

FINLAND

Dates of Elections: 20 and 21 March 1983

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Finland, the *Eduskunta*, is composed of 200 members elected for 4 years.

Electoral System

All Finnish citizens who have attained the age of 18 before the year in which the election takes place are entitled to vote, with the exception of those who have been convicted of vagrancy or certain corrupt practices connected with elections.

Electoral registers are revised annually at the constituency level. Voting is not compulsory.

Every member of the electorate is eligible to become a member of the *Eduskunta*, except persons under guardianship and those on active military service. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with the posts of Chancellor of Justice and Ombudsman of Parliament and with membership of the Supreme Court of Justice and the Supreme Administrative Court. Candidates are nominated by registered political parties.

Finland is divided into 15 electoral constituencies, which roughly correspond to the boundaries of the country's provinces. In 14 of them, 199 members of the *Eduskunta* are elected by proportional representation from party lists of candidates. Seats are distributed among the individual parties, or alliances of several parties, in accordance with the d'Hondt rule of highest average. For the distribution of seats within each list, candidates are ranked according to the number of personal votes they have polled.

The province of Aland elects a single deputy by simple majority vote.

A vacancy arising in the *Eduskunta* between general elections is filled by the individual who is "next-in-line" on the list of the party which formerly held the seat.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Subsequent to the March 1979 general elections and the formation of a centre-left four-party - Social Democratic Party (SDP), Centre Party (KP), Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL) and Swedish People's Party (SFP) - coalition Government two months later. President of the Republic Urho Kekkonen resigned in October 1981 and was succeeded by Prime Minister Mauno Koivisto (SDP). The latter was himself replaced by Mr. Kalevi Sorsa, also a Social Democrat. In December 1982, following internal controversy over increased military spending, the governing coalition was re-formed without the participation of the communist-dominated SKDL.

The campaign for the 1983 elections was relatively quiet, focusing on economic issues and, to some extent, on the country's defence policy; a total of 1331 candidates from 11 parties were in the running. On polling day, more than half of the *Eduskunta*'s seats changed hands as the SDP registered slight gains while the Rural Party (SMP) - which had campaigned as the champion of the country's poorer "forgotten people" - picked up the largest number of additional seats (10).

On 6 May, Mr. Sorsa was sworn in as the head of a new four-party coalition comprising his own party, the KP, the SFP and the SMP (the coalition holding a total of 122 seats). The following day, the composition of a new 17-member Cabinet was announced.

