

European Economic Area (EEA) : Party political opinion

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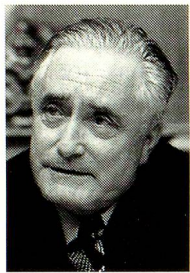
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Party political opinion

Supporters and opponents of the European Economic Area are to be found almost everywhere in the Swiss political spectrum – except amongst the nationalist right-wing, which is unanimously against the treaty. But internal arguments (amongst Radical Democrats and Christian Democrats particularly and to some extent amongst Social Democrats) may well put voters off.

A brief outline of the situation in each party is nevertheless possible. The Radical Democrats are the biggest, and their federal councillor, Jean-Pascal Delamuraz, is one of the two Swiss "fathers" of Switzerland's EEA membership. Three-quarters of his political col-



"What I don't like about the Federal Council publicists is that they keep sending out their mush, telling us everything will be for the best. They are trying to sugar the pill by telling us that the EEA

means prosperity, happiness and peace."

(Georges-André Chevallaz, former Federal Councillor)

leagues are with him, although there are always the few permanent nay-sayers.

The Social Democrats are more united than the Radicals, even if left-wingers amongst them are reserved on the EEA, suspecting it to be a mere creature of a centralist and bureaucratic EC. But the second "father" of Swiss membership is the Social Democrat federal councillor, René Felber.



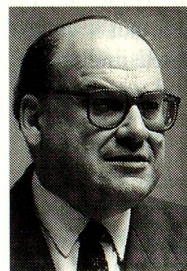
"EEA membership would lead to higher economic growth and positive changes in social policy, including more employee rights."

(Peter Bodenmann, National Councillor and SPS Chairman)

Christian Democrat parliamentary members are officially enthusiastic EEA supporters and unanimously in favour of entry.

The one Democratic Union of the Centre federal councillor, Adolf Ogi, has recently seemed very "European"; but within his party Ogi is opposed by the Zurich section led by Christoph Blocher, which has taken a majority of MPs with it.

The Greens oppose the EEA Treaty on the grounds that economic policy will be dictated from Brussels and Switzerland will have no say at all. The right-wing Automobile Party, the Swiss Democrats (formerly National Action) and the Ticino League are strongly and



"It is very important indeed that we should see once and for all that the EEA is not to be equated with the EC. That is one of the falsehoods that EEA opponents subscribe to. The EEA Treaty is

an economic treaty which will not affect us politically in our democracy, federalism and neutrality."
(Ernst Mühlemann, FDP National Councillor, Co-Chairman of the Pro-EEA Committee)

"Our main criticism of the EEA Treaty is institutional: we have no right to a say, we have to accept EC economic dictatorship. And in any case development is in the wrong direction: increased burdens for the environment, added incentives to consume at the expense of the third world."

(Verena Diener, National Councillor of the Greens)

unanimously against. Most Liberals and Independents are in favour of membership.

It is difficult to gauge the extent of difference between the various language areas. But among politicians the trend is clear: almost all French-speakers are EEA supporters while a third of both German-speakers and Italian-speakers are against. ■



"The EEA Treaty is unworthy of a free people. Our country would not only lose much of its sovereignty and independence; but most facets of direct democracy, federalism, neutrality and our

currency – the Swiss franc – would also have to be abandoned."

(Christoph Blocher, UDC National Councillor, Chairman of the Action Group for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland)

"We are convinced that it is good not only for industry, but also politically and not least culturally: free movement of persons, for example, will encourage Swiss citizens to travel abroad and even settle down there. It will open up our horizons, it will enrich us culturally, and above all it will help young people to come to terms with themselves both professionally and personally."

(Edwin Somm, Managing Director, Asea Brown Boveri Switzerland)

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