

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: - (1974)

Heft: 1684

Rubrik: Letter from Switzerland

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: 22.02.2026

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

LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

One of the problems under country-wide discussion at present, both in the Federal Parliament and in the mass media, is the declared desire of workers and employees to share the power of decision-making of the employers. As far back as August, 1971, three import Trade Union Federations launched the so-called "Initiative for Co-determination" (Mitbestimmungs-Initiative), which postulates that the workers' and employees' alleged right to a share in the power of decision-making in industry should be written into the Federal Constitution. If this were to happen, all further details would have to be the subject of subsequent legislation.

On the Trade Union side it has been made clear that what they aim at *for the time being* is co-determination on a basis of parity on the boards of directors in industrial companies. The expression "on a basis of parity" can, as the Trade Unionists see things, mean two possibilities. One of them would be that any Board of Directors would have half of its members from one and the other half from the other side of industry. Alternatively "parity" could mean that the employers' side would be represented by one-third of the total membership of a Board, the workers' and employees' side

by another third, whereas the remaining third would be reserved for "the public interest", or in other words for some functionaries. The Trade Unions have also reserved the possibility for themselves to demand, should this seem advisable one day, the same "right to co-determination" in the actual *Management*. All this is, of course, going quite far in a leftward direction, but is in line with the present trend.

The employers' organisations see things from a different angle. They speak of their "indivisible responsibility" and consequently reject on principle any demand for an institutionalised sharing of power. They concede, however, that it might be wise to eradicate "the authoritarian style of management which still exists here and there" in order to replace it by more modern methods of leadership, based on the increased delegation of competence and responsibility, as well as on increased and more detailed information about the problems of enterprises. In between these two diametrically opposed points of view stands the Federal Council, which in a message to parliament has acknowledged that "adequate co-determination" corresponds to a genuine need of the present time.

But what does "adequate" ("angemessen" in the German text) mean? It could mean a minority-representation in the decision-making body, or a 50:50 share, or it could even mean that the trade unionists should be in a majority. It is known that a minority representation is in the Federal Council's mind, just as everybody knows that the Trade Unions postulate at least parity.

The National Council of the Federal Parliament has already debated the problem and several schemes — or models — at great length and the Council of States will tackle the same task in one of its forthcoming sessions.

What kind of solution will ultimately be found cannot, at this juncture, be said. But it is fairly obvious that a simple rejection of the Trade Unions' demand right across the board would provoke yet another initiative and possibly even some unrest in some industries. Probably the employers, while safeguarding their own and their shareholders' interests, would be wise to assist in finding a compromise solution which is fair to both sides and takes into account the rapidly changing ideas of the younger generation. The problem is of topicality and its satisfactory solution is in the interest of industrial peace and the national economy.

Gottfried Keller



SWISS BANK CORPORATION

(a company limited by shares, incorporated in Switzerland)

Principal London Office
99 GRESHAM STREET,
P.O. Box No. 114,
LONDON EC2P 2BR
Tel. 01-606 4000

West End Branch
SWISS CENTRE,
1 NEW COVENTRY STREET,
LONDON W1V 8BR
Tel. 01-734 0767

(Savings Account facilities available)

SOCIETE DE BANQUE SUISSE
SCHWEIZERISCHER BANKVEREIN
SOCIETA DI BANCA SVIZZERA

Offices throughout Switzerland
in New York, San Francisco, and Tokyo