

**PARTY DISCIPLINE  
IN THE SPANISH PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES**

By

**Manuel SANCHEZ DE DIOS**

Departamento de Ciencia Política y de la Admón. II  
Facultad de CC. Políticas y Sociología  
Universidad Complutense- Somosaguas  
28223- Madrid  
SPAIN

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## **ABSTRACT**

*With this paper we try to explain how party discipline works in the Spanish parliamentary system. First we pay attention to the constitutional formula which, although states the principle of independent mandate of deputies, strengthens the role of parties as main actors of the system. It is so because the Constitution and the electoral law rules a proportional system. Secondly we consider how party discipline is regulated in Standing Orders of the Spanish lower chamber: the Congreso. In general terms Standing Orders submit the will and activity of MPs under the interests of parliamentary groups. Finally, we study mass party and parliamentary groups statutes to know the network of every organization and how MPs are monitored.*

## **1.- Introduction**

Party discipline is one of the basic principles of the parliamentary government. Stable governments are the ones supported by a disciplined majority of a strong party or coalition, and only an homogeneous and unified opposition can aspire to take control of the government. However, party discipline contradicts the liberal principle of free representation of parliamentarians.

It is interesting to see which are the limits to this old liberal principle in each parliamentary system and to know up to what point parties are the fundamental structures of our political systems.

One can analyze these questions in the Spanish case by studying the constitutional rules of the parliamentary system, in particular the electoral ones, and the Standing Orders of the parliament, comparing data about party-list renovations and interparty mobility. To complete the analysis one can weigh organizational rules of the party statutes.

## **2.- The constitutional formula**

In the Spanish Constitution of 1978 there is only a short reference to parliamentary parties. They are only mentioned in art.78.1 to say that parliamentary groups have to send representatives to the *Diputación Permanente* which is a constitutional organ in charge of the *Congreso de los Diputados* powers when it is not in a period of sessions (closed or in vacation). On the other hand, MPs are defined free from dependent mandate art. (67.2) and the Spanish Constitution establishes that Mps cannot delegate their vote in any one (art. 79.3) since it is personal.

If Constitution does not pay attention to parliamentary groups it affirms clearly that parties are powerful actors in the political system. Art. 6 says that parties are "fundamental instruments for political participation" and, regulating the electoral system of the *Congreso de los Diputados*, art. 68 establishes a proportional representation based on blocked lists.

The Spanish electoral system of the *Congreso* is linked to D'Hondt formula (RD-L of 1977 and LOREG of 1985) which has some extremely distorting effects of benefit to the two mayor national parties (Socialists and Centrists or Conservatives), as well as to the Basque and Catalan minorities which are majoritarian in their regions. As a result, the electoral system has been the main source of party discipline in the Spanish case, so that if MPs want to be in the best places of the electoral lists, they must accept and vote for the instructions and proposals of the party direction.

In addition to the electoral rules party leadership is strengthened by the financing-parties law (LOFPP 1987). Parties in Spain obtain mainly money from public budget and it goes directly to the party direction hands. For this reason individual parliamentarians cannot oppose party direction if they want to be economically protected by the party, for example when financing electoral campaigns (Del Castillo, 1990).

In the left coalition IU, the Federal Political Council (federal assemble) approves the lists elaborated by each federation and so happens in the Basque nationalist party PNV where the national executive organ *Euzkadi Buru Batzar* proposes to the national assembly of the party the list to the *Congreso de los Diputados* election. Consequently, the most important way to control MPs is by determining lists composition, which is in the hands of the party direction. In the socialist party there is a "committee on lists" elected by the Federal Committee of the party which controls the content of electoral lists. In the Popular Party there is a national electoral committee linked to the National Executive Committee of the party, which must approve electoral lists for the *Cortes Generales*.

## **A) PARTY RENOVATIONS**

Parliamentary party renovations can be considered a good measure of party discipline when we take into account the effects of the electoral system in the party structures. It can be said that the stronger the party discipline the more stable the MPs and vice versa.

We can take the percentage of 70% of group deputies that were members also of the former parliament as a normal rate, when considering parliamentary party renovations. This is the case of PSOE that rated 72% in 1993 (114 of 159) or 74% in 1989 (129 of 175)

When the amount of MPs of a parliamentary group grows after an election, 70% of MPs of the former legislature repeating can be considered the average rate too. This is the case of PSOE in 1982 (85 of 121) or PP in 1993 (74 of 106) or CIU in 1986 (8 of 12) (this percentage is above the main figure and between brackets).

The stability of a group can be also understood if we take into consideration the fact that the total number of MPs of each parliament is about 50% of the total of two Parliaments before.

**CHART 1: Party renovations**

	PCE -IU	PCE C 1977	PCE I 1979	PCE II 1982	IU III 1986	IU IV 1989	IU V 1993
PSOE	MPs	20	23	4	7	17	18
C 1977	118		17	2	2	1	0
			74% (85%)	50%	29%	6%	0
I 1979	121	75		4	3	2	0
		62% (64%)		100%	43%	12%	0
II 1982	202	52	85		0	1	0
		26%	42% (70%)		0	6%	0
III 1986	184	39	62	128		4	3
		21%	34%	70%		24%	17%
IV 1989	175	34	49	102	129		9
		19%	28%	58%	74%		50%
V 1993	159	26	40	76	95	114	
		16%	25%	48%	60%	72%	

	UCD- -CDS	UCD C 1977	UCD I 1979	UCD+ CDS II 1982	CDS III 1986	CDS IV 1989
AP-CD- -CP-PP	MPs	165	168	14	19	14
AP C 1977	16		92	8	2	2
			55%	57%	11%	14%
CD I 1979	9	4		10	4	1
		44%		71%	21%	7%
CP II 1982	106	13	18		2	4
		12%	17%		11%	29%
CP III 1986	105	16	15	40		11
		15%	14%	38%		79%
PP IV 1989	107	17	16	26	57	
		16%	15%	25%	54%	
PP V 1993	141	16	18	22	45	74
		11%	13%	16%	32%	74% (70%)

	CIU	C 1977	I 1979	II 1982	III 1986	IV 1989	V 1993
PNV	MPs	11	8	12	18	18	17
C 1977	8		5	2	2	1	1
			63%	17%	11%	6%	6%
I 1979	7	6		7	6	6	3
		86%		58%	33%	33%	18%
II 1982	8	2	2		8	7	4
		25%	25%		44% (67%)	39%	24%
III 1986	6	0	1	2		17	11
		0	17%	33%		94%	65%
IV 1989	5	0	0	0	3		11
		0	0	0	60%		65%
V 1993	5	0	0	0	2	4	
		0	0	0	40%	80%	

According to this particular point of view, while PSOE and CIU can be considered stable, this is not the case in the rest of the parties. The stability of PSOE can be explained because it is a ruling party. Before 1982 when the PSOE was in opposition, centralism (and stability) was strengthened in the party in order to fulfill its aim of being a party of Government. CIU is a coalition of nationalist parties, its stability is due to the fact that it has been also a governing party in its home region during the whole period of democracy.

The PCE was stable when it was strong in Parliament, however its successor, IU, was in a constant crisis, changing its parliamentary leaders very frequently. The coalition IU was formed because the communist party (PCE) was not successful in 1982 when the left vote went to the socialist party. After 1982, the best organized opposition party to franquist dictatorship, the PCE, went into a strong crisis and a lot of its leaders joined the PSOE ranks. By 1986 the communists set up the leftist coalition IU in which the PCE remains the main group which controls the whole organization. The constant change of leadership in the communist finished by 1989 when an orthodox group took control of the PCE.

The nationalist party PNV was also very stable until the mid 80s, at that moment there were two different groups that were separated by the elections of 1989. Since then the PNV remains stable. What also explains the stability of the PNV is that it has been the ruling party in the Basque region.

In the right wing, as national parties, there have been two groups competing between them not only for votes but for MPs. On one hand there is the UCD, a centrist party based on a coalition of "families" (factions) ranging from liberals to social-democrats including Christian-democrats (De Esteban and López, 1990). UCD won the first and second elections with a relative majority. Due to disputes among internal groups, UCD faced a big crisis in 1981 when the resignation of the Prime Minister and party leader was followed which the abandons of some of the parliamentary party members. The UCD party disintegrated after a big failure in the 1982 elections.

The UCD former leader A. SUAREZ founded a new centered liberal party: CDS with the aim of being a possible a partner on a coalition Government. Although in 1986 the CDS became the 3<sup>rd</sup> national party, its plan was unsuccessful and the party disappeared after 1993.

On the other hand we find the conservative party AP founded by franquists that was unsuccessful the two first legislatures, even though some liberals joined the party before the 1979 elections. The UCD crisis helped the conservative party development and in 1982 AP set up a new coalition which had a very good electoral result. *Coalición Popular* became the main opposition party and a possible governing party. Some of the UCD MPs joined this group although the amount was not really important: as we can see in the chart 1 only about 16%. The

proportion of centrist deputies that went to the popular group remained approximately the same in the rest of the legislatures, as it can be seen when we consider how many MPs of the PP group were in parliament in 1977 and 1979 (15% and 14% respectively in 1986).

From 1982 onwards the conservative party has had a big renovation and in 1986 only 38% had been deputies again in 1982. In 1989 the number had increased to 54%. Before the 1989 elections the party changed leadership and name (now Popular Party) and began a process of power centralization. In 1990 there was a party congress of "re-foundation and renovation" after which the party has been strongly controlled by a new group of young leaders. This explains the stability of the party in 1993 when 70% of the MPs of 1989 were also popular MPs in 1993.

### **3.- Parliamentary parties in Standing Orders of the Congreso de los Diputados (RDC)**

#### **A) THE PARLIAMENTARY PARTY SYSTEM FROM 1977 TO 1993**

In the Spanish parliamentary system MPs must be integrated in a parliamentary group from the beginning of the legislature or from the first time the MPs go to Parliament (beginning of the session period) (RDC ar. 23). There is the so called *grupo mixto* where Mps that cannot form a group join together and have to act from there.

From 1982 on, when the new Standing Orders were adopted, to form a parliamentary group requires 15 MPs at least or 5 if the party or coalition obtained 5% of the total vote at national level or 15% in the electoral districts where the party or coalition presented a candidature. As a result of this rule not only MPs are part of a group, but they are part of a strong group.

Another rule is that MPs from the same party or from different parties cannot form a parliamentary group separated from the one of the party that had included them in its electoral list. Consequence of such a rule is that in the Spanish parliament must have the smallest and most stable number of parliamentary groups.

Before 1982 parties with 5 MPs which obtained less than 15% of the vote in the districts they presented candidates in were allowed to form a parliamentary group: this was the case of PSA in 1979. At that time it was also possible to form a separated parliamentary group of deputies of the same party as it was the case of Catalan or Basque socialists (see chart 2).



## **B) PARTY DISCIPLINE ACCORDING TO STANDING ORDERS OF THE *Congreso de los Diputados***

According to Standing Orders of the *Congreso de los Diputados* the Spanish parliament is a "parliament of groups". Parliamentary parties are the main agents of the *Congreso*: they form the *Junta de Portavoces*, which is in charge of organizing the parliamentary work (distribution of time), and they decide the composition of parliamentary committees, which is based on a quota that every group has according to its number of MPs.

The most important point of the Standing Orders is that groups are considered as unified actors with only one will, so when a parliamentary group acts through a representative its vote is worth exactly the number of members of the group (*voto ponderado*). This means that the representative of each group (*portavoz*) in every parliamentary commission or in the main organs of the *Congreso* votes instead of the whole group of deputies using the number of votes the group has.

The power of parliamentary parties is more impressive when we consider how MPs can act in the *Congreso*. If we pay attention to the legislative process, we can see that deputies can present individually total or partial amendments to legislative projects. However all the amendments must be signed by the Chief Whip of the parliamentary party (*portavoz del grupo*) (art. 110).

Legislative proposals (*proposiciones de ley*) can be tabled both by groups or MPs, however legislative proposal of deputies must be signed by at least 15 MPs (art.126.1). In that case it is clear that only if the group supports the proposal, it will be debated.

If we consider acts of checking on the executive power we find also a strong pressure capacity of the groups over MPs. Because in parliamentary debates the only speakers are the representatives of the parliamentary parties, motions that end in a debate are controlled by groups and so are interpellations (which can be tabled both by groups or members) since they can give raise to a debate. In addition, due to the fact that each parliamentary party has a limited number of interpellations in each period of sessions, it is a faculty of the group leaders to decide when to table an interpellation.

Only questions are totally reserved to MPs (art.185) but there is also a limited number for each group, that the group direction administer.

We can conclude by pointing out that deputies are controlled so much by groups, that one can say with López Aguilar (1988) that only MPs speak freely in the so called "*turno por alusiones*". This is when in a debate a MP refers to another without this reference being the core of the debate, then the referred MP can give his own speech to answer without any intervention of the group. There is another possibility for MPs to act free from group control; this is when the Cabinet informs the *Congreso* and MPs ask for complementary information.

Finally, Standing Orders establish that economical and personal resources are in the hands of groups, which are in charge of distributing them. The resources of each group are proportional to its strength or number of MPs. The result of all this is the weakness of the individual parliamentarian, who has little room for autonomous initiative.

### C) INTERPARTY MOBILITY

Standing Orders of the *Congreso de los Diputados* regulate in a restrictive way the intergroup mobility. A MP who wants to change group has to be accepted by the Chief Whip of the new group, and he can only ask for a change of group in the first five days of each parliamentary session, otherwise the changing deputy has to remain until the end of the session period in the *grupo mixto*.

As we can see in the chart 3 interparty moves in the Spanish *Congreso* have been relatively frequent. These moves affected the center and right wing groups which compete for the right wing vote (Montero, 1989).

#### CHART 3: Intergroup mobility (TRANSFUGISMO)

##### Constituant 1977-79

	<i>B</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Change to</i>
G. CENTRISTA (GC) .....	165	-- 157	--- 8 GMx
G. SOCIALISTA (GS) ....	105	-- 106	
G. SOC. DE CAT. (GSC) .	13	-- 17	
G. M. CAT. (GMC) .....	11	-- 10	--- 1 GMx
G. MIXTO (GMx) .....	12	-- 15	--- 4 GSC, 1 GS

##### First legislature 1979-82

	<i>B</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Change to</i>
G. CENTRISTA (GC) ...	168	-- 150 -- 13	GMx, 4 GCD, 1 GA, 1 GMC
G. SOCIALISTA (GS) ..	98	-- 97 -- 1	GMx
G. SOC. DE CAT. (GSC)	17	-- 16 -- 1	GA
G. COAL. DOMOC. (GCD)	9	-- 12 -- 1	GC
G. M. CAT. (GMC) ....	8	-- 9	
G. COMUNISTA (GCo) ..	23	-- 22 -- 1	GMx
G. ANDALUCISTA (GA) ..	5	-- 7	
G. MIXTO (GMx) .....	9	-- 24 -- 4	GSC, 1 GS

##### Second legislature 1982 - 1986

	<i>B</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Change to</i>
G. CENTRISTA (GC) .....	12	-- 11	--- 1 GP
G. POPULAR (GP) .....	107	-- 104	--- 3 GMx
G. MIXTO (GMx) .....	10	-- 13	

Third legislature 1986- 1989

	<i>B</i>		<i>E</i>		<i>Change to</i>
G. SOCIALISTA (GS) ..	184	--	182	---	2 GMx
G. POPULAR (GP) ....	73	--	89	---	2 GCDS, 3 GMX, 1 GMC
G. MIN. CAT.....	18	--	19		
G. VASCO .....	6	--	4	---	2 GMX
G. CDS .....	19	--	27	---	1 GMx
AG. DEMOCRAT. CRIST.	21	--	0	---	15 GP, 3 GMx, 3 GCDS
AG. P. LIBERAL .....	11	--	0	---	6 GP, 3 GCDS, 2GMx
AG IU .....	7	--	6	---	1 GCDS
G. MIXTO (GMX).....	11	--	23		

Fourth legislature 1989-1993

	<i>B</i>		<i>E</i>		<i>Change to</i>
G. POPULAR .....	106	--	105	---	1 GMx
G. CDS .....	14	--	12	---	2 GMx
G. MIXTO .....	15	--	18		

In the constituent legislature there was a big move from the socialist party PSP -which was in the *grupo mixto-* to the socialist group (PSOE), that could be considered a normal process of integration of socialists in a unique party. However, abandons of the centrist group in the first legislature were due to a crisis in the party.

Moves to the popular group in the third legislature were produced by the addition of MPs of the Christian-democratic and liberal groups which were members of the same electoral coalition in 1986 (*Coalicion Popular-* CP). These changes took place at the end of the legislature with the aim of rebuilding the electoral coalition. In the third legislature there were also moves to the centrist party CDS which at that time was strengthened and considered as a possible pivotal party in the future fourth legislature.

#### **4.- The internal organization of parliamentary parties**

Party discipline is structured by the internal organization of parties. To explain how Spanish parliamentary parties are organized we have to take into consideration both mass party and parliamentary party statutes at the same time as practices and ways of proceeding.

##### **A) MASS PARTY STATUTES**

Some of the rules of parliamentary parties functioning are found in mass party statutes: they are the basic principles. First of all mass party statutes set up a link between the mass party and the parliamentary group. For example, the president of the party is at the same time the president of the group in the Popular Party. In the case of *Izquierda Unida* the mass party statutes state that the president and the *portavoz* elected by the parliamentary group must be ratified by the Federal Council of

the coalition (executive committee). It is the same for the Basque group. The PSOE statutes only mention that the parliamentary group elects its own leaders and that the president of the group is a member of the Federal Executive Committee of the party.

On the other hand the statutes of the Popular Party, United Left and PNV establish that parliamentary groups can write their own statutes but they must be finally approved by the mass party direction (Executive committee).

In the PSOE statutes there is a rule of unity of action and vote discipline for MPs who can be sanctioned in the case they don't act in this way. Similarly the Popular Party states that MPs must act according to instructions of the party direction.

A clear difference among parties is the economical relation between party and MPs. In the case of populars the parliamentary group is autonomous when administering its resources, so that deputies receive their salary directly from the *Congreso*. However for socialists, communists and bisques it is the mass party through a special fund in which the deputies salaries are entered which decides the wage or economic assignation of each MP.

The PSOE statutes state that parliamentarians who abandon the party should resign as MPs. This can only be understood as an ethic rule because no party can legally force a MP to resign.

On the other hand the PSOE accepts that members of its parliamentary group can be independents -not socialist militants-, and it has happened several times: in these cases discipline has been difficult to demand, especially when voting.

## **B) INTERNAL ESTATUTES OF PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES**

The general structure of parliamentary parties is stated in the internal statute (*reglamento interno*) of each one.

All statutes of Spanish parliamentary parties specify that there is a *Portavoz* of each group, which is also defined in the Constitution and in the Standing Orders of the *Congreso*. The *portavoz* plays a very important role: it is the main representative of the group (Solé and Aparicio, 1984). In the socialist group the *portavoz* is the president of the group -he is the "Chief Whip" according to the British pattern- and must be elected. Before the 1993 elections the socialist group was homogenous and unified, but from then there have been two main factions competing in the parliamentary group (as it happens in the mass party): "renovators", which are the majority, and "guerristas". That is why in 1993 for the first time socialist MPs had to choose between two candidates through secret vote. Again in June 1994 socialists had to elect a new president and there was also an internal division in the group.

Among populars the *portavoz* is a different charge from the president of the group. While the president is the leader of the party -and the leader of the opposition- the *portavoz* is the Chief Whip, elected by MPS, who organizes and directs the whole

group. He is the second leader of the party and substitutes the president in the Council of Direction (executive committee).

The mass party chooses the *portavoz* of the Basque group and of the Catalan minority. In the group of IU there are a president, a vice-president and a *portavoz*. Only the *portavoz* of IU is in charge of having formal relations with other groups.

Both major parliamentary parties in the Congreso (socialists and populars) are organized along similar lines. Both meet in a general assembly (*pleno*) of all back-benchers who belong to the party. In the case of socialists that takes place three times a month: that is before each general assembly of the *Congreso*. The populars meet just once a month. While populars use these meetings to give information to backbenchers, socialists use them to have political debates in which the government ministers participate (the intraparty mode in terms of A. King).

Members of IU also meet regularly before each plenum of the *Congreso* to have a political debate. In the assembly of IU group different proposals or initiatives from MPs are taken into consideration before tabled and conflicts between MPs and committee coordinators are solved.

Both socialist and populars are governed by an executive committee which is elected by MPs. In the socialist group candidates to the Direction Committee (*Comité de Dirección*) can be proposed by the Federal Executive Committee of the PSOE - which has been the usual trait - or by five members of the parliamentary group. The Direction Committee is responsible before the general assembly of the group and in each period of sessions it must have a vote of confidence on the Committee. The Committee coordinates the activity of the whole group with the Government.

In the socialist group there is a second executive committee called the Permanent Committee (*Comité permanente*) larger than the first one: about 30 members. This is integrated by the whole Direction Committee and all the coordinators of commissions - which are the ones in charge of coordination of socialists MPs in every parliamentary commission-. The Permanent Committee evaluates legislative initiatives as well as acts of parliamentary control from MPs.

There is a third committee in the socialist parliamentary party that controls participation and voting of MPs: Committee on Discipline. It has three members and its president is a member of the Permanent Committee of the group. This Committee is helped by the coordinators of commissions who give information about faults of MPs. The Committee on Discipline proposes sanctions that can be imposed by the Direction Committee.

In the popular group just one executive committee is formalized: the Council of Direction. It is very large with leaders of the parliamentary party and others from the mass party. However in its weekly reunions only the main leaders of the parliamentary group meet under the presidency of the *portavoz*.

Among populars every week where there is a plenum of the *Congreso* there is reunion on Monday between the President of the

mass party (which is at the same time president of every parliamentary group the party has) with the Chief Whips of the parliamentary parties of the two chambers and the European Parliament, to prepare the party strategy. Afterwards there is a meeting of the Council of Direction of each parliamentary party. There is a second reunion at the end of the week to consider legislative proposals or bill amendments which are going to be discussed soon.

The Council of Direction studies different legislative proposals, initiatives etc. from popular MPs before they are tabled. It also designates members of the group for the parliamentary commissions. The Council also takes decisions about party discipline. The general secretary of the group, who is a member of the Council also, takes care of the discipline of the group and informs the Council about absences of MPs. There is also in the popular group a "coordinator of commissions", he is a member of the Council and he coordinates and monitors the parliamentary activity of popular MPs in parliamentary commissions. The "coordinator" meets regularly with the *portavoz* or representative of the party in each parliamentary commission.

### **C) DISCIPLINE PROCEEDINGS**

In every parliamentary party there is a procedure to demand for the responsibility of MPs who don't act according to party discipline. This procedure is regulated in the statutes of the two main parliamentary parties, socialists and populars. For the IU group there is just a small reference to this question. Usually it is the executive committee of the group who penalizes MPs. The statutes refer to the kind of penalties that can be put on deputies depending on the fault they commit. If, for example, there is a very transcendental vote that requires a qualified majority and a MP is absent without any justification, the executive committee can put on him a fine of up to 25.000 pts. In the socialist group or 40.000 pts. in the popular. While in the socialist group the money is easy to take because MPs receive their salary through the party, in the case of the popular group deputies have to pay the fine by themselves.

The executive committee of each group can penalize other kind of acts of MPs as for example a vote contrary to the instructions of the party direction. However, statutes of the group and statutes of the mass party usually charge the monitoring of the behavior of MPs to the mass party direction, which can expulse them from the party. On the other hand, the executive committee of each party is a high court competent enough to know about appellations of MPs against decisions of executive organs of the parliamentary groups.

## D) VOTING

Dissension in voting has not been significant in the whole period. The study of Capó (1990) about vote of laws in the four first legislatures shows that there has been a general consensus among parties. Considering 568 laws (*leyes* and *decretos-leyes*) in which there has been a vote on the whole, the average was 223 votes in favor, 28 against and 14 abstentions. Moreover, laws obtained more support with minority governments than with majority ones: which means that UCD governments gained support from part of the opposition. It means also that we have to distinguish between UCD governments from PSOE ones. Before 1982 not only every bill had to be negotiated among the different families that made up UCD, but also the government had to make deals with other parliamentary groups, due to the fact that it didn't have an absolute majority (J. CAPO et al. p. 108) In the case of socialist governments (II, III and IV legislatures) the socialist parliamentary party was "rubber stamp" to the government proposals, as Gillespie (1992) pointed out.

Abstentions are significant because votes on the whole are previously announced, but it is difficult to link abstentionism with dissent because usually it is not made explicit.

**CHART 4: Average of vote of laws in each legislature**

	<i>Total</i>	<i>1978</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>
in favor	223	229	237	208	210
against	28	7	24	39	34
abstentions	14	12	12	16	15

Source: J. CAPO (1990), p.99

## E) SUBSTITUTION OF DEPUTIES

Finally if we consider the number of substitutions of MPs (see chart) we can see that there is a global number 35-40 for each legislature. The bigger amount of the first legislature was due to the fact that a lot of MPs went to represent their parties in the brand new regional parliaments which were set up by then. There are 3-4 replacements due to deaths in each legislature and of the rest only about 10% are substitutions due to a crisis between the MP (who leaves) and the party.

**CHART 5: Substitutions of MPs.**

<i>Legislature</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>
G. CENTRISTA.....	5	9	2		
G. CDS.....				2	3
G. POPULAR .....			7	9	12
G. SOCIALISTA...	1	13	26	21	12
G. S. DE CAT ...	1	6			
G. SOC. VASCOS.....		2			
G. COMUNISTA- IU..	2	4		1	
G. MIN. CAT.....		7	2	4	2
G. VASCO .....	1	3	2	1	3
G. MIXTO.....	1	1			5
G. ANDALUCISTA.....		2			

In total, in every parliamentary party we can find a real integration among its members based on a strong direction which coordinates the group with the mass party -and the government if it is a party of government-. There is also a unified representation of the whole group through the *portavoces* both in the *Congreso* and in each parliamentary committee. Finally, in each main parliamentary group there is a web structured by the *portavoces*, which serves at the same time for transmitting instructions to backbenchers and for monitoring them.

### **5.- Concluding remarks**

In the Spanish case party discipline is really strong, to the point that we can affirm that in the practice the constitutional principle of free mandate of deputies is ineffective. Spanish MPs always act according to party instructions. The reason of this is the electoral law which puts on the hands of party headquarters the capacity to decide who appears in the electoral lists. Moreover, party discipline is helped by the principal role that parties have in the whole parliamentary system. As a result parliamentary groups are the main actors of parliament.

Taking into consideration the Spanish parliamentary parties, we can notice that the socialist group, where party discipline is really strong, has been more cohesive and stable than any other group. There are different explanations to this fact. First and the most important is that it has been a government party for several legislatures with a qualified majority; besides it is a center to the left party in which discipline is an important value and, finally, it has been organized as a mass party with the highest rate of affiliation in Spain.

On the other hand conservative and liberal groups have been instable with a lot of renovations of deputies. These parties are just electoral parties with a weak organization, where a lack of professionalism has been observed in the MPs. Still the most

important cause to instability of conservative parties was the inexistence of unique political organization: there have always been two competing parties and MPs move between them. Nevertheless since 1990 the Popular Party is walking in the right way: a new direction is strengthening its organization.

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