

Letter from Switzerland

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LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

by **Gottfried Keller**

On 21st March the people of Switzerland are, once again, invited to vote. The problem this time is whether to vote for (or against) a Co-determination Initiative launched by the Trade Unions or for a counter proposal as elaborated by the Federal Council and the two chambers of parliament. The Trade Unions go very far in their Initiative in

demanding co-determination on a basis of parity, which means that half the number of members on the board of a private company and in the public administration should consist of employees as well as of members of their respective Trade Unions.

Those who oppose the Trade Union Initiative contend that it is nothing less than an attempt on the Unions' part to extend their power and that co-determination, as proposed by the Federal Authorities, prevents dangerous experiments. They also say that the best protection the Trade Unions can afford their members is in their capacity as outside organisations, and without co-responsibility for the conduct of individual enterprises.

The Trade Unions, on the other hand, use the argument that their model of co-determination would not only increase the job security of their

members, but could also prevent the closure of enterprises. This, say their opponents, is nonsense, because job security and the necessity to close enterprises do not depend on the wishes of the employed, but on hard economic facts quite outside the control of management. In the Federal German Republic co-determination on a parity basis exists in quite a number of large enterprises — yet parity co-determination in the Volkswagen-Werke was, a few months ago, unable to prevent the termination of employment for 25,000 workers. Nor is parity co-determination a guarantee for orders flowing in.

As always before an important vote is held on a nationwide scale, a great deal of propaganda pro and contra is made in the mass media. It would be difficult to forecast how this particular vote will go, but personally I would still be surprised if the Trade Union model would be adopted. While it is true that the Unions and the Left in general are slowly gaining strength in Switzerland, I nevertheless don't expect this particular demand to go through yet. Perhaps in a few years time, if repeated. But, who knows, maybe the result of 21st March will prove me wrong.

Switzerland in Britain's cultural life

Till 15th April — Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore: Mon.-Fri. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. — May — School of Geography, University of Oxford — June and July — Cambridge University Library — *Swiss Cartography Exhibition*.

Till 28th March — Victoria and Albert Museum — 10th April to 8th May — Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museum — 19th May to 6th June — Third Eye Centre, Glasgow — *Otto Künzli* is among the 25 leading artists participating in the Jewellery in Europe touring exhibition.

WEDNESDAY, 7th April — Purcell Room, 7.30 p.m. — *Ballade* by *Frank Martin* is in the programme presented by Ank Mulder (flute) and Jan Gruit-Huyzen (piano).

THURSDAY, 8th April — Wigmore Hall, 7.30 p.m. — The guitarist Forbes Henderson plays, among other works, 4 *Pièces brèves* by *Frank Martin*.

TUESDAY, 13th April — Royal Festival Hall, 8 p.m. — *Tamas Vasary* plays Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by David Atherton.

SATURDAY, 24th April — Royal Festival Hall, 2.45 p.m. — *Charles Dutoit* conducts the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain in a Berlioz, Brahms, and Stravinsky programme.

WEDNESDAY, 28th April — Royal Festival Hall, 8 p.m. — *Tamas Vasary* plays Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 in G with the London Mozart Players conducted by Harry Blech.

25th May to 11th June — Leeds University Art Gallery — 24th June to 24th July — Derby Museums and Art Gallery — Exhibition of *Prints and Drawings* by *Felix Vallotton*.



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