

The First Direct Election of Finland's President

Pertti Pesonen, University of Helsinki, Finland

The Republic of Finland had nine presidents between 1919 and 1994. They were voted into office indirectly, the final decision being made by the popularly elected Electoral College (and in some exceptional cases by the Parliament). The French type of direct election method was used for the first time in 1994 when the successor to President Mauno Koivisto was designated.

The election days were 16 January and 6 February 1994, and on both occasions more than 43 percent of the voters rushed to the post offices to cast their ballots in advance. Both rounds of the election turned out to be exciting. However, the biggest surprise was the success of the woman candidate of the small Swedish People's Party, Mrs Elisabeth Rehn, who unexpectedly came close to victory but was defeated at the last moment by the original favorite Mr Martti Ahtisaari, the Social Democratic Party candidate. Thus the tenth president of the Republic is again a he and not a she.

The results are summarized in Tables 1 and 2 and the crucial fact in Table 1 is that Rehn received more votes than the candidates of two of the three big parties, while the crucial fact in Table 2 is that Ahtisaari received more votes than Rehn.

There had been increasing demands during the 1980s for more power to the people and less to the political elite. One obvious undercurrent of the 1982 presidential election was the voters' determination to prevent any unannounced "black horse" candidate from entering the votes to be cast by the members of the Electoral College. By the 1988 presidential election the political leaders had yielded somewhat and two simultaneous elections were held: a direct one and that of the Electoral College, the latter for the purpose of making the decision in the almost certain case that no candidate crossed the 50 percent mark. The next step then was the direct election on two rounds in 1994. A provision about consultative referendums was also added to the Constitution Act in 1987.

The 1994 presidential election was not only exciting, but educational as

Table 1. Votes Cast in the First Round of Finland's 1994 Presidential Election, Between 5 and 11 January (Advanced Voting), and on 16 January (Election Day).

The Candidates	Number of Votes			Adv.	In percent	
	Advanced	El. Day	Total		El. Day	Total
Martti Ahtisaari	369,419	458,619	828,038	27.2	24.9	25.9
Elisabeth Rehn	210,408	491,803	702,211	15.5	26.7	22.0
Paavo Väyrynen	295,099	328,316	623,415	21.8	17.8	19.5
Raimo Ilaskivi	230,536	254,499	485,035	17.0	13.8	15.2
Keijo Korhonen	87,545	99,391	186,936	6.5	5.4	5.8
Claes Andersson	49,467	73,353	122,820	3.6	4.0	3.8
Pertti Virtanen	40,652	54,998	95,650	3.0	3.0	3.0
Eeva Kuuskoski	39,937	42,516	82,453	2.9	2.3	2.6
Toimi Kankaanniemi	15,548	15,905	31,453	1.1	0.9	1.0
Sulo Aittoniemi	13,618	17,004	30,622	1.0	0.9	1.0
Pekka Tiainen	3,611	3,709	7,320	0.3	0.2	0.2
Total qualified	1,355,840	1,840,113	3,195,953	100.0	100.0	100.0
Disqualified	4,040	4,538	8,578			
TOTAL	1,359,880	1,844,651	3,204,531			

Table 2. Votes Cast in the Second Round of Finland's 1994 Presidential Election, Between 26 January and 1 February (Advanced Voting), and on 6 February (Election Day).

The Candidates	Number of Votes			Adv.	In percent	
	Advanced	El. Day	Total		El. Day	Total
Martti Ahtisaari	780,924	942,561	1,723,485	52.3	55.2	53.9
Elisabeth Rehn	712,548	763,746	1,476,294	47.7	44.8	46.1
Total qualified	1,493,472	1,706,307	3,199,779	100.0	100.0	100.0
Disqualified	6,740	8,242	14,982			
Total	1,500,212	1,714,549	3,214,761			

well. Much was learned about candidate selection, campaign methods, the behavior of voters, the election method itself and, perhaps, about the seriousness of campaign promises. Moreover, the stage was renewed for the forthcoming consultative referendum on Finland's membership in the European Union and for the 1995 election of the Parliament.

The Candidates

The deadline for nominations was 26 November 1993. Eleven candidates

were properly nominated; namely, seven by registered political parties and four by the required 20,000 individual supporters. All the important nominations took place quite early, before the summer of 1993.

Each party of the governing coalition had a candidate. The Center Party nominated anew its former party leader and presidential candidate of 1988, Dr Paavo Väyrynen, and the Conservatives the ex-PM and former Mayor of Helsinki, Dr Raimo Ilaskivi. Those choices echoed the results of party primaries: the big news in early April was the defeat of Pertti Salolainen the chairman of the Conservative Party and the government's Minister of Foreign Trade, while the obvious result in May was the victory of Dr Väyrynen over the Minister of Justice, Dr Hannele Pokka. The Christian People's Party nominated Toimi Kankaanniemi, the Minister for Foreign Aid. Rehn, whose support in the SPP was far from unanimous, is the government's Minister for Defence.

The new two-term limit which had been stipulated by a constitutional amendment in 1991 did not apply to the incumbent Dr Mauno Koivisto. Therefore the main opposition party (since 1991), the Social Democrats, could not act until President Koivisto finally announced on 19 March 1993 that he would not be seeking re-election. In the middle of May the party then organized a very open membership primary in which non-members were free to participate. For example, there were 14,000 voters in Helsinki, a city where the party had only 5,500 dues-paying members. The career diplomat Martti Ahtisaari, who came from the outside, campaigned actively and defeated the most likely candidate, the long-time party leader Kalevi Sorsa. After such a result the SDP could not avoid abandoning its heir apparent.

The Left-Wing Alliance, in turn, nominated its chairman and MP, Dr Claes Andersson, and the Finnish Rural Party the chairman of its parliamentary group Sulo Aittoniemi. The Greens and the Liberals did not name any candidate.

Many independents also attempted to gain a candidacy but, finally, only four "citizens' movements" were able to satisfy the requirements. They included two former Center Party ministers: the professor, ambassador and journalist Dr Keijo Korhonen and the pediatrician and MP, Dr Eeva Kuuskoski. The two others who appeared were the Communist Pekka Tiainen and the psychologist and popular star Pertti Virtanen.

It is worth noting that none of the three political figures who in theory should have been the most likely candidates was among the eleven nominees, namely, the incumbent President, the Speaker of the Parliament, and the Prime Minister. The fourth person who could have been added to the list is the defeated SDP leader who had served both as the Prime Minister of five governments and as the Speaker of the Parliament.

The First Campaign

Both finalists, Martti Ahtisaari and Elisabeth Rehn, supported Finland's membership in the European Union. On the other hand, joining the EU was fiercely opposed by the historian Keijo Korhonen who presented it as an issue of either defending or giving away Finland's independence; also by Minister Toimi Kankaanniemi who had originally joined in the government's decision to apply for EC membership; and a somewhat milder opposition was expressed by Eeva Kuuskoski. The side in favor also included the Conservative candidate and, though even more cautiously, the Center candidate, whereas both candidates from the far Left opposed membership quite vehemently.

European integration was not the only campaign issue, but it was both very timely and of historic importance. The terms of Finland's membership had been under intensive negotiations since February 1993, and, just as it was hoped during the campaign, the provisions of the treaty were agreed upon by the beginning of March 1994. Curiously, the strongest supporters of EU membership became the two winners of the first round of balloting on 16 January, while the most consistent anti-EU crusaders received rather few votes; yet only a narrow majority of Finnish voters actually favored membership.

It would be pointless to look for too much consistency in the content of a lively campaign. For example, tactical considerations seem to have eroded some of Ahtisaari's clarity on the EU issue during November and, on the other hand, a Gallup poll in early January shocked the opponents of EU membership because it revealed a revival of more favorable mass attitudes.

Neither should one look for too strict an observance of the President's constitutional powers in the campaign promises. Some candidates promised, if elected, to do things the President cannot legally do, such as dissolving the Parliament upon their own initiative. In addition, there was continuous debate on how much influence the President could exert through his powers of persuasion. Thus the Conservative Ilaskivi concentrated his campaign on policies aimed at revitalizing the country's economy, although those actually belong to the realms of the parliamentary government and the Bank of Finland.

Even before January 1994 it was generally felt that the campaign had lasted too long. Yet it is not easy to determine when the open campaign actually started. Public opinion pollsters had been looking for potential candidates after the parliamentary election of 1991 and again during 1992, and limited but intensive campaigning took place before the party primaries and party conventions of 1993. Väyrynen toured the country throughout the summer and opened his campaign "officially" on his forty-seventh birthday, 2 September. Ilaskivi began his campaign on 6 September, and Elisabeth Rehn as late as 23 October. For the first time, eight of the

candidates met to discuss Finland and the United Nations on 24 October, yet one might also say that the over-all starting-point was 3 November, when the first of the four large televised campaign debates with all the candidates was broadcast on MTV. By that time Ahtisaari had also returned from his expedient "exile" in Geneva.

Another later milestone was 1 December, when the eleven candidates were formally acknowledged and given their official numbers (from 2 to 12). The numbers which were essential for actual voting were also used in the advertisements and campaign literature as well as in the outdoor posters which were allowed to be displayed in most cities from 29 December.

An important element of previous presidential elections was no longer present in the 1994 campaign. To a large extent the liveliness and the content of presidential elections had been determined by the constituency-level activity of the candidates who ran for the Electoral College (1,912 candidates in 1988). Now there was hardly any "intermediate" link of activists to speak to the voters on behalf of the presidential candidates, and the candidates were thus left more alone than before to meet their voters face to face in the mass media or during their canvassing tours. One substitute for the "missing link" were newspaper advertisements displaying impressive lists of supporters' names.

Owing to the important role of the mass media, the candidates were willing to accept a great many invitations to appear on all five TV channels: in various debates (or "questionings") and also in light programs on the level of popular entertainment. Several programs compared a few candidates only, because the law no longer required equal time for all the candidates. The press devoted plenty of pages to the campaign, actually more to interviews of the candidates than to news reports from their campaign trails.

It is obvious that information revealed through public opinion polls played an important role in the campaign and in the dynamics of opinion change. The rapid decline in Ahtisaari's support from 50 percent in June to as low as 24 percent in December forced the SDP to revise its strategies (and also to train him, in secret, to perform more convincingly on TV). As late as in November Rehn was in fifth place (see Table 3), but then overtook the other woman candidate Eeva Kuuskoski and later rose to the level of the more obvious contenders, Väyrynen and Ilaskivi, for second place. Finally, one survey questionnaire in January indicated that she had a real chance of defeating Ahtisaari in the second round. This promoted her upward swing sufficiently to outrank the two supposedly much stronger candidates.

On the eve of election day an amazing note from the Russian Embassy became public. The Embassy had asked whether two (very insignificant) right-wing groups were acceptable in accordance with the Paris Peace

Table 3. Support of Finland's Presidential Candidates Between September 1993 and January 1994 (in Percent, Surveys by Taloustutkimus Oy).

	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	20 Nov. 2 Dec.	4 Dec. 19 Dec.	7 Jan. 10 Jan.	Election Result
Ahtisaari	48	42	36	30	25	27	26
Rehn	7	8	9	9	10	18	22
Väyrynen	11	12	16	18	16	19	20
Ilaskivi	12	16	17	16	16	18	15
Korhonen	5	5	4	9	10	6	6
Andersson	2	3	4	3	3	3	4
Virtanen	—	—	—	—	7	5	3
Kuuskoski	8	9	10	8	8	3	3
Kankaanniemi	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Aittoniemi	4	4	3	5	4	1	1
Tiainen	—	1	1	0	0	0	0

Treaty of 1947. The same thing had been asked and answered verbally half a year earlier. The Russian ambassador denied that the timing of the note had anything to do with the election, but one immediate rumor claimed that the intention was to help Väyrynen. If there was any real effect at all, it naturally was the opposite, because this minor incident may have reminded some voters of the election of 1982, in which the rumored Soviet support for Dr Ahti Karjalainen put a definite end to his chances.

The Second Campaign

The latter three-week campaign was a considerably simplified continuation of the long first round. The time was now short and only two candidates remained to face each other. Yet both of them made speeches around the country, and they found time to make a joint appearance in seven televised debates or question programs. There was plenty of advertising in the newspapers.

The tone of the campaign became different. Ahtisaari attempted to make it a clear duel between government and opposition. Although the main responsibility for Finland's economic policies is vested in the Prime Minister and his Cabinet and not in the President, that did not limit the topics that were raised in the campaign debates.

The Social Democrats had been in opposition since the parliamentary election of 1991. Now the economy of the country was in trouble and unemployment was high, largely due to the stagnation of West European economies and the collapse of Finland's trade with the former Soviet Union. Rehn had to defend the government's entire economic and social policies;

her position would have been even more difficult had there not appeared some early signs in the country of a turn to a livelier economy. Then, as soon as all the votes were in, even the newly elected President began to distance himself from both his party and the main theme of his second campaign.

Other issue areas included feminism, the welfare state ideology and more generally the left/right dimension of ideology. Some voters were also concerned with the language cleavage, although Ahtisaari did not allow that to surface in the actual campaign. Obviously, the candidates' outer appearance and other personal characteristics, as well as their general image of trustworthiness, outweighed the political issues in the minds of many voters, while the economic problems of many others were converted into anti-government attitudes. A special attempt was made by the SDP to defend its party line against its female supporters' temptation to vote for the female candidate.

After her surprising initial success Mrs Rehn entered the second campaign as the new favorite. But the "honeymoon" with the voters was not durable enough. For obvious reasons she was not as well prepared as Ahtisaari to start the new fight. She was given the endorsement of the Conservatives and of the Center Party leaders, also that of both of their presidential candidates whom she had defeated, but she received hardly any real help from their organizations. It also became obvious that she was getting rather tired. Gradually she was rolled over by the overwhelming organizational strength of the Social Democrats. An almost linear trend reduced her initial 56 to 44 percent advantage to her final 46 to 54 percent disadvantage.

There was no more hugging during the second campaign, but it did not leave behind any divisive bitterness either. Both Ahtisaari and Rehn avoided personal attacks and, generally speaking, managed to conduct even the most heated debates in a cordial atmosphere. In doing so Ahtisaari was helped by the performance of a lower, more down-to-earth echelon of more negative campaigners.

Had the second round taken place much sooner, Rehn would have been the likely winner. Even now, the election was another major step in the advancement of women in Finnish politics, and before Ahtisaari took his oath of office on 1 March, the Parliament elected the Minister of Education, Riitta Uosukainen, to serve as its first female Speaker.

The Behavior of the Voters

For several decades the Finns had been more active when electing the Parliament than they were in the elections for the presidency. Then, in the

Table 4. Development of Preferences Between Ahtisaari/Rehn After the First Election Round (in Percent), Related to Choice of Candidate in January.

Vote in January	Distribution of Preferences		
	17 Jan.	26–27 Jan.	31 Jan.
Total	44/56	47/53	51/49
Ahtisaari	95/05	99/01	97/03
Rehn	1/99	8/92	16/84
Väyrynen	21/79	22/78	21/79
Ilaskivi	20/80	19/81	21/79
Korhonen	48/52	61/39	64/36
Andersson	81/19	100/00	92/08
Virtanen	59/41	90/10	88/12

Source: Helsingin Sanomat/Finnish Gallup).

presidential election of 1982, the turnout rose to the record high figure of 86.8 percent. Even in the 1988 presidential election the turnout was 82.7 percent, much higher than the 72.1 percent recorded in the subsequent parliamentary election. Such a reversal of relative interest does not mean that the President would have recently gained or the Parliament lost importance in the Finnish political system. Rather, it can be interpreted as a symptom of the general trend towards more personified politics.

In the new kind of direct elections one might have expected that the interest of the voters would decline after the first round, because in February a majority (52 percent) of the January voters needed to abandon their original candidate. In fact, that did not happen. The turnout percentage was 82.1 in January and 82.3 in February. Obviously the direct and clear-cut choice between two individuals motivated people into participating.

The preferences of many voters were unstable. The rise of Elisabeth Rehn's support occurred so late and was so strong that having held the fourth place with only 15.5 percent of the advanced votes cast in January, she was in a leading position on the election day, 16 January, with almost 27 percent of the ballots having then been cast (see Table 1). Likewise, the opposite trend became apparent in February. By the time of advanced voting Rehn had lost her initial advantage, and after that her share declined even further, from 48 percent of the advanced votes to only 45 percent on election day (see Table 2).

Rehn's support was more malleable than Ahtisaari's. The people who had voted for Ahtisaari in January remained quite loyal to him, whereas a proportion of Rehn's voters began to slip away during the second campaign (see Table 4). In January a 57 percent majority of the voters had chosen either Rehn, Väyrynen or Ilaskivi, but all three lost some voters to Ahtisaari on the second round. He also picked up most of the supporters of minor

Table 5. Presidential Vote by Party* in January 1994 (in Percent, by Finnish Gallup).

	Center	SDP	Cons.	Left-wing	Greens	Other	Non-voters	NA	Total
Ahtisaari	4	64	8	32	24	10	11	16	22
Rehn	9	9	14	5	29	40	18	26	19
Väyrynen	69	6	7	3	6	10	7	11	16
Ilaskivi	4	7	64	2	14	8	9	14	17
Korhonen	4	3	1	9	1	10	4	6	4
Andersson	0	1	0	33	2	2	—	2	2
Virtanen	2	1	1	4	9	4	7	5	4
Kuuskoski	—	2	0	2	11	2	—	4	3
Kankaanniemi	2	1	0	1	—	7	—	1	1
Aittoniemi	2	1	1	—	1	2	1	1	1
Tiainen	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	0
Did not vote	1	4	1	5	3	4	38	5	7
DK, NA	2	1	0	1	1	1	3	9	4

* "Which party would you vote for, if parliamentary elections were to be held tomorrow?"

Table 6. Presidential Vote by Party in February 1994 (in Percent, by Finnish Gallup).

	Center	SDP	Cons.	Left-wing	Greens	Other	Non-voter	NA	Total
Ahtisaari	15	84	11	83	44	41	32	42	43
Rehn	71	10	80	6	49	52	26	37	42
Did not vote	8	3	4	6	5	4	34	7	8
DK, NA	6	2	3	2	2	3	8	13	7
	(185)	(282)	(195)	(68)	(104)	(104)	(148)	(469)	(1582)

candidates. In January Rehn's success had ousted Ilaskivi from the "final" round, whereas one reason for Väyrynen's loss to her had been the support of the two independent candidates from his own Center Party.

Tables 5 and 6 give an idea of the impact of party affiliation on the choice of presidential candidate. In January a large majority, but not all, of Center, SDP and Conservative supporters voted for their own party's candidate, whereas the supporters of the Left-Wing Alliance divided their support equally among Ahtisaari and the party's own candidate Claes Andersson. Of the Greens and the "others" (who include the SPP), 40 percent chose a woman in January, and a majority of both groups voted for Rehn in February.

Table 6 indicates that the SDP had good reason to be worried about the party's female supporters, as 10 percent of the Social Democrats voted for Rehn in both rounds. On the other hand, the advice of Väyrynen and

Table 7. Perceived Influence of Some Opinions and Qualities of Ahtisaari and Rehn on the Choice of the Voters (Percent Who Were Influenced "Much" or "Somewhat", Data by Finnish Gallup).

Opinions and Qualities	Voted for:		
	Ahtisaari	Rehn	Total
Views on economic and employment policies	82	64	74
Views on foreign and security policies	81	49	66
Personal qualities	67	83	74
Mother tongue	39	8	25
Gender	17	39	27
Position on EU membership	10	9	10

other Center Party leaders to cast their vote for Rehn was by no means unanimously obeyed. While the Center supporters also tended more than others to abstain from the second round, Ahtisaari had more success than Rehn in mobilizing previous non-voters to the polls.

As indicated in Table 7 the two "finalists" were chosen, to some extent, for different reasons. The relative strengths of Elisabeth Rehn were her attractive personal attributes and her female sex, while Martti Ahtisaari was considered by his voters relatively stronger in his views about domestic economy and employment policies and about the country's foreign and security policies. The mother tongue also helped Ahtisaari more than Rehn.

When the Finnish Gallup asked the voters in February about the importance of nineteen different issue areas in connection with the choice they made, most of those issues were also considered more important by the voters of Ahtisaari than by those of Rehn. The few themes which were emphasized relatively more by Rehn's voters included national defence, environmental protection and the equality of the sexes, whereas Ahtisaari's voters placed much more emphasis on areas such as the attitudes toward the ruling government, the economy of the country, unemployment, taxation, and labor relations. There was only a slight difference in how important the unification of Europe and the Russo-Finnish relationships, or state support for enterprise and agriculture, or the powers of the President were felt to be.

Because only two candidates were facing each other in February, the campaign became more focused and followed the style one would expect of presidential elections. On the other hand, the themes that were discussed then increasingly concerned current and pressing political problems, more typical of parliamentary than presidential elections, and the reactions of the voters proved that Ahtisaari had been advised to follow the right strategy.

New Elements in the Political System

Finland's traditional party organizations can be counted among the losers of the 1994 election. To a considerable extent the parties were by-passed by the voters who wanted to exercise their direct power.

The presidential candidates were aware of the anti-party mood. That is why the Conservative Ilaskivi criticized the economic policies of the Center-Conservative government, and the Center Party candidate Väyrynen opened the way for his critical statements about his own party by resigning from his position as the Minister for Foreign Affairs in May 1993. Three small parties with only a meager chance of the Presidency sought at least some visibility which could help them in the 1995 parliamentary elections, but actually their poor showing may have been more of a hindrance than a help.

Ahtisaari had a tricky relationship with his party. He became president without previous political experience although he had been a member of the Social Democratic Party since his student days. He had distinguished himself abroad, especially when serving in the United Nations Organization. Suddenly his name came up and his popularity surprised the leadership of the party. After his nomination in May, he wisely remained in Geneva until his late campaign debut. His first television appearances were quite unsuccessful but, finally, the SDP party machine and trade union organizations moved in and helped him effectively. Their support was crucial when facing the more "amateurish" opponent in the second round. Ahtisaari's own performance also became increasingly reassuring and his campaign message – to involve the presidency in dealing with the worst economic slump in sixty years – was appealing.

As the tenth president of the Republic of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari will not openly remain a Social Democrat. Like his predecessor Mauno Koivisto he returned his membership card to the party. In his new role he is surrounded by the unrealistic expectations that accumulated as a result of the economic situation, the substance of the campaign, and the people's interest in it.

One reason why the Finnish Constitution was recently amended and some of the President's powers were transferred to the parliamentary government was the notion that direct elections give additional strength to the president. Ahtisaari also promised to continue what he had learned to do during the campaign, namely, to tour the country and meet directly with "ordinary people". If the President can keep up this image of direct contact and also maintain a non-partisan profile, the alternative of political linkage he offers to the parliamentary and political party channels will be strengthened.

An essential element in this development has been and will continue to be the mass media, especially television. The personal image of the

presidential candidates played a crucial role during the campaign, and personal image-building will remain an important element in the political system. On the other hand, more rational issue voting may gain ground in parliamentary elections.

Political parties may need to reconsider their role in presidential elections by the end of Ahtisaari's six-year term, in the year 2000. Most campaigning was now organized by *ad hoc* citizens' groups rather than by the nominating parties themselves. After the election the Conservatives were actually compelled to settle the problem of who was to be responsible for the outstanding campaign bills: the candidate's temporary campaign organization or the regular party organization?

Elisabeth Rehn's campaign may have helped to bridge some traditional cleavages in the Finnish political system. Electing a woman for president will no longer be a problem in Finland – no more than it is in Iceland or Ireland – and very little remains of the language cleavage. The left/right cleavage was also reduced again. The importance of an attractive personal performance in today's media environment has been proven. The unpredictability of today's young floating voters has also been recognized and, to a large extent, the simultaneous prevalence of many more traditional patterns of voter behavior.

After the 1994 election the powerful President of Finland could never return to the distinguished "splendid isolation" of the early decades of the Republic. The direct election method has left a permanent mark on the political culture.

Proposals to Amend the Election System

In 1992 the Parliament had once again appointed a special Committee to study constitutional reform. The main attempt was to limit further the powers of the President and to have such limitations legislated before the election of 1994. However, during the summer of 1993 one candidate after another expressed unwillingness to limit any powers, and by September it was clear that the proposals of the almost unanimous committee had no real chance in the Parliament. Thus the proposed further limitations withered away. On the other hand, Ahtisaari's campaign time idea of establishing a permanent foreign policy council for the President was dropped by another committee soon after Ahtisaari had taken office.

During the campaign the candidates themselves and many others expressed suggestions as to how Finland's new election system might be improved. For example, in an early TV panel all the candidates who were present responded favorably to a question from the floor which suggested a lowering of the voting age from 18 to 16 to years.

There was uneasiness about the number and uneven quality of the candidates and, specifically, about two aspects of candidate nomination. Namely, the parties may have learned how to improve their “primaries” in the future, while many commentators felt that it was too easy to be nominated as a “wild” candidate.

The latter point can be disputed, too. Four candidates were nominated in addition to the seven party nominees, but at least six other persons whose names were mentioned publicly did not succeed in collecting the required 20,000 signatures. Raising the requirement up to 50,000, as was suggested, might be almost prohibitive, in other words reminiscent of the parliamentary elections of 1970 and 1972 in which the newly passed election law allowed only registered parties to name candidates. If such a party monopoly had remained effective, the Greens would not have risen to the Parliament in 1983.

The duration of the campaign was considered to be far too long, but this again is hardly a matter to be controlled through legislation. If desired, it is up to the parties to move their nominations from the spring to the fall. Between the first and the second round of the election in France, there is a lapse of only two weeks. Many Finns preferred the same time span, but here the practical problem is that two weeks might not allow adequate time to administer the important advance voting.

It would hardly be possible in Finland to follow the French rule of denying the right to publish public opinion polls near election days. However, an important discussion was launched about the right to publish exit polls during the voting (and soon, while the forthcoming referendum is going on). The exit polls seem to create more serious problems than ordinary opinion surveys because people may perceive them as reliable information about actual early ballot counting. Soon the exit polls and the possible impact of opinion surveys will be discussed on the basis of the results of a separate study.

Some discussion was also initiated regarding the basic idea of the second round. In my opinion it would have suited the Finnish political system better if three and not just two candidates had been chosen in January to go on to the decisive round in February. The necessary majority could have been guaranteed by using a preference vote of the Irish type.

An illustrative application of such a preference vote was Ireland's 1990 election, in which none of the three candidates reached the required 50 percent, whereafter the transferred second choices of the ballots cast for the third-ranking candidate lifted Mary Robinson from her original second place to be the final winner. In Finland's 1994 election such a system would have allowed 67.4 percent and not only 47.9 percent of the January voters to stick to their own candidate in February. Quite likely it would have increased the involvement of the electorate and it would have tested once

more the relative popularity of the third candidate. The preference vote would also have satisfied those persons who considered it less important to support a candidate than to vote against somebody.

There remained a few observers in Finland who continued to hanker after the abandoned indirect election method and who wanted to bring back the electors as the final interpreters of the will of the people. However, after the 1994 experience of the first direct election it would seem no longer possible to remove the newly acquired power from the rank and file of the mass electorate.