

DENMARK

Date of Elections: 23 October 1979

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament following dissolution of this body. The Government had resigned on 28 September 1979 as a result of internal disagreement about economic policy, and writs for a new election were issued. Previous general elections had taken place in February 1977, and the normal expiry date of the legislature was February 1981.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Denmark, the *Folketing*, is composed of not more than 179 members elected for 4 years. Of this total, 2 are elected in the Faeroe Islands and 2 in Greenland.

Electoral System

The right to vote at a *Folketing* election is held by every Danish subject of at least 18 years of age whose permanent residence is in Denmark, provided that he has not been declared incapable of conducting his own affairs. The age qualification for suffrage had been lowered from 20 to 18 years on 27 September 1978, following the referendum held on 19 September 1978.

Electoral registers are revised at the municipal level in January and February of each year. Voting is not compulsory. Postal voting is permitted particularly for the sick, the aged, prisoners and persons abroad.

Any person who has a right to vote at *Folketing* elections is eligible for membership of the *Folketing* unless he has been convicted "of an act which in the eyes of the public makes him unworthy of being a member of the Folketing".

Any elector can contest an election if his nomination is supported by a minimum number of electors of his constituency. This minimum number, in most constituencies, is 25. No monetary deposit is required. Each candidate must declare whether he will stand for a certain party or as an independent.

For electoral purposes, metropolitan Denmark (excluding Greenland and the Faeroe Islands) is divided into three areas—Greater Copenhagen, Jutland and the Islands. These areas are in turn subdivided, with the Copenhagen area comprising three large constituencies, and the Jutland and Islands each comprising seven county constituencies. Each of these constituencies is for its part divided into from two to 10 districts: there are altogether 103 of these districts. Two to 15 parliamentary seats are allocated to each constituency.

Members of the *Folketing* are chosen according to a list system of proportional representation. Each elector can cast either a "personal vote" for one of the candidates or a vote for one of the party lists. The elector may moreover cast a preferential vote within a party list. He can vote for any of the candidates or parties of his constituency, not being limited to those of his nomination district.

Of the 175 seats reserved for Denmark proper, 135 seats are distributed among the constituencies. The mandates in the constituencies are distributed among the political groups in contention according to a modified version of the St. Lague method (whereby the total vote of each party in a constituency is divided by 1.4, 3, 5 and so on by odd numbers in order to arrive at the quotients on the basis of which seats are allocated). Utilization of this method ensures representation for smaller parties.

The 40 remaining, or supplementary, seats are then distributed among the parties which either have won at least one area seat; have obtained, in two electoral areas, at least as many votes as the average number of valid votes cast, in the area, per area seat; or have obtained at least 2% of all valid votes cast in the country as a whole. Such distribution, based on votes obtained on the national scale, is aimed at redressing the balance achieved through the distribution by constituencies.

When it has been decided which parties are entitled to a share of the supplementary seats, it is calculated, on the basis of the total number of votes cast for these parties in all parts of the country, how many seats each party is proportionately entitled to of the 175 seats. From the number of seats thus arrived at for each party, the number of area seats already obtained by the party is deducted. The number thus arrived at is the number of supplementary seats due to the party.

The end result of this rather involved electoral system is a distribution of seats in the *Folketing* that faithfully reflects the share of the popular votes received by the parties.

Candidates who have been nominated but not elected figure on a list of substitute members drawn up by the Ministry of Interior after each general election. These substitute members fill the seats of the *Folketing* which become vacant between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The 1979 elections were the fourth general elections in Denmark within a period of a little less than six years.

After the elections of 1977, the leader of the Social-Democratic Party, Mr. Anker Jorgensen, formed a minority Government. This Government was reorganized on 30 August 1978, when seven Ministers were appointed from the Liberal Party. As a result of disagreement between the two Government parties on economic policy, Prime Minister Jorgensen issued writs for a general election a little less than 18 months before expiry of the normal *Folketing* term.

At the 1979 election, 12 political parties nominated 1087 candidates for the 175 seats of metropolitan Denmark (excluding Greenland and the Faeroe Islands). The main

problems discussed during the campaign were the country's economic difficulties, particularly the ever-increasing foreign debt, persistent inflation and unemployment, as well as the role of the trade-unions in Government policy making. The Liberals together with the Centre Democrats, the Conservatives and the Christian People's Party put forward a joint programme for a non-socialist Government. The Social-Democrats presented a new version of the co-ownership plan in industry.

On polling day, the Conservatives, Radical Liberals and Socialist People's Party made progress, whereas the Centre Democrats and Progress Party declined. The Communist Party lost all its seats in the *Folketing*. The Social Democrats, with a gain of three seats, maintained their leading position in Parliament. Prime Minister Anker Jergensen formed a minority Social Democratic Cabinet on 26 October.

Statistics

*1. Results of Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the Folketing*

Number of registered electors.	3,730,650
Voters.	3,194,345 (85.6%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	23,343
Valid votes.	3,171,002

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats obtained	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
<i>Social-Democratic</i>						
Party.	104	1,213,456	38.3	68	65	65
Progress Party	102	349,243	11.0	20	26	26
Liberal Party	98	396,484	12.5	22	21	21
Conservative Party	86	395,653	12.5	22	15	15
Centre Democrats	94	102,132	3.2	6	10**	11
Socialist People's Party	103	187,284	5.9	11	7	7
Communist Party	103	58,901	1.9	-	7	7
Radical Liberal Party	98	172,365	5.4	10	6	6
<i>Christian People's</i>						
Party.	73	82,133	2.6	5	6	6
Single Tax Party	91	83,238	2.6	5	6	6
Left Socialist Party	84	116,047	3.7	6	5	5
				175*	174	175

* Four more Deputies are elected in Greenland and the Faeroe Islands.

** Before dissolution, one Deputy left the Centre Democrats.

*2. Distribution of Deputies according
to Professional Category*

Personnel in administrative, clerical and commercial fields.	41
Managers and administrative executives	30
Teachers.	28
Government employees.	19
Self-employed: liberal professions.	11
Farmers.	9
Self-employed: crafts and industry.	6
Skilled workers.	5
Housewives.	5
Self-employed: trade and transport.	4
Unskilled workers.	4
Technical employees.	3
Others.	14
	179

3. Distribution of Deputies according to Sex

Men.	137
Women.	42
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4. Distribution of Deputies according to Age Group

18-30 years.	5
30-40.	49
40-50.	61
50-60.	48
60-70.	16
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