

Føroya Løgting

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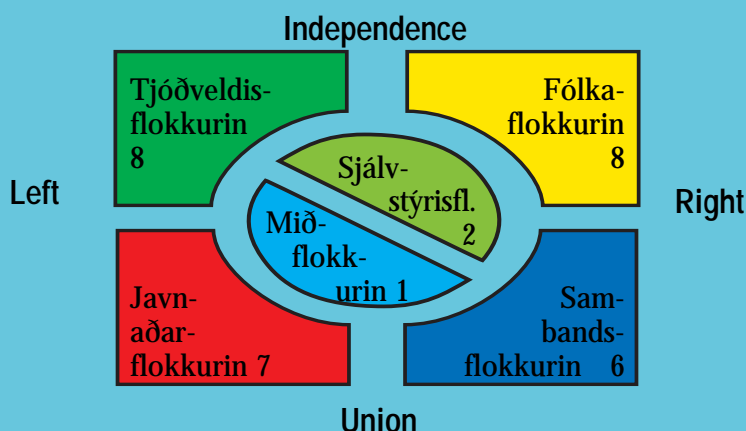


The origin of the Faroese Parliament (the Løgting) can be traced back more than one thousand years. Since 1948 the Løgting has had legislative power as regards the areas which have been taken over as separate jurisdiction in accordance with the Home Rule Act. The Faroese Government has the executive power within these areas.

The Løgting is elected for a period of four years, and the number of the members of the Løgting varies from 27 to 32. The members are elected in 7 constituencies. Six parties are at present represented in the Løgting.

Føroya Løgting 1998 - 2002

The sketch shows the graphic distribution of the parties.



A Historical Outline

The Faroese Løgting can be traced back more than one thousand years. The first source which mentions the Løgting is the "*Færeyingasaga*" which was written in Iceland about the year 1200, but historians estimate that the origin of the Faroese Løgting can be traced as far back as shortly after the first Norse landnam (settlement) of the Faroes in the year 800.

From the very beginning all major decisions which affected the whole country were taken by the Løgting situated in Tórshavn.

In 1035 the Faroes came under the kings of Norway, but historians think that the old order of business was probably retained.

1274-1816

Originally the Faroese Løgting was an Althing where all yeomen had a right to have their say in the policy making, but when the "*Landslóg*" of *Magnus Lógbætari* took effect as from 1274 the Faroese Althing was changed into a Løgting.

The Løgting consisted of 36 chosen men. The Løgting elected the Løgmaður, who was appointed by the King. The Løgting had judicial power and contact with the king and his officials. The "Fútin" was the King's High Commissioner and represented the king in the Løgting and he was responsible for the King's Inland Revenue. He was also Public Prosecutor. The Løgting had its own secretary, the so-called "Sorinskrivari". Another function of the Løgting was to be High Court of Justice, and sentences which were passed at the "Várting" in the various "sýslur" could be appealed to the Løgting.

In 1380 the Faroes as a Norwegian Crownland came under the Danish king but it was still considered to be a Norwegian land.

When Christian the V's "Norska lóg" took effect in the Faroes in 1688, the number of representatives was increased to 48, but no member of the Løgting could sit for more than a period of one year at a time. The result of this system was that the members of the Løgting were not so experienced as they used to be, and consequently the importance of the Løgting diminished, whereas the importance of the Danish officials increased. The "Fútin" and the "Sorinskrivarin" gained in power, whereas the office of the Løgmaður lost in significance.

1816-1852

After Norway was separated from Denmark by the Peace of Kiel in 1814 the Faroes remained with Denmark.

In 1816 the old Faroese Løgting was abolished, and so was the office of the Løgmaður. The "Sorinskrivarin" was now the sole judicial authority.

In 1816 the Faroes became a Danish "amt" (administrative district). The "Amtmaður" (the Chief Administrative Officer) alone decided which Danish laws were to take effect in the Faroes.

1852-1948

In 1852, at the request of the Faroese people, the Løgting was re-established, but now only functioned as a consultative body for Danish authorities concerning the governing of the Faroes. The Løgting had 18 elected members. The "Amtmaður" and the "Próstur" (the dean, the then highest clerical authority in the Faroes) had seats in the Løgting, and the "Amtmaður" was chairman.

In 1906 the membership of the Løgting was increased to 22, but apart from this minor change, the system initiated in 1852 lasted until 1923.

Then the membership was changed, so that from then on there were 20 seats, and up to 10 supplementary seats. At the same time the "Próstur" lost his seat, and from now on the Løgting itself elected the chairman.

AFTER 1948

After the Second World War a vast majority of the Faroese people wanted a new political status within the Kingdom of Denmark. After negotiations between representatives of the Løgting and the Danish Government it was decided that a plebiscite was to take place on September 14., 1946. The voters could choose between a very limited Home Rule or total independence from Denmark. The result of the plebiscite was a narrow majority for independence. A dispute arose as to how to interpret the result – whether the plebiscite had been consultative or decisive. After the following general election in November 1946 new talks resulted in the the Home Rule Act of 1948.

After Home Rule had come into force the parliamentary work of the Løgting changed fundamentally, because before Home Rule the Faroese Parliament had only been a consultative body, whereas now the Faroese Parliament has legislative power within all the branches taken over from the Danish Parliament (Det danske Folketing). According to the Home Rule Act the various branches of legislative power are divided into an A-sector and a B-sector. The several branches within the A-sector can be taken over by the Løgting, if either the Løgting or the Danish Government so want it. The branches within the B-sector can only be transferred to the province of the Løgting if the Faroese Government (Føroya Landsstýri) and the Danish Government agree on the terms. Matters regarding defence and foreign policy are outside the scope of Home Rule. The Danish "Folketing" has legislative power in all areas except those which have been taken over by the Løgting. The Faroese have two seats in the Danish Folketing. Within the framework of Home Rule the Løgting provides for constitutional affairs and for the order of business.

According to the Faroese Home Rule Act the organization of internal affairs is solely within the province of the Faroese Parliament. An act concerning this matter was passed on July 26. 1994. According to section No. 1. of this act the division of legal power concerning matters taken over by the Home Rule is now shared jointly between the Faroese Parliament and the Prime Minister, executive power rests with the Government whereas judicial power in such matters rests with the Danish courts. The Parliament is elected for a period of four years, and the maximum membership is 33 members who are elected in public, secret, and direct elections. The government consists of the Prime Minister (løgmaður) and not fewer than two ministers (landsstýrismenn). The Prime Minister is appointed indirectly by the Parliament as the Chairman of the Parliament after having had talks with the party leaders submits a proposal for a new prime minister, then a vote is taken, and if a majority of the members reject the candidate then the proposal is rejected, otherwise the candidate is accepted. The Prime Minister appoints the ministers. Neither the Prime Minister nor a minister may hold their seats if a vote of censure is put forward and 17 MPs are opposed to one of them. The Prime Minister has at any time the power to issue writs for election.

The Prime Minister and the ministers are not permitted to have seats in Parliament, but they have the right to propose bills and to speak, but they have no voting rights.

The Members of The Løgting



Finnboði Isakson



Jógvan Durhuus



Hergeir Nielsen



Heini O. Heinesen



Annita á Fríðriksmørk



Páll á Reynatúgvu



Finnur Helmsdal



Tórbjørn Jacobsen



Óli Breckmann



Eyðun Viderø



Bjarni Djurholm



Jógvan við Keldu



Jóanis Nielsen



Fólkaflokkurin



Javnaðarflokkurin



Sambandsflokkurin



Sjálvstýrisflokkurin



Tjóðveldisflokkurin



Miðflokkurin

The Political Parties Of The Løgting

Six parties are represented in the Løgting. A Distinctive feature as regards Faroese politics is the fact that there are two trends, one concerning the national question, the other is ideological from left to right.

The Faroese parties are still influenced by the fact that the Faroese non-political nationalist movement, which came into being in the 1880s, and at the turn of the century became political.

Sjálvstýrisflokkurin (The Home Rule Party) was founded in 1906, and its political programme was to confer more power to the Løgting, and to see to it that the Faroese language got the same rights as Danish had as liturgical language, as medium of instruction, and in public life in general.

Sambandsflokkurin (The Unionist Party) was founded in 1906 and is a liberal party, whose main purpose is to gain a steady and liberal advancement for the Faroese people both economically, culturally and constitutionally. The party supports, in co-operation with Denmark, to carry out progressive policies in all fields.



**Jógvan
á Lakjuni**



**Rúna
Sivertsen**



**Jákup Suni
Joensen**



**Vilhelm
Johannesen**



**Henrik
Old**



**Jóannes
Eidesgaard**



**Kristian
Magnussen**



**Dan R.
Petersen**



**Hans P.
Strøm**



**Katrin D.
Jakobsen**



**Flemming
Mikkelsen**



**Lisbeth L.
Petersen**



**Edmund
Joensen**



**Heðin
Mortensen**



**Alfred
Olsen**



**Marjus
Dam**



**Sámal Petur
í Grund**



**Jákup Sverri
Kass**



**Jenis
av Rana**

Føroya Javnaðarflokkur (The Faroese Social Democratic Party) was founded in 1928. The party is an independent social democratic party. The party wants to base its policy on a democratic foundation and thus strengthen the community spirit and the promotion of the people's welfare. All people are to have equal right to participate in the struggle for greater welfare and civil freedom.

Fólkaflokkurin (The People's Party) was founded in 1940. Its platform is political and economic independency based on Christian values. The party's political aim is that each and every family and individual has opportunities and freedom according to individual skills and initiative based on people accepting full responsibility for their activities within the framework of the legal and social system. The party as a liberal party aims at both as little interference as possible from the authorities and at as little burden of taxation as possible.

The chairmanship of the Løgting

Finnbogi Ísakson Speaker	Eyðun Viderø 1. Deputy
Vilhelm Johannesen 2. Deputy	Edmund Joensen 3. Deputy

The office of the Løgting

It is the business of the office to advise the members of the Parliament when so required. Its business is also to function as office for the various parliamentary committees. The office also takes care of matters concerning the Nordic Council and the North-West Parliamentary Assembly.

The address of the office is:

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110 Tórshavn
Tlf. 31 08 50 · Fax 31 06 86
E-mail: logting@logting.fo



Súsanna Danielsen
Executive of the Parliament

The Danish High Commissioner
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Box 12
110 Tórshavn
Tlf. 31 10 40 · Fax 31 08 64
E-mail: riomfr@stm.dk



Vibeke Larsen
The Danish High Commissioner

Tjóðveldisflokkurin (The independence Party) was founded in 1948. The Party aims at establishing the Faroe as an independent republic. The party's policy is to strengthen democratic values in all sections of the society based on both rights and obligations.

Miðflokkurin (The Centre Party) was founded in 1992 and its policy is based on the Christian faith. The party works for a society whose basis is a Christian outlook on life and the party aims at political decisions being taken in harmony with Christians principles.

The Election Of The Løgting

The Løgting is elected for a period of four years. Election of the Løgting can take place before the end of an election period if the Løgting agrees on dissolving itself. The lögmaður issues a proclamation of the forthcoming election and appoints the day of election, which must take place, at the earliest, 6 weeks after the proclamation.

Government of the Faroe Islands (Føroya Landsstýri)



Anfinn Kallsberg,
Prime Minister
(løgmaður): His
portofolios are
Constitutional Affairs,
Foreign Affairs and
Municipality Affairs



Høgni Hoydal,
Minister of Self-
Government, Judicial
and Nordic Affairs,
Deputy Prime
Minister



Jørgen Niclasen,
Minister of
Fisheries and
Maritime Affairs.



Signar á Brúnni,
Minister of
Education and
Culture



Karsten Hansen,
Minister of
Finance



Finnbogi Arge,
Minister of Trade
and Industry



Eyðun Elttø,
Minister of Energy, Oil
Extractive Industry and
the Environment



**Helena Dam á
Neystabø,**
Minister of Health
and Social Services

The Coalition in power is composed of the Fólkaflokkur (The People's Party), Tjóðveldisflokkur (The Independence Party), and Sjálvstýrisflokkur (The Home Rule Party). The coalition has 18 of the 32 members of the Løgting.

The 1998 Election

Total numbers of voters: 31.609 Turn out: 27.660
Percentage of electorate: 87,5 %

	votes	%	seats
Fólkaflokkurin	5.886	21,3	8
Javnaðarflokkurin	6.063	21,9	7
Sambandsflokkurin	4.995	18,0	6
Tjóðveldisflokkurin	6.584	23,8	8
Sjálvstýrisflokkurin	2.116	7,7	2
Kristiligi Fólkaflokkurin - Fram- burðs- og Fiskivinnuflokkurin	698	2,5	0
Miðflokkurin	1.125	4,1	1
Verkamannafylkingin	215	0,8	0

The electoral age and the age of eligibility is 18.

The Session Of The Løgting

The first meeting of the Løgting is “á Ólavsøku” (Saint Olaf’s Day). On Saint Olaf’s Day, 29. July the members of the Løgting, the landsstýrismenn (the ministers), the ríkisumboðsmaður (the High Commissioner), and high officials walk in procession from parliament building to the Cathedral. After the service the procession returns to Parliament House, and the Løgting is opened. At the first meeting, and then the Løgmaður delivers his Saint Olaf’s Address, in which he gives a general descriptions of the state of the Faroese community.

The Løgting has one major parliamentary debate concerning the state of the community. The debate is about Løgmaður’s Saint Olaf’s Address, and the budget.

As a rule the Løgting debates between 125 and 175 various items in one session.

Committees

The Parliament has 7 standing committees which in accordance with the order of business of the Faroese Parliament are elected for the duration of the election period unless the members of the Parliament agree on electing the committees anew.

Standing Committees:

The Finance Committee. As provided by section 44, subsection 2 of the Home Rule Act, the committee grants supplementary appropriation and in addition it gives the Faroese Parliament recommendations on matters of finances, economy, taxes, and duties.

Committee on Foreign Affairs. As provided by section 54 of the Home Rule Act the committee gives the Faroese Government recommendations on foreign affairs, market matters, and defence matters, and in addition recommendations on relations with Denmark.

Committee on Fisheries and Industry. Its tasks is to give the Parliament recommendations on fishing matters, shipping matters, matters concerning fishing industry, industrial matters, matters concerning fish farming, agricultural matters, matters concerning the environment, matters concerning communication and transport, matters concerning energy and oil industry, trade matters and furthermore matters concerning commercial companies and registration matters etc.

The Welfare Committee. Its task is to give the Parliament recommendation on social matters, matters concerning the labour market, and matters concerning housing.

Committee on Judicial Affairs. Its task is to give the Parliament recommendation on judicial and municipal matters.

Committee on Cultural Affairs. Its task is to give the Parliament recommendation on educational, cultural, and ecclesiastical matters.

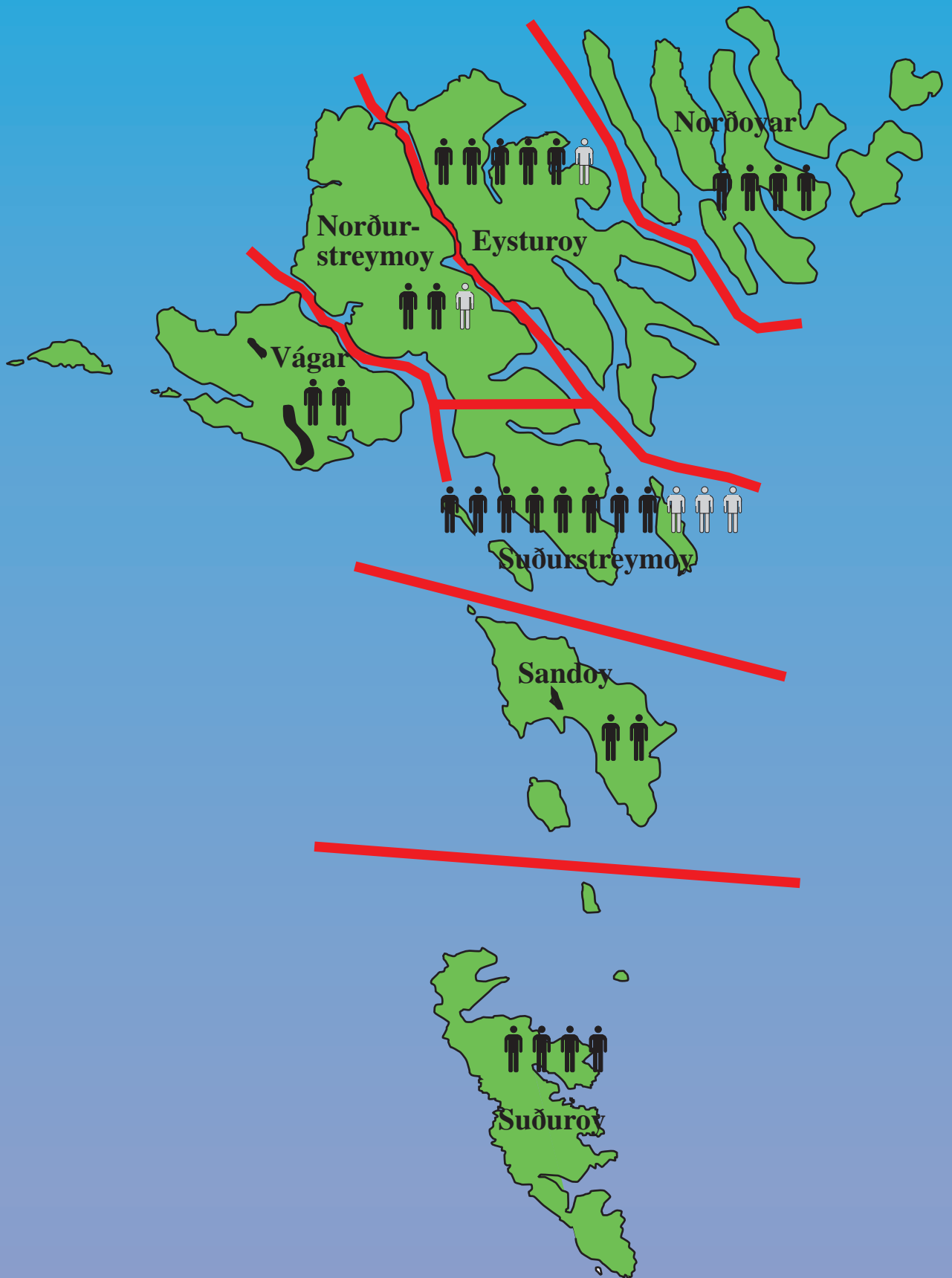
Committee on Governmental Affairs. As provided by section 38 of the Home Rule Act the committee’s task is to have judicial supervision with the Prime Minister and the ministers and to see to it that they observe the rules of law. The committee has authority to summon the Prime Minister or ministers to explain in detail items concerning any political question.

The Representation Of The Constituencies In The Løgting

The membership of the Løgting varies from 27 to 32. The 7 constituencies have 27 seats, and additionally up to 5 supplementary seats. The election act came into force in 1978, and the seven general elections since then have all resulted in 32 members.

Facts about the Faroes

Area	1.000 km ²	1,4
Fishing Territory	-	274
Population	31.12.98	44.850
Total Faroese catch (1998)	1.000 tons	359
- here of:		
Near areas:	-	138
Middle areas:	-	192
Distant areas:	-	29
Gross National Product	1997 (mill. kr.)	5.880
Investment	-	1.882
Faroese export	1998 (estimated, mill. kr.)	2.900
- here of:		
Fish products:	-	2.795
Wessels:	-	85
Other items:	-	20
General Practitioners	pr. 1.000 inhabitants	0,6
Books published	-	3,0
Private cars	-	264



The Procedure of the Faroese Parliament (Föroya Lögting)

The Faroese Parliament works along the legal lines stipulated in the Home Rule Act and according to the order of business of the Faroese Parliament.

Acts, Resolutions, And Other Matters Before the Parliament Have Five Different Forms of Procedure

1. Bills to Become Acts of the Faroese Parliament (Lögting)
2. Recommendations by the Faroese Parliament Concerning Acts Passed by the Danish Parliament (det Danske Folketing) Bearing on Faroese Affairs
3. Proposals Concerning Parliamentary Resolutions
4. Accounts and Written or Oral Questions
5. Votes of Censure

The above mentioned five forms are the only legal ones. Only the Prime Minister (Lögmaður), ministers (landstýrismenn), or MPs (lögtingsmenn) may make a motion. In such cases a citizen or an organization sends the Faroese Parliament a petition or a resolution it does not get a reading unless a member of the Parliament takes responsibility for it within the forms mentioned above.

Bills to Become Acts of the Faroese Parliament

Bills to become acts of Parliament must have a motion and three readings in four different sittings. The bill is moreover debated in a committee and in the Prime Minister's office.

Motion(s)

A bill is tabled when the Speaker of the Parliament announces the fact from the chair during a session of Parliament. Each Member of Parliament receives a copy of the bill no later than the day it is tabled. When the bill is first tabled it is not discussed, nor can it yet be forwarded to a parliamentary committee.

First Reading(s)

The first reading of a bill may take place two workdays after the bill has been motioned. During the first reading the bill is debated in general terms, and possible amendments may be proposed and debated.

Debates in Committees

Chairman of the Faroese Parliament (Lögtingsformaðurin) decides whether a bill should be referred to a committee and to which committee it is to be referred. The committee writes a report to the Faroese Parliament and possible amendments may be proposed by either the majority or the minority of the committee. Debates in committees usually take place between the first and the second readings. The Parliament may, however, after the second reading decide to refer the bill to a committee. During the debate in committee the members of the committee study the bill more thoroughly and may collect additional pieces of information from public and private sources. The committee sometimes summons people to give their opinions concerning the bill.

Second Reading(s)

The second reading may take place on the third workday after the first reading has been concluded, but not, however, until the second day after a possible amendment has been proposed by the committee. An MP may move an amendment in writing, but such amendments must be proposed before the parliamentary debate has begun. The committee as a whole, the majority or the minority of the committee may also move an amendment in writing after the second reading has begun, but only before the debate has ended. A vote is taken when the second reading has been concluded. If the bill is defeated this ends the debate.

Third Reading(s)

The third reading may take place on the third workday after the second reading has been concluded, or after the presentation of possible amendments proposed by a committee. 4 MPs may jointly propose an amendment in writing, and in cases where the bill has been referred to a committee, after the second or the third reading, the majority or the minority of the committee may propose amendment(s) in writing. Amendment(s) may be proposed at the third reading, but only prior to the beginning of the reading. During the third reading the Parliament first debates the amendment(s) proposed and at this stage the MPs also reach a decision as to possible changes of wording concerning sections of the bill which have been proposed amended, and finally a vote is taken concerning the amendment(s) as a whole. Only then follows the final reading of the bill which is then either passed or rejected.

Confirmation and Proclamation

Although Parliament has passed a bill it is not binding on the citizen, until the Prime Minister has confirmed the bill as a Parliamentary Act and it has been proclaimed in the Faroese *gazette*. The Prime Minister has the authority to reject the bill which then does not become an Act of the Faroese Parliament, but he seldom does so, because it might result in a vote of censure forcing him out of office.

Recommendations by the Faroese Parliament Concerning Acts Passed by the Danish Parliament Bearing on Faroese Affairs

The procedure concerning recommendations by the Faroese Parliament concerning acts made by the Danish Parliament bearing on Faroese affairs is the same as that of a bill. The only difference is that the passing of a recommendation is not proclaimed in the Faroese *gazette*, but the Faroese Prime Minister informs the Danish High Commissioner of the decision of the Parliament. The recommendation decided upon is not binding on the citizen, but it is a not binding recommendation to the Danish Government to *legislate* in accordance with the recommendation. As a rule the Danish Government acts on the recommendation.

Proposals Concerning Parliamentary Resolutions

Parliamentary resolutions have only two readings, and after the second reading a vote is taken. The Prime Minister neither confirms nor proclaims resolutions. Parliamentary resolutions are neither binding on the Faroese Government nor on the citizen. In some cases though the Home Rule Act stipulates that a resolution has to be passed by the Faroese Parliament before the Faroese Government may take steps to make important treaties with other countries.

Accounts, Written or Oral Questions

A characteristic feature concerning accounts, written or oral question is the fact that the Faroese Parliament does not make any decision based on the debate. The account or the question is debated in the Faroese Parliament and it is then concluded. No vote is taken, no debate in committee. The purpose of these debates is to give the MPs the opportunity to collect as much information as they need from the Prime Minister, the ministers (*landsstýrismenn*), or from the Danish High Commissioner (*rikisumboðsmaður*) in order to be able to reach a political decision as to which steps to take.

Votes of Censure

According to the Home Rule Act neither the Prime Minister nor the ministers are bound by the Faroese Parliament. The ministers are appointed by the Prime Minister, whereas the Prime Minister is appointed by the Chairman of the Faroese Parliament, the precondition is though that 17 MPs accept the Chairman's candidate for prime minister. The Prime Minister and the ministers are not completely independent, because if 17 MPs are opposed to one of them, they are forced to resign. In case a vote of censure is put forward for the resignation of either the Prime Minister or a minister it gets only one reading. If a vote of censure is put forward by a member of the Parliament it is immediately debated by the Parliament and is then put to the vote.

The Sittings of Parliament

The sittings of the Faroese Parliament are public.

