

# *Editorial*

## A triumph for Democracy

*Let us first state clearly certain facts for the benefit of our many overseas readers — and even those of Europe ! Valais is one of the cantons of which all Switzerland is proud. SION, its capital, had proposed itself as a candidate town for the Winter Olympic Games of 1968. It was one of seven towns in the running. The budget, drawn up by those responsible, carried a guarantee given by the State of Valais, (Swiss cantons enjoy a considerable autonomy), of three million francs to cover all possible loss. We will not go into the details of a popular debate in which feeling ran high, except to state that, for the first time in the history of the allocation of the Olympic Games, a people were summoned to vote ! Great was the feeling in this Canton, which was divided into two factions.*

*Those who understand the system of popular sovereignty in this small country will not be astonished by this procedure. It was difficult to see how a decision could be reached on a*

*question of principles, where an objective approach to such an academic subject had so little chance of success. The radicals — yes, politics came into it! — of one part of the Canton, and the conservatives of another were against Valais having the Games. The Christian social party was in favour of it and advised its adherents accordingly. in spite of all this, the authors of the scheme continued the fight. 'One can certainly applaud in passing', said the Nouvelle Revue de Lausanne before the vote was taken, 'this magnificent effort of a people to overcome material difficulties which without such courageous efforts would condemn them to mediocrity'.*

*The people had to choose between boldness and caution. They were above all afraid of financial risk. They chose the path of prudence and, on December 8th last, they voted NO by 13,076 votes to 12,767. That is to say that opinion was fairly equally divided. Sion and the brave initiators withdrew from the arena.*