

Direct Democracy

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DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Federal

At the weekend of 18th/19th May, The Federal Law regarding tobacco duty was rejected by the Swiss voters. (*The reason for being late with the report is the strike in France, which delayed the arrival of news sheets and Swiss papers.*) 277,000 voters were for and 297,000 against. This means that the present ruling regarding price control on tobacco will remain in force until a new draft law has been accepted by the Federal Parliament without a Referendum being taken against it. Had it been accepted, price control would have been removed in three years. The rejection was no surprise, only the small majority. The Referendum had been taken against the proposed law by the Zurich firm Denner who had instructed their 130 branches to grant 16% rebate on larger quantities of cigarettes. This was against the law (which set the limit at 10%), and the firm lost a court case. They fought the Government proposal with the Referendum on the grounds that the draft law was serious interference with trading freedom.

Voting participation (the lowest but one since 1848) in some Cantons was very meagre (as low as 11.9% in the Canton of Geneva, 12.8 in the Valais and 13.4 in the Ticino, the latter mainly because the Association "Pro Malcantone" asked the citizens to boycott the plebiscite as a protest against the suspension of the new postal motor coaches between Lugano and the Malcantone; 26 Communes followed suit). The highest participation was 70.6% in Uri. This picture is probably somewhat distorted, because of the rather important cantonal and communal voting matters, especially in Uri where the seventh seat in the Cantonal Government had to be filled.

In connection with the federal vote, it should be remembered that nearly 40% of the price of tobacco goes towards financing the Old Age Insurance (A.H.V.). It is also a fact that under tobacco price control many small shopkeepers are able to make a living out of the sale of tobacco, which would be put in jeopardy once the big chain stores are at liberty to undercut. A period of transition would therefore be justifiable, though, since price control on branded goods has been dropped nearly throughout, there is no doubt that tobacco, too, has to be brought into line. Many opponents to the draft law expressed an objection on the grounds of principle, a demonstration against the increasing tendency to interfere in the laws of free trade and the liberty of the citizen. It remains to be seen how Government and Parliament react.

Cantonal

In *Obwalden*, the new Cantonal Constitution was accepted by a large majority (2,388 : 645). With it voting age has been put at 19, and women's *Wählbarkeit* rights are established. On the whole, its main characteristic is a logical structure containing only laws of principle. The citizens also accepted the new Education Law which brings several improvements.

In *Uri*, for the first time, a Social Democrat has been elected to the Cantonal Government, Franz Achermann, train conductor from Erstfeld. The Conservatives and the *Talschaft* Urseren suffered a defeat. Next to the Socialist, there are four Conservatives and two Liberals in the *Regierungsrat*. The electorate also accepted two new draft laws, a new order in the structure of educational authority, and a new law for the Uri Cantonal Bank.

The *Schwyz* citizens rejected the new building laws by a small majority. All the Parties had supported the

draft with its modern conception. Now, the old law dating back to 1899 will remain in force.

In *Baselstadt* 6.6 million francs was granted for a central computer installation, but the proposed change of the Cantonal Constitution was rejected by nearly 17,000 to just over 8,000 voters. The constitutional change would have affected the number of signatures for Initiative and Referendum, i.e. from 2,000 to 6,000 and from 1,000 to 4,000 respectively. Women's participation was extremely low.

In the *Aargau*, the electorate approved the revision of the children's allowance law; such grants have now been increased from 20 to 30 francs minimum, and the age limit has been moved from 20 to 25.

30,000 *St. Gall* citizens voted in favour of new regulations to the federal law on vocational training (13,600 against). 10,685 francs was granted for the restoration of the Teachers' Training College Mariaberg at Rorschach. The Confederation will contribute 2.2m. and the Commune of Rorschach 100,000 francs.

In *Schaffhausen*, the old apprenticeship law of 1943 has been replaced by a *Berufsbildungsgesetz*, when a 3:1 majority approved new proposals.

A very low voting participation was registered in *Berne* where the citizens (27%) agreed to a credit of 1.95m. for the rebuilding of the *Amthaus* Aarberg. The age limit for eligibility as members of the Cantonal Parliament has been moved from 25 to 20 years (45,675: 27,094).

The *Solothurn* citizens agreed to an increase in the basic capital of the Cantonal Bank.

Communal

The municipal electors of *Schaffhausen* rejected the budget for 1968 according to the Referendum taken by Liberals. Also defeated was the proposed increase of the tax rate.

In *Chur*, the citizens confirmed their Municipal President (Dr. Georg Sprecher) and their Executive in office for a further four years. They also agreed to a new school law and a credit of nearly half a million francs for an Evangelical settlement for the aged.

The *St. Gall* voters agreed by a large majority to three credits: 3.46m. for additional installations at the lake water works Riet on the Lake of Constance, 12.7m. for extensions to the water supply services and 1.55m. for the first stage in a sports field at the Breitfeld. Voting participation was 54.8%. Other communal plebiscites in Eastern Switzerland concerned seven Communes in *Appenzell-Ausserrhoden* where a 13.5-million franc credit was granted for the erection of a new District Hospital. In *Appenzell-Innerrhoden*, the *Bezirk* Oberegg has decided on the secret vote as opposed to the Open *Bezirksgemeinde*. *Rorschach* agreed to improving the beach facilities and to continuing the process of depositing rubble on the lakeside to create additional land. At *Romanshorn*, new road and sewerage proposals have been accepted, and improved water supplies at *Arbon*. In the district elections there, the Socialist teacher Walter Wyss was elected as second member to the *Bezirksrat*. Police Corporal Paul Waldburger, Oberuzwil, was elected *Vize-Statthalter* for the *Bezirk* Bischofszell. *Flawil* citizens rejected a 58,500 franc-credit for a public civil defence station. For the Thur correction near the *Grundwasserwerk Flawil*, the necessary credit was granted. The municipal electors of *Wil* agreed to a contribution of a million francs to the inter-cantonal association "St. Gallische Krankenschwesternschule" and their projected hospital which will cost 8 million.



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In the Canton of Zurich, the following decisions were taken by various Commune electorates: In *Winterthur*, citizens agreed to a plan for a kindergarden building (Endlikerstrasse), the extension and renovation of a building in the Wartstrasse as a home for women and a credit of 1.25 million francs for a new staff house and renovations of the Lindberg Hospital. The project of the Wuelflingerstrasse gymnasium was rejected. Wetzikon voters (66.5% participation) decided in favour of joining the scheme to extend the garbage plant of the Zuercher Oberland. All 23 Communes have thus agreed. Wetzikon also granted the necessary credit for a double kindergarden.

The Evangelical voters of the town of *Zurich* agreed to a separate Church Hall for the Italian-speaking Community which up to now had the use of the old Church of Wiedikon (.354m.). The Church of Hoengg is to be renovated. All Zurich voters agreed to a 6.25 million-franc credit for a settlement for old people at the Mathysweg.

Kloten citizens have granted 5.5m. for a new cemetery, *Wettingen* 3.8m. for the second stage of the school centre Margelaecker and *Dietikon* 7.5m. for a *Gewerbeschulhaus*.

Adliswil rejected the new *Gemeindeordnung*, and *Uster* the projected by-pass of the Glattenriet. The *Solothurn* voters agreed to the planned contributions by the town to the Foundation for Old-Age Flats.

In the Canton of *Berne*, a number of Communes have accepted women's suffrage, bringing the total to well over 60. *Corcelles*, however, have rejected the proposal by 17 to 13 votes. With a low participation of 28.4%, the *Bienne* electorate accepted the planned purchase of a site at the cost of 1.5m. francs. *Burgdorf* agreed to road and river projects and to a limitation of office (12 years) for members of the Municipal Council. *Langenthal* voters accepted the budget, introduced women's suffrage and voting by post. They rejected the Initiative for *Listenverbinding*. *Koeniz* citizens agreed to a garbage dump in the Hummersloch.

In Central Switzerland, the "Corporation Citizens" of *Ursern* met in the historic Ring at Hospenthal to elect their new *Talammann* Leonhard Renner, *Statthalter* Arthur Regli and *Saekelmeister* Ludwig Simmen. The new Commune President of *Schwyz* is Walter Inderbitzin (Conservative). The *Lucerne* citizens agreed to a new gymnasium on the site of the Dula School, and the Commune Assembly of *Wolfenschiessen* to a new station.

At *Bagnes* in the Valais, the electorate agreed to a nature reserve Mauvoisin, Grand Combin, Bec des Rosses and Mont-Gêlé.

In Western Switzerland, *Neuchâtel* was in the news when the PDA (Party of Labour) was successful in the elections to the Commune Councils, thus in the town of Neuchâtel, they gained 5 seats, whilst the Radicals lost 4. At *Hauterive*, the "Entente Villageoise" won 8 seats from all the other Parties. At *Marin-Epagnier*, the Radicals gained 11 seats — the Council has been increased from 27 to 39. At *Boudry*, the Liberals lost 5 seats, and the new group "Les Chevrons Boudryens" won 8. The "Groupement des Intérêts Communaux" at *Les Geneveys-sur Coffrane* made an impact with 9 new members, whilst the Radicals lost 6.

In *Yverdon*, the voters rejected the proposed credit of 790,000 francs for the restoration of the historic "Café du Château", following a Referendum. Another Referendum has been taken against the 13.5 million-franc plan for a new school.

(News received by courtesy of
Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

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A complete 6820 kW Back Pressure Steam Turbine Generator Unit has been supplied and successfully commissioned by Brown Boveri for Lindsey Oil Refinery Limited at Killingholme, near Grimsby. Lindsey Oil Refinery by Total Oil Great Britain Ltd. and Petrofina (Gt. Britain) Ltd.

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