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UP TO 100% VOTING PARTICIPATION The Swiss Electorate at Work

During the last few weeks, there were several cantonal and local plebiscites. Many Communes and some Cantons had to elect their authorities, accept or reject annual budgets and vote on many different proposals. Voting often makes heavy demands on a citizen — one of the reasons why so many women are themselves against getting the vote. Take a Commune like Koeniz (Berne) where no fewer than nine matters were put before the electorate: annual budget (yes), introducing a *Gymnasium* of its own (yes), new Sunday law (yes), new school at a cost of 4.3m. francs (yes), three construction schemes (yes), the partial revision of the Commune Rules, which would have given two full-time Commune Councillors in addition to full-time President (no), and a popular Initiative which wanted a different site for a school from that proposed by the Council at Thoerihaus (no). Not easy to be well informed on so many different matters!

At Moutier, the Commune Assembly had to be postponed because of lack of space; when the hall was filled to capacity by 770 citizens, 150 were still outside trying to get in. They would have had to vote on new building laws.

At Payerne, the first Commune in Switzerland to introduce this, 400 young people under age have been granted a consultative vote for all plebiscites, a week before the actual polling date and on the simple majority basis. It was the young Protestant and R.C. citizens who started the initiative. They will be able to vote for the first time at the end of January.

Female Suffrage

In quite a number of places, women went with the men, some for the first time. Several Communes, especially in the Canton of Berne, granted their women the vote, and by Christmas, 172 out of 472 Communes had introduced women's suffrage. At first, the Jura Communes were the pioneers, but during the year, also the "Old Canton" has made progress, especially the Emmental and Seeland. In the Jura, five new women have been elected to the local Commune Councils, but also at Langenthal, three women will sit with their male colleagues for the first time, two Socialists and one Liberal. A woman will be President of the Commune of Villeneuve (Vaud). There have been plebiscites in several Communes in order to vote on women's suffrage, where it has been denied them, some in the Jura, others elsewhere like Daerlingen (Lake of Thun) and Zweisimmen. The same goes for the Appenzell Commune of Huttwil where suffrage was refused them by 197 to 192. All 19 Evangelical Communes of Appenzell-Ausserrhoden, on the other hand, have granted them the vote. In the Grisons, five Communes have votes for women so far; Chur and Landquart were the first, now to be followed by Marmorera (Oberhalbstein), Sils (Domleschg) and Pontresina. The women there had previously been consulted to find out their own attitude, and it had been found that out of 299, 120 were in favour, 114 against, 46 abstaining and 19 absent from home.

Increasing Participation?

Much has been said about the lack of interest in plebiscites, and it is true that in some Communes and Cantons, there is apathy. On the whole, a slight increase has been noted. In recent polls, the lowest, as far as has been published, were Neuchâtel (6.7%), Zug (13%) and Horw (Lucerne) with 14% only. On the other hand,

quite a few Communes had extremely high voting participation of 75% and over. Two Communes in the Jura showed 100%, Roche d'Or and Pleujouse — *with* the women! At Delémont, it was found that the votes of the Social Democrats increased by a quarter, those of the Liberal-Radicals doubled and those of the Independent Christian Socialists trebled by the introduction of women's suffrage. At Unterseen, near Interlaken, of the 1,145 men, 76% went to the poll, of the 1,435 women, 55%.

Cantonal Decisions

Schwyz decided on various road and river corrections and a school at Rickenbach. The **Obwalden** citizens accepted the new taxation law. In **Zug**, the voters elected their *Obergericht* and Cantonal Tribunal — no changes in Party representation. In **Berne** (27.5%), the electorate agreed to an psychiatric observation centre for young people, a new domestic science school at the agricultural college of Schwand/Muensingen and a new building for the district prison at Delsberg. In the Canton of **Solothurn**, the proposed alterations in Church, State and Commune taxation were rejected, whilst the introduction of professional academic guidance was agreed to. The citizens of the Canton of **Baselstadt** rejected the plans for a new Court of Justice at the Baeumleingasse (20m. franc project!) They also put a brake on demolishing buildings by rejecting the proposed new regulations, but agreed to an increase in gas prices from 26.5 to 30 cts. per cubic metre. The **Schaffhausen** cantonal electorate accepted the new draft law for road taxation (increase of about 25%). The revised law regarding the organising of the Cantonal Police was also accepted. Voting Participation: 80%.

The **Aargau** electorate agreed to the proposed new law on scholarships and promotion of vocational training, as well as to the new proposals for increasing cultural activities. Voting participation was 61.5%. The cantonal elections in the **Valais**, which had been controversial, showed that the losers were personalities, and not Parties. In Sion, the Conservatives lost a seat to the Democrats, at Zermatt, a new Inhabitants' Party took away two seats from the Conservatives, at Conthey, the Progressives conquered a mandate and at Fully the "Dissidents". Men and women of the Canton of **Neuchâtel** approved a scheme for a centre for nervous diseases and granted 2 million francs for construction and maintenance of roads at Couvet and the Vue-des-Alpes.

Cantonal Capitals decided . . .

With an unusually high voting participation, **Altdorf** elected a "wild" candidate as Commune Clerk, Edwin Inderbitzi; in the second poll, **Berne** (only 27.2%) said yes to the budget (4.7m. deficit), to the construction of new central waste-water plant at Oberbottigen, to an extension of the Tiefenau Hospital (4.2m.), to additional cost of new main station (7.6m.), to various road construction plans. **Chur** (men and women) agreed to a new school "Rheinau" (nearly 8m.), to new gas works and to the town's joining the garbage disposal scheme at Trimmis. **Frauenfeld** has decided to join a similar regional organisation. **Lucerne** accepted the budget, plans for an educational home at Schachen near Malters, whilst **St. Gall** granted a total of 5 million francs for extending the girls' school Talhof and various road schemes.

Schaffhausen elected the 50 members of the large Municipal Council where the "Landesring" and the Evangelical Parties gained seats from the Liberals (3) and the Social Democrats (1), the "Landesring" now having 6 as against 3 seats previously. The successor to National

Councillor Bringolf as Municipal President is Dr. Felix Schwank (Liberal Democrat). The new building regulations were accepted. **Solothurn** accepted the budget and said yes to further improvements of the station square. Finally, **Zurich** agreed to further extension of the *Westtangente* by constructing a fly-over at the cost of 72m., and various other road construction schemes.

Communes decide from Salary Increases to Dog Licences

Fritz Staehli has been confirmed in office as Mayor of Bienne; there are no significant changes in either legislative or executive. At Bagnes (VS), voters decided to decrease the number of Commune Councillors from 15 to 11, but a similar proposal at Ayent near Sion was defeated. At Burgdorf, the electorate agreed to an increase of 6% of teachers' salaries and of the municipal staff. New **schools** or school extensions have been decided by the citizens of Brunnen (tower building), Nottwil, Oberehrendingen, St. Imier, Sirmach, Zollikon (Zollikerberg). Plans for **Communal Buildings** have been accepted by Wiesendangen, Sainte-Croix (administrative), Kilchberg (fire brigade, building office, civil defence), Winterthur (where the "Young Lions" had put up a plan for a multi-purpose skyscraper in opposition to the Council who had proposed various extensions and individual smaller buildings; the latter was accepted), as well as increase in salaries by 6% and a new telephone exchange. Plans for **garbage incineration plants** have been accepted by Winterthur and Moutier and **waste-water plants** by Olten, Affoltern/Albis, Tramelan and Uster.

Amongst various other decisions the local electorates had to take, there was acceptance by the Horgen citizens of a new **landing stage** with a view to the larger ferry on the Lake of Zurich later this year, and of the Langenthal men and women voters who decided to increase **dog licences** from 20 to 35 francs, except for old-age pensioners.

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