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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

## The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

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## SWISS CENTRE RESTAURANTS NOW OPEN

### FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

#### WILL THE WARNING BE HEEDED?

At the last weekend in October, the Swiss electors went to the poll to renew their Parliament for its thirty-eighth legislative period beginning in December and of four years' duration. For the National Council, in which Cantons are represented according to their size, 200 members had to be elected. The Council of States is elected according to cantonal laws, and only 27 seats out of 44 had to be filled; that was in 15 Cantons where, for convenience, elections to both Chambers took place simultaneously. In the Cantons of Vaud and Geneva for the second, and in Basle for the first time, women had the chance to go to the poll in the elections of Councillors of States, two for each Canton.

The number of citizens entitled to vote in the National Council elections numbered about 1,592,000. After deducting the Cantons of Schwyz, Glarus and Appenzell ARh where the number of candidates did not surpass the number of available seats, about 1,544,000 voters were expected to do their civic duty, to elect the remaining 193 M.P.s. In Uri, Obwalden, Nidwalden and Appenzell IRh, elections take place according to the simple majority system. In the other remaining Cantons (18), 1,252 candidates fought for the 189 seats (proportional representation).

Altogether, 45 new National Councillors were elected; of these, 35 move into seats vacated by retiring members at the end of the last session, and 10 take the place of defeated candidates, i.e. National Councillors who were not re-elected. The new members are 10 Social Democrats, 15 Radicals, 6 Conservative/Christian Socialists, 5 Farmers, Tradesmen and Citizens (BGB), 6 representatives of the "Landesring der Unabhängigen" and one non-Party candidate nominated by the "Campaign against Over-Foreignisation".

The new Parliament is composed of the following Parties: Socialists 50 members (53 in 1963), Radicals 49 (51), Conservatives 45 (48), Farmers 21 (22), "Landesring" 16 (10), Liberals 6 (6), Workers' Party (PdA) 5 (4), Democrats 3 (4), Evangelical People's Party 3 (2), "Liste Dellberg" 1 (0) and Zurich's anti-over-foreignisation 1 (0).

From these figures may be seen that no sweeping changes have taken place, and that the positions of strength have not materially altered. Socialists, Radicals and Conservatives have lost a few seats each, the Farmers one, but they, too, have kept their position. The surprising

increase is that of 6 seats to 16 of the "Landesring". Their success was especially marked in Berne, Zurich and Lucerne, where they increased their votes by 90%. The Workers' Party, too, have received a substantial increase in votes. In Neuchâtel, for instance, they scored 4,344 lists as opposed to only 2,350 in 1963.

The Socialists lost two seats in Zurich, the Radicals one each in Zurich, Aargau and Neuchâtel and gained one in Schwyz. The Conservatives lost one each in Zurich, Schwyz and Geneva, whilst the Farmers lost one seat in Berne. The "Landesring" improved their position by four seats in Zurich and one in the Aargau. The Liberals show no change, but the Workers captured a seat in Neuchâtel. The Democrats lost a seat in Zurich and gained one in Berne. The "Aktion gegen Ueberfremdung" secured their seat in Zurich, and in the Valais, National Councillor Karl Dellberg got in on his own. His candidature was not acceptable to his Party (Socialist), so he stood as independent and won. He was born in 1886 and is the oldest National Councillor. He has been a member from 1935 to 1947 and again since 1951. It is he as *Alterspraesident* who will, for the third time, open the first session of the new legislative period when it begins at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, 4th December.

As regards age, the largest group are men between 55 and 59, 48.5% as against 39% in 1963. The age group 40-49 make up 25.5%, 6% less than last time. 18% of the total number are between 60 and 69, a decline of 4.5%, whilst the youngest group, 30-39, show a small increase to 6%. Only four members are 70 and over, i.e. 2%. On average, the Conservatives are the youngest and the Liberals the oldest. The youngest member is the Geneva Socialist Prof. Dr. Jean Ziegler (33), and the overall average of the Chamber is 53 years, the same as in 1963.

It is interesting to see what occupation the individual M.P.s follow outside Parliament. The largest group consists of *Verbandsfunktionaere* (union and federation officials), 27 in all, of whom 14 are Socialists. They are followed by members of Cantonal Governments (26 *Regierungsräte*, 9 of whom are Socialists and 8 Radicals). Lawyers make up the next group, 25, of whom 13 are Conservatives. They are followed by tradesmen, industrials and men engaged in commerce, 20 in all. 18 each

of farmers and Commune Councillors and Presidents (the latter include 10 Socialists) come next, followed by 17 managers and directors (9 of these amongst the Radicals). Editors and journalists number 15, teachers and professors 10 and employees and workers 9. The rest is made up of 5 public officials, 6 doctors, engineers and architects, etc. The biggest increase is in the number of *Regierungsraete* and men from trade, industry and commerce, whilst the number of public officials and union and federation officials show the biggest losses.

The first actor ever, Alfred Rasser, has been elected (Basle), and for the first time, too, a blind National Councillor in the person of Dr. Fritz Tanner, Psychologist (Maienfeld GR), both as members of the "Landesring", the former in the Aargau, the latter in Zurich.

As regards voting participation in the elections, it was 65.7% as against 66.1% in 1963. Generally, it fluctuated between 85% in Schaffhausen and Valais and 26% in Obwalden. On the whole, participation for the Council of States was much the same, except for the women whose attendance was disappointingly poor: In Geneva, 24.8 and Vaud 18%. (No figures available for Basle). This is particularly surprising because both these Cantons put up women candidates. The total number of women entitled to vote in the three Cantons numbered 304,000. Note: in Neuchâtel, too, women have the vote, but its Councillors of States are elected by the Cantonal Parliament.

As regards the elections for the Second Chamber, three happenings caused sensations: In Basle, none of the three candidates received the absolute majority, and a second poll was necessary. Before citizens voted again on 11th November, the Radical Councillor of States, Dr. Eugen Dietschi, withdrew his nomination, and the choice was between the Liberal Dr. Alfons Burckhardt and the Socialist Dr. Willi Wenk. (As Basle is a Half-Canton, there is only one representative). The "Landesring" and the Workers combined with the Socialists, and Dr. Wenk was victorious.

The two most surprising results were in Zurich, where the much-respected *Regierungsrat* Rudolf Meier (BGB), in the Council of States since 1960, was defeated, though he reached the absolute majority. The new representatives are Dr. Fritz Honegger, new Radical Councillor, and, for the first time since Gottlieb Duttweiler (1949-1951), a member of the "Landesring", Albin Heimann.

The Conservatives kept the nine seats which were to be filled, which brings their total to 18. The Radicals won one in Zurich and one in Baselland and have now 14. The Socialists have lost two members and now only have two (Solothurn and Basle). Other newly elected Councillors of States are Josef Ulrich (Schwyz, Conservative), Dr. Ulrich Luder (Solothurn, Radical), Dipl. Ing. Werner Jauslin (Baselland, Radical), Councillor of State Jean-Pierre Pradervand (Vaud, Radical) and Dr. Hermann Bodenmann (Valais, Conservative).

The two Chambers taken together, the largest Swiss Party, the Socialists, have further fallen behind the Conservatives and the Radicals by losing four seats (52), whilst the latter's position is unchanged (63). The Conservatives have the same number now that they have lost three seats. The Farmers have 24 seats as against 26, the Liberals with nine show no change. The Democrats has six seats (-1), the Evangelicals three (+1), Dellberg's List one (+1), "Aktion gegen Ueberfremdung" one (+1). The increase of one to six seats of the Workers and the much-improved position of the "Landesring" who have now 17 as against

seven during the last Parliament, make the total of 244 (= 200 National Councillors and 44 Councillors of States).

No sweeping changes on the whole we said, but nevertheless a distinct warning that the Federal Government has lost favour. The "Landesring" now form a "Fraktion" i.e. they are entitled to have members on Parliamentary Commissions. The same applies to the Workers' Party (for the third time). They have considerably increased the number of votes. These two Parties are, as it were, the Opposition, for they are not represented in the Government. And their increasing success must be looked upon as a sign that many voters are dissatisfied with the policy of the Federal Council. There is a definite non-conformist tendency. The results as expressed in the number of seats are not even as indicative as the actual votes polled.

It is a warning that the much-talked-about *innenpolitische* stability may not be as unassailable as presumed. It is true, of course, that federal elections in Switzerland are surprisingly subject to happenings in the Cantons. But the man who is sent to Berne, must be and indeed is in the first place a representative of his Canton, its inhabitants and its Government. This is how it should be in a federalistic democracy. It has its advantages, but also its dangers and drawbacks, especially at a time when the Confederation has to take over more and more tasks from cantonal spheres. The Parties are aware of their difficult position; they also realise the necessity and source of strength of free social groupings, and they have to accept that economic and professional organisations compete with them. By differing in principles one from the other, the element of contest often clouds over judgment and fairness. The elections just fought, have proved this.

The Parties in office, i.e. represented in the Federal Council, have received a jolt, and that should make them reconsider their principles. But even more so, the Government will have to study the indications and obvious dissatisfaction in some quarters most carefully, or the next elections will show more than trends of displeasure and turn out to be rigorous censure.

(Compiled by the Editor from news and information received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique)

## BUSY SWISS ELECTORATE

In a number of Cantons and Communes, the electorate was asked for its decision on various matters at the same time as going to the poll to elect its federal parliamentary representatives.

In **Uri**, the people granted assistance on behalf of the Canton to the Furka-Oberalp-Bahn; a one-time amount of 900,000 and an annual contribution of 45,000 francs between 1971 and 1975. Voting participation: 56.55%.

The citizens of the **Ticino** agreed to a mainly formal alteration of the Cantonal Constitution.

The Evangelical electors of the **Thurgau** agreed to the draft of a partial revision of the Church Laws; this will enable the Church Parishes to engage full- or part-time helpers.

The voters of the town of **Berne** (participation 62%) agreed to all seven proposals, amongst them building plans, a school building credit of 16.7m., the purchase of property for 6m., the plans for the first extension of the Ziegler Hospital for 2.63m. and the Municipality's participation of 2.4m. francs in the new building for the "Städtische Schwesternschule Engeried".

The **Winterthur** citizens accepted all three proposals, i.e. subterranean parking garage in front of the Technical