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Nevertheless, since the hotellerie did not, for obvious reasons, do quite so well in 1974 as it used to do during the boom years, the incentive for trying to meet the more reasonable of the expressed wishes is certainly there.



On Sunday, 8th December, the Swiss sovereign — as the population is called here — has once again been called upon to vote. Several important proposals on the federal level, apart from a number of cantonal ones in various regions, were put to the test. Perhaps the most interesting of these was one with the aim of reducing the deficit in the federal finances which have been accumulating ever since 1971. This aim was to be achieved by raising both the direct and the indirect taxation and in order to make it more palatable to the people it was coupled with a second proposal which would have made spending by the federal departments more difficult. Interestingly enough, the first proposal has been heavily and decisively defeated and the second one equally decisively adopted. However, as the second one, popularly called the “spending brake,” has been linked to the first one, now rejected, it cannot, as it is, be put into force.

Nevertheless, the message sent to Berne by the population is quite clear. It means that the people want the federal government to start economising in earnest before they are willing to pay yet more direct and indirect taxes. And the Confederation can, of course, make economies by cutting down on subsidies of all kinds: such as subsidies to cantons, subsidies for universities and others. In other words: Mr. Chevallaz, the Finance Minister, has clearly been told by the electorate that in order to reduce the federal deficit, he should start by reducing expenditure before looking for

more revenue. This means that the Federal Council will, in the new year, first have to work out a new budget for 1975, which will then have to be dealt with by the two chambers of parliament in an extraordinary, or special, session early in 1975. As both the national councillors and the councillors of state have to face new elections in the autumn of next year, it is to be expected that the mood of the population will be taken into consideration in their decisions in chamber. On the whole it can be said that while the rejection of Mr. Chevallaz's proposals may have been a disappointment to him personally, it is certainly no national tragedy. It simply means that “Berne” will have to think again and come up with something more palatable. The proposal and its rejection show up a striking difference between the British and Swiss democracies: whereas in the British parliamentary democracy the Chancellor and Parliament decide what national taxes the people have to pay, in the Swiss system of direct democracy the people can — and just did — say “No” and throw the ball back into the State's court.

In a different field yet two more proposals have been rejected. It concerned health insurance. Two sets of schemes were submitted to the population. Both were based on the generally recognised fact that the existing Swiss health insurance laws, dating from 1911, were out of date. An initiative launched by the Socialist Party and supported by the Trade Unions and others postulated a health insurance scheme in some ways similar to the British National Health Acts to have its anchor in the Federal Constitution. The Federal Council and the two chambers of parliament in Berne then worked out a set of counter-proposals — both incidentally based on compulsory wage-percent contributions, which were not quite as radical as those proposed by the Left. It can often be observed in Swiss politics that the Left proposes

something quite drastic and is then quite content if a milder version is proposed by somebody else and goes through. Probably the Swiss Socialists and Trade Unions would have been quite content in this instance if the Federal Council's and Parliament's counter-proposals had been adopted. However, both proposals have been rejected and it remains to be seen what happens next. Probably nothing for a while — except for the premiums for those who are insured going up in the new year.

The percentage of those who did vote in these national issues was small, but small percentages on such occasions are due to the fact that the Swiss system of direct democracy has, apart from many advantages, the disadvantage of calling the people of voting age altogether too often to the polling stations.

FOR THE GARDENER

Peas: These valuable and nutritious vegetables respond to generous treatment. In the normal relatively small garden, the peas would be grown in well-prepared rows. Main crop peas some 18" to 2' between the rows, but the earliest dwarf varieties need only be 12" apart. Other suitable crops can be grown between the rows (lettuces and other fairly quick maturing things). The best method of preparing the ground is to take out a trench about 15" wide and 2' deep. Into the bottom of the trench put a good dressing of manure or compost, some wood ash if available and a little bonemeal. The earth should then be returned to the trench and then left to settle. Peas need some lime so a dressing of this at the rate of about 4 oz. per square yard should be put on. In favoured

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areas sowings may be made in the latter part of February, though generally early March would be soon enough.

The ground which has been prepared should be lightly forked over and drills 4" to 6" deep should be taken out along the full length. The peas should then be spaced out along these drills about 3" apart and in three or four rows. The drills should then be filled to a depth of about 2" with the soil removed when making the drills. This leaves the soil below the surrounding ground and acts as protection against any cold winds as the seedlings emerge. When the latter are some 3" to 4" in height, the staking should be inserted, twiggy hazel branches are best if obtainable, or netting can be used.

Successional sowings should be made as the seedlings emerge from the previous sowing.



HOW TO BAKE YOUR OWN BREAD

Although the crisis in regard to bread will probably by now have been settled, it is thought perhaps some of our readers might like to have first-hand knowledge passed on to them as to how to make and bake their own "staff of life."

The main thing to remember is that nothing should be hurried and each stage should be given time to fully develop, a lot depends on gas pressures at the time (that is of course if one uses gas for cooking).

INGREDIENTS & EQUIPMENT

Kitchen scales

One palette knife

One measuring jug

Two 2lb oblong baking tins 4" sides

One large and one smaller mixing bowl

3lb of strong wholemeal flour, for brown bread;

or

3lb strong white flour, for white bread. (If you cannot get this, ordinary plain flour can be used, the finished product is not quite the same texture, but quite nice.)

One 4oz tin of dried yeast (this will be sufficient for at least 4 bakings, 8 loaves. If you only want to try one loaf, just halve the ingredients).

METHOD

Light the oven and keep on just warm.

Measure out by weight 1oz of the yeast and mix into 15oz of hand-hot water. It's best to sprinkle in gradually then one does not get the yeast clogging into one mass.

Add 1oz of granulated sugar and stir till dissolved.

Add three pinches of salt and stir in.

Place the mixture into the warm oven and leave.

Whilst waiting place 3lb of flour (one of the above) into the large mixing

bowl, place into the oven for a few minutes to get warm.

Remove and then rub in gently 2oz of fat (I find that lard is best for this). Most recipes say use 1oz of fat but I have found that the bread tends to go a trifle dry rather quickly and the 2oz seems to have got over this problem.

Have a look at the yeast mixture in the oven, if it's got a nice frothy top on it, it is ready for the next step. If it hasn't, don't worry, put it back and leave until it does produce its head.

Divide the flour into two roughly equal amounts and place one half into the reserve bowl.

When yeast is ready, make a hole in the flour in the large bowl and tip the mixture in, get another 15oz of hand-hot water and add this as well. Thoroughly mix together into a smooth paste.

Obtain a cloth and place over the bowl and put into the warm oven and leave for about 15 minutes. Here again, it might take somewhat longer, the main thing is that the mixture should have swelled up to approximately twice its size, it's then ready to come out.

Mix in the remainder of the flour from the other bowl, this is quite a job and whilst most of the experts say use your hands, I find that it can be done quite successfully with the palette knife. You should finish up with a nice ball of dough, if you find it's inclined to be very dry add a little more water, not too much, or you will have trouble later on in the process.

Replace in the warm oven, covering



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