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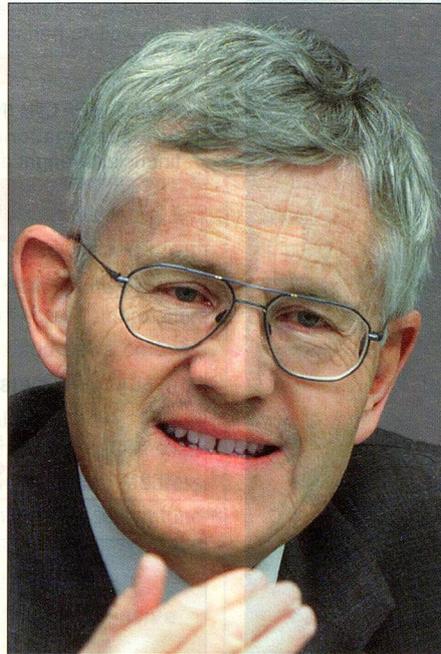
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Centre-right holds sway

The centre-right clearly asserted itself with regard to the five proposals up for vote on 2 December 2001. The debt control issue was accepted virtually unanimously, while the four popular initiatives met with a massive No.

THE DEBT CONTROL PROPOSAL, which completes and underpins the measures already taken to reduce the federal deficit, was approved by 85 percent of voters, though slightly less emphatically in Latin Switzerland. Kaspar Villiger, Minister of Finance, can therefore embark on his presidential year with a resounding victory in his pocket.

The Greens registered a sharp setback, with less than 23 percent of voters in favour of their initiative “for a secure AHV – tax



Victorious: Kaspar Villiger.

energy, not work!”. By comparison, the Swiss Trades Union Association came off more lightly with slightly more than one in three voters in favour of its proposal for a capital gains tax.

Finally, the initiatives “for a Switzerland without an army” and “for a voluntary civil peace service” were soundly rejected by 78 and 77 percent of voters respectively.

At 37 percent, turnout was low.

PAT

COMMENTARY

The referendum of 2 December 2001 is outstanding for its clear, unambiguous results and a rare national consensus. Five proposals, five overwhelming majorities of more than 65 percent, and five unanimous cantonal votes. A rare result indeed!

One of the reasons for this unequivocal result is the virtual absence of political debate in the run-up to the vote. Against the backdrop of major current events such as the terrorist attacks on the USA and the war in Afghanistan, the Swissair debacle and the bloodbath in Zug, these referendums appeared minor and mundane; especially since the political focus had shifted to another issue even before 2 December i.e. the referendum on Switzerland's membership of the UN, scheduled for 3 March 2002. Added to this, the electorate had already recently registered its opinion on most of the issues up for vote on 2 December, i.e. on army and defence in November 2000 and June 2001, and on an energy tax in September 2000. The low turnout and unambiguous nature of the results also reflects voters' weariness at having to vote once more on these “rehashed” concepts.

The Group for a Switzerland without an Army will have difficulty recovering from its massive defeat, while the Social Democrats, by giving a covert nod to the abolition of the army (freedom of vote), have practically placed themselves on the sidelines in the forthcoming debate on the Army XXI reform.

Pierre-André Tschanz

Translated from the French by N. Chisholm

Results of the Federal Referendums

Canton	Debt control		Energy tax		Switzerland without army		Voluntary civil defence for peace		Capital gains tax		Turnout in %
	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	
ZH	85.0	15.0	27.0	73.0	23.0	77.0	25.0	75.0	34.0	66.0	40.5
BE	86.0	14.0	24.0	76.0	20.0	80.0	21.0	79.0	42.0	58.0	38.3
LU	89.0	11.0	20.0	80.0	17.0	83.0	18.0	82.0	31.0	69.0	41.6
UR	82.0	18.0	20.0	80.0	13.0	87.0	15.0	85.0	30.0	70.0	40.0
SZ	87.0	13.0	16.0	84.0	14.0	86.0	14.0	86.0	19.0	81.0	45.9
OW	88.0	12.0	17.0	83.0	15.0	85.0	15.0	85.0	25.0	75.0	43.5
NW	89.0	10.0	14.0	86.0	14.0	86.0	13.0	87.0	22.0	78.0	41.0
GL	87.0	13.0	19.0	81.0	14.0	86.0	15.0	85.0	32.0	68.0	35.6
ZG	89.0	11.0	18.0	82.0	18.0	82.0	18.0	82.0	24.0	76.0	44.6
FR	86.0	14.0	19.0	81.0	24.0	76.0	25.0	75.0	37.0	63.0	37.8
SO	87.0	13.0	21.0	79.0	18.0	82.0	18.0	82.0	37.0	63.0	37.8
BS	85.0	15.0	31.0	69.0	30.0	70.0	29.0	71.0	38.0	62.0	43.2
BL	87.0	13.0	24.0	76.0	23.0	77.0	23.0	77.0	32.0	68.0	38.0
SH	80.0	20.0	28.0	72.0	20.0	80.0	24.0	76.0	35.0	65.0	59.5
AR	88.0	12.0	21.0	79.0	18.0	82.0	17.0	83.0	34.0	66.0	43.5
AI	89.0	11.0	14.0	86.0	12.0	88.0	10.0	90.0	23.0	77.0	37.3
SG	89.0	11.0	20.0	80.0	18.0	82.0	17.0	83.0	34.0	66.0	37.3
GR	86.0	14.0	22.0	78.0	18.0	82.0	20.0	80.0	33.0	67.0	33.5
AG	87.0	13.0	19.0	81.0	17.0	83.0	17.0	83.0	28.0	72.0	33.1
TG	89.0	11.0	21.0	79.0	16.0	84.0	17.0	83.0	31.0	69.0	36.7
TI	75.0	25.0	23.0	77.0	24.0	76.0	27.0	73.0	27.0	73.0	31.5
VD	83.0	17.0	23.0	77.0	27.0	73.0	31.0	69.0	36.0	64.0	29.5
VS	78.0	22.0	17.0	83.0	20.0	80.0	22.0	78.0	30.0	70.0	30.3
NE	80.0	20.0	22.0	78.0	31.0	69.0	34.0	66.0	41.0	59.0	48.1
GE	75.0	25.0	27.0	73.0	38.0	62.0	40.0	60.0	35.0	65.0	42.1
JU	75.0	25.0	24.0	76.0	41.0	59.0	39.0	61.0	45.0	55.0	35.7
Total	85.0	15.0	23.0	77.0	22.0	78.0	23.0	77.0	34.0	66.0	37.2