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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

**The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain**

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## THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS ARE OVER

The results of the elections to the Federal Parliament are out; the picture is only slightly altered and much the same as it was in 1955, since the Social Democrats and the Workers' Party (Communists) have regained the seats lost in 1959, and the Farmers have had to cede their gain of the last elections. Only the Conservative/Christian Socialists (mainly Roman Catholic) and the Liberal Democrats show a real gain. It was, as the Parliamentary Correspondent of the "Basler Nachrichten" said, "a dead race", at least as far as the parties are concerned.

The three extra seats which were allocated to Zurich under the new distribution went to a Liberal/Radical, a Conservative/Christian Socialist and a Social Democrat. In Lucerne the Liberal/Radicals lost one and the Social Democrats gained one seat. Fribourg is entitled to one seat less than hitherto. The Liberal-Radicals have gained one, and the Conservative/Christian Socialists lost one to the Farmers. Baselland has received an extra seat which the Socialists have gained. The Grisons are now only allotted five mandates which meant that the Socialists have been left out. In the Canton of Vaud the Communists have gained one seat from the Socialists. Geneva has now two more M.P.s. As the Liberal/Radicals have lost a seat, there is an increase of one each for the Liberal/Democrats, the Conservative/Christian Socialists and the Socialists. In all the other Cantons there is no change as far as the allocation of seats or Party representation is concerned.

Of the total number of two hundred seats (196 in 1959) the Social Democrats have fifty-three (51), the Liberal/Radicals fifty-one (51), the Conservative/Christian Socialists forty-eight (47), the Farmers twenty-two (23), the "Landesring" ten (10), the Liberal/Democrats six (5), the Democrats and Evangelicals six (6) and the Workers' Party four (3).

None of the new party lists which had been sponsored mainly in Zurich has been successful. They were called "Cleanliness in Politics", "New Gotthard Ring", "Swiss Popular Movement against too many Foreigners", "Swiss People's Party" and "Supra-Party Union".

It may be of interest to know that the Communists in Zurich lost 26,000 of their 162,000 in 1959.

Nine National Councillors from amongst those up for re-election were defeated. Fifty-nine new National Councillors have been elected to replace forty-six M.P.s who had resigned, the above-mentioned nine who were defeated and to fill the four new seats which were added to bring the total number of seats in the National Council to two hundred.

The new representatives belong to the following Parties: Social Democrats fifteen, Liberal/Radicals fifteen, Con-

servative/Christian Socialists seventeen, Farmers five, "Landesring" three, Liberal/Democrats two, Democrats one, Workers Party one.

As to age, the average at the beginning of the new legislative period is fifty-three years (fifty-four in 1959). The oldest member is again the Valais Socialist, Karl Dellberg, born 1886, to whom will fall the privilege of opening the first session of the new Parliament on the first Monday in December. The youngest member is the Thurgau Farmers' Secretary Hanspeter Fischer with thirty-three years.

5.5% (5.1) are between thirty and thirty-nine, 31.5% (23.5) between forty and forty-nine, 39% (43.3) between fifty and fifty-nine, 22.5% (26.1) between sixty and sixty-nine and three members making 1.5% (2) are over seventy. The average age for the individual Parties varies between 49.4 years of the Conservative/Christian Socialists to 57.2 of the Democrats.

As to the occupations the National Councillors follow in their everyday life the picture is as follows: thirty-one (34) are officials of organisations such as trade unions, twenty-three (21) lawyers, twenty-two (22) members of Cantonal Governments ("Regierungsräte"), twenty-one (24) farmers, nineteen (17) are full-time Municipal and Commune Councillors, eighteen (11) directors and managers of co-operative, private or industrial undertakings and institutions, sixteen (16) editors and journalists, thirteen (17) are independent tradesmen, industrialists and dealers, twelve (7) university professors and teachers, twelve (10) other civil servants, four (7) employees and labourers, three (4) doctors and veterinary surgeons, three (4) engineers and architects, and three (2) retired.

So now the two hundred representatives of the people are ready for the new parliamentary term of four years. The election campaigns brought a great deal of excitement to some of the towns and Cantons. The figures are not all available yet as to the strength of polling. In 1959 the country's average was 68.5% of the then 1,473,155 citizens entitled to vote. By the last federal polling on 26th May (second Atom Initiative) their numbers had risen to 1,523,595. The 1959 figure was the lowest participation since the introduction of the proportional system for the National Council elections. The best was 80.4% in 1919. In every election there have been a few Communes, most of them in the Grisons, which mustered 100% of their electors.

In some Cantons the low participation in the plebiscite in October was below 50%. The electors of the Canton of Vaud were the worst. In the elections of the Councillors of States the weak participation of the women who have the right to vote in cantonal matters pulled down the

average to 29%. The writer is almost ashamed for her Vaudois sisters of whom only 19.17% went to the poll in Lausanne. The Editor of the "Schweizerisches Kaufmännisches Zentralblatt", a firm supporter of women's suffrage for many years, considers this lack of interest on the women's part a serious setback in the fight for equal political rights. With this negative result the Vaudois women have given a trump card to the opponents of votes for women. "A pity", he says, "that one has to start again and again at the beginning".

After the elections, the Swiss organisation for women's suffrage congratulated the newly elected National and States Councillors. The message expressed hope and expectation that the coming parliamentary term will see the realisation of women's political rights, although they had not been mentioned in any of the election propaganda.

In an article on "Democracy and Federalism" in the international edition of the annuary of the New Helvetic Society (1963), Peter Dürrenmatt says that the large masses are no longer as politically minded as they used to be before so many possibilities of diversion faced them. The complicated proposals and the frequency of polling may deter some citizens. No doubt, all this constitutes a crisis for direct democracy. On the other hand, Dürrenmatt says, the lethargy in plebiscites is as old as the Swiss democracy itself and can be regarded to a large extent as expression of the individual's personal will — he only goes to the poll in matters which really interest him. Seen from this angle, a low percentage can also represent the elector's satisfaction with things as they are.

None of these reasons, however, would apply in parliamentary elections, for it seems that every citizen should be interested in his representative in Parliament. This neglect of civic duties would have serious repercussions if it were not for the fact that abstainers belong to all Parties and quarters.

In the elections to the Council of States which took place in eleven full and three Half-Cantons on the same day as those for the National Council, sixteen former Councillors were confirmed in office, and nine new ones were successful.

The Socialists had made great efforts to get extra seats. In 1955 they had five of which they lost three in 1959. But only in Zurich have they been successful, and the former Swiss Envoy in Belgrade, Minister Zellweger, triumphed over the Liberal Prof. Marcel Grossmann. The other Zurich seat, however, went convincingly to Regierungspräsident Rudolf Meier, member of the Farmers' Party, no mean achievement in an industrial Canton like Zurich.

In the Aargau only one candidate reached an absolute majority, and a second polling will be necessary.

The strongest party in the Council of States will be the Conservative/Christian Socialists with seventeen, possibly eighteen seats, if the second polling in the Aargau goes as expected. The Liberal/Radicals have thirteen (fourteen last time). The Farmers have again four, the Liberal/Democrats and the Democrats three mandates each. The Socialists, with one more than last time, have also three seats.

The Council of States, unlike in other countries where there is the two-chamber system, has equality with the National Council and as such is an extremely important instrument in the formation of opinion. The elections of 28th October have proved once again that the citizen is aware of the important function of the Council of States.

And finally, the representation of the Parties in the Federal Assembly, namely when the two Councils meet together. Whilst in Parliament the Socialists lead the Liberal/Radicals by two seats, the mainly Roman Catholic Conservative/Christian Socialists will have the majority with sixty-six in the Federal Assembly, followed closely by the Liberal/Radicals with sixty-four. The Socialists will have fifty-six, the Farmers twenty-six, the "Landesring" ten, the Liberal/Democrats and the Democrats nine. The remaining four are the Communist Workers' Party. The balance of the Council of States and the Federal Assembly may be very slightly altered as elections to the Council of States will take place before December in the Ticino and in Berne, apart from the second polling in the Aargau.

By and large, the elections have shown that the Swiss people are reasonably satisfied with their representation. After all, they always have the last word with the Referendum.

*(Mainly based on news received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)*

## RECENT DEATHS IN SWITZERLAND

The following deaths have been reported from Switzerland:

Charles M. Kuhn (65), Honorary Consul-General in Trinidad, head of a commercial firm in Port of Spain since 1926 (incidentally, a subscriber to the "Swiss Observer").

Gottfried Klaus (64), Councillor of States since 1943 and member of the Government of the Canton of Solothurn.

Dr. Emil Kloeti (86), former Councillor of States and Municipal President of Zurich, one of the most capable members of Swiss Socialist Democracy; he received an honorary degree from the ETH for his work as Municipal Building Chief of Zurich, and one from Zurich University for his valuable contribution in preparing the Swiss National Exhibition in 1939.

Francesco Borella (80), Chiasso, former National Councillor and pioneer of radio in the Ticino.

Dr. Ludwig Rittmeyer (67), St. Gall, former National Councillor and prominent leader in the Young Liberal movement.

Hans Felber (71), former member of the Lucerne Government and a Colonel in the Army.

Charles Koenig (52), Commune President of Fleurier.  
Jean Born (73), former Commune President of Moutier.

Ferdinand Demaurex (61), former Commune President of Rolle.

André Rossel (68), Cantonal Judge of Vaud from 1952 to 1961.

Emile Bourdin (64), for twenty years in the Valais Parliament.

Louis Baudraz (81), former Commune Councillor, member of the Grand Council and Justice of the Peace at Moudon.

Edouard Drexler (86), Geneva, Federal Civil Servant (Customs).

Walter Lindegger (63), "Regierungsstatthalter" and Magistrate of Laupen.

Elvezio Borella (92), Mendrisio, Commune President for thirty years and member of the Ticino Government.

Arnold Bargetzi (82), Solothurn, founder and director of one of the largest stone quarries in Switzerland.

Louis de Castella (76), Nyon, Chairman of the Board of Ursina A.G. Konolfingen.