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All four initiatives rejected

The four initiatives up for vote found no favour with the Swiss electorate. On the other hand, a resounding majority voted in favour of the new Federal Government Personnel Law.

The votes on 26 November represent an across-the-board victory for the Federal Council. This was to be expected in view of the fact that none of the popular initiatives had won support from centre-right parties. The Social Democrats were the only party to come out in favour of the proposal for a flexible retirement age. German-speaking Switzerland, which is generally more sensitive to financial problems, unanimously rejected the AHV initiatives. The reason why the popular initiative launched by the Greens fared better than that of the Swiss Association of Commercial Employees is

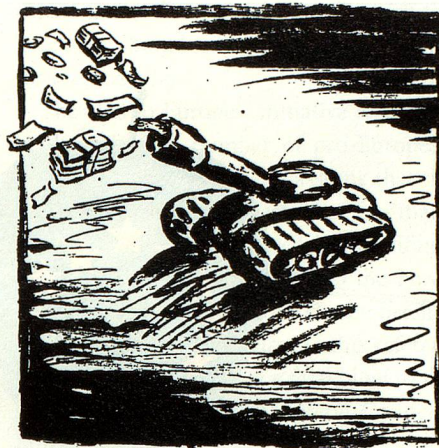



Illustration: Stefan Baldaur

The argument of an expensive army cut no ice with Swiss voters.

that their initiative envisaged a pension for everyone who opted for part-time work on reaching age 62.

With the popular initiative to cut spending on the military ("Redistribution Initiative") rejected by 62.3% of the vote, the Left also suffered a clear defeat. This was only partly attributable to the different Latin

mentality, since the initiative was accepted only in the cantons of Geneva, Jura, Neuchâtel and Vaud. The only proposal in which government parties could share a victory was the initiative to cut hospital costs: This was given the thumbs-down by 82% of voters, who did not allow themselves to be swayed by the simple Denner solutions. Finally, the new Federal Government Personnel Law was endorsed by 67% of voters. Retention of civil servant status, regarded by many as an anachronistic privilege, had no chance with Swiss voters. PC 

COMMENTARY

The results hold no real surprises. This is because topics which highlight the different sensibilities of Latin and German Switzerland primarily concern social policy, as has been shown with the vote on maternity insurance, and national defence.

French and Italian-speaking Swiss, who were more strongly affected by the recession than their German-speaking counterparts and had to contend with stubborn, widespread unemployment, saw fit to vote in favour of retirement at age 62. Left and right have different perspectives on the outcome of the vote: Concerned for the future of the AHV dictated by an increasingly ageing population, centre-right parties stress that the electorate has spoken out in favour of a general retirement age from 65. The losers, on the other hand, take the view that a significant segment of the population is positively against a flexible retirement age without pension curtailments.

We shall see which solution wins out at the spring session of the federal councils to be held in Lugano. It is highly possible that parliamentary debates will result in a good Swiss compromise which would allow the cracks between linguistic regions to be repaired and keep the AHV solvent: with retirement from age 65 for all and pension curtailments for those who opt for early retirement.

Pablo Crivelli

Results of the Federal Referendums

Canton	Retirement age (Swiss Association of Comm. Employ.)		Retirement age (the Greens)		Redistribution		Lower hospital costs		Federal Personnel Law		Turnout in %
	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	
ZH	34.6	65.4	40.4	59.6	37.1	62.9	16.3	83.7	74.0	26.0	41.6
BE	36.2	63.8	43.3	56.7	32.6	67.4	14.6	85.4	68.4	31.6	42.7
LU	30.1	69.9	36.6	63.4	29.9	70.1	19.1	80.9	73.2	26.8	41.5
UR	30.9	69.1	40.1	59.9	19.7	80.3	19.6	80.4	63.9	36.1	36.5
SZ	27.2	72.8	36.2	63.8	25.8	74.2	20.6	79.4	70.1	29.9	42.9
OW	25.3	74.7	33.5	66.5	22.2	77.8	15.6	84.4	71.9	28.1	37.6
NW	25.4	74.6	32.4	67.6	21.9	78.1	16.8	83.2	77.3	22.7	42.9
GL	31.7	68.3	39.4	60.6	27.7	72.3	17.4	82.6	71.7	28.3	37.9
ZG	28.9	71.7	35.3	64.7	29.8	70.2	16.2	83.8	78.0	22.0	46.5
FR	50.5	49.5	58.7	41.3	44.6	55.4	18.9	81.1	60.0	40.0	43.3
SO	34.9	65.1	41.9	58.1	32.4	67.6	17.3	82.7	70.2	29.8	44.0
BS	38.1	61.9	43.6	56.4	45.2	54.8	19.1	80.9	70.2	29.8	51.7
BL	36.7	63.6	41.9	58.1	37.5	62.5	15.7	84.3	72.7	27.3	41.0
SH	35.0	65.0	44.7	55.3	32.5	67.5	21.3	78.7	69.2	30.8	61.5
AR	29.9	70.1	35.5	64.5	28.1	71.9	16.3	83.7	73.6	26.4	45.0
AI	21.7	78.3	26.6	73.4	22.4	77.6	15.2	84.8	73.9	26.1	35.5
SG	31.6	68.4	38.4	61.6	29.7	70.3	17.4	82.6	75.1	24.9	38.2
GR	34.3	65.7	41.4	58.6	32.7	67.3	20.9	79.1	65.8	34.2	33.1
AG	32.5	67.5	39.9	60.1	29.9	70.1	18.2	81.8	72.8	27.2	38.5
TG	31.8	68.2	39.0	61.0	28.2	71.8	21.1	78.9	72.9	27.1	40.8
TI	63.4	36.6	67.6	32.4	49.0	51.0	30.6	69.4	47.0	53.0	41.1
VD	54.2	45.8	61.0	39.0	50.8	49.2	18.1	81.9	58.0	42.0	36.3
VS	43.0	57.0	51.6	48.4	36.5	63.5	18.2	81.8	50.3	49.7	40.8
NE	60.4	39.6	65.3	34.7	54.4	45.6	19.4	80.6	50.3	49.7	38.5
GE	56.6	43.4	62.1	37.9	60.0	40.0	18.6	81.4	54.3	45.7	47.2
JU	64.0	36.0	70.6	29.4	62.7	37.3	21.9	78.1	46.8	53.2	59.0
Total	39.5	60.5	46.1	53.9	37.7	62.3	18.0	82.0	67.0	33.0	42.5