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BUSY SWISS ELECTORATE

"Landsgemeinden"

Springtime usually brings the voters to the poll, and in the last remaining Cantons where the "Landsgemeinde", the Open-air Parliament, still takes place, the end of April is the time when they are held. The "Landsgemeinde" is a venerable political institution, constituting the purest form of democratic life — an open show of hands! Sometimes it is not only interesting, but also amusing to hear how some of the quaint mountain farmers talk to their Government, how they make proposals and criticize public affairs.

On 27th April, a fine spring day, the people of Obwalden met on the "Landenberg" near Sarnen where Federal Councillor von Moos was a guest. In an hour and a quarter, elections took place — the new *Landammann* is Arnold Durrer (Giswil), a Liberal for the first time after 23 years.

The Nidwalden citizens assembled at Wil near Stans, in an open circle. For three hours, business was debated after the procession had made its way from Stans. Walter Vokinger (Stans) is the new *Landammann*, for the third time. Labour law, a change in the administrative account system, a new law for the cantonal electricity works (a nuclear energy pump storage works will be erected at Emmetten), new tax regulations for boats — a total of nine proposals, and all accepted.

The voters of Appenzell-Inner-rhoden met in the "Ring" at Appenzell. After Mass, the citizens walked to the assembly site, and business began once the large bell of the Mauritzenturm had stopped ringing. Leo Mittelholzer is the new "ruling" *Landammann*. The late Roman Koelbener was replaced by Josef Hersche as *Regierungsrat*. The law on the introduction of compulsory sickness and accident insurance was accepted, as well as various other legal proposals. But the women were not granted suffrage, but it was agreed that the distaff side should be consulted as to their wishes.

In Appenzell-Ausserrhoden, this year's "Landsgemeinde" took place at Hundwil (at Trogen in years ending in an even number). Some 8,000 out of the 14,000 citizens entitled to vote, assembled to conduct their business. It is in Appenzell-A.R. that the famous "Landsgemeinde" Hymn is sung "*Alles Leben strömt aus Dir*". The seven members of the Cantonal Government were confirmed in office. Five legal proposals were voted on. With a majority of 4:1, the citizens decided to keep to the present closing time in pubs, i.e. midnight, and not 11 p.m. Increases in the salaries of the Cantonal Government were agreed (from 12,000 to 20,000 francs p.a., plus a life insurance). The Cantonal Council was granted competence to decide on the amount of dog license fees. 1.13m. francs was granted for a new *Werkhof*

for the Office of Works at Herisau. Two years ago, a slightly higher credit had been refused.

The fifth open-air Parliament, that of Glarus, took place a week later. Teachers and Cantonal Civil Servants are to get increased pay, but motor taxes are to remain at their present level for the moment. The proposal for a 50% quorum for Commune Assembly decisions was defeated. Federal Councillor Bonvin, high Army officers and foreign Ambassadors were guests at the ceremony which lasted 2½ hours.

Polling in Central Switzerland

On 4th May, the Corporation Commune of Uri (1,000 strong) met at Altdorf and elected Hans Marty as successor to Oswald Puentener who had held the office of Corporation Clerk for 30 years.

The Schwyz District Commune of the "March" met the same day to grant a ¼ million franc subsidy (p.a. for five years) to the College of Nuolen. The Schwyz District electorate at Ibach accepted accounts and various credits without speaking up on any subject. The Einsiedeln voters a few weeks earlier, had not been so easy — they had rejected the waste-water plant scheme. Several Schwyz Communes have asked for secret polls to be introduced. The small Commune of Galgenen granted 4m. francs for water purification and other schemes.

Obwalden's accounts for 1968 were short of nearly 20,000 francs, with some 32m. francs of expenditure. The Nidwalden Commune of Stans is to spend 5m. on a new higher school with five storeys, an assembly hall and two gymnasias.

The voters of Lucerne elected the agronomist Peter Knuesel (Meggen) as new *Regierungsrat* (only 23.4% voting participation).

North-Eastern Switzerland

Voters in St. Gall (town) accepted the project for a new *Gewerbeschule* in the Demut Valley and granted 2m. francs for eliminating the Haggen level-crossing. Altstaetten citizens accepted the 4.28m. scheme for a recreational and sports centre and more money for old folks' homes. Uznach and two other Communes have agreed to build a waste-water plant.

In the Thurgau town of Arbon, women voted for the first time, but their participation percentage was only 48.29 whilst 56.71% for the men. In several Thurgau Communes, school projects were agreed.

Ticino and Grisons

At Losone, citizens rejected the plans for a children's playground. On a cantonal scale, Ticino voters refused to agree to the proposed zone planning law which was aimed at preserving the beauty of old villages and securing harmonious and rational development.

The Grisons citizens accepted a new law about mountain guides and ski-ing instructors, as well as the proposal to introduce a psychology service for schools. Traditionally, on the first Sunday in May of an uneven year, the Grisons citizens elect their cantonal M.P.s.

The Chur citizens — men and women — rejected the proposed reorganisation of the Municipal Administration. The Commune of Scuol/Schuls has decided to drop the German name and use the Romansh Scuol in future.

North and North-West

The Baselland Commune of Aesch granted over 9.1m. francs for a primary school and an open-air swimming pool.

Early in May, the Solothurn citizens were called to the poll to elect their Cantonal Government. With a 79.24% voting participation, they re-elected four *Regierungsräte*, and for the retiring Werner Vogt, the Social Democrat Rudolf Bachmann (Olten) was chosen. The seat distribution in the Cantonal Council after elections on the same day, is as follows: Liberal Democrats 66 (—2), Conservatives 36 (—1), Social Democrats 35 (—4), "Landesring" for the first time 7 seats.

The Olten Commune Assembly agreed to the plans for reorganising the municipal *Bauwesen*, including five new posts. They introduced consultation hours for primary teachers and parents, but refused a plan for a fifth holiday week for municipal personnel after the age of 60. — Bellach's R.C. voters granted the vote to their women.

The "Landesring" was successful in Aargau, too, in the parliamentary elections of the Canton. They doubled their present 6 seats. The Social Democrats lost 5 and have now 57. The Liberals with 40 are short of 3, the Conservatives won one and have 47, the BGB Party (Farmers and Citizens) keep their 30. Amongst other minor changes are 3 seats for the New Young Liberals "Team 67).

In the Aarau municipal elections, a second poll was necessary, and there are now one full-time *Stadtammann* and 6 part-time Councillors (4 Liberals, 2 Social Democrats and one "Landesring" man.

Brugg and Laufenrohr have decided to fuse.

Neuhausen voters have agreed to join the Schaffhausen garbage disposal plant.

French-speaking Switzerland

In Neuchâtel, citizens elected their government (51% participation) and Cantonal Parliament. It needed a casting vote as no absolute majority was reached. Two candidates withdrew, and the Council now consists of 2 Socialists, one Radical Democrat, a Liberal and a National Progressive. In the Grand Council, there are now 35

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