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Referendum of September 26

Loud and clear: Five x Yes

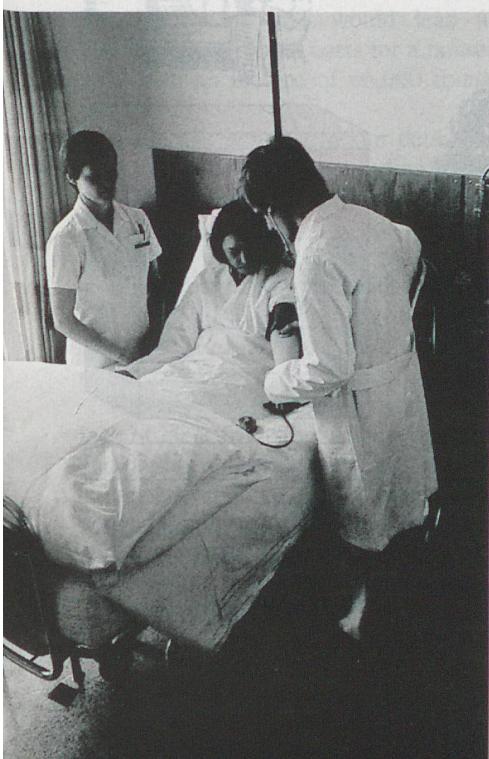
The five texts submitted to voters on September 26 were all approved with loud and clear majorities (see box). However, voter participation was substantially lower than in the last few referendums.

Press review

The unusual clarity of the results this time was emphasised in the daily '**La Suisse**' (Geneva): "The people have decided with unusual clarity. This was the first surprise in this vote. The second was the totally pro-government attitude of a people who are often defiant and not easily impressed by voting recommendations from the highest political authorities".

"We have rarely seen the country so unanimous, standing almost like a man behind the federal authorities. In a phrase, we may call it a voting weekend without serious division, without rifts which could threaten cohesion in any way", writes '**24 Heures**' (Lausanne).

After acceptance of the urgent federal decision on sickness insurance, patients will have to pay a share in hospital costs.
(Photo: Keystone).



'**Il Giornale del Popolo**', Lugano's Catholic daily, writes: "With reference to the arms trade, the federal government has finally been provided with laws which will be valid throughout the country. This is the only adequate instrument to combat misuse and to put an end to the work of dealers and mercenaries without bringing into question the hard-won traditions of the descendants of William Tell."

The '**Berner Tagwacht**' notes that the Swiss trade unions and the Socialist Party, which were against the urgent measures on unemployment insurance, remained far below their hoped-for figure of 40% of No votes. The Socialist daily goes on: "But there is one good thing about the clear result: the defeat of the trade unions is also one for the employers. These cannot now insist that the electorate wants tighter restrictions on unemployment insurance on their terms; for the contribution of the employers to the number of No votes was obviously negligible".

Referendum result

Federal decree to prevent the abusive use of arms

YES 1,539,594 (86.3%) - all cantons
NO 245,114 (13.7%)

Transfer of Laufon District

YES 1,189,208 (75.2%) - all cantons
NO 393,263 (24.8%)

Initiative «Bank holiday on August 1»

YES 1,490,564 (83.8%) - all cantons
NO 289,041 (16.2%)

Health insurance: Emergency federal decree

YES 1,414,543 (80.6%) - all cantons
NO 342,521 (19.4%)

Unemployment insurance: Emergency federal decree

YES 1,224,493 (70.4%) - all cantons
NO 515,010 (29.6%)

Voter participation: circa 39%

The '**Aargauer Tagblatt**' comments in these terms on the ratification of the Bernese district of Laufon's transfer to the half-canton of Basle Rural: "Obviously the great majority of Swiss voters finally wanted to bring to a full stop the unending question of which canton the valley of Laufon is to belong to. This is presumably for the justified reason that all the democratic consultation procedures have now been exhausted".
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Commentary

Voters gave a knockout blow to the anti-establishment on September 26. How else can we explain the fact that the left-wing and the trade unions did not even get 30% support in their struggle against lower indemnities for 45,000 unemployed without families? Or that less than one voter in five was against the ten-franc per day charge for hospital stays – which even the government was originally against? Or that fanatic supporters of a liberal arms trade found themselves up against more than 86% of those who want the federal government to combat arms abuse?

The reason for the knockout must be sought in the absence of any credible alternatives. A vote against reducing some unemployment indemnities – as recommended by the left-wing and the trade unions – would be the same as

saying No to measures against long-term joblessness. To reject the hospital charge would amount to saying No to the ceiling on insurance contributions. To refuse the constitutional article against arms abuse would be to maintain the present laissez-faire situation. The vote on the transfer of Laufon district was simply an act of ratification.

If they want to have any weight, those against the establishment – from whichever side they come – must propose alternatives credible. They must show some imagination. They could take an example from the Swiss Democrats. Their initiative to make August 1 a holiday was approved by more than 80% of voters. It is true of course that this has nothing to do with being anti-establishment!

Pierre-André Tschanz