

Polling sunday in Switzerland

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POLLING SUNDAY IN SWITZERLAND

FEDERAL PLEBISCITE

As was reported in our last issue, the Swiss gave their Government what amounts to a vote of confidence on its policies for fighting inflation, when they went to the polls on 28th February. In a nationwide Referendum, the electorate decided in favour of continuing for a second twelve months the measures taken in order "to prevent serious disturbances in the economic equilibrium and maintaining the purchasing power of the Franc". The measures concern credit, investment, foreign capital and construction. For voting purposes, these were grouped into two categories, credit and construction. The results of the 209th federal plebiscite were as follows:

Canton:	Credit		Construction		%
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Zurich	108,622	75,925	104,681	79,968	67.8
Berne	97,964	48,123	94,587	51,568	55.1
Lucerne	25,648	19,073	25,085	19,825	61.3
Uri	3,318	2,336	3,234	2,456	65.0
Schwyz	7,335	5,319	7,188	5,482	56.5
Obwalden	1,962	1,711	1,883	1,796	56.0
Nidwalden	2,160	2,150	2,101	2,174	68.6
Glarus	4,476	2,390	4,292	2,578	66.0
Zug	4,875	3,725	4,539	4,079	56.0
Fribourg	12,895	10,192	12,783	10,321	48.7
Solothurn	20,578	13,107	19,129	15,101	60.0
Baselstadt	16,819	18,158	16,435	18,653	52.0
Baselland	13,400	13,382	12,741	14,106	61.0
Schaffhausen	7,494	6,905	7,295	7,130	85.0
Appenzell A.R.	4,733	4,092	4,233	4,613	65.9
Appenzell I.R.	1,559	454	1,444	515	54.1
St. Gall	32,449	25,690	29,893	28,239	65.0
Grisons	9,482	14,610	9,334	14,790	62.0
Aargau	45,234	31,752	43,762	33,423	79.0
Thurgau	21,059	11,725	20,330	12,457	74.3
Ticino	7,945	13,935	7,743	14,183	41.0
Vaud	35,174	22,432	33,525	24,194	47.0
Valais	12,927	15,258	12,605	15,746	50.0
Neuchâtel	11,890	6,936	10,840	7,906	44.7
Geneva	16,618	16,325	18,046	14,996	46.0
TOTAL	526,616	385,750	507,728	406,299	58.9

The credit measures were rejected by Valais, Grisons, Ticino and Baselstadt. The restrictions on construction were opposed by Nidwalden, the two Basles, Appenzell A.R., Grisons, Ticino and Valais. [A.T.S.]

IN THE CANTONS

The last Sunday in February brought a classic example of Swiss voting democracy when next to the two federal proposals, there were plebiscites in eleven Cantons and many Communes where the citizens were asked to go to the poll.

In the GRISONS, the two present Councillors of States Dr. A. Theus (Democrat) and Dr. G. Darms (Conservative/Christian) were confirmed for the new term of office beginning on 1st June (for three years).

In the THURGAU, the government had to be elected. Four "Regierungsräte" were confirmed in office (Dr. W. Staehelin, R. Schuemperli, W. Ballmoos and Dr. A. Schlaepper), and in place of the retiring Dr. J. Mueller,

the present leader of the Council of States, Dr. E. Boeckli (Liberal), was elected as the new fifth member.

The electors of the Canton of ZURICH agreed to a state contribution of 3.3 million francs towards the building of a nursing home for the chronically sick in Winterthur (156,338 : 23,056).

93,628 voters in the Canton of BERNE approved the revision of the church law by which women will be allowed full ministry — 39,635 were against. On the other hand, the People's Initiative for increased children's allowances as well as a counter proposal by the Grand Council were rejected. The proposal regarding the taking up of loans to a maximum of 100 million francs to consolidate the current state debt was accepted. Voting participation was 52%.

The citizens of SOLOTHURN agreed to continue supporting the private railways. Participation was 61%.

BASLE had two projects to decide upon, both to do with the theatre. 24,323 against 10,832 approved the credit to the Municipal Theatre, and a slightly lower majority agreed to give a state subsidy to the "Komoedie".

61% of the voters in BASELSTADT went to the poll and accepted by 18,720 to 7,313 votes the proposals for state scholarships and students' loans.

The Canton of SCHAFFHAUSEN asked its citizens to introduce the "Jägerprüfung", to which they agreed by an overwhelming majority.

ST. GALL voters approved by 3 : 1 the decision by the Grand Council to secure enough stock of surgical dressing materials for civilians in case of war or catastrophe.

17,281 voters of the TICINO rejected and only 3,806 accepted the new regulations passed by the Cantonal Parliament to enter mortgages in the ground register.

Men and women voters of NEUCHÂTEL refused by a very minute majority the raising of the limit for the compulsory Referendum in financial matters. The new Commune Law and the welfare proposals were agreed to, also the project for the creation of a pathological institute in Neuchâtel (16,512 : 6,442).

IN THE COMMUNES

In ZURICH there had been a controversy regarding parking meters. The motion to do away with meters and introduce the "blue zone" was rejected. A counter proposal by the Municipal Council to use parking fees for financing parking facilities was accepted by a large majority. The voters also agreed to a credit of 1.6 million francs for a provisional parking building on the Sihlquai.

All three proposals were accepted in LUCERNE: the change of the regulations regarding the officials' and teachers' pension scheme and cost of living grants, a credit for the extension of the Wuerzenbach school and a further grant for the building of two school pavilions for the college of trade and applied arts.

In SOLOTHURN the voters approved the project for a waste water plant in the Solothurn region and elected B. Baumgartner as new Registrar for deaths, births and marriages.

The OLTEN electorate agreed to the proposed improvements at the Saeli school and voted the necessary additional credit.

In ZUG the "Sovereign" (i.e. the people) agreed to a proposal to increase the dog tax by 100%.

As usual WINTERTHUR showed a relatively high voting participation. 78% of its citizens went to the poll and agreed to an 8-million-franc credit for housing and a grant for the building of a "working year" school.

THUN voters elected two new Commune Councillors and approved the acquisition of a road cleansing machine.

SELZACH citizens elected J. Otter-Wingeier as the new "Gemeindeammann".

HEIDEN (AR) agreed to retain the Commune Parliament by rejecting a proposal to re-introduce the Commune Assembly. A proposed limitation of all building was accepted. Voting participation was 70.4%.

Three-quarters of BURGDORF's voters went to the poll and rejected a partial revision of the Commune Laws. Large majorities accepted a proposal to join the waste water plant of the region and a credit of 1.5 million francs for the purpose.

74.75% of the HORGEN electorate took part in the voting and agreed to a credit of 7.8 million francs for the erection of a high school.

4.1 million francs were voted for a new school at WALLISELLEN.

HERISAU's citizens agreed to extend the sewerage system at a cost of 2.7 million francs.

At ST. BLAISE (NE), a water purification tax had been decided upon by the Commune Council. The Referendum was taken, and this has been defeated, and the tax will be introduced.

ST. IMMER's voters agreed to a credit for road construction, and DELSBERG accepted various financial credits, to buy the former orphanage, a piece of land and a building and to improve the bathing establishment.

148 men and 58 women went to the poll at LE LIEU in the Joux Valley and accepted the Initiative to re-introduce the system of simple majority which had been replaced by the proportional system in 1957.

64.5% of ST. SULPICE's voters, one third of them women, went to the poll and approved the credit for joining the Lausanne waste water plant.

The Social Democrats of PESEUX had objected to an increase in the tax rate decided by the Commune Council and launched an Initiative. The citizens approved the Council's decision by 1,104 to 798 votes.

HERISAU's electorate approved a credit of 2.7 million francs for the extension of the communal sewerage system, the proposed primary school reform and introduction of a ninth optional school year.

WALZENHAUSEN agreed to a partial revision of the Commune employment regulations; this will mean a pay increase of about 10%.

GAIS citizens approved the renovation plans for the Commune Chancellery, the extension of the water supply and the introduction of two ozone plants. They rejected the proposed conversion of a house into teachers' flats and asked the Commune Council for plans for a new building for this purpose.

WETZIKON (Zurich) approved proposals for two waste water plants and an additional credit for road work. They elected Ernst Keller as new "Gemeindeammann" of Duernten.

Democracy at work — that indeed was the theme of Sunday, 28th February. It gives also one of the explanations why Swiss women are not all that keen to get the vote which entails so much more than just electing an M.P. and the local authorities once every few years. A lot is still to be done until women are ready to take up their civic duties actively.

Such frequent calls to the poll may be the cause why voting participation has been somewhat reduced. Many people consider this as a disadvantage of our system. But then, those refraining from exercising their right to vote have only themselves to blame if, afterwards, they are displeased with a law which has been approved. It remains a wholesome thing for citizens not merely to harry the Government and legislature, but to carry a good portion of the legislative responsibility themselves.

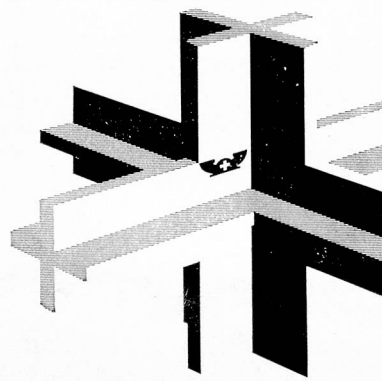
*(Voting results received by courtesy of
Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)*

SWITZERLAND EXPRESSES SYMPATHY WITH AUSTRIA

After the death of the Austrian President Dr. Adolf Schaerf early in March, the Swiss flag on the West wing of the Bundeshaus was flown at half-mast. The President of the Confederation, Bundesrat Tschudi, sent a telegram of condolence to the Austrian Government, and Federal Councillor Wahlen headed a delegation to the residence of the Austrian Ambassador in Berne. Federal President Tschudi gave an appreciation over the Swiss radio. At the Austrian Embassy in Berne and the Consulate-General in Zurich, books of condolence were displayed which were signed by many Austrians and Swiss. The Federal Council was represented at the funeral in Vienna on 5th March by the former Federal Councillor Petitpierre in his capacity as Ambassador Plenipotentiary on special mission, and the Swiss Ambassador in Vienna, Monsieur Escher.

[A.T.S.]

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Information, booklet and catalogue obtainable from the Swiss Embassy, 18 Montagu Place, London W.1 or the Swiss Consulate, Midland Bank Buildings, 56 Spring Gardens, Manchester 2.