

# A new federal councillor elected

Autor(en): [s.n.]

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - (1962)

Heft 1418

PDF erstellt am: **09.08.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-693682>

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itself. It seemed strange, Dr. Halbheer said, that the 600,000 foreigners working in Switzerland influenced merely by their presence the ratio of representation in the National Council whereas the 265,000 Swiss citizens abroad had no influence whatsoever.

We Swiss abroad know full well that we are a long way from having our own representative in Parliament, though some are incurable optimists who seem to have forgotten how slowly things mature at home.

To-day the most effective representative of the Swiss abroad is the ASK, which is more and more consulted by the authorities. This forum of the Swiss living away from home has developed into a recognised body, and its executive, the Secretariat, keeps close and well-founded relations with Parliament and the Federal Authorities. The ASK is making a demand to be consulted compulsorily in any questions touching the Swiss abroad.

As one of the recent examples of close co-operation Dr. Halbheer gave the Solidarity Fund, which was able to delegate its President, as an expert on to the parliamentary commission. The ASK is also consulted in all questions relating to the Old Age and Invalidity Insurance for the Swiss abroad (AHIV) and the big subject of Technical Assistance.

The ASK was **not** consulted, however, in the unfortunate decree regarding the purchase of land by persons not resident in Switzerland, which has created much indignation and bad feeling.

The ASK has also asked that the Swiss abroad should be allowed to have a representative in parliamentary commissions which dealt with questions of policy concerning Swiss citizens abroad. Whilst agreeing to the demand for consultation, the Parliamentary Group is against having a representative on all parliamentary commissions, though there is no reason why such a representative should not be co-opted in individual cases.

What the ASK is now asking on our behalf is that we should be granted voting rights in Federal matters when temporarily in Switzerland. We would have to deposit our passport and a declaration by our consular agency that we were registered and of good reputation. This could be done wherever we are in Switzerland, and our voting papers would afterwards be sent to our respective commune of origin. During military service the Swiss from abroad would be allowed to vote by correspondence. We should not be allowed to sign any initiatives or referendum demands.

The second request concerns the compulsory obligation of the Swiss Federal Authorities to consult the ASO (Auslandschweizer Organisation) in all questions affecting the Swiss abroad.

There is no doubt that our interests are well taken care of by the ASO and it is up to us to support their efforts and to strengthen the Commission by sending well-briefed delegates to its meetings.

*Mariann.*

### **Nouvelle Société Helvétique**

**Tuesday, 16th October 1962, at 7.45 p.m.**

**"Russia and Black Africa through Swiss Eyes"**

**Dr. ERIC METTLER,**

Chief Correspondent, "Neue Zürcher Zeitung"

talking about his observations on his journeys through Russia and many African countries in answer to questions.

Refreshments are available as usual before the meeting from 6.45 p.m. onwards

## **A NEW FEDERAL COUNCILLOR ELECTED**

On Thursday, 27th September, the Federal Assembly, that is the National Council and the Council of States combined, met to elect a new Federal Councillor in place of Federal Councillor Bourgnicht, who had resigned for reasons of health. It has since been announced that Monsieur Roger Bonvin from Sion has been chosen as the new Federal Councillor. Rarely, if ever at all, has there been so much speculation as to who would emerge as the successful candidate, nor indeed has there ever been such a difficult election in which several ballots were needed. Unfortunately, the interesting reports reached the editor too late to be made use of in this issue as all material for one number has to be ready a week before publication date. But she hopes to give detailed information and to present a true picture, in the next issue, of the interesting happenings preceding the election of Monsieur Bonvin to the highest office open to a politician.

## **SWITZERLAND PRESENTS HER CASE TO THE COMMON MARKET**

On Monday, 24th September, at 5.30 p.m., the Swiss delegation met the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community in Brussels in order to state Switzerland's case. The delegation of seven was led by Federal Councillors Wahlen and Schaffner. Monsieur Wahlen read the declaration in French. A summary of its text will follow.

At a press conference immediately on his return to Switzerland Federal Councillor Wahlen emphasised that at the presentation of the Swiss case as well as at the informal meetings afterwards, a very friendly atmosphere had prevailed. Interest, understanding and sympathy had been shown for the Swiss position. The Chairman of the Council, the Italian Minister of Industry and Commerce, had assured the Swiss delegates that the declaration would now be examined with due care. No date for the resumption of discussions, leave alone negotiations, could be fixed as agreement with Great Britain would have to be arrived at first. This Switzerland fully understood, and in the meantime much preparatory work could be done. Many a hard nut would have to be cracked before any measure of success could be achieved. Should the negotiations between Great Britain and the Common Market collapse, the whole EEC would be severely weakened and it might change matters. In a radio interview on his return, Federal Councillor Schaffner stressed that the Swiss declaration had been remarkably well received, probably because it did not ignore the difficulties, but dealt in a constructive and realistic way with the problems which would have to be solved by both presumptive partners. This did not give the green light for the negotiations, however, but it was at least a good beginning. Our declaration was based on the right principles, and, if used wisely, a framework of European integration could be built up which would enable us to be both good Europeans as well as remain good Swiss.

*Mariann.*