FINLAND: THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION OF 1966

In Finland the seats at a parliamentary election are distributed in accordance with the proportional method of Victor d'Hondt, which was introduced in Belgium in 1899 and applied since the electoral reform of 1906. According to this method the election results are calculated by dividing the total number of votes for each party in a constituency by the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 .... (in the Saint Lague method by the add numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, etc.). The comparison figures so obtained are arranged in order of magnitude and the parties receive their seats in the order indicated by the comparison figures. Whether the distribution of seats is really proportional depends upon the number of seats per constituency. If the number of seats is small the proportionality will not materialize to the same extent as in a situation in which the number of seats per constituency is great. In the latter case the smaller parties more easily achieve the smallest comparison figure required to obtain a seat.

In the elections of 1966 Finland had 15 constituencies. This number includes the only single member constituency, that of Aaland County. In the other 14 constituencies the number of seats varied between 21 (the city of Helsinki) and 9 (North Karelia).

In consequence of the proportional system of representation Finland has a multi-party system. The basis of the party system is similar to that in the other Nordic Countries. It consists of a conservative party, a liberal party, a centre party that gets its chief support from the rural population, a social democratic party and a communist party. Further, the section of the country's Swedish-speaking population which thinks along middleclass lines has united in the Swedish People's Party (According to the Census of 1960 the Swedish-speaking population amounted to 7.4 per cent of the total population). In addition there are various splinter groups that for longer or shorter periods — usually shorter ones — have established themselves within the political life of Finland.

Election Results

The number of seats alloted to the country's 15 constituencies is based on the total of the registered population, and *not* on the number of those entitled to vote. This has led to the consequence that the parties which enjoy great support in constituencies where the birth-rate is high obtain their seats with a lower average number of votes than other parties do. There were thus 13,616 votes to a seat in Helsinki. The corresponding number in the constituency of Oulu, which has a large child population, amounted to only 10,869.

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Table 1 shows the results of the four latest parliamentary elections in Finland, and table 2 presents the distribution of seats in the same elections.

Table 1. Vote Distribution in the Parliament Elections of Finland from 1954 to 1966.

Party	Number of votes				Percentage of votes			
	1954	1958	1962	1966	-54	-58	-62	-66
Social Democratic Party	527,094	450,212	448,930	645,339	26.2	23.2	19.5	27.2
Centre Party[1]	483,958	448,364	528,409	504,850	24.1	23.1	23.0	21.3
Finnish People's Democratic League[2]	433,528	450,506	507,124	502,713	21.6	23.2	22.0	21.1
National Coalition (Conservatives)	257,025	297,094	346,638	326,928	12.8	15.3	15.0	13.8
Liberal People's Party[3]	158,323	114,617	146,005	153,259	7.9	5.9	6.3	6.5
Swedish People's Party	140,130	130,888	147,655	141,688	7.0	6.7	6.4	6.0
Social Democratic League[4]	—	33,947[6]	100,396	61,274	—	1.7	4.4	2.6
The Finnish Farmers' Party[5]	—	—	49,773	24,351	—	—	2.2	1.0
Others	8,199	18,607	27,068	9,561	0.4	0.9	1.2	0.4
Total	2,008,257	1,944,235	2,301,998	2,369,963	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Turnout (in %)	79.9	75.0	85.1	84.0				

[1] "Agrarian Union" until 17 October, 1965.
[2] Mainly consisting of Communists.
[3] The party was formed on 29 December 1965 by the fusion of the Finnish People's Party and the Liberal League; the latter received 12,000 votes in 1962.
[4] See Magnus Lemberg: "Domestic Politics in Finland during 1962-65." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 1/1966, p. 249.
[5] "Smallholders' Party" until 14 August 1966.
[6] The party stood for election in only four constituencies (out of 16).

Table 2. Party Distribution of Parliamentary Seats in Finland, 1954 to 1966.

Party	Number of seats			
	1954	1958	1962	1966
Social Democratic Party	54	48[1]	38	55
Centre Party	53	48[2]	53	49[3]
Finnish People's Democratic League	43	50	47	41
National Coalition (Conservatives)	24	29	32	26
Liberal People's Party	13	8	13	9[4]
Swedish People's Party	13	14	14	12
Social Democratic League	—	3	2	7
The Finnish Farmers' Party	—	—[5]	—	1
Others	—	—	1	—
Total	200	200	200	200

[1] Among the 48 Social Democrats there were 11 persons who broke away from the parliamentary group and joined the parliamentary group of the Social Democratic League which thereby attained a strength of 14. This act, which had an unequivocal flavor of bad faith towards the electorate, was to a high degree to infect the previously strained conditions in the political arena.
[2] The strength of the group was reduced to 47 by the withdrawal of one member.
[3] The strength of the group has increased to 50 by defection from the Liberal People's Party.
[4] The strength of the group has later decreased to 8 by defection to the Centre Party.
[5] The Finnish Farmers' Party, the former Smallholders' Party, was de facto represented in the Parliament from the autumn of 1958 when the founder of the party withdrew from the Centre Party group.

When the percentages of the votes received by the parties are compared with the number of seats obtained certain anomalies become conspicuous. Thus, a greater proportion of votes need not imply a corresponding increase in representation. This can be explained partly by the fact that the system of d'Hondt is unfavorable to small parties and partly by the occurrence of election coalitions formed between parties. In the election of 1962 the Social Democratic League received 4.4 per cent of the votes, which proportion would have corresponded to 9 seats. But in fact the number of seats obtained did not amount to more than two. At the approach of the election of 1966 the party entered into coalition with the Communists in all the multi-member constituencies. In spite of the fact that the proportion of votes for the Social Democratic League decreased by almost 40 per cent its number of seats increased from 2 to 7 (by 250 per cent). This can be explained by the fact that the party was allowed to put up only 1—3 candidates in its election coalitions with the Communists. A concentration of votes was made possible thereby and that was advantageous because the personal votes of the individual candidates within an election coalition are decisive for the individuals' election. Thus the Social Democratic League received 2.2 per cent of the votes in the southern Turku constituency against the 24.4 per cent for their Communist coalition partners. The joint coalition won four seats. Because the Social Democratic League's 4,500 votes were concentrated upon a single person the party's candidate ranked fourth in the coalition. The Communists, with almost 12 times as many votes, received only 3 seats.

The following comparison shows how shifts in the parties' votes and their number of seats need not coincide. The figures indicate net gains (+) or losses (−) in per cent from 1962 votes and seats.

	Votes	Seats
Social Democratic Party	+ 43.8	+ 44.7
Centre Party	− 4.9	− 7.6
Finnish People's Democratic League	− 0.9	− 12.8
National Coalition (Conservatives)	− 5.7	− 18.8
Liberal People's Party	− 3.0	− 35.7
Swedish People's Party	− 4.2	− 15.4
Social Democratic League	− 39.0	+250.0
The Finnish Farmers' Party	− 51.1	−

It is possible that the above tabulation may at first sight present an unfavourable picture of the equitability of the electoral system. It should however be noted that an equalization of the disproportion between votes and seats has occurred as compared with the election of 1962. It the parties' percentages of votes are doubled (to obtain the number 200) and the numbers obtained are compared with the actual distribution of seats the discrepancy for the 1966 elections will be smaller than that for 1962. After the elections of 1962 the under- and over-representations amounted to a total of 26 seats. After the elections of 1966 this number decreased to 18.

The Political Significance of the 1966 Election

According to the Finnish Constitution the President shall have authority to dissolve the Parliament. Although the President did not avail himself of this authority the elections were held on 20—21 March 1966 instead of 3—4 July of the same year. The latter was the time provided for in the Constitution. The explanation is that the Parliament "dissolved itself". On 10 December 1965 Prime Minister Virolainen put a question to the parliamentary groups on their attitudes regarding an alteration in the time of election. On the 14 December, all the parties having replied in an affirmative sense, a measure was submitted in the matter and on the 20th of December the altered law was passed unopposed.

The unanimity that found expression is this matter was not significant of the political atmosphere during the Parliament of 1962—1965. The Social Democrats had found themselves in opposition since the beginning of 1959. As the Social Democratic Party and then the Agrarian Union were the mainstay of most governments in the 1950s the question arises of what the reason was for the violent opposition from the Social Democrats after 1959 right up to the elections of 1966.

The explanation lies to a great extent in the fact that the former partners of the Social Democrats in government coalition — the Agrarians — refused to cooperate with the Social Democrats at government level for what was stated to be reasons of foreign policy. This explanation was frequently expressed in the Agrarian Party press. The following quotation from the chief organ of the Agrarian, the newspaper *Maakansa* (21 November 1964) may serve as an example. "Within the Agrarian Union the conviction still prevails that the opportunities of cooperation between ourselves and the Social Democratic Party will not be decided by what representation the parties have in the Parliament, the decisive question being the chances of success in foreign policy that a government consisting of these two parties would have..." The newspaper *Maakansa* is generally regarded as being a medium of expression for President Kekkonen. Especially Väinö Leskinen, former Secretary of the Social Democratic Party, was declared to be a stumbling block when it came to adjusting the foreign policy of the party. During the last years one of the most central issues in Finnish politics was the discussion regarding the Social Democratic Party's incapacity for government in a foreign policy sense. It has, however, been difficult for the critics to indicate any concrete point over which the Social Democratic Party had erred. Dieter Strand, the noted commentator of *Stockholmstidningen*, the now defunct organ of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, writes (21 October 1964) "It is really very difficult to get any Finn to provide any concrete indication of what opinions of Leskinen in themselves would compromise the official foreign policy."

Critics have consequently voiced the opinion that the Social Democratic Party's incapacity for government on grounds of foreign policy is not associated with its foreign policy but with the Party's attitude towards the Communists in the country. Now that the Party, subsequent to its change in attitude with respect to government cooperation with the Communists, has received partial absolution in Moscow it appears that the critics had more or less hit the mark. In order to be accepted by the Communists the Social Democrats political actions must of course satisfy the Communists.

During its period in opposition the Social Democratic Party was conducting a tough opposition policy that struck at many of the measures of the non-socialistic governments during the period from 1962 to 1965.

The Social Democratic Party was the only party that increased its vote in the 1966 election as compared with that of 1962. The party captured one or more additional seats in 13 constituencies. In the constituency of the city of Helsinki, where support for the party increased from 20.9 to 32.5 per cent of the vote, the Social Democratic Party obtained three new seats in addition to its previous four.

For the *Centre Party* this was the first election since the party had changed its name. A weighty reason for its change of name was the fact that continuing urbanization was making it necessary for the party to look for compensation in towns and centres of population. The name "Agrarian Party" was not regarded as being attractive enough considering that the party found it imperative to appeal to the urban population. It may be noted that the party's campaign upon towns and boroughs largely missed the mark. The party was not able to record any increase in the vote worth mentioning, not even in absolute numbers. Helsinki, the capital, was one of the few towns where the party was able to increase its vote: from 5,523 to 7,945. The party would, however, have needed almost 4,000 additional votes in order

to capture a seat. It may be mentioned that Johannes Virolainen, Chairman of the Centre Party and then Prime Minister, stood for election in Helsinki as did Ahti Karjalainen, the Foreign Minister. Because the electoral law still permits one and the same person to stand in several constituencies the Party Chairman and the Foreign Minister managed to get elected in their more rural constituencies.

The *Finnish People's Democratic League* — the Communists — suffered an unequivocal defeat in the election. It should be emphasised, however, that the defeat was to some extent of a technical nature in that its coalition partner, the Social Democratic League, was successful in obtaining places in the lead in the election coalitions. The extreme left was forced to register losses in votes primarily in the industrialized southern parts of the country. In contrast the FPDL was able to assert itself in the country's two northernmost constituencies. In the constituency of Oulu the party increased its support from 31.3 to 31.9 per cent of the vote. In Lapland the corresponding figures were 33.9 and 35.1 per cent. In the latter constituency the party succeeded in making its only capture of a seat in this election. The Communists suffered a significant defeat in the highly-industrialized northern Häme constituency. The party's vote fell from 28.9 to 26.3 per cent.

The National Coalition (Conservatives) had to resign itself to receding support in all constituencies except the southern Turku constituency in the south-west of Finland where the party's proportion of the vote rose from 12.5 to 12.9 per cent. The cause of the defeat of the National Coalition must evidently be sought in the party's unpopular commitment in government during most of the lifetime of the 1962—1965 Parliament. This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that the wing within the party that was opposed to the government policy conducted was able to register successes.

Although the vote for the *Liberal People's Party* declined by as little as 0.4 per cent it lost (no fewer than) 5 of its earlier 14 seats. This was largely a result of the party's having entred into unsuccessful election coalitions. As to the election result concerning the Liberal Party, an interesting shift can be noted. The party came into being towards the end of 1965 through a union of the Finnish People's Party and the Liberal League. The parliamentary group of the Liberal People's Party had 14 seats (13 + 1) after the fusion. After the election in March the number of members in the Parliament who had formely belonged to the Finnish People's Party dropped to 4 while the former Liberals now received no less than 5 seats. The cause of this shift can be assumed to be the fact that the Finnish People's Party, by participating in government during the period 1962—1965, had come to be regarded as partly responsible for the policy of that government. The Liberals, on the other hand, had assumed a consistent attitude of opposition. As the proportion of the liberal sector increased considerably in the election it may be concluded that a protest action against the government policy conducted was concerned.

The Swedish People's Party, too, had been represented in government for most of the period 1962—1965. As a consequence the Party had to withstand severe criticism from the Social Democrats. There were also circles within the party that stood in opposition to the policy conducted. The election result — the loss of 2 seats — may be seen as a shift of votes to other parties (chiefly the Social Democratic Party) but also in part as the continuing relative decline of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland. One may be puzzled by the fact that the Liberal People's Party, with 6.5 per cent of the vote, obtained 9 seats while the Swedish People's Party, with 6 per cent of the vote, obtained 12 seats. The explanation lies in the fact that the vote for the Liberal People's Party is spread throughout the country while the support for the Swedish People's Party is concentrated in only 4 constituencies where the party captures 13—20 per cent of the vote (with the exception of the southern Turku

constituency, where party's proportion amounted to 6.3 per cent). The system of d'Hondt can not consequently be regarded as unfavorable for the party.[1]

It was the Swedish People's Party that had to bear the greatest turnover within its parliamentary group. Of the 14 members of the group in the previous Parliament 13 stood for re-election. Only five of these were returned while eight were rejected.

For the *Social Democratic League* the election involved a paradox. Although the party lost almost 40 per cent of its vote, its number of seats rose from 2 to 7. Although this is a victory for the party from a purely representative point of view the decline in the vote is nevertheless a warning. If the Social Democratic League had gone to the polls without entering into election coalitions with other parties it would have been left without a seat. The future of the party consequently rests upon shifting ground. One may assume that it was not the intention of the Communists to give away some of their seats to the Social Democratic League. No fewer than four of the six seats that Communists lost went to the Social Democratic League. At the next general election, it may consequently be assumed, any election coalition partner of the Social Democratic League will lay down such conditions for entry into coalition as will ensure a more equitable distribution of the seats between the parties.

The Finnish Farmers' Party lost ground in all the constituencies where it stood for election with the exception of one, the constituency of Kuopio where the party increased its support from 6.4 to 6.8 per cent. This minute increase in the vote, however, meant that the party, which was previously unrepresented, now obtained one seat. The Finnish Farmers' Party seems, however, to be built upon its chairman, Veikko Vennamo. Of the 8,800 votes for the party in the constituency 7,000 were given to Mr. Vennamo. The Finnish Farmers' Party stands in sharp opposition chiefly to the Centre Party, of which party chairman Vennamo was earlier a member.

Victory of the Opposition

It can be established that Finland's parliamentary election of 1966 proved to be an unequivocal victory for the forces that had been opposed to the policies of the non-socialist majority, led by the Agrarians, since the 1962 election. It may be noted that the foremost opposition party, the Social Democrats, registered what was almost a landslide victory. But the distribution of the vote within the non-socialist block also shows that the non-socialist voters had not been unreservedly satisfied with the policies conducted during the past years.

It may be mentioned that no fewer than six of the ministers of the non-socialist government of Dr. Virolainen stood for election in the constituency of the city of Helsinki. All of them were rejected. Thus the personal vote for Jussi Saukkonen, former Chairman of the National Coalition, fell from 8,003 in 1962 to 2,355. J. O. Söderhjelm, former Minister of Justice and a prominent representative of the Swedish People's Party, saw his vote reduced from 5,035 to 1,637. Representatives of the opposition within the non-socialist parties were, in contrast, able to register considerable gains. Raimo Ilaskivi, one of the leading opposition politicians of the National Coalition, obtained 16,000 votes in 1966 as compared with the 9,000 that he received in 1962. Georg C. Ehrnrooth, one of the major critics of the government from the Swedish People's Party, received more than 15,000 votes in the 1966 election. These few examples indicate that the opposition within the non-socialist parties was able to assert and improve its position despite the general political swing to the left. The election held in Finland in March 1966 resulted thus in a sharp settlement of accounts with the policy conducted during the previous four-year-term of the Parliament.

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[1] L. Krusius—Ahrenberg — M. Kull: *Kring frågan om en reform av vårt proportionella valsätt*. Helsingfors 1954, p. 22.