

# The seven federal Councillors

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## THE SEVEN FEDERAL COUNCILLORS

The Constitution of the Swiss Confederation provides in Article 96 that the seven members of the Federal Council shall be elected for four years by the Federal Assembly consisting of Swiss citizens eligible as members of the National Council. The same article prescribes that after every re-formation of the National Council the Federal Council, too, shall be reconstituted, that is to say every four years. Up to now this renewal has always been made individually with each member of the Federal Council having to stand personally for re-election.

The last confirmation of the seven Federal Councillors took place on 12th December. It took place in an unusual atmosphere as the ceremony was transmitted on Television, which meant cameras and bustling photographers — a great deal of fuss which disturbed the dignity of the Council Chamber. There was considerable criticism of such forced publicity.

The new President of the National Council, Mr. Otto Hess (Thurgau), was in the chair. The elections proceeded in order of seniority of office.

Federal Councillor Paul Chaudet, Chief of the Military Department, in the Government since 16th December 1954, was elected with 185 votes (absolute majority 96).

Federal Councillor F. T. Wahlen, Head of the Political Department, in the Government since 11th December 1958, was confirmed by 197 (absolute majority 110).

Federal Councillor W. Spuehler, Chief of the Department of Communications, President of the Confederation in 1963, in the Government since 17th December 1959, was elected with 164 votes (absolute majority 89).

Federal Councillor Ludwig von Moos, Head of the Department of Justice and Police, Vice-President of the Confederation in 1963, in the Government since 17th December 1959, was confirmed with 160 votes (absolute majority 92).

Federal Councillor H. P. Tschudi, Chief of the Department for Home Affairs, in the Government since 17th December 1959, was elected with 204 votes (absolute majority 103).

Federal Councillor Hans Schaffner, Head of the Department for Economic Affairs, in the Government since 4th July 1961, received 195 votes (absolute majority 98).

Federal Councillor Roger Bonvin, Chief of the Department of Finance and Customs, in the Government since 27th September 1962, was confirmed with 190 votes (absolute majority 96).

Ever since Federal Councillors have been re-elected it has happened only once that one of them did not receive a sufficient number of votes and had to leave the Government. It was expected that the elections were purely a matter of form and that all seven Councillors would be confirmed. Nevertheless, the results are not very flattering, and it shows that the M.P. is not prepared just to be a "Yes-Man".

In an article in the "Basler Nachrichten" the Parliamentary Correspondent, Mr. Arnold Fisch, comments on this "Doubtful Examination for the Federal Councillors". The relatively low number of votes which some of the seven members of the Government registered could give the wrong impression. Mr. Fisch maintains that popularity is a bad measure for the real performance and accomplishment of a Federal Councillor. Above all, he says, this popularity is subject to considerable fluctuation, may be high one day and low the next. Mr. Chaudet received a reasonably high total, but he, too, has registered poor results in the past. Though some military credits are still the subject of heated argument, in general there are no complaints against him. His quiet, pleasant way of accepting criticism apparently reconciles his opponents.

Mr. Wahlen, polled the highest number of votes — not being very exposed to conflict of interests in his domain. On the other hand, the outgoing President of the Confederation has had to face considerable criticism regarding the handling of his department. This was reflected in a low number of votes. The next candidate, the then Vice-President of the Confederation, Mr. von Moos, polled the lowest number of all, which Mr. Fisch considers the result of unfair party politics — the Socialists taking revenge for the bad support accorded to their member Mr. Spuehler. Fortunately, the opponents did not continue this kind of competition, on the contrary, the next Socialist, Mr. Tschudi, achieved the second best result. Mr. Schaffner still had to feel some of the Socialists' indignation and only polled a meagre 171 votes. It must be mentioned that the man in charge of economic affairs has to face some very unpleasant tasks at the moment — the fight against the excessive economic boom rests on his shoulders. Finally, the Parliamentary Correspondent describes Mr. Bonvin's result as surprisingly high, seeing that there had been quite some displeasure at his handling of federal finances.

It is also typical of the Swiss system that though Federal Councillor von Moos received the lowest number

of votes, he was later elected President of the Swiss Confederation for 1964 with 178 votes.

The Conference of Parliamentary Party Heads is studying the question whether in future the re-election of the Federal Councillors should be made *in globo*. The Secretary-General of the Federal Assembly, Dr. H. Bruehwiler, has been entrusted with preliminary work.

This would break with a tradition of more than one hundred years old, and it might take away some of the interest the public shows in the re-elections of the Federal Councillors. On the other hand, as Mr. Fisch suggests, one single voting slip for all seven members would considerably shorten the procedure (at present it takes at least one hour and a half) and it would prevent any policy of revenge. But in order to make this system work, the Socialists would have to realise that "one cannot play opposition and sit on the Government Bench at the same time". More loyalty would be a good thing.

(Based on A.T.S. and "Basler Nachrichten".)

### THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION

The President of the Federal Council who will be the head of the Confederation during the year of the Swiss National Exhibition is Federal Councillor Ludwig von Moos. He was born on 31st January 1910 at Sachseln (OW), his commune of origin. He was the eleventh child of the local stationmaster and grandson of a "Regierungsrat". Bundesrat von Moos went to school at Sarnen and Sachseln and finished his schooling at the Benedictine College at Sarnen in 1930. He studied law for three years at the University of Fribourg and graduated as licentiate of law. He became Commune Clerk of Sachseln and a year later he was elected to the "Einwohnergemeinderat" and to the "Bürgergemeinderat". He presided over the "Einwohnergemeinde" from 1941 to 1946.

From 1936 onward he was in the Cantonal Court of Justice. He was also active as editor of the "Obwaldner Volksfreund" and belonged to the Cantonal Council for two years.

The "Landsgemeinde" of 1943 elected him as Councillor of States and three years later into the Government of Obwalden. Four times he was "Landammann". In 1946 he became a member of the Obwalden Cantonal Bank and in 1954 Chairman of its Board. He was also a member of the Board of the Swiss Federal Railways and of many other organisations and institutions, such as Radio Berne.

On 17th December 1959, Ludwig von Moos was elected to the Federal Council as the first citizen of Obwalden and became chief of the Federal Department of Justice and Police.

The new President is a Catholic Conservative and father of seven children.

The President of the Confederation is the first citizen of Central Switzerland who has reached the top in the one hundred and fifteen years of history of the present Confederation. It is strange that the three Cantons which founded Switzerland should never have been in the Government. Neither have they ever had a President of the National Council and Federal Assembly. It is only the second time this year that they have a President of the Council of States in the person of Ludwig Daniöth (Uri). The extraordinary structure of Switzerland will show up

particularly this year of the National Exhibition, and it is thus of special significance that for the first time the President should hail from Central Switzerland. The joy in his Canton and Commune is great, and the reception which he was given was splendid. Flags were flying and bands playing already in Lucerne, and many personalities received him. The Bruenig Railway took the party first to the Canton of Nidwalden and then on to Obwalden. Bells were ringing and schoolchildren were out to greet the new President. In open carriages the procession went from the station to the baroque Town Hall of Sarnen. A guard of honour drawn from the Mountain Fusilier Battalion 47 completed the festive array. Amongst the special guests were the outgoing Federal President Spuehler, the Presidents of the National Council and the Council of States, many personalities from Army, Politics and Church. Many were the speeches which were delivered at Sarnen and later at Sachseln, and the newly elected President spoke of the duties and obligations of the present generation so that history would not blame the people of our times for dissipating the great possessions which our forefathers had entrusted to us.

(Based on news received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

### THE UNITED STATES THANK SWITZERLAND

The Federal Council received a letter of thanks from the American *Chargé d'Affaires* in Berne, Monsieur H. J. Kellermann, in which he referred to the bonds of friendship between the two countries. He said he had been specially impressed by the honest and spontaneous sympathy for the late President shown by the youth of Switzerland.

The new Ambassador in Berne, Monsieur William True Davis, read a message by President Johnson on the Swiss Television on 4th December. In it the new Head of the United States said that his country's sorrow was lessened by the knowledge that millions of people all over the world shared in it. This strengthened his determination to continue the fight for peace and freedom, the two ideals to which President Kennedy had dedicated his life.

President Johnson also assured the Swiss people how the American nation had felt honoured that Switzerland had sent Federal Councillor Wahlen to the Funeral, and by the exceptional demonstration of sympathy shown by the two Chambers of the Swiss Government which opened the thirty-seventh legislature session early in December by a silent tribute.

On his return from Washington, Federal Councillor Wahlen declared that the funeral had been most moving and had given ample proof of President Kennedy's popularity. He also said that he had had talks with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, during which economic problems affecting the two countries were discussed, also the closing of the two American Consulates in Basle and Geneva. Federal Councillor Wahlen was optimistic regarding the GATT Conference in spring.

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From Chur it was learnt that the alleged murderer of President Kennedy, Lee Oswald, registered at the Albert-Schweitzer College at Churwalden in 1959 for a four months' course. He did, however, not come and went to Moscow instead.

[A.T.S.]