

NORWAY

Dates of Elections: 13 and 14 September 1981

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the term of members. The previous general elections took place on 11 and 12 September 1977.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Parliament of Norway, the *Storting*, consists of 155 members elected for 4 years.

The *Storting* is in reality a unicameral system, but when dealing with legislation, it divides in two parts. The first division is called the *Lagting* (acting as Upper Chamber) and the second division is called the *Odelsting* (acting as Lower Chamber).

Under the terms of the Constitution, the *Storting* nominates one-fourth of its members (39) to constitute the *Lagting*. The remaining three-fourths (116) constitute the *Odelsting*. This nomination takes place at the first assembly of the *Storting* following a general parliamentary election.

Electoral System

Norwegian citizens of either sex and over the age of 18 years* on polling day are entitled to vote, provided they have resided in Norway during the previous 10 years. The right to vote is lost in the case of any person who is sentenced for criminal offences, enters the service of a foreign power without the consent of the Government, is found guilty of electoral fraud or is declared incapable of managing his or her own affairs.

The electoral registers are revised every four years. Voting is not compulsory.

Every qualified elector is eligible for the *Storting*, with the exception of Ministers and officials of the Ministries, the Royal Court and consular or diplomatic services, whose posts are deemed incompatible with the parliamentary mandate.

Although the great majority of candidates are nominated by a recognized political party, this is not obligatory and persons may run as independents. A candidate may run simultaneously in several constituencies; if he is elected in more than one he must select the constituency he wishes to represent.

Each of Norway's 19 counties (*fylker*) constitutes an electoral constituency. In each of them, four to 15 Deputies and their substitutes are elected by party list system, with proportional distribution of seats according to the St. Lague method. These same substitutes are called upon to fill any vacant seat which may arise between the general parliamentary elections.

* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XIII* (1978-1979), p. 23.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Following the September 1977 general elections, Mr. Odvar Nordli (Labour) had formed a Labour-Socialist Left coalition Government with a majority of one in the 155-member House. In February 1981, Mr. Nordli resigned on health grounds and was succeeded by Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland (Labour)—the first woman in any Scandinavian country to become Prime Minister.

Economic issues—inflation, rising taxes, growing governmental spending, oil production, etc.—dominated the 1981 election campaign. Other matters raised included the abortion law, the NATO alliance, establishment of a Nordic nuclear-free zone, etc.

With the 18-year-old citizens voting for the first time, the voter turnout was rather heavy—83.2%.

The poll results were a major set-back to the ruling coalition. The Labour Party itself lost some 5% in votes and 10 seats. The non-socialist parties took 85 seats as against 77 in the outgoing House. The Conservatives obtained 31.7% votes as against the earlier 24.76% and secured 12 more seats.

The Ministry of Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland resigned on 12 October and the Conservatives formed a minority government headed by Mr. Kaare Willoch, after efforts at forming a non-socialist coalition had failed. Mr. Willoch named his 17-member Cabinet on 14 October 1981.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the Storting

Number of registered electors.	3,004,014
Voters.	2,498,635 (83.2%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	3,577
Valid votes.	2,495,076

Political Group	Votes obtained	H	Number of Seats	Number of Seats won at Previous Election
Labour Party.	914,749	37.20	66	76
Conservative Party	780,372	31.74	53	41
Christian Democrats Party	219,179	9.38	15	22
Centre Party.	103,753	6.65	11	12
Socialist Left Party	121,561	4.94	4	2
Progressive Party.	109,564	4.46	4	-
Liberal Party.	79,064	3.93	2	2
Red Election Alliance	17,844	0.73	-	-
Liberal People's Party	13,304	0.55	-	-
Norway's Communist Party.	6,673	0.27	-	-
Others	3,683	0.15	-	-
			155	155

1. Distribution of Members of Parliament
according to Sex

Men.	115
Women	40
	155

3. Average Age of Members of Parliament: 47.8 years