

## Voting by Proxy in Finnish Parliamentary Elections since 1951.

By Risto Sänkiäho

Although Finnish statistics on voting by proxy are rather underdeveloped (e.g. there is no statistical information on communal or voting district level), it is possible to make some generalizations about the voting by proxy in Finland. The author analyzes on constituency level the voting by proxy in Finnish parliamentary elections in 1951, 1954, 1958, 1962 and 1966.

There are considerable temporal and regional variations in voting by proxy. One rather obvious generalization that can be made is that in the southern constituencies voting by proxy is most frequent in summer time, while the opposite is true in the northern constituencies. The author explains this discrepancy by referring to the transfer of the unemployed workers to emergency work camps during the winter season in the northern parts of Finland. The author also points to the discernible trend of increasing voting by proxy in Finland in general, which is no doubt due to the increasing mobility of the population.

As to the distribution of the proxy votes between different political parties, the Conservative Party is no doubt in the most favoured position. The Centre Party (formerly the Agrarian Party) obtains the least of the proxy votes. The proportion of proxy votes out of the total votes received by different political parties in winter and summer elections can be seen in Table 3. The variations are explained by the author in reference to the social structure of the voters of different parties.

One important observation is that the party's proxy votes are a very sensitive indicator of the party's general gains or losses. The winning parties usually increase the proportion of their proxy votes more than their votes at large. Similarly the losing parties lose more in proxy votes than in votes in general. This naturally reflects a higher degree of general activity among the supporters of a winning party.

The ecological correlation between the parties' votes at large and their proxy votes shows that although the Conservative and the Social Democratic party get their general support from the same constituencies the Conservatives get the main part of the proxy votes from these areas. The Conservatives also get numerous proxy votes from areas dominated by the Centre Party. The Liberals get their proxy votes from constituencies where their general support is weak and the proxy votes from their strong areas go to the Conservatives. There is a strong positive correlation between the other parties' votes in general and the local distribution of proxy votes. Especially the Swedish People's Party can be counted as a great »proxy-vote-party» because it gets about 30 % of the proxy votes in those constituencies where it participates in the election.