

# Mailbag

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Utopian society and, as such, appears somewhat idealistic," states the Federal Council in its message to parliament.

### ... and civil peace service

At the same time as the initiative "For a credible security policy and a Switzerland without an army", the Group for a Switzerland without an Army has submitted another initiative entitled "Solidarity creates security: for a voluntary civil peace service (ZFD)". This "will contribute to reducing violence at home and abroad and prevent new conflicts arising".

Government and parliament point out that Switzerland is already active in this respect in the field of international co-operation and peace promotion, that concrete peace work is becoming increasingly professional, that conscientious objectors already have the option of doing civil defence service, and finally that a vote in favour of the initiative would result in the government having to take over tasks which are currently being performed effectively by non-governmental organisations. Those in favour of the initiative claim that the current civil defence service is only a substitute for conscientious objectors and its further development as a result of the initiative would be beneficial. It would take the form of a voluntary service whose task would be to collaborate with local organisations to reduce violent conflict in Switzerland and abroad. Volunteers would be trained in conjunction with state

institutions, non-governmental and private organisations, and tours of duty would count as part of the civil defence service. It is also worth noting that, unlike the initiative "For a Switzerland without an army", this initiative does not call for a disbandment of military conscription.

### Capital gains tax

Finally, the popular initiative "For a capital gains tax" was launched by the Swiss Trades Union Association (SGB) and submitted two years ago with 104 000 valid signatures. It calls for capital gains to be taxed at a universal proportional rate of 20 to 25 percent. It also envisages an option of offsetting capital losses in the fiscal year and for a further two years through capital gains taxes. The SGB finds it no longer acceptable that private individuals' capital gains are kept from the tax authorities through equity trading. Capital gains are currently tax-free, and the SGB estimates that the proposed tax would generate annual revenues between

**The Federal Council has decided to postpone the referendum on the new electricity market law until next year since it wants voters to be able to make an informed decision once they are in possession of all the facts on the liberalised electricity market. However, these will not be published before December.**

## Federal Referendums


### 2 December 2001

- Federal decree on debt control
- Popular initiative "for a secure AHV – tax energy, not work"
- Popular initiative "for a credible security policy and a Switzerland without an army"
- Popular initiative "Solidarity creates security: For a voluntary civil peace service (CPS)"
- Popular initiative "for a capital gains tax"

### Forthcoming referendum dates 2002

3 March / 2 June / 22 Sep. / 24. Nov.

CHF 400 million and CHF 1 billion (CHF 100 to 400 million according to the Federal Council).

In terms of fair taxation the government and parliament feels this tax would be justifiable, but it would compete with the wealth tax and would be less profitable and administratively more complex. 

Translated from the German by N. Chisholm.

### Bookmarks

<http://www.admin.ch/>

## Not quite watertight?

FOCUS, UN 03/2001



If "Switzerland is open to all", then it must not be quite watertight! The Confederation should not apply this modern, if not downright trendy multicultural metaphor (in the first paragraph) to itself, as

Pablo Crivelli hopes. To be open to all can only mean you have no individual standpoint, and have to juggle a collection of different standpoints. This may also generate a false understanding of tolerance and freedom.

*Dr. Theo Brune, Bad Iburg (D)*

### Thanks for the camp!

This is the third year running that our children have attended the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad's summer camp, and at a reduced cost due to our meagre funds. Every year

they come home contented and raving about Switzerland and the international circle of contacts they have made. A huge "Merci!" not only to the Foundation but also to the enthusiastic teams ably led by Franz Keller.

*Christian Theile (D)*

### Show the flag!

In late July/early August I spent a fortnight's holiday in Wilderswil with my English wife. From there we took a trip to the Jungfrau-Joch. For me, who emigrated to England in 1957,

this was a wonderful experience. On 1 August we travelled over the Brünig Pass to Lucerne, Zurich and Kloten. We made an interim stop at Lucerne. But what had happened? Are the Swiss no longer patriotic? I was so disappointed I could scarcely credit it: where were the coloured flags in front of the houses? And from Interlaken to Kloten, not a single person in national costume!

*René Keusch, Birmingham (GB)*