

**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:** - (1978)

**Heft:** 1744

**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:** 18.01.2026

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

# LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

by Gottfried Keller

## TOWARDS A NEW CONSTITUTION

The Swiss Federal Constitution is 104 years old and has undergone 82 revisions. It is moreover written in a language which is difficult to understand for the man in the street. It is, in other words, super-annuated. In view of this, the need for a new, modern, more streamlined Constitution was felt as early as the middle-sixties and after about six years of preliminary work, a Committee of 46 men and women from all political parties and walks of life, presided over by Federal Councillor Furgler, has now been deliberating during the last three years and has recently come up with proposals for a new basic law of the land.

These proposals have been published and given wide publicity in a press conference. There will now be a public debate, lasting about three years, and if everything goes well, the draft constitution may reach the two federal chambers thereafter and the people — for final approval or rejection — towards the middle or late eighties. The draft contains, in simpler language than hitherto, much of what the citizen is already constitutionally guaranteed, but also a number of novelties.

Capital punishment, for example, is now also abolished in wartime — during World War II 17 Swiss traitors were, as will be remembered, executed by firing squad — which may, or may not, be a good

thing. Whereas hitherto all the Swiss citizens were equal before the law, in the new constitution all human beings are in this position, which now includes all the aliens who reside here.

After one year's legal residence in one place the aliens will also receive the right to take up domicile anywhere else inside the country. Protection of the environment and consumer protection are writ large, as befits the present times, and the Confederation is charged with aiming at full employment. The sovereignty of the cantons is further reduced — which, in view of the federalistic structure of the country, may well prove a stumbling block in due course.

The voting age is reduced to 18 years, which again may not be popular, and a civil service in lieu of the compulsory military service is also postulated, although this idea has been rejected in a nationwide vote as late as 1977. Another novelty concerns the right of the citizen to initiate: whereas hitherto the individual, with the necessary number of signatures, was only able to initiate changes or additions in the federal constitution, if the new proposals are adopted this right will be extended to initiate laws.

The two half-cantons of Basle are to have their status raised to Cantons, sending two Councillors of State to Berne, but the militia character of the

two chambers of the Federal Parliament is to remain, and the Federal Council is to remain a seven man executive, not nine or eleven, as some people proposed.

These are but some of the aspects, contained in 118 articles. One important one remains to be mentioned: man and woman, male and female, are to have the same rights as well as the same remuneration for the same work. At last, I feel tempted to add. On the whole one gets the impression that an outdated, old-fashioned piece of clothing of the Swiss body politic has been re-tailored and adapted to the present time.

## WOODEN BRICKS OF SWISS DESIGN

A system of walls made of extremely practical wooden bricks has recently been devised by a Swiss inventor. These bricks, which are easily laid and not at all expensive, can be used to renovate façades, build garden houses or interior walls. As walls made with these bricks are bearing walls, it is possible to build a whole chalet with them. By means of a system of strips and battens, the wooden bricks are laid on either side of a layer of insulating material, which makes it possible to make walls as thick as one wants and ensures excellent thermal insulation. The system, which has already gone into production in Switzerland, is patented and the inventor is looking for licensees.

## Inn on the Park. After dark

Apart from being quite the most beautiful hotel in London, the Inn on the Park is also quite the most perfect rendezvous. It's the place to meet after dark, after theatre, after a hard day's work, after anything. It also lets you start any evening as you mean to go on. In style.

There's the military splendour of the Vintage Bar. Or the Four Seasons Bar, just large enough to ensure that the only thing that's crushed is the ice in your drink. And speaking of comfort, the Inn on the Park has one of the few really civilised lounges left in London.

In fact, such is the attraction of

starting or concluding any evening at the Inn on the Park, that people naturally wish to spend the middle of it with us as well. For these discerning people we have a delicious alternative.

*The Vintage Room*



very much alive atmosphere till 2a.m.

For those for whom gastronomic pleasures are to be taken seriously, there is the Four Seasons Room.

Unquestionably, this is one of Europe's finest restaurants. Created by people who know about good food for the remaining few who really appreciate it. The service is pure magic and the ambience pure Inn on the Park. Try it. After dark.

*The  
Four  
Seasons  
Room*

The Vintage Room is that rare thing. A sophisticated night spot where you can dine like a king and dance with your hands around your partner, not your ears. Live music and

**Inn on the Park**  
Hamilton Place, Park Lane, London, W1A 1AZ  
For reservations telephone: 01-499 0888.  
Ample car parking available.