

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1975)

Heft: 1703

Artikel: No to a compulsory sickness insurance

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-687013>

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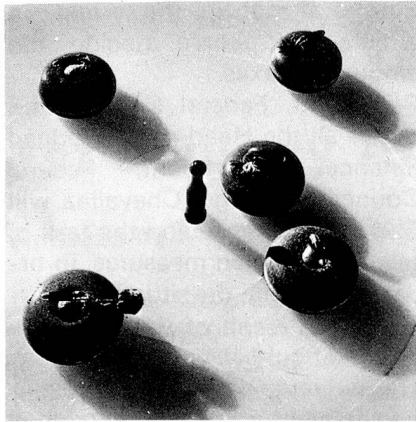
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of this sport must also be considered, and it would be wrong to maintain that it is nothing more than a pastime to which only weakly old men adhered, even though the stone has lost considerably in weight since 1775 and now weighs 20 kg with a circumference of 0.915 m. Even so, the demands are still great.

Due to the daring and determina-

tion of the four Duebendorf players whose average age is not above 21 years, this sport was discovered anew and made «fit for society» again. Enough of that banter about «the man and his broom», enough of those petty allusions about the «game for the rich»! Justice was done, and suddenly one remembered again that officially acknowledged Curling championships took place at the Olympic Games at Chamonix in 1924. Is there possibly a chance that this particular case might have a continuation almost 60 years later? The fact that the next Olympic Winter Games will take place in Canada is favourable, for most of the adherents of this sport live there. About 100 000 people find pleasure in trying to reach the goal, 38.40 m away, as near as possible. The four Duebendorf club pals have done pioneering work. They wear their hair long, look like students and are always ready for pranks. In spite of this, they are aware of their strength and will make a serious effort to prove

themselves also in future. Specialists believe that this should not create too many difficulties.

By choosing the four players as sportsmen of the year in team games, new talents may be discovered. Even a few years ago, one would have ridiculed such a choice. Today one realizes that Curling has its justification amongst other games, for it demands typically athletic abilities as well as quick reaction and a sense of strategy. It is not the purpose of these lines to exaggerate the qualities of this sport in order to puff up the merits of the Duebendorf players. But it was necessary to mention a few home-truths which one had tried almost deliberately to forget.

Whatever the future of the four sportsmen is like, they have definitely made a big contribution to the importance of Curling. Their pleasure in playing is so great that one will not speak of them much in future; that is where the secret of big success lies.

Bertrand Zimmermann

No to a compulsory sickness insurance No to an increase in taxes Yes to a brake in expenditure

On 8th December 1974, the Swiss people were called to the poll in order to give their opinion on two vastly different proposals, which had, however, one thing in common: finance.

Compulsory sickness insurance

The people's Initiative launched by the Social Democrat Party, which had as its aim the creation of a compulsory sickness insurance and the counterproposal by Parliament to improve the existing

insurance were rejected by the Swiss electorate.

Voting participation was only 39,7 percent; the Initiative was rejected by 1 010 103 to 384 155; the counterproposal got 457 922 yes and 883 179 noes.

In view of this double no, reactions were not slow in coming: some think that the people wish a pause in the expansion of the welfare state; others believe that the voter has spoken in favour of an improvement in the sickness insurance in principle, but does not

wish interference by the state. Federal Councillor Hürlimann, Head of the Federal Department of the Interior, has stressed how urgent it is today to improve benefits, especially removing the time limit for benefits in cases of hospitalisation and the reduction of the age limit for joining. This should be made on the basis of the Constitutional Article of 1911.

Thus the position of the Swiss abroad has not changed. Deadlock remains; though the problems of sickness insurance for our com-

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patriots returning home are fully realized by the authorities, and our organization will make contact again with the central offices of the sickness insurance companies and try to remove this bottleneck for Swiss abroad, especially since this situation has not been created by their own will but by the impossibility to join a sickness insurance without being resident in Switzerland.

But there is some good news: Swiss from abroad who come to Switzerland temporarily or for a period of training, have the possibility to conclude a «temporary residents' insurance» for the period of their stay in Switzerland. Detailed information may be had direct from Swiss sickness insurances.

Tax increases

Voting participation in this matter was 39,7 percent. The draft proposal to improve federal finances was rejected by 623 548 yes to



Mr G.-A. Chevallaz, Federal Councillor.
Keystone

785 141 noes, whereas the proposed brake on expenditure was accepted by 930 101 yes to 460 023 noes.

What has brought about this situation – reason or selfishness? One has to remember that Switzerland is one of the last countries in

Europe if not in the world, in which the people decide the amount of taxes.

Parliament, Federal Council and above all the Head of the Federal Finance Department, Federal Councillor Georges Chevallaz, will find themselves facing the task of taking draconian measures, in order to deal with the situation created by the result of the plebiscite which should have produced increased revenue of about 685 million francs for the Confederation. The budget deficit for 1975 will now be in the neighbourhood of one milliard francs. This necessitates an urgent obligation to present a new, much reduced budget which must, however, not go too far; not that the Confederation is no longer in a position to fulfil its constitutional obligations, or that it can no longer carry the burden which people and Parliament have taken on in the Confederation's name. SSA Lucien Paillard

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