nearly all the towns, villages and small hamlets. Thirdly, for the first time the Congress and the APHLC openly challenged for an open debate. The first debate took place at Smit where A.S.Khongphai, Josingh Rynjah and Nelson Khongmen were the spokesmen of the Congress while B.B.Lyngdoh, G.G.Swell and R.S.Lyngdoh
were the main Spokesmen of the APHLC. This was followed by another interesting debate at Halki. The names of the participants were already announced. Hoover Hymniewta, G.G.Swell and F.S.Lyngdoh were to speak on behalf of the APHLC while A.Alley, J.T.Tariang and Maham Singh were to speak on behalf of the Congress. But on the appointed date, Maham Singh alone did not turn up. Thereafter, debates took place at Jowai, Charrapunjee, Tyrna and other places where the Congress leaders were totally beaten either in arguments or oratory. The memorable speeches of F.S.Lyngdoh on 3rd February, 1962 at Qualapaty, Shillong and on the 6th February, 1962 at Jowai threw the entire stand of the congress into shreds. The results of the elections had by then become a forgone conclusion.

Let us now examine the result of the elections constituency-wise. For the Jowai seat, the APHLC set up H.Enowell Pohshma who forfeited his security deposit in 1957. The Congress set up Histobin Eymbai. The other two independent candidates were Larsing Chyne and Prosperly Chyne. H.Enowell Pohshma was elected by a minority vote.

For the Nongpoh seat there were three candidates. F.B.Lyngdoh was the nominee of the APHLC, A.S.Khongsphai fought as a congress candidate and Jormanik Syiem contested as an independent candidate. It may be recalled that A.S.Khongsphai was contesting for the fifth time since 1937. In 1937 and 1946 he was defeated by Rev. Nichols-Roy from the Shillong seat. In 1952 he contested as an independent candidate from Nongstoin and won it. But in 1957 he contested as a congress candidate from the same seat and lost to Henry Cotton. In 1962 he contested as a congress candidate from the Nongpoh constituency, Jormanik Syiem was elected in 1957 and in the bye-election held in 1958 as an independent candidate from the Nongpoh seat, and in 1962 he contested again as an independent candidate. B.B.Lyngdoh
who contested the Assembly seat for the first time was elected by capturing an absolute majority of the votes polled.

For the Nongstoin seat, the APHLC set up Folingstone Lyngdoh who secured an absolute majority of the votes polled. He defeated Bhatiar Singh Syien, a congress candidate and two independent candidates. One of the independent candidate lost his deposit.

There were four candidates who contested for the Shillong seat. The APHLC set up Wilson Reade and the congress nominated Aaron Alley. Wilson Reade contested for the parliamentary constituency in 1952 and lost. Again he contested from the Nongpoh constituency in the bye-election held in 1958 and lost. Aaron Alley contested from the Nongpoh constituency in 1952 and 1957. He won in 1952 and lost in 1957. In 1962, both Reade and Alley were shifted to Shillong. Reade was elected by a minority vote.

The most prestigious seat in this election was the Cherrapunjee seat. The APHLC set up its General Secretary, S.D.D.Nichols-Roy against a congress candidate, Maham Singh who was then a Minister for Tribal Areas Department of the Government of Assam. S.D.D.Nichols-Roy was elected by a thumping majority. He polled the highest number of votes in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the margin between him and Maham Singh was also the largest.

Two cases were filed regarding matters connected with the election for the Cherrapunjee seat. The first was a defamation suit instituted by Kynpham Singh, a younger brother of Maham Singh against R.S.Lyngdoh and others. But the case was dismissed by the Court. The second case was filed by Clifford, one of the voters from Cherrapunjee constituency against S.D.D.Nichols-Roy on the ground that S.D.D.Nichols-Roy was not a Khasi, was not a member of the Scheduled Tribe, and was not a resident of the said constituency. But the Election Tribunal and the Honourable High Court upheld that
S.P.D. Nichols-Roy is a Khasi. The other grounds were also rejected. While the petitioner was trying to move for leave that an appeal be preferred to the Honourable Supreme Court, S.P.D. Nichols-Roy had already resigned the seat as directed by the party.

In 1962 there were 17 candidates for the five seats. The APHLC set up five candidates and won all of them. The Congress lost all. The CPI and the independent went down miserably.

As per decision of the APHLC, excepting H.E. Pohshna, all the other four elected members resigned their seat from the Assam Legislative Assembly. It may be recalled that after the declaration of the election results in 1962, all the elected members of the APHLC from Khasi and Jaintia Hills were given a rousing reception at Iewrynghep ground. It was in that meeting that H.E. Pohshna assured the people that all APHLC members would resign en bloc. "I tell you," he thundered, "others may betray the party, not I........ never." But this public utterance of this elected member proved to be only an eyewash. His party loyalty proved to be short-lived. He refused to resign when called upon by the party to do so.

For the Parliamentary seat, the APHLC set up G.C. Swell and the Congress set up Jerlie E. Tariang. G.C. Swell defeated Tariang and another independent candidate. He polled an absolute majority of the votes polled.

The bye-election for the four vacant Assembly seats was held in 1963. The APHLC nominated Hoover Kynnieeta as its candidate for the Shillong constituency in the place of Wilson Peada. The other candidates of the APHLC for the other three constituencies were the same as those who contested in 1962. The Congress did not contest, but congressmen openly supported the independents. The whole show was a tame affair. The opponents were so weak that the voters did not even remember their names. The only seat which was worth mention-
mentioning was the Cherrapunjee seat. This time S.D.D.Nichols-Roy was confronted with A.S.Khongphai who shifted himself from Nongpoh to Cherrapunjee. Khongphai knew his fate, but he fought it on principle. Khongphai contested, this time as an independent candidate.

All the four candidates set up by the ATPILC were elected by a greater majority than in 1962. Even in Shillong constituency, the majority was increased from 49 percent to 62 percent. In Nongpoh the majority was increased from 72 percent to 97 percent, in Nongstoin it was increased from 54 percent to 76 percent, and in Cherrapunjee it was increased from 70 percent to 73 percent.

A.S.Khongphai who tried his best to get S.D.D.Nichols-Roy's nomination rejected by the Returning Officer found out that he could not convince the Returning Officer. After the election, he filed an election petition against the election of S.D.D.Nichols-Roy more or less on the same grounds as were raised in an earlier case filed by Clifford of Sohbar. But both the Election Tribunal and the Honourable High Court upheld their earlier judgement. An appeal against it was also rejected by the Honourable Supreme Court.

Let us now examine the 1967 elections. The APHLC selected the same candidates who won the bye-elections in 1963. But for the Jowai seat, the APHLC nominated Edwingson Bareh as its candidate. Of these five seats, B.B.Lyngdoh and S.D.D.Nichols-Roy returned uncontested from the Nongpoh seat and Cherrapunjee seat respectively. The contest in the other three constituencies was also one-sided. All the five APHLC candidates were elected by a thumping majority. Even in the Jowai constituency, H.Enewell Pokhna was defeated by E.Bareh by a big margin.

For the Parliamentary seat, once again G.G.Swell was re-elected for the second term by a great majority. He defeated a
Congress supported candidate, Mr. Momin from the Mikir Hills.

For the Shillong seat, there were three candidates. Hoover Eynniewta of the APHLC polled an absolute majority of votes polled. For the Moringstoin seat, there was a contest; but an independent candidate who fought against Hopingstone Lyngdoh of the APHLC lost his security deposit. Hence, the victory of the APHLC in the 1967 elections was really spectacular. Since the issue at stake was highly emotional, anti hill state leaders like Maham Singh, A. Alley and others did not contest the elections.

In March 1970, there was an indirect election to the Provisional Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous State of Meghalaya. Since the HSPDP members of the Khasi Hills District Council refused to participate in the election, all the 18 seats allotted to the Khasi Hills were captured by the APHLC. In the Jowai Autonomous District Council, the opposition was not entitled to get even one member. Hence all the 4 members elected by that district council belonged to the APHLC. The total strength of the Legislative Assembly was 41, of whom 18 were from the Khasi Hills, 16 were from the Garo Hills and 4 were from the Jaintia Hills. Out of the 38 elected seats, the APHLC captured 34 and the other four belonged to the congress. Three members were later nominated, but all of them joined the APHLC parliamentary party. Thus, the APHLC came to power within ten years of its existence.

The fourth Lok Sabha was dissolved one year earlier than its normal term of five years. Hence, the General election to the fifth Lok Sabha was held in February 1971. For the Parliamentary seat from the Autonomous hill district, the APHLC set up G. C. Swell as its candidate. This time Swell had to face Hopingstone Lyngdoh, a candidate of the HSPDP and Bapuram Singmar, an independent candidate.
It must be recalled that Hopingstome Lyngdoh was expelled from the APHLC and Bapuram Singnar had left the APHLC. But since the HSPDP was not yet recognised by the Election Commission, H.S.Lyngdoh was treated as an independent candidate. Before election, there was an understanding between the APHLC and the Central Congress High Command that the Congress should support G.G.Swell and that the APHLC should support M.M.Choudhury, a Congress candidate for the Dhauki constituency which included the Garo Hills. While the APHLC gave an all out support to M.M.Choudhury, the majority of the Congressmen in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills were secretly canvassing against G.G.Swell. However, G.G.Swell was elected for the third term by an absolute majority of votes polled.

The first general election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly was held in February, 1972. The seats allotted to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills were 36, six for Jaintia Hills and thirty for the Khasi Hills. Since the HSPDP was not yet recognised by the election Commission, it will be better to treat its candidates as independents. For the 36 seats there were 139 candidates. Since there was an electoral adjustment between the APHLC and the Congress in the Khasi Hills, the APHLC set up 31 candidates, the congress 6 candidates, the CPI 1 candidate. In the Khasi Hills, four seats were reserved for the congress and one seat was left purposely by the APHLC in favour of an independent. But in the Jaintia Hills, the congress set up candidates against the APHLC because there was no electoral adjustment there. There were as many as 101 independent candidates (including the HSPDP candidates). Compared to its magnificent performance in 1967, the APHLC fared very badly in 1972. The APHLC contested 31 seats and won only 15 seats, the congress contested six seats and won four seats. The CPI contested
and lost it. The independents won 17 seats (8 HSPDP and 9 independents proper). Out of the 139 candidates 54 forfeited the security deposit, 50 were independents and 4 were APHLC candidates.

As regards the number of votes polled, the APHLC polled less than the Independent-HSPDP combination. Out of the total number of 2,70,207 voters, the APHLC polled 54,283 votes, the congress polled 10,646 votes, the CPI polled 517 votes and the independents (including the HSPDP) polled 51,610 votes. Although the independents polled more votes than the APHLC, yet it must be remembered that the number of independent candidates was more than three times the number of the APHLC candidates. Again, the average number of votes polled by an APHLC candidate was much higher than the average number of votes polled by an independent candidate (which included an HSPDP candidate). The highest number of votes was polled by Edwingson Bareh of the APHLC from Martiang constituency and the lowest number of votes was polled by Pilat Khongkliam who secured only 16 votes. Khongkliam contested as an independent candidate from the Nongskeng constituency.

In the 1972 Assembly elections from the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, there was no uncontested return. There was straight contest in 6 constituencies, there were three candidates in each of the 12 constituencies, four candidates in each of the seven constituencies, five candidates in six constituencies, six candidates in four constituencies, and nine candidates in one constituency. Among the 36 elected candidates 18 were elected by a minority vote. Among the 18 as many as 9 belonged to the APHLC, 7 were independents (including HSPDP) and 2 belonged to the Congress.

It was one of the ironies of history that the party which was responsible for the formation of "Meghalaya should fare badly
at the general election held immediately after Meghalaya was made a full-fledged State. The reasons for such a bad show were many. First, at the time when the nomination Committee finalised the names of the candidates of the party, the selection was not made on the basis of public opinion which the Committee had sought. The selection was entirely based on the principle of how to fit in a particular person from one constituency or the other. There was a lot of string pulling among the top leaders of the party, especially in the Khasi Hills. So far as the Jaintia Hills was concerned, the party made a mistake in depending too much on the opinion of one leader alone. Secondly, as a result of such string pulling, many leaders left the party and fought the election as independent candidates. Thirdly, the electoral adjustment between the APHLC and the Congress gave the HSPDP and the Independents the chance to blame the APHLC for its alliance with the congress leaders who had all along been fighting against the hill state. Fourthly, the APHLC, by its decision not to give tickets to persons who had resigned from Government service alienated itself from those constituencies which wanted such persons to contest on party tickets. Had it not been for this factor, the APHLC could have easily won by more than twenty seats. Lastly, G.G.Swell who was elected as member of Parliament on APHLC tickets and who had become Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, in his public addresses, openly canvassed against the APHLC. These were the most important reasons why the APHLC could not fare well in the 1972 general elections.

During the period 1937 to 1976, only three women were elected to the legislature. Even, at present, there is no lady member in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly from Khasi-Jaintia Hills. Perhaps, the Khasis still believe that although women play a notable role in the social and economic affairs, men shall have the monopoly in political affairs. However, the interest taken by Khasi women during
election was more keen than the interest taken by men.

After the general elections, there were two election petitions. The first election petition was filed against an elected member from the Mawthangkut constituency on the ground that he was a Government Contractor. The election was declared null and void by the Honourable High Court. But in the bye-election, the same person was elected, and thus the HSPDP retained that seat. The second election petition was filed against an elected member from Songsak constituency on the ground that he had misrepresented the symbol of one defeated candidate in the dummy ballot papers. This election was also declared null and void by the Honourable High Court. The said person was also debarred from contesting any election for six years. An appeal preferred against this judgement was rejected by the Honourable Supreme Court. But in the bye-election, the APHLC retained the seat.

In the 1972 general election the APHLC captured 32 seats, the congress captured 9 seats, the HSPDP captured 8 seats, and the Independents captured 11 seats. Subsequently one Congress member and six independents joined the APHLC, four independents joined the Congress, one independent joined the HSPDP, and one HSPDP left the party to remain independent. On 5th April, 1976, one congress member who was elected in 1972 as an independent candidate left the congress and once again he became an independent member. The present party position in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly is like this: 39 belong to the APHLC, 11 belong to the Congress, 8 belong to the HSPDP, and the other two are independents.