

Emanuel Höhener

The Swiss Vote 'No' to the New CO₂ Law

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Schiller Institute

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In a poll on the weekend of June 13, 2021, the Swiss population had to decide upon three proposals. All of them were in connection with environmental issues and all of them were rejected.

The Political Instruments of Switzerland

For your understanding of some of the political instruments of Switzerland, the following:

Switzerland, at the federal level, has the democratic instruments "referendum" and the "right of initiative." A "referendum" gives the option to voters to reconsider and decide upon a bill, which has already passed the federal parliament, which consists of two chambers. A referendum can be imposed within a given time period by the demand of a minimum of 50,000 voters.

Furthermore, for changes of Constitutional acts as well as international agreements, a vote by referendum is mandatory.

A further political instrument is the "right of initiative." Interested parties and circles can submit an initiative for changes in legislation if within a given time period, signatures of 100,000 voters are submitted.

Environmental Concerns and the 'No' Vote of June 13

The June 13th poll also received particular interest from abroad. One of the subjects to be decided upon was a most stringent new CO₂ legislation, upon which

the parliament had already decided. The referendum reached [approval with] a majority of voters and cantons, which means that this new CO₂ legislation was rejected.

The content of the CO₂ bill was developed and governed mainly by the Leftish-Green interests and their ideology. Quickly, it would have led to cost driving measures: increase of fuel prices for vehicles, increase of fuel prices for heating purposes, taxes on flight tickets, constraints on homeowners to refurbish their

properties with regard to insulations and heating technique, mainly because use of fossil fuels would no longer be allowed. As a result, rental costs would have increased drastically in a country where renting property is prevalent. With this proposed legislation, the goal was to get Switzerland 100% CO₂ free by 2050, which means prohibiting the use of fossil fuels.

An interpretation of the result of the poll [to mean] that the Swiss people do not care about environmental issues, would be entirely wrong. In Switzerland, we have stringent standards concerning heat insulation for houses, operational quality of home heating, and for vehicles—including emission standards amongst others, and also standards concerning CO₂. Quality standards, which are regularly checked at frequent intervals, have been in place for years.

Thus, one of the main reasons why the CO₂ legislation under discussion was turned down: People lost confidence and were convinced that it would not improve anything with regard to the climate; however [it would] increase the cost of living and create an additional—useless—government administrative body.

And also important to note: The younger generation mostly rejected the CO₂ legislation. The slogan of the promoters was: "We are rescuing the climate!" The absurdity of this claim, under the preconditions that Switzerland imposes such ruling, *isolated and alone*, may be illustrated by the following considerations. The contribution of Switzerland to the global CO₂ emissions is about 0.13%. Assuming Switzerland were to reduce its