

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 23 (1960)
Heft: [1]

Artikel: Situation in Switzerland prior to the election
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942421>

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HELVETIA

Monthly Publication of the Swiss Society of New Zealand (Inc)

GROUP NEW ZEALAND OF THE NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY

23rd Year

JANUARY 1960

Hamilton

Situation in Switzerland Prior to the Election

By Max Nef

The Autumn Session of the Federal Parliament came to an end, in October, and with it, also, the 35th present legislative period. On the first Monday in December the new Lower Chamber resulting from the October elections will be sworn in for a new period of office, extending over four years. This means a new period of office, also, for the Federal Government, which will have to be elected by the new Parliament. It is still too early to make any surmises regarding the possibilities of new replacements in the Cabinet. Although—when compared with similar conditions abroad—the position of our Federal Authorities is very stable, nevertheless, when Parliament proceeds with a general election of the Federal Government, one may reckon on a change occurring in respect of about one-quarter of its members. At the same time, only insignificant variations take place in regard to the strength of the various parties represented therein.

The retiring Parliament dealt with a large number of individual desires and questions on the part of the deputies, during the two weeks of its Autumn Session. Among these were questions relating to Switzerland's foreign policy, which gave the Federal Government the opportunity to sketch a rough outline of the international situation and, above all, to lay before Parliament, and thus also before the Swiss Public, the views held by the Federal Government in regard to the important problem of European integration.

Switzerland's participation in the union of seven countries for the purpose of forming a common Free Trade Area is intended as an answer and as a counterweight to the already effective union of the six countries which constitute the so-called Common Market. Both these groups comprise countries which belong to the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, known as the O.E.E.C., which has established effective and appropriate practical conditions for the reconstruction of Europe after the war and has striven to overcome the lack of union, which threatened it.

With the setting up of the new European Common Market, of which three of Switzerland's neighbours namely West Germany, France and Italy are members, as well as Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg, a new cleavage is now

threatening European economy, which may prove all the more prejudicial in that certain political aspirations are manifesting themselves within it. If seven further countries which belong to the O.E.E.C. have now decided to unite into a group, this does not mean the achievement of a final solution to the problem, but rather an intermediary stage which it is hoped may facilitate a future union between the two communities. In this way it may prove possible to ban the danger which is now threatening, of a splitting up of Europe into separate economic blocs.

Even should such unions bring with them certain disadvantages and the surrendering of former liberties for the countries concerned, these are outweighed by the expected advantages. Switzerland has most carefully examined the question as to whether her neutrality, as well as the principles of free trade, allow her to participate in such a grouping with other countries. The Federal Government has, however, carefully marked out the limits which must not be overstepped. The marching orders for the further development of this scheme are clear and explicit, as could be gathered from the statement made by Mr Petitpierre, the Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs, before Parliament. His remarks were both clear and convincing.

Latterly, the development of Swiss economy has proceeded smoothly along the even tenor of its way. The cost-of-living has become stabilised, to a very large extent, with only occasional fluctuations relating to the seasons. The results of our foreign trade serve as a graduator, among other things, for an estimate of our economic prosperity. They continue to be characterised by an upward trend. Tourist traffic, also, favoured as it has been by the fine weather, has proved very satisfactory. The turnover in the domestic retail trade shows higher figures, in value, than those in the preceding months. The situation of employment continues to be good. According to the Labour Exchanges, they have fewer than a thousand workers who are looking for jobs. The number of foreign workers, imported in order to fill in those jobs for which the domestic labour was insufficient, is still very considerable. The building trade, fortunately, shows a revival in its activities, but, all the same, there is still a big dearth in housing accommodation.



ELECTION RESULTS

	DER NEUE NATIONALRAT																			
	Freisinnige			Kons.-Chr.so			B.G.B.			Liberales		Sozialisten		Unabhängige		Demok. u. Evan.		Kommun.		
	neu	bish.		neu	bish.		neu	bish.		neu	bish.	neu	bish.	neu	bish.	neu	bish.	neu	bish.	
Zürich	5	(4)		4	(4)		5	(5)		—	—	9	(10)	5	(6)	4	(3)	—	—	
Bern	6	(6)		2	(2)		11	(11)		—	—	12	(13)	2	(1)	—	—	—	—	
Luzern	4	(3)		5	(5)		—	—		—	—	0	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Uri	1	(1)		—	—		—	—		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Schwyz	—	(1)		2	(1)		—	—		—	—	1	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Obwalden	—	—		1	(1)		—	—		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Nidwalden	—	—		1	(1)		—	—		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Glarus	1	(1)		—	—		—	—		—	—	1	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Zug	1	(1)		1	(1)		—	—		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Freiburg	1	(1)		4	(4)		1	(1)		—	—	1	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Solothurn	3	(3)		2	(2)		—	—		—	—	2	(2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Baselstadt	2	(2)		1	(1)		—	—		1	(1)	3	(2)	1	(1)	—	—	—	0	(1)
Baselst.	1	(1)		1	(1)		1	(0)		—	—	2	(2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Schaffhausen	1	(1)		—	—		—	—		—	—	1	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Appenzell A.-Rh.	1	(1)		—	—		—	—		—	—	1	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Appenzell I.-Rh.	—	—		1	(1)		—	—		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
St. Gallen	4	(4)		6	(6)		—	—		—	—	2	(2)	1	(1)	—	—	—	—	
Graubünden	1	(1)		2	(3)		—	—		—	—	1	(0)	—	—	2	(2)	—	—	
Aargau	3	(3)		3	(3)		2	(2)		—	—	4	(4)	1	(1)	—	—	—	—	
Thurgau	1	(1)		1	(1)		2	(2)		—	—	2	(2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Tessin	3	(3)		3	(3)		—	—		—	—	1	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Waadt	6	(6)		1	(0)		1	(1)		2	(2)	5	(5)	—	—	—	—	—	1	(2)
Wallis	1	(1)		5	(5)		—	—		—	—	1	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Neuenburg	2	(2)		—	—		—	—		1	(1)	2	(2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Genève	3	(3)		1	(2)		—	—		1	(1)	1	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	2	(1)
Total	51	(50)		47	(47)		23	(22)		5	(5)	51	(53)	10	(10)	6	(5)		3	(4)

NEWS OF THE COLONY*SWISS SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING*

A Committee meeting of the Society was held on Sunday, January 10th, at the President's residence and was well attended by nine members. Unfortunately, the Wellington and Taranaki members were unable to be present.

The Treasurer, Hans Oetli, commenting on the financial situation, said it was pleasing to see that finances were sound and that in spite of the reduction in price for the "Helvetia" the Society might even end up with a small gain—provided every member assists in paying the subsidy promptly. We now appeal to everyone who has not already done so to send their subscription in to the Treasurer as soon as possible.

A case of a needy compatriot which has concerned us for a long time is coming to a satisfactory conclusion in that he is now able to enter an old folks home.

The most important item, the finalising of the Steinstossen on a New Zealand-wide scale, was fully debated and the following decisions made: That each club sets up one or more teams of three (3) competitors to compete for a Swiss Society Trophy (Challenge Cup), to be held by the winning club for 12 months; also, a Trophy for the highest individual result over all competitors will be donated annually by the Society. This Trophy is to be won outright.

In the case of a Shooting Trophy on similar conditions to Steinstossen, it was felt that sufficient time would not be available to organise it for this year and it was then decided to defer this for another year. Our Vice-President, Dr Kaegi, and the Treasurer, Hans Oetli, two majors of the Swiss Army, have graciously consented to work out suitable rules and bring them before a Committee meeting at a later date. Charles Ding and Walter Risi are working out the rules for the Steinstossen competition, which will be competed for this year. The first such event will be held at Mercer where the Auckland and Hamilton clubs are holding their annual picnic

on January 31st. Taranaki is to follow on February 14th at their picnic in Te Ngutu Park. Wellington will most likely have their event at some later date. The official stones, all identical, were distributed last year.

HAMILTON SWISS CLUB CHRISTMAS PARTY

A large number of compatriots and their families attended the Hamilton club's Christmas party, held at the Riverlea on December 20th.

After 9 p.m. the candles on the Christmas tree were lit and by their mellow gleam the official part of the celebration began. First everybody joined in singing "Stille Nacht" and to follow Joe Risi sang a tenor solo, "Ave Maria." A small choir consisted of Mesdames Hans and Heiri Oetli, Studer, Reinhard and Santner. The junior members were the children of the two Oetli and Reinhard families. This choir sang a "lesson of Carols." Ernst Studer, as narrator, read the appropriate scripture passages linking the Carols together. Adding to the Christmas touch, each singer held a lighted candle. To end this part of the programme, everyone joined once more to sing "Oh du froehliche." Mrs Biland accompanied the singers on the piano. The audience showed their appreciation by very attentive listening and the President, Arnold Biland, thanked the performers for their fine items.

The large number of children were next given a treat when Santa Claus, splendidly impersonated by Peter Reinhard, walked the length of the hall—complete with sack and "Ruete." Each child received a tablet of chocolate from benevolent Santa Claus. On his way out of the hall, Santa Claus actually carried a "naughty boy" in his sack to the amusement of all. Thanks to the generously-filled plate which each lady had brought along, it was possible to serve a splendid and plentiful supper. A "gemuetlicher Hock" followed the repast and all went home well satisfied.

—H.B.