

ICELAND

Date of Elections: June 30, 1974

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held to renew all the members of Parliament, which body was not normally due to be dissolved until 1975. Previous general elections took place on June 13, 1971.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Parliament of Iceland, the *Althing*, is divided into 2 Houses: the *Eefri deild*, or Upper House, and the *Nedri deild*, or Lower House. When, as often happens, both Houses work together, Parliament is known as the *United Althing*.

The Upper House consists of 1/3 of the members whom the *Althing* chooses from amongst the newly-elected representatives, the remaining 2/3 forming the Lower House. Each House and the *United Althing* elects its own Speaker.

The *Althing* comprises 60 members, all elected for a 4 year term.

#

Electoral System

All Icelandic subjects, of either sex, who are at least 20 years of age and have been domiciled in the country for no less than 5 years prior to the elections have the right to vote. Electors must furthermore be of unblemished character and financially responsible.

Electoral registers are drawn up by municipal councils at the latest 2 months before the election date. Voting is not compulsory.

Every citizen qualified to vote is eligible for the *Althing*, with the exception of Supreme Court judges. Civil servants do not require governmental authority to stand for election. However, once elected, they must ensure that, throughout their term of office, their duties are carried out in a satisfactory manner and at no additional cost to the Treasury.

Of the 60 popularly elected members of the *Althing*, 25 are elected according to the d'Hondt method of representation in 5 constituencies of 5 members each; 12 are elected in 2 constituencies of 6 members each; 12 are elected in the city of Reykjavik; and 11 supplementary members — deemed nationally elected — are chosen for equalization between those parties which have

obtained at least one constituency seat, so that each of them is represented in Parliament as nearly as possible in proportion to the number of votes obtained in the general election.

Parliamentarians figure on party or non-party lists in all constituencies. Each list generally contains twice the number of members to be elected in the constituency.

Deputy members elected at the same time as full-fledged members fill parliamentary seats which become vacant between general elections, in the order of their appearance on the list concerned.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

At the request of Prime Minister Olafur Johannesson, the *Althing* was dissolved on May 9, 1974, and the election date scheduled the same day. This dissolution followed a split, within the Cabinet, over the question of the Government's anti-inflation policies. The crisis had begun when, three days earlier, the Liberal Left resigned from the ruling leftist coalition (comprised, in addition, of the Progressive Party and the communist People's Alliance) in order to protest the Government's proposals to abolish cost-of-living wage increases and to impose a ceiling on pay raises. This loss of Liberal support left the Government without a parliamentary majority.

Eight parties and more than 550 candidates contested the 60 seats at stake. The conservative Independence Party, largest group in the outgoing Parliament, focused on national security, calling namely for the maintenance of the strategic NATO base at Keflavik. Mr. Johannesson had announced that the base would be closed by 1975.

In the wake of the stalemate between the outgoing Government and the rightist opposition bloc (Independence and Social Democratic parties), Premier Johannesson, who had stayed in office until the elections, resigned on July 2. President Kristjan Eldjarn in turn asked Independence leader Geir Hallgrímsson to head a new coalition Government.

Statistics

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

Number of registered voters.127,507
Voters.115,586 (90.65 %)
Blank or void ballot papers.1,953
Valid votes.113,633

*Iceland***m**

Political Group	Votes obtained	0, 'o	Number of Seats
Independence Party . . .	48,758	42.7	25 (+3)
Progressive Party . . . ,	28,388	24.9	17 (=)
People's Alliance . . . ,	20,922	18.3	11 (+1)
Social Democratic Party	10,321	9.1	5 (-1)
Liberal Left ,	5,244	4.6	2 (-3)
Others	448	0.3	—
			60