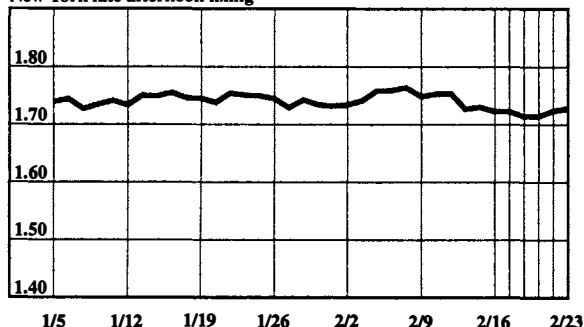


## Currency Rates

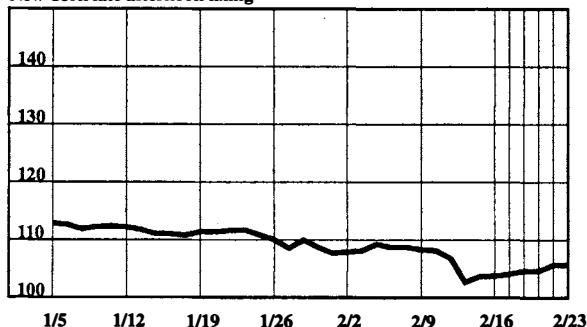
**The dollar in deutschmarks**

New York late afternoon fixing



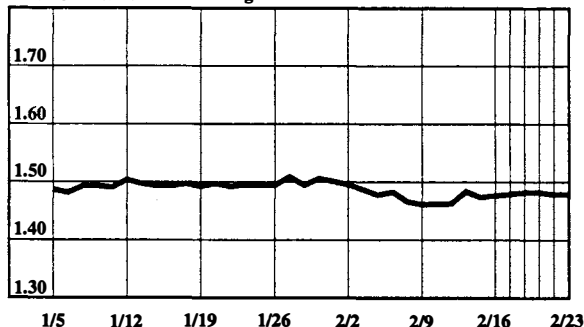
**The dollar in yen**

New York late afternoon fixing



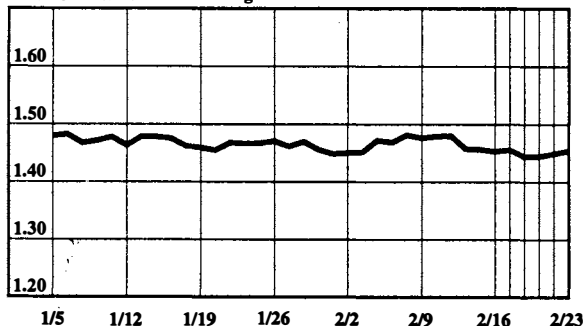
**The British pound in dollars**

New York late afternoon fixing



**The dollar in Swiss francs**

New York late afternoon fixing



## Swiss voters cut Italy off from Europe

by Alexander Hartmann

Only a few weeks ago, a report issued by the traffic commission of the Council of Europe praised Swiss voters for their decision to build two new major rail connections, with tunnels of 49.3 and 23 kilometers at Mt. St. Gotthard and Mt. Lotschberg, respectively. Now, the same Swiss voters have taken decisions that will be less appreciated by European authorities, and will have repercussions that will force the question of trans-Alpine traffic onto the agenda with much more urgency.

On Feb. 20, Swiss voters decided five legal initiatives concerning traffic issues. Four of the propositions were supported by the Swiss government, and concerned an increase of road tolls, trucking taxes, and new air traffic regulations that will reduce investments in air traffic infrastructure and impose "ecological" criteria for flight taxes. These propositions passed with comfortable majorities of between 61% and 72% of the vote.

But even if these decisions will increase the costs of truck transport through Switzerland, they were not the hot issue. Much more contested was the fifth proposition on the ballot. Against the explicit advice of the government, the Parliament, and most of the business groups and political parties, 51.9% of the voters approved of the Alp Initiative, which mandates that after Jan. 22, 2005, all transit truck traffic through Switzerland will have to go by piggyback on rail. There will be no transit truck traffic on roads, period.

It's a good idea, of course, to use rails for long-distance freight transport wherever this is possible and economical. For traffic across Switzerland, this is especially the case, with more than 200 miles and steep grades in the Alps that make trucking even less economical. Therefore, it's no surprise that 90% of trucks already use rails for transit.

That does not mean the new law will have no major effects. There is hardly any unused rail capacity left, and traffic experts expect international traffic to increase massively over the next decade. While new rail tunnels at Mt. St. Gotthard and Mt. Lotschberg have been approved, they will not be completed before the year 2008.

This means that the law will indeed massively affect goods transport across the Alps after 2004, since most of the current transit truck traffic crossing Switzerland and any growth of the transport volume until then will have to be rerouted around Switzerland, either by way of France, or