

NETHERLANDS

Date of Elections: May 25, 1977

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of the Second Chamber (Lower House) on the normal expiry of their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Parliament of the Netherlands, the States-General, is bicameral. The First Chamber (Upper House) comprises 75 members indirectly elected for 6 years, half of whom are renewed every 3 years. The Second Chamber (Lower House) is composed of 150 members elected for 4 years.

Electoral System

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

Electoral registers are continuously kept up to date. Voting is not compulsory. Proxy voting is permitted within strict limits.

To be eligible for election to either Chamber, a candidate must have Dutch nationality and be at least 25 years of age. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with the office of civil servant, member of the armed forces, Minister, Vice-President, member of the Council of State, judge of the Supreme Court, member of the General Board of Auditors, Queen's Commissioner in a province and Clerk of either Chamber. A Minister who is chosen as member of the States-General may nevertheless, for a period not exceeding three months, hold both these posts.

In each electoral district, lists of candidates must be supported by at least 25 electors. The 25 nominating persons can appoint a representative who is empowered to link their list with other lists, at the national level, into what is then called a group of lists. Nominations of lists of parties which are not already represented in the Second Chamber must be accompanied by a deposit of 1,000 *guilders*. This deposit is not refunded if the number of votes obtained by the political group remains below 75 % of the established electoral quota.

For elections to the Second Chamber, voting takes place in 18 districts, under a party-list system with proportional representation. Seats are distributed on the national level among different lists or groups of lists, each being awarded as many seats as its total number of votes for its candidates 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 each list, seats are then allocated among candidates according to the order in which they appear on the list. The seats remaining unfilled after this first distribution are then allocated according to the d'Hondt method of highest average.

Members of the First Chamber are elected by the 11 provincial councils (grouped into four electoral colleges) by party-Ust 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 candidate who is " next in line " on the list of the same party which previously held the seat.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Prompted by rifts over proposed land-policy legislation in the centre-left coalition he had headed since May 1973, Prime Minister Joop den Uyl resigned on March 22, 1977, and the newly-formed Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) withdrew from the Government on the same day.

A total of 22 political parties contested the elections. Among these figured most prominently the outgoing Prime Minister's socialist Labour Party (the most successful party in the previous elections), the CDA (the former Catholic People's and Anti-Revolutionary parties, and the Christian Historical Union) and the Liberal Party. Economic issues (especially inflation and unemployment) dominated the election campaign.

A record turnout of 87.5 % was registered on polling day. The three main groups listed above all made gains as the Labour Party's 6% increase in votes gave it an extra 10 seats in Parliament — the largest gains by any political party in years. These results indicated an increasing polarization of political forces (83 % of the vote for the three major parties as compared to 73 % in 1972) and a consequent decline in the smaller parties, as the number of groups represented in the Second Chamber fell from 14 to 11. Although following the elections Mr. den Uyl attempted for several months to form a new coalition Government, he had not as yet succeeded at the time of publication of the XIth *Chronicle*.

Statistics

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

Voters. 87.50 % (approx.)

Political Group	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats
Labour Party.	2,810,636	33.81	53 (+ 10)
Christian Democratic Appeal	2,653,416	31.91	49 (+ 1)
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (Liberals).	1,492,188	17.95	28 (+6)
Democrats 1966.	451,739	5.43	8 (+2)
State Reform Party.	177,038	2.13	3 (=)
Netherlands Communist Party	143,420	1.73	2 (-5)
Radical Party.	140,662	1.69	3 (-4)
Farmers' Party.	69,854	0.84	1 (-2)
Democratic Socialists 1970.	59,508	0.72	1 (-5)
Others.	315,131	3.80	2 (-3)
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