

NETHERLANDS

Date of Elections: November 29, 1972

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held to renew all the members of the Second Chamber (Lower House), which had been prematurely dissolved by Royal Decree on September 21, 1972 — 17 months subsequent to previous elections. The normal expiry of the members' terms of office was not due until September 16, 1975.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Parliament of the Netherlands, the States-General, is bicameral. The First Chamber (Upper House) comprises 75 members elected for 6 years, half of whom are renewable every 3 years. The Second Chamber (Lower House)

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Electoral System

Every Dutch citizen of either sex who is at least 18 years old * and resident in the Netherlands is entitled to vote unless he is insane, has been disenfranchised as a result of certain criminal convictions, or has been deprived of parental authority or guardianship over children.

Electoral rolls are drawn up at the municipal level by the Mayor and his assistants. Voting is not compulsory.

To be eligible for election to either Chamber, the candidate must have Dutch nationality, be at least 25 years of age, and not have been disenfranchised nor made ineligible by court decision. No person can be a member of both Chambers simultaneously. An incompatibility moreover exists between the offices of parUamentarian and Minister, Vice-President or member of the Council of State; President, Vice-President or member of the Supreme Court; Attorney-General or Solicitor-General to the Supreme Court; President or member of the Court of Accounts; and provincial Governor. A Minister who is chosen as member of the States-General may nevertheless, for a period not exceeding 3 months, hold both these posts.

Lists of candidates are presented at the principal electoral office of each of the 18 circles, or districts, into which the country is divided. To hand in a list, one must collect 25 signatures. The 25 nominating persons can appoint a

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 14.

representative who is empowered to link their list with other hsts, at the national level, into what is then called a group of hsts. The presentation must be accompanied by a payment of 1,000 Guilders. This deposit is not repayable if the number of votes obtained by a group of hsts remains below 75 % of the electoral quota established.

For elections to the Second Chamber, voting takes place in 18 districts, under a party-list system whereby electors vote for one individual candidate appearing on a list. Seats are distributed on the national level among different lists or group of hsts, each being awarded as many seats as its total number of votes is the multiple of an established national quota (the total of valid votes in the country divided by the number of seats (150) to be filled). Within a list, seats are then allocated among candidates according to the order in which they appear on the list. Only if a candidate obtains a number of votes equal to 50 % of the list-quota (a list's total number of votes divided by the number of seats allocated to it) is he elected whatever his position on the list may be. The seats remaining unfilled after this first distribution are then allocated according to the rule of highest average.

Members of the First Chamber are elected by the 11 Provincial Councils (grouped into 4 electoral colleges) by party-list system, with seats proportionately filled as for members of the Second Chamber.

If a seat becomes vacant between general elections it is filled by the first of those next in line on the same list as the former holder thereof.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

After the general elections of 1971, which produced a swing to the Left, the new socialist party DS 70 joined the coalition Government, led by Prime Minister Biesheuvel of the Anti-Revolutionary Party. The 5-party coalition: 3 Christian-Democratic groups (the Catholic People's Party, the Anti-Revolutionary Party and the Christian Historical Union), the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (liberals) and the Democratic Socialists 70 (right-wing socialists), which controlled 82 of the 150 seats in the Second Chamber, broke down in July 1972 after 2 Ministers, members of DS 70, resigned in protest over budget reductions foreseen to curb inflation. The controversy succeeded in depriving the Government of a workable majority in this same Chamber, and led to the premature elections.

A total of 211 candidates from 20 political parties — 16 of them nationally supported — were in contention for seats of the Second Chamber. Such a large field was in effect a further reflection of the electoral system currently in force in the Netherlands — proportional distribution of seats among the various

parties, thus ensuring the representation of all trends in the country. Such a system explains the multiplication and splintering of political groupings, none of which disposes of a majority in Parliament, as well as the recourse to vast coalitions.

With regard to political orientation, the numerous political parties could be generally classified into 4 main groups — center-right coalition, progressives, conservatives and extreme left. Providing the main opposition to the 5 parties of the original Biesheuvel Government were the united left-wing " progressives " consisting of the Labour Party (socialists), Democrats 1966 (left-wing liberals) and the Radical Political Party (a break-away group from the Christian parties).

The dominant issue of the electoral campaign was that of inflation. Mr. Biesheuvel's coalition vowed it would keep defense expenditures at a " reasonable level" —• guided by the principle of quality over quantity. The progressive bloc, meanwhile, called for a large defense budget cut, price freezes, talks with industry and labor on wage and price policies, and increases in minimum wages and pensions. Both groups published joint programmes, and the Opposition even presented a shadow Cabinet.

The results of the elections evidenced an accelerated tendency towards deconfessionalisation and, consequently, a certain polarisation among the electorate. The gains and losses among parties created what was generally acknowledged as a post-election balance in the Second Chamber. The combined number of seats of the former governmental coalition fell to 70 and that of the " confessional " parties to 48, while that of the " progressives " rose to 56 — 19 short of majority. Liberals and radicals gained considerably owing to the vote of the new 18-year old electors. The Radical Political Party, formed in 1968, made an impressive advance — from 2 to 7 seats. In all 14 parties were represented in the Lower House.

The formation of a new Government, acceptable to all sides, took more than 5 months. On May 11, 1973, Mr. Joop den Uyl, leader of the Labour Party, was appointed Prime Minister, heading a Cabinet of 10 left-wing and 6 Christian-Democratic Ministers.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Second Chamber

Number of registered voters.	8,916,947	
Voters.	7,445,287	(83.5%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	51,242	
Valid votes.	7,394,045	

Political Group	Votes Obtained		Number of Seats in the Second Chamber
Labour Party.	2,021,454	27.4	43 (+4)
Catholic People's Party.	1,305,401	17.7	27 (-8)
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy.	1,068,375	14.4	22 (+6)
Anti-Revolutionary Party.	653,609	8.8	14 (+1)
Radical Political Party.	354,829	4.8	7 (+5)
Christian Historical Union.	354,463	4.8	7 (-3)
Netherlands Communist Party.	330,398	4.5	7(+1)
Democrats 1966.	307,048	4.2	6 (-5)
Democratic Socialists 70.	304,714	4.1	6 (-2)
State Reform Party.	163,114	2.2	3(=)
Farmers' Party.	143,239	1.9	3 (+2)
Reformed Political Association.	131,236	1.8	2(=)
Pacifist Socialist Party.	111,262	1.5	2(=)
Netherlands Roman Catholic Party	67,658	0.9	K+1)
Others.	77,245	1.0	—

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!. *Distribution of Members of the Second Chamber
according to Professional Category*

Public administrators.	22
Industrialists and tradesmen	21
Officials of trade unions.	15
Teachers.	14
Liberal professions.	13
Scientists.	13
Officials of social organizations	12
Officials of political organizations...	12
Farmers.	11
Officials of the mass media	7
Members of the armed forces	5
Clergymen.	5

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Netherlands

3. *Distribution of Members of the Second Chamber according to Sex*

Men .	136
Women	11
	150

4. *Average Age: 45 years and 7 months*