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Federal referendums

September 25, 1994

- Federal decision on abolishing the subsidy on the domestic cereal price out of customs duties.
- Modification of the Swiss Criminal Code and the Military Criminal Code (race discrimination).

December 4, 1994

Subjects not yet decided.

nation has never caused much bother, either in Switzerland or elsewhere. But the government – for the sake of Switzerland's international reputation – decided in 1992 to ratify the convention, although with two reservations. One concerns freedom of expression and association in implementing the measures required to eliminate incitement to racial discrimination. The second relates to the access of foreign workers to the Swiss labour market. It should be noted that for the reasons linked to freedom of expression the United States has also failed to ratify this international convention so far.

Violent incidents in Switzerland too

The vast majority of Swiss politicians are favourable to the ratification of the convention and to adding provisions against racial discrimination to the criminal code. The government's proposals came at a time when Switzerland too was undergoing a wave of violent attacks against foreigners, particularly asylum seekers. These events showed up the fact that the present criminal provisions are insufficient to deal with the problem of racial hatred and discrimination.

Some people nevertheless believe that the new ones go too far and could be interpreted by judges in such a way as to sanction acts and decisions which in fact have nothing to do with racial hatred or discrimination. To these fears on the part of opponents of the project (see comments by National Councillor Geneviève Aubry), those in favour reply that neither Swiss traditions nor the principle of free trade need be subjects of anxiety (see comments by National Councillor Rosmarie Dormann). ■

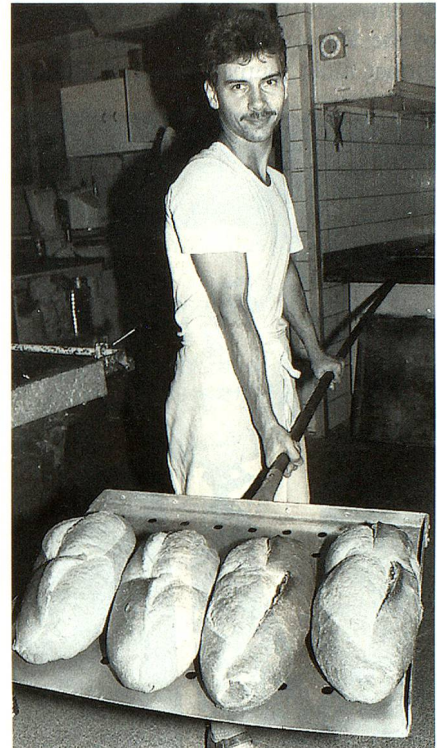
Bread more expensive?

On September 25, 1994, Swiss voters will also have to say whether they are prepared to pay 5 centimes more per kilo of bread. This is what would in fact result from a measure proposed by the government and parliament to improve the federal finances by abolishing the subsidy on domestic cereals. This costs the federal government 25 million francs.

The reason why a decision of such minor importance has to be approved by a double majority of people and cantons is because promotion of cereal cultivation in Switzerland is mentioned in the federal constitution, and any constitutional amendment requires the assent of this double majority.

The abolition of the subsidy on domestic cereals is one of 19 measures included in the second federal austerity package dating from 1993. All these measures taken together would reduce federal expenditure by Sfr. 1.5 billion. It should be noted, however, that some of the measures planned by the government were later withdrawn from the austerity package – e.g. the abolition of the optional pension scheme for the Swiss Abroad. In addition, the economic measures in question will be supported by an increase in revenue stemming from voter approval of the 6.5% value-added tax in the referendum held at the end of last year.

The federal government uses part of the customs duties levied on imported bread cereals – Sfr. 25 million – to subsidise the production of domestic



Abolishing the subsidy on domestic cereals would make a kilo of bread five centimes dearer.

bread cereals. The 1993 economic package includes abolition of the subsidy but without reducing the customs duty on imported cereals. This will result in Sfr. 25 million more for the federal coffers and a likely rise of 5 centimes in the consumer price of a kilo of bread.

PAT ■

Information on cassettes

Swiss Radio International is making available free of charge to Swiss Abroad audio cassettes describing the referendum subjects and explaining what is at stake. If you fill in the order form below and send it to *Swiss Radio International, Referendum Cassettes, CH-3000 Berne 15*, you will receive a cassette containing information on voting issues shortly before each referendum.

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