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# New Year Address by the President of the Confederation



Ernst, Brugger,  
President of the Confederation

Dear Fellow-Citizens:

It is traditional for the newly elected President of the Confederation to convey to the Swiss people on the 1st of January the Federal Council's best wishes for the year just beginning. It gives me great pleasure to do this on behalf of all my colleagues: those who are leaving the Federal Council, those who are remaining and also the newcomers who – eager for action – will be taking up their duties during the month of January.

I believe that in 1974 we shall all need a little luck, good resolutions and confidence. The past year has brought changes, and even upheavals, which indicate that we have reached a turning-point. We have experienced unparalleled economic development: in 25 years our gross national product has trebled, our exports have quintupled and our average real income has more than doubled. I know that many of my fellow-citizens do not think very highly of this development. But to all those who seek to disparage the value of economic achievement I should like to say one thing: if we wish to avoid social tensions, we must do everything in our power to maintain a productive economy. Indeed, without a solid economic basis it will be impossible for us to absorb the enormous costs of the new AVS and of the so-called "second pillar"; we shall no longer be able to bear the considerable expenditure involved in increased protection of the environment, in country planning, in the extension of public education, in sickness, insurance and in transport. All these burdens rest on our own shoulders and we shall have to earn the money to pay for them before we can spend it.

All this will not be easy, for our economic machinery is creaking more and more. First of all there is the international monetary crisis, which has not yet been mastered. Next, there is inflation, which is partly forced on us by external factors and partly produced at home. The price rises benefit some and harm others. They are thus bound to create new inflationary pressures, making it ever more difficult to break the vicious

circle. There are no miracle cures to stop this headlong movement. However, the measures which the Swiss people agreed to extend on 2nd December last will at least enable us to put the brakes on. To give up the struggle against price rises would have serious consequences; to develop a mentality which accepted inflation would be even worse. In fact, it would mean that we were prepared to live at the expense of our economic future, and for this, sooner or later, we should have to pay the price. And now we have the additional problem of petrol supplies. Although the position is still somewhat obscure, it would be as well to be prepared for a world-wide diminution in energy supplies. Even if it is not absolutely out of the question that the situation may become a little more settled, the age of superabundance and waste is finally over. As much from the point of view of quantity as of price, we are confronted with obstacles which will not be easily surmounted. The events of the last few months have shown us how much we depend on other countries. This applies not only to petrol but to other raw materials, and especially to certain foodstuffs which have become scarce and expensive and which make our supply position more difficult. In this connection, I must emphasize how sensible it was to maintain a productive agriculture, even in an era of industrial expansion. Although they constitute only seven per cent of the population, our farmers are able to grow on our soil nearly half of what we eat.

All the shortages and restrictions I have just mentioned show us where the limits actually are of the growth we have heard so much about recently. In addition to the restraints imposed on us from outside, in our own country, too, we are getting nearer and nearer to the limits of the possible. Think, for example, of the problems of land and the environment. In future we shall no longer be able to do anything we like simply because it is possible and profitable. We shall have to give up many things which would have increased our standard of living because the price will be too high.

Incidentally, we shall also have to do this in the interests of the individual human-being, whose psychological stamina has its limits too, and for whom today's hectic tempo is not wholly good.

Since I am speaking of the individual, may I point out that every diminution in economic growth makes great demands on him. For every change and every act of self-denial causes anxiety, affects our living and working habits, and requires discernment and a spirit of solidarity. And are we capable of facing up to this? Are not too many of us selfish, materialistic, indifferent and irresponsible? Indeed, twenty years of economic boom have not developed our community spirit! We are past masters in the art of defending the interests of individuals or groups. We protest and struggle fiercely against everything that does not suit our own purposes and sometimes we even act against our own reason and judgment. Instead of discussing things frankly, instead of listening to other people's arguments and seeking realistic solutions for the good of the whole country, we often adopt obstinate standpoints and defend inflexible positions. Naturally, this attitude does not help us to master difficult situations and to find generous solutions in the interests of the community.

We still have a lot to learn. Above all, it will be necessary to rediscover what unites us. In other words: we shall have to move closer together. It is with this in mind that I salute the hundreds of thousands of men and women for whom the future of our country and its people is a subject of prime importance. I pay tribute to all those who, in spite of the limited scope of their own actions, do not expect a miracle to come from outside but are determined to make a personal and positive contribution. I salute all those who are endeavouring to be decent, objective, open-minded and tolerant. Therein lies the constantly renewed strength of our people, a strength which gives us the courage to seek, with fresh confidence, the solution to our difficult tasks. It is in this spirit, dear fellow-citizens, that after telling you about some of my anxieties I sincerely wish you a happy new year. I also offer my good wishes to the foreigners among us, and I send a very special greeting to our compatriots all over the world. I remember particularly the sick and infirm, and all those others who, for various reasons, are in need of comfort. My sincere gratitude goes, too, to all who are caring devotedly for the sick and the inadequate.

# Three New Federal Councillors Elected

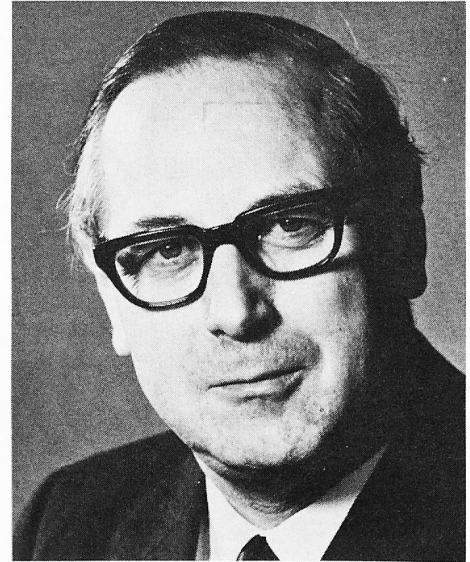


**WILLI RITSCHARD**

He was born on 28th September, 1918, as citizen of Oberhofen/BE and Luterbach/SO. He went to primary and regional (*Bezirk*) school and was apprenticed as a heating erector. He became a member of the Luterbach Commune Council in 1945, and was President of the Commune from 1947–59. In 1945, he was elected to the Solothurn Cantonal Parliament. He presided over the Cantonal Council in 1963 and remained on it up to 1964. He was a member of the National Council from 1955 to 63.

Since joining the Solothurn Government in 1964, he has been in charge of the Finance and Forestry Department. He became particularly well known as Chairman of the Conference of Cantonal Finance Directors and as Chairman of the special commission for simplifying and coordinating the tax system, a commission set up by the Conference of Cantonal Finance Directors.

Federal Councillor Willi Ritschard is an enthusiastic rambler in the Jura where he spends most of his leisure time. He is married and has one son and one daughter.



**HANS HUERLIMANN**

He was born at his Commune of origin Walchwil/ZG on 6th April, 1918. He spent his school years at the *Stiftschule* at Einsiedeln, where he passed the matriculation exams. He studied law at the Universities of Berne and Fribourg and graduated as a doctor of law in 1945.

Federal Councillor Huerlimann was a member of the Cantonal Government of Zug from 1954 onward. First he was head of the Department of Justice, Police and Military Affairs. In 1962 he changed over to the Department of Education, Culture, and again, Military Affairs. In 1967, the Canton delegated him to the Council of States in Berne. For eight years, he chaired the Conference of the Cantonal Military Directors, and later, from 1968–73, that of the Directors of Education. In this capacity he worked indefatigably towards coordination of schooling. He also belonged to various commissions, especially in the interest of children and young people.

Federal Councillor Huerlimann has two sons and a daughter.