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SWISS EVENTS

Swiss voters have rejected participation

Swiss voters overwhelmingly rejected proposals to give workers a constitutional right to a voice in management.

Two proposals on workers' participation put to the Swiss people on the weekend of 20-21st March failed to get more than one-third support from an electorate of 3.5 million.

Results from all of Switzerland's 22 cantons showed Swiss men and women voting by 3-1 against a trade union-sponsored proposal empowering parliament to legislate on participation at all levels of industry and business.

A government counter-proposal limiting workers' participation to plant level won only 31 per cent of the vote.

The electorate also voted against a plan to do away with Switzerland's tax havens and to increase duty on wine and beer by taxing drink according to alcoholic content.

Worker participation proposals put forward by the major trade unions had the blessing of Switzerland's left wing national parties and the Protestant church.

Swiss Roman Catholic bishops issued a statement backing worker participation in general without indicating whether they favoured either the trade union or government scheme.

Switzerland's strongest parliamentary party, the Christian Democrats, urged voters to reject both, describing the union initiative as revolutionary and the counter-proposal as retrograde. The influential Liberal party, strong among small businessmen and office employees, also came out against the union move.

INVESTMENT IN HOTELS

Nearly Sw.Fr.300 million has been spent over the past ten years on major renovation and installation work by Switzerland's top hotels.

And two-thirds of this sum has been spent over the past five years.

The figures are revealed by the Leading Hotels of Switzerland group, following a survey among its nearly 40 member-hotels.

Has the confederation a cultural role?

A 500-page report on the Confederation's role in cultural matters was presented to the Press last February by Federal Councillor Hanst Huerlimann, Head of the Department of the Interior, and Mr. Gaston Clottu, a former Liberal National Councillor who had chaired the group responsible for drafting the Report.

Commissioned in 1969, this lengthy document was awaited with some anticipation. Its presentation was "fanfare" in the Swiss Press.

The Report remains faithful to UNESCO's definition of culture. The world educational and scientific body recognises that one should not speak of "culture" but speak of "cultures" which, in their diversity, reflect the relationships of human groups to the world and to society. Seen in that light, a cultural policy becomes a task involving all the manifestations of the human spirit so long as these manifestations create conditions favourable to the fulfilment of the individual and the development of society.

Limiting itself to the Swiss cultural situation, the Document underscores the cultural particularities of our country. It mentions the existence of four languages which preclude the implementation of a "Swiss" cultural policy. There are also cantonal and communal individualisms even more sharply etched in the cultural field than in the political sphere. This points to the strong cultural influence of certain population centres which threaten

to drain cultural life from outlying areas in their cultural orbit.

The Confederation, it says, should help some poorer areas to satisfy their cultural needs. The report notes that it already does so in defending Rheto-Romansch. This minority language requires the support of the Federal State for its survival. In its recommendations to Cantons, the Report suggests that, in some cases, the burden of organising cultural events be shared between the cities which stage them and the suburban communes who profit from these activities without shouldering their cost.

The State is also invited to support cultural manifestations which could otherwise only take place in a commercially viable context at the risk of sacrificing their initial purpose. The Report mentions art exhibitions and the edition of cultural gramophone records.

Great stress is laid on education. There is little chance for culture without "formation" and no culture at all without "communication". All these fields are linked. But the report is a little wary of radio and television. It considers that an increase in cultural investment in the two medias will not necessarily lead to a wider "cultural propagation". Pro Helvetia, the State-backed foundation responsible for cultural events abroad, should be given wider tasks and become a "Swiss Foundation for Culture". The Clottu Report finally suggests the creation of a "Swiss National Centre of Documentation and Study".

Government rejects two anti-foreign initiatives

The Federal Council has rejected two anti-foreign Initiatives presented in March 1974 and announced that it didn't plan to submit counter-proposals to the Swiss people.

The first Initiative, launched by National Councillor James Schwarzenbach and his Republican Party, calls for a limit to the number of foreigners with a yearly or residential status to the equivalent of 12.5 per cent of the indigenous Swiss population (the ration is at present 1 million to 5.2 million, or nearly 20 per cent).

This Initiative was, in fact, the fourth anti-foreign Initiative submitted to the Swiss people. The previous one, launched by the National Action movement, was by the Swiss people in a Referendum held on 20th October, 1974. It called for a massive repatriation of

foreigners and was deemed as "too harsh" by Mr. Schwarzenbach who thought fit to submit his own proposals although they varied with those of the National Action only in degree.

The second Initiative rejected by the Government, which was the fifth to be launched, was also the work of National Action. It had gathered the required signatures in March 1974 and calls for a limit of the yearly number of Swiss naturalisations to 4,000.

Although the Government doesn't plan counter-projects, it is expected, in the near future, to table an important bill governing the situation of alien residents. Meanwhile, the economic recession has proved more efficient than any law in alleviating the problem: The slow-down in industry has reduced the number of foreign residents by 52,000.

Popular Republic of Angola is recognised

Switzerland has recognised the Popular Republic of Angola following the victory of the Marxist MPLA movement against its two nationalist rivals in that country.

Switzerland's recognition of the new regime was announced at a Press conference in Berne by Mr. Juerg Iselin, Head of Political Division 2 and former First Counsellor at the Swiss Embassy in London. Mr. Jean Monnier, Head of the International Law Division of the Department, also took part in the briefing.

Nine European countries had at the time already recognised the new republic, namely France, Malta, Sweden, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Britain, Finland and Italy. Mr. Iselin recalled that Switzerland had considerable interests in Angola and wished to develop friendly relations with that country.

Swiss exports to Angola totalled 31.7 million francs in 1973 and imports from the former Portuguese territory amounted to 45.6 million francs. The following year, imports fell to 30.9 million and exports to Angola increased to 45.2 million francs.

The Swiss Colony in Angola counted about 200 members before the troubles that preceded independence last November. There are at present only about twenty Swiss nationals still there and the General Consulate in Luanda has been closed. But Mr. Iselin said that diplomatic relations will eventually be established with Angola.

40-hour week is rejected

A Socialist motion to introduce a 40-hour week in Zürich's Cantonal Administration was heavily defeated by the Cantonal Parliament. Those who had tabled the motion wanted it to take effect without loss of salary, over a period of three years. Among the strongest opponents of the idea, Mr. Albert Moosdorf, Head of Cantonal Finances, said that it would have entailed an additional expenditure of a hundred million francs a year. He added that working conditions among local authorities had to follow conditions prevailing in the private sector and not the reverse.

The 40-hour week is still far from common in industry.

EQUAL RIGHTS IS GATHERING SUPPORT

An initiative in support of equal rights for women is gathering signatures across Switzerland. It was launched, naturally enough, by a committee of women who want to see the following provisions added to the Federal Constitution:

- Men and women are equal before the law
- Men and women have the same duties in the family
- Men and women have the right to equal pay for equal work
- Men and women must enjoy equal rights in education, professional training and professional opportunity.

A provisional clause is added. It stipulates that laws implementing the Initiative should be enacted within five years of its acceptance by the people. The addition would become Article 4 bis.

Although it seems hard to dispute these elementary and basic requirements, there are many so-called "suffragettes"

who plan to reject the Initiative. They consider it unnecessary and believe the same results can be achieved through existing constitutional and legal channels. They note, in particular, that the Constitution already provides for the equality of all Swiss citizens and confirms the right of women to vote in federal issues. Existing laws already endorse equality of opportunity.

These women, therefore, feel that it is not necessary to rush things by means of a Referendum. They prefer to allow time and the inevitable transformation of mores to secure such principles as "equal pay for equal work" and equality of opportunity at higher professional levels. These rights have, however, not yet been established in practise.

But opponents say that the country's laws have not fully secured women's rights so far. They, therefore, consider recourse to a Referendum necessary.



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INITIATIVES MIGHT REQUIRE 100,000 SIGNATURES

The National Council is divided about whether to double — from fifty to a hundred thousand — the number of signatures necessary to have an Initiative accepted by the Federal Chancellery.

At present, any person or group of persons wishing to introduce new provisions in the Constitution as a result of a Referendum must first obtain 50,000 signatures in support of his proposals within one year. The Lower House was presented with a bill to amend this procedure last December but refused to take a vote. The same thing happened in early March.

Although there seems to be a consensus to raise the number of signatures to 100,000, many national councillors feel that to keep to the same one-year deadline would be making things unfair to Initiative Committees.

Many people agree that there has been a certain "abuse" of the democratic right of Initiative. There has been many such Initiatives during the past few years and twenty-four of them are presently "pending" at the Chancellery.

The idea is, therefore, to make the exercise of that right slightly more difficult. It has proved no problem at all for the great majority of Initiatives to gather the required signatures well before the deadline although some, like the one backing a civilian service for conscientious objectors, didn't find easy support.

FIRST EVER LOSS BY RAILWAYS

Swiss Federal Railways operated at a loss last year for the first time.

Provisional figures indicate a loss on the year of nearly Sw.Fr.38 million — compared with a profit of nearly Sw.Fr.290 million in 1974.

The number of passengers carried last year dropped by just over 4 per cent and the amount of freight by more than 25 per cent.

Rail fares were increased in Switzerland last year by almost 15 per cent.

FOREIGN PROPERTY LAWS EASED

The Federal Council has announced that the "Furgler Law" restricting the purchases of Swiss real estate by foreigners will be made a little less stringent. People domiciled abroad will now be allowed to buy shares in companies owning real estate in Switzerland providing they do not take a controlling interest in these companies. A company with registered head offices in Switzerland will be authorised to buy property in the country without special authorisation provided it can prove that it isn't under the influence of foreign interests.

It will also be possible for foreign residents to buy land or houses when it is considered that these purchases do not appreciably increase the value of property in foreign hands.

For the past 22 months, the Department of Justice and Police has examined 6,000 applications to buy land in Switzerland and 240 complaints of which 25 have been brought to the Federal Court.

DUTCH IN SWITZERLAND TO INVESTIGATE

The Federal Council has authorised Dutch investigators to question two former Lockheed officials living in Switzerland in connection with the bribes allegedly paid to Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. (See Gottfried Keller's Letter from Switzerland.) The Prince Consort is said to have accepted bribes totalling 1.1 million dollars, an allegation he has strongly denied. The two Lockheed officials are Mr. Meuser and Mr. Weisbrod. Some newspapers commented that the Government had ignored strict legal procedure in giving the authorisation because the legal aid convention signed by Switzerland and Holland refers only to criminal cases.

The enquiry on Prince Bernhard's activities has not yet reached such a stage. The Government's attitude thus appeared to be political and, perhaps, natural enough in the circumstances.

Swissair Management has asked the American authorities for details of bribes that might have been paid out to its executives by Lockheed. The Congressional enquiry into Lockheed apparently showed that the firm had approached some Swissair officials with money for sales promotion efforts.

SWISS ACQUIT THEMSELVES WELL AT INNSBRUCK

Switzerland gave a good account of itself at the 13th Winter Olympics which took place in Innsbruck in February. Although the results of the Swiss team weren't as remarkable as four years ago at Sapporo, one gold medal, three silvers and many good placings were nothing to be ashamed of.

The great surprise came in the Mens' Giant Slalom where the acknowledged maestros such as Ingemar Stenmark and Gustavo Thoeni, were beaten by Heini Hemmi and Ernst Good.

The women rather disappointed us in their own Giant Slalom, Lise-Marie Morerod finishing fourth and Marie Therese Nadig fifth. They even failed to manage a place in the Special Slalom where Morerod was widely expected to gain a medal. But she missed a gate and Nadig gave up after ski-ing with one baton because of an injured shoulder.

The men did better in the Special Slalom with Walter Tresch taking fourth place. In descent, Sapporo gold medallist Bernhard Russi came a close second behind the Austrian Franz Klammer. The Swiss four-man bob team led by Erich Schaerer ended up in fourth place.

Elsewhere, the Swiss were disappointing. They produced little in skating and ice-hockey and didn't live up to their reputation in ski-jumping. A fifth place in the Relay was the best result achieved by one of our countrymen in Nordic ski-ing.

TOP SWISSAIR EXECUTIVES RETIRE

Two top Swissair executives have retired — Mr. Hans Aeppli, Executive Vice-President Marketing; and Mr. Isidor Lack, Vice-President Plant Engineering.

Mr. Aeppli, 65, joined Swissair in 1933, two years after the founding of the company. He was successively in charge of reservations, sales and traffic, and marketing. He is being succeeded as Executive Vice-President Marketing by the man who was his deputy, Mr. Hellmuth Scherrer.

THE CHEAP DENTIST OF APPENZELL

Up to ten years ago, dentists could set up a surgery in Appenzell Outer Rhodes without showing a diploma of any sort. As a result, there were a record number of them: one for every 350 inhabitants. Despite their dubious qualifications, their businesses thrived as patients were attracted from other Cantons, and even from abroad, by their highly competitive fees.

Understandably, the authorities found it necessary to stiffen the regulations on this matter in 1965. But these regulations still remained less stringent than in neighbouring cantons.

The number of dentists declined a little but there were still a hundred of them for a population of fifty thousand.

The law said that only dental mechanics with three years' training could practice. But they were not allowed to carry out complicated dental surgery and had to display the title "cantonal graduate" in their surgery. Despite these limitations, abuses still occurred and periods in absence by colleagues of unproven professional standing. New regulations have just been adopted to put this situation under control and to make sure that "cantonal graduates" have six years' training in a dental surgery.

COMPUTERISED CARGO RESERVATIONS

Swissair's computerised cargo reservations, information and documentation handling system CARIDO is now

being introduced in the airline's cargo reservations offices in Zurich, Geneva, Basle and Berne.

Visual display units and printer terminals are being installed in these offices in the system's first stage when it will be used for cargo reservations functions, enabling staff to confirm instantly space requests on Swissair flights from Switzerland and to propose alternatives where necessary.

The second stage will start in early 1977 with the addition of cargo handling functions. Information will be instantly available on the status and location of all shipments during transport. The airport cargo handling services at Zürich, Geneva and Basle as well as the Berne cargo office will be linked to CARIDO for these functions.

UNEMPLOYMENT SLOWING DOWN

The rise in unemployment has slowed down during the month of February. According to official statistics, it rose by less than 10 per cent after having jumped by 29 per cent last December and by 20.3 per cent in January. Figures for January were the smallest since the beginning of the recession which has led to about 30,000 workers being laid off and at least 100,000 more on short time.

Official statistics also indicate a significant reduction of the hours of production lost due to short-time working. About 3.2 million hours were lost in February as against well over 5 million last December.

The two worst hit sectors are the watch and the machine tool industries.

ABORTION IN THE CONSTITUTION

Less than a month after its launch, an Initiative to legalise abortion had received the backing of nearly 68,000 citizens. The sponsoring committee was headed by Mrs. Simone Hauert, of La Tour de Peilz. An earlier Initiative launched by the same Committee, calling for a complete legalisation of abortion, had been rejected by Parliament. The second one constitutes a "toned-down" version. It calls for the legalisation of abortions carried out by authorised

doctors.

The Federal Council drafted an abortion bill last year to counter Mrs. Hauert's initial proposals. This was rejected by the National Council but accepted, after amendment, by the Council of States. The National Council then adopted a solution somewhat more liberal than the Council of States'. The Upper House Commission will now examine the National Council's solution in the hope of finding a compromise.

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GOVERNMENT TO INVEST MORE

In order to promote economic recovery, the Federal Council has invited Parliament to consider a billion-franc investment programme which would go, initially, to the Post Office and the Federal Railways. The Nation Council

was due to examine the package during March. The Government had already obtained approval to two similar public investment schemes.

One was voted last June, the second was adjourned to the 1975-76 Budget. The present plan would provide for heavy orders for telecommunications equipment for the Post Office and rolling stock for the railways. These orders are designed to boost the sectors concerned.

FEWER BRITONS IN BERNE

BERNE. British tourism to Switzerland last summer showed an "unexpected revival", according to a report by the Swiss Government.

The report reveals that overnight bookings at Swiss hotels by British tourists rose by 7 per cent over the same period the previous year, in contrast to a fall in bookings from other major "tourist exporting" nations.

But despite the revival, overnights by British visitors were still 61 per cent below the record summer of 1961.

Overall last summer, the Swiss hotel industry registered nearly 19 million fewer overnight bookings.

This was a drop of 4 per cent over the 1974 summer figure, which itself was 7 per cent down on the previous May-October period.

Reasons for the decline, says the report, were the world economic recession, increasing unemployment, and restrictions on business travel. In addition there was a trend towards "parahotellerie" — overnight accommodation in camping grounds, chalets and apartments.

In the circumstances, adds the report, the hotel industry's results last summer could be considered satisfactory.

HOW THE MIDDLE-CLASSES LIVED IN OLD ZURICH

Zürich has acquired another attraction. In the city centre is the home decor museum in two 300-year-old houses which once belonged to a silk merchant. Here the visitor can gain an

idea of how the upper middle classes lived in the 18th century, a period of major importance in Zürich's cultural development. In the living rooms and bedrooms are stylish murals and exquisite furniture representing periods from the late Renaissance to the 19th century Biedermeier.

In the room used once as ballroom and banqueting hall visitors are taken back to the atmosphere of the Rococo period by classical music discreetly played through concealed loudspeakers. Opening times are Mondays, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to midday and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Entry is free.

BEA'S SILVER CELEBRATION

Berne's BEA Exhibition for Industry, Agriculture, Commerce and Crafts this year celebrates its Silver Anniversary. The 25th annual event will be staged at the Guisanplatz Exhibition Centre from 8th to 18th May, and will present the products of some 650 Swiss and foreign exhibitors. This year's special attractions will include an exhibition on how to "Eat, Drink and Be Fit"; a display devoted to air and sea safety, the radio telephone and telegraphy, and weather satellites; a civil defence exhibition; and a display "Electricity — how it is generated and distributed". Other highlights will include a working butcher's shop, bakery and printing works, fashion and art shows, an exhibition devoted to the theme "Wood", and displays of animals and agricultural machinery with regular demonstrators.

THE NAME'S THE SAME

Tradition has it that the new-born inhabitants of Berne's world-famous bearpits always make their first public appearance at Easter. But this year, there was a double première. In addition to the baby bears, there was another attraction — Emil Hänni, who succeeded his father, Emil Hänni senior, as Berne's official bearkeeper. Emil Hänni senior, a familiar figure to thousands of Swiss and foreign tourists, retired recently after 24 years' service.

FURTHER DROP IN TOURISM

Swiss hoteliers suffered a new fall in business last year. After the strong fall registered in 1974, the number of nights spent by Swiss and foreign tourists during the year in all categories of establishment has diminished by 2.5 per cent to 65.5 million. Nights spent by Swiss people fell by 3.5 per cent to 34.2 million. Nights spent by foreign tourists fell by 1.5 per cent to 31.3 million.

Although fewer people spent nights in hotels, last year's warm summer led to an increase in business at camping sites. The chalet- and holiday-apartment-to-let business slackened a little.

In all, about half of all nights spent by tourists were booked in hotels. A third were in chalets and holiday flats. Nine per cent in tourist dormitories, 9 per cent in camping sites and 1 per cent in youth hostels.

PRICES STAY STABLE

The 37 members of The Leading Hotels of Switzerland are to leave their prices "largely unchanged" this year.

Lausanne-based group spokesman, Mr. Urs Meierhofer, said the few price increases that were planned would be in the 3-5 per cent range.

Mr. Meierhofer added: "We are placing great emphasis on a clear price policy. There are no hidden extras, no unpleasant surprises."

"All our members are five-star hotels — and that means they cannot be cheap. But they are often less expensive than the public thinks."

SPEED LIMITS HAVE PROVED THEMSELVES

Speed limits of 130 kph on motorways and 100 kph on ordinary roads introduced in 1973 have resulted in a sharp reduction in the number of accidents. A study group has established that, for the whole road network, accidents have diminished by 15 per cent in three years. There were 28 per cent fewer deaths and 22 per cent fewer injuries. The difference is particularly striking on motorways where, due to reduced speeds, fatal accidents have been reduced by nearly 40 per cent. The Study Group accordingly urges the Government to make these temporary speed limits permanent from 1st January 1977.

JAZZ FESTIVAL FOR BERNE

The Swiss capital, Berne, is a city with a long and varied jazz tradition. It has firmly established clubs such as the "Shalimar" and the "Mahogany Hall", presentations such as the Nuits de Jazz at the Hotel National and morning concerts at the Kornhauskeller, and successful groups such as the Bernese All Stars, the Wolverines, the Long Street Jazz Band and the Red Hot Peppers. Berne is also the home of Switzerland's only official Swiss Jazz School, and a Bernese is the President of the International Jazz Federation.

The Wolverines Jazz Club this year

celebrates its 10th anniversary — and to mark the event an international jazz festival is being staged at the Berne Kursaal from 5th to 9th May.

Leading performers from Europe and the United States will be taking part, along with the most prominent amateur musicians from the Swiss jazz scene. Each of the five evenings will be devoted to a particular jazz style.

The five-day event is seen as a welcome alternative to the world-famous Montreux Jazz Festival — and also a possible revival of the once regular Berne Jazz Festival.

INDEX OF PRICES IN SWITZERLAND AT THE END OF JANUARY 1976

	Wholesale price 1963 = 100	Difference in relation to	Retail price End of Sept. 1966 = 100	Difference in relation to
End of January 1976	146.1		165.9	
End of December 1975	146.2	-0.1%	165.0	+0.5%
End of January 1975	152.7	-4.3%	160.4	+3.4%

SWISS FOREIGN TRADE IN JANUARY

Period	Switzerland's Balance of Trade			Value of exports as a % of the value of imports
	Imports	Exports	Balance	
(In million Sw.Fr.)				
1975 January	3,090.1	2,520.6	-569.5	81.6
1975 December	2,836.6	3,074.1	+237.5	108.4
1976 January	2,575.2	2,464.7	-110.5	95.7

WATCH INDICATING THE TIDES TWO WEEKS IN ADVANCE

A firm at Biel has launched a precision wrist-watch combining conventional time and lunar time — both legible at a glance — which offers sportsmen and scientists a new, simplified method of reading the tides. This self-winding watch, called "Solunar", is the first of its kind in the world to indicate the times of high and low tides, daily, two weeks in advance. The dial has hands indicating the time of day in hours, minutes and seconds, as well as an automatic day-date calendar. This conventional dial, however, is surrounded by two easy-to-read revolving rings that give tide readings. The watch is provided with a high precision self-winding lever movement, housed in a water-resistant stainless steel case.

FOR THE GARDENER

ALYSSUM (Cruciferae)

Commonly called the Madwort. These plants which are dwarf, may be either annual or perennial, they grow from 3 to 10 inches in height according to species. They are most useful for edging or ground cover, in the latter case they will form a dense cover which is excellent for keeping weeds at bay. Also they are attractive in the rock garden and look really impressive, cascading down between the rocks. The perennial types flower throughout May and June whilst the annuals will carry on throughout the summer until cut down by frost. The favourite soil for these plants is that of a sandy nature and in a good sunny position. Propagation is by either seeding, cuttings or division. Some species will seed themselves, providing masses of plantlets in the spring which can be transplanted as required. The colours available are white, yellow and lilac.

Species:

Alyssum saxatile (Gold Dust), a favourite for the rock garden, usually propagated by seed.

A. saxatile citrinum, similar to the above, but sulphur yellow.

A. tortuosum, prostrate, silvery leaves, a plant for the scree or rock garden.

A. maritimus, white and fragrant.

A. compactum, white and dwarf.

A. "Primrose Queen" The yellow and

A. "Lilac Queen" coloured forms of the Sweet

Alyssum.



ALYSSUM