

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1971)
Heft: 1620

Rubrik: Comment

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 21.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

The Swiss Observer

Published Twice Monthly at
63/67 TABERNACLE STREET
LONDON E.C.2
Tel.: 01-253 2321

Telegrams: Paperwyse Stock London

HON. PRESIDENT: Robert J. Keller
EDITOR: Pierre-Michel Beguin

Advisory Council:

Gottfried Keller (Chairman)
O. F. Boehringer, J.P., (Hon. Sec.)
F. Burri, J. Eusebio, Dr. C. Jagmetti
(Press Attache Swiss Emb.)
A. Kunz, R. M. Suess

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES (POST FREE)

UNITED KINGDOM

24 issues . . . £2.40
12 issues . . . £1.25
6 issues . . . £0.65

SWITZERLAND & Elsewhere

12 issues Frs. 13 — or £1.30
24 issues Frs. 25 — or £2.50

Swiss subscriptions may be paid into

Postcheck Konto Basle 40—5718

Editor's telephone: 01-602 1378

of the N2 between Basle and Chiasso. Of 325 km of roads there will be 91 km of bridges and tunnels. Thirty-three per cent of the road runs on the plateau, 9 per cent in the Jura, 30 per cent in the southern and northern Pre-Alps and 28 per cent in the Alps proper. All in all, there will be 65 km of tunnels and 26 km of bridges. National Highway 13 linking Saint-Margrethan to Bellinzona, passing through Chur, Sargans and the San Berdanino will be 190 km long with 12.2 km of tunnel and 6.8 km of bridges. The longest of them all, the N1 linking Geneva to Saint-Margrethen and 410 km long, will have 10.2 km of tunnels and 16 km of bridges.

The motorway programme as it stands today foresees 1550 km of motorways and semi-motorways and 290 km of mixed traffic roads, a total of 1840 km. There are, at present, detailed projects for 64 km of six-lane motorways, 900 km of four-lane motorways, 244 km of semi-motorways and 185 km of mixed traffic roads. This means that the category of roads has been fixed for 75 per cent of the planned network. On 31st December, 1970, 650.8 km of national highway or 35 per cent of the total was open to traffic. This included 16 km of six-lane motorways, 361.4 km of four-lane motorways, 171.4 km. of semi-motorways and 102 km of mixed traffic roads. Almost 96 km of national highways were opened to traffic last year, and 335 km, or 18 per cent of the planned total are actually under construction.

When Parliament debated the Federal budget for 1971 they saw that the outlay of the federal motorway account was to be 950 million francs. This, with additional revenue accruing from the sale of land, matched the requirements of the cantons charged with the works. This round sum of

approximately a billion francs was to lay 93 km of new highway, which translates into about £1,400 per yard of new highway.

The Hurlimann Commission

How is this kind of money found? The Confederation contributes 85 per cent of total costs. Sixty per cent of custom duties on imported fuel goes to road construction and maintenance and 40 per cent of this sum devolves to the motorways. The motorist pays a further 15 centime per litre at the petrol station, bringing his total contribution to the financment of motorways to 20.4 centimes per litre. In the ten years to 1970, 7.7 billion francs had been spent on the construction of motorways and this sum had been two-thirds covered by the above revenue.

The construction of motorways is a joint cantonal and federal venture. The responsibilities are shared as follows: The Confederation establishes the network, fixes the general projects, the norms, the construction programmes and delegates partial responsibility to the cantons. The latter are responsible for submitting detailed building projects, for buying land, for contracting, for the surveillance of traffic and the maintenance of national highways.

Actually, the *Hurlimann Commission* has complemented the national highway programme by a proposal to discharge the cantons from the maintenance of national highways. This would however require an amendment to the Federal Constitution. The Hurlimann Commission has also proposed a modified financment of the whole network. Taking account of a 4.5 per cent rate of inflation, it estimates the total cost of the work still to be achieved before the national highway network is completed in 1986 at 27 billion francs, about a third of the present national product. But the money forthcoming under the actual system, more or less fixed at about a billion francs a year, will not be enough. Hurlimann reckons that 3,450 million francs will be needed in the next three years. It therefore proposes a different mode of federal contribution and an increase on petrol tax.

Despite the grumblings of Swiss motorists, Switzerland's motorways are therefore beginning to take shape. There have been a number of delays, particularly in those cases where priority, and hence funds, have been shifted from one project to another. Hence the Gothard Tunnel and other major works have delayed the completion of the Lausanne-Berne axis, which will not be ready until 1985.

The western Swiss tend to feel neglected, motorway-wise, and this is not entirely unjustified when one considers the map of present realisation.

Nevertheless the Genevese will, in 1975, be able to drive directly from their city to Aigle in the Rhone valley, using a masterpiece of civil engineering flying above Chillon and Montreux, 12 km of which are already opened to traffic. In the view of most motorists, Switzerland is behind her neighbours who are better equipped in motorways and uncluttered roads. The tourist likes everything about motoring in Switzerland except its slow-going roads. We can see the day when this reputation will no longer be justified.

(Based on "La Suisse")

COMMENT

HOW TO SPEND ART MONEY

The town of Basle spends 160,000 francs every year on art. A special commission is charged with administering this official manna for the benefit of local artists and decides where statues or frescoes are necessary and who is going to be given the job.

The artists of Basle, who are not opposed to this regular allocation, even though it is of trifling importance, wish to change the spirit in which it is made. Under the leadership of an artist called Samuel Eugster they have sent to the Arts Credit Commission a kind of manifesto in which they claim that the 160,000 francs should serve a social purpose. That is, the art generated with this money should not be left in a kind of void but serve a useful purpose and be a ferment to the growth of society. They stated their desire to "discover the forces which can have an influence on the physionomy of the town, and hence on our own culture, and bring these forces to light; to produce ideas which would elicit the solutions of the problems just made visible".

Such a philosophical and vague letter was hardly formulated to make an impact on the practical minded administration of the arts. In fact the Arts Credit Commission was unable to understand what the artists really wanted and did not think that a reply was necessary.

The writer who commented on this incident in the *Basler Nachrichten* felt likewise that if artists desired a change of policy on their behalf, then they should at least make their wishes clear.

The fact is that it is always difficult to find clear and pragmatic reasons to why money should be spent on art. Nobody would complain in this country if a million pounds was spent on a hospital, but if the government had decided to buy the works of art recently auctioned at Christie's for a comparable sum in order to safeguard the national heritage, then there would have been a public uproar.

Some years ago a Member of Parliament lashed out at the expendi-

In Switzerland
for over 50 years!

Lloyds Bank Europe

Geneva

1 Place Bel-Air
& Palais des Nations
Tel: 25-03-20

Lugano

9 Corso Pestalozzi
Tel: 3-90-91

Zurich

18 Börsenstrasse
Tel: 25-87-65

An International
bank for
international
people

Head Office:
100 Pall Mall,
London, S.W.1
(Tel 01-930 0831)



Part of the
Lloyds Bank
Group

ture on opera. "Why should the tax payer pay for something which nobody wanted to go to?" was his reaction, and doubtless one shared by millions of people. The people of Basle behaved otherwise some years ago, when they voted to spend considerable funds in enriching the arts museum with five Picasso paintings. In the event, an ingratiated Picasso offered them two more paintings free.

The fact remains that the artist is an outsider to community living. He may be paid officially for decorating the walls of a secondary school, but his work has no other meaning than to put aesthetics on a surface that would otherwise be blank. That decoration has no relation to the features of the city, to modern life and to the games of the children in the playground.

Samuel Eugster wants art to play a vital role in the life of the community. Like most artists he abhors the notion that art should just be "something to fill space agreeably". But this is unfortunately just what official art has to be in a capitalist society devoid of any ideological goal and where art is by-the-way.

(PMB)

SWISS NEWS

WHY PEOPLE WON'T GO TO THE POLLS

Geneva is reckoned to hold the world record for political abstention. Following two motions tabled to the Great Council of the canton in 1964, an official enquiry has been carried out on this civically distressing situation and yielded a 450-page document bristling with statistic and data.

It sets out to find out the underlying reasons to voting participations which can fall to as low as 10 per cent, and an average which is definitely the lowest in Switzerland. During the prosperous years of the beginning of the century, the people of Geneva were already prone to neglect their democratic duties. It was only during the years of the great depression and the politically unsettled times of the thirties that the situation tended to improve.

But after the war, the trend reversed and participation figures fell relentlessly, the trend being abetted by the mingling of populations and the introduction of women's votes. There is a natural correlation between prosperity and abstentionism, although not everything can be explained in terms of Switzerland's continuing economic boom. Other factors to be taken into account are the accelerated urbanisation and the increasing isolation of the individual. Life in the cities and in cramped tower blocks has dissolved the sense of belonging to a community. This is confirmed by the high voting participation to be found in Geneva's

rural communes.

The report states the case of a vote in Jussy, where a 90 per cent attendance was not very far from the Soviet absolute. Voters in these communes have fewer electoral lists to choose from and are in human contact with their administrators. The citizen's political consciousness depends on the opportunities of human contact and dialogue. In a big town like Geneva communications between the electorate and the political class are broken.

Abstentionism is more a case of indifference than principle. Only 10 per cent of men and 25 per cent of women will not set foot in a voting office on principle, all the others are occasional poll dodgers. They will vote as soon as they are emotionally concerned with the issue put before them. The best example was the vote on the Schwarzenbach initiative last year which attracted 72.5 per cent of the Geneva electorate. Culture and class also have an incidence on voting participation. The residential district of Champel will usually show higher attendances than the working class areas of La Jonction and Les Acacias.

The report also showed that abstentionism was not a result of discontent. It was, on the contrary, when things were not as people wanted them to be that participation increased. The multiplicity of political parties didn't help the situation either. It tended to confuse the voter, to make him hesitate and thus to favour his tendency to abstain.

Having taken so much pain in tracing the causes of abstentionism in Geneva, the reporters could not have completed their work without giving the remedies. They prescribe more education, more social integration and more information on social matters. It is only through education that the future citizen can pick up the good habit of going regularly to the polls. Education should give him a sense of responsibility, both at work and at play.

Citizens should be more integrated socially, or feel that they belong to a community, by a new distribution of responsibility within local political life. The life of local societies (brass bands, gymnastics, choirs, sports, etc.) is primordial and should be encouraged, particularly by the Press. Finally, it should be the ambition of the Press to kindle public desire for more political contact and participation in community life.

A SIMPLIFIED FINING SYSTEM IN ZURICH

The Zurich police have simplified the fining procedure against offending drivers. Formerly, a person fined for a parking offence had to present himself at the police station and pay his fine personally. The new parking ticket will be composed of two halves, one indicating the nature of the offence and the