

Referendum result raises a lot of eyebrows!

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REFERENDUM RESULT RAISES A LOT OF EYEBROWS!

By a large majority, Swiss voters, called to the polls on 5th December, rejected a left-wing initiative calling for the implementation of an all-round 40-hour week.

The Initiative, which was launched three years ago by the "Swiss Progressive Organisations", called for a 40-hour working week to be written into the Constitution compared with the present 44-hour week.

As it turned out, the idea was rejected by a massive majority. Nearly three out of every four voters considered that such an abrupt reduction of the working week, with no due account taken of the requirements of the various industries, would have entailed serious trouble for the economy. They also felt that there was no reason to alter the traditional collective methods of obtaining advantages for the workers.

This was the reason why the "Union Syndicale Suisse", which includes the most "representative" trades unions, campaigned against the Initiative and proposed another, less abrupt solution. Of the main parties, only the Socialists supported the Initiative and observers noted the growing rift between the many radical idealists in the party and conservative trades union leaders.

The vote showed how fundamen-

tally conservative the Swiss people are. There is no evidence of any widespread desire for change, and certainly no wish to try the radical and uncompromising solutions advocated in other western countries.

The traditional values, of which work and moderation are among the most important in Switzerland, were upheld. The results of the voting recalled a similar referendum held about two years ago where the Swiss people rejected an Initiative calling for worker participation in the management of industry.

The results of this referendum caused more than a few raised eyebrows in Britain. All the national newspapers featured it at some length. In addition, your editor was "summoned" urgently to the BBC on the following Monday morning to explain why he was not surprised by the result. The interview "merited" a two minute slot on BBC Radio One's Newsbeat programme at 12.35!

WGS

More squabbles in the Jura

A new chapter in the continuing political crisis in the Jura was opened at the end of October when the Constituent Assembly of the future Canton comprising the three northernmost districts of the Jura area, which are still incorporated in Canton Berne, decided that its Constitution should embody provisions calling for the eventual reunification of the whole Jura area.

The three southernmost districts of the area, which is French-speaking and Catholic, as opposed to the German-speaking and Protestant majority in

Berne, had decided to remain in the "Old Canton" in a referendum in 1974 and not be a part of the future Canton.

The Constituent Assembly's decision caused great concern in Berne. The Cantonal executive in Berne decided to break its relations with the Assembly while the Federal Council voiced its "Concern" over the Assembly's decision. These reactions increased the anger of militant "Jurassians" towards the federal and cantonal authorities in Berne which they accuse of having thwarted their cause for thirty years.

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