

# Comment

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Tel.: 01 - 253 2321

Telegrams: Paperwyse Stock London

EDITOR: Pierre-Michel Béguin

Advisory Council: R. J. KELLER (Chairman)  
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O. F. BOEHRINGER, J. EUSEBIO,  
Dr. C. JAGMETTI (Press Attaché Swiss Emb.),  
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Editor's telephone: 01-602 1378

Two days of discussion were naturally not sufficient to examine all the sociological causes of the use of drugs, in particular, heroin, LSD, and "pot" (or cannabis) in the U.S.A. and pot in England and Scandinavia. There is a certain relationship between the quality of life and the consumption of pot, but the usual Marxist explanation does not hold for Switzerland, a highly capitalistic country in which the rise in drug addiction hardly exceeds the increase in population.

Two explanations to the drug fad appear plausible: the first is that when something common, such as the smoking of hashish among youths emerges, then everybody will have a bash out of imitation and lust of experience. Hardly anybody would ever be a cigarette smoker if there hadn't been a temptation some time during early teens to imitate other elder smokers. This is how smoking spread into a universal habit. There are obvious signs that this is becoming the case of pot. 80% of Vietnam veterans smoke pot and it seems rather vain to insist in forbidding it legally in the United States. This could be equally true of Great Britain. To allow it would at least cut the grass from under the feet of the underworld and diminish our rising crime rate. This, at least, was what some of the speakers at the symposium maintained. The second explanation is that drugs correspond to a genuine spiritual need and that their widespread consumption reflects the moral and existing vacuum of our disintegrating society. If this is the case, then there is obviously little one can do to stop the movement until society is completely overhauled. This is maybe what the young pot smokers of today will achieve tomorrow—for better or worse, that's another question.

The conference closed after having well explicated the facts but still leaving some important questions unanswered.

For example: the attitude we ought to adopt towards pot and the intelligent use of LSD and, if a common condemnation of these things were reached, what measures should be taken to put an end to them.

The cultural value of the use of drugs was examined, and there at least the conference agreed that they were not the way to an improvement of art. Many writers and artists had experimented with LSD. Koestler and Huxley among them, and found that their inspiration was definitely heightened but that their means of expressing it coherently were correspondingly diminished. One of the most remarkable effects of LSD is to break, or perhaps to transcend, the outside causality of the world as we usually perceive it. Under favourable circumstances, the taker of LSD can visualise a world in which everything is One, just like the mystic. Unfortunately, his powers of analysing and structuring what he sees are blocked and there is no possibility for him to do any creative work under the influence of the drug. The artist loses the ability of delineating objects and the writer finds it impossible to construct meaningful sentences and eventually loses his whole spelling.

In his closing speech, Arthur Koestler pointed out the astonishing discrepancy between the intellectual and moral being of a man (a theme which he had developed in a recent "Observer"). The drug which, he said, he would like to see developed, should be able to unite our marvellous intelligences with our perverted personalities. So would we: because the day we are as good as we are clever, then this world of ours would do away with pot and LSD for ever.

(PMB)

## COMMENT

### DO SWISS WOMEN REALLY WANT THE RIGHT TO VOTE?

Switzerland treats its women so unjustly that it ranks among the most primitive countries in the world. The only other countries which deny their women the right to vote are Lichtenstein, Yemen, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Nigeria, moslem countries for the most part, where women are confined to harems and not even allowed to show their faces.

As a proof that this uncivilised anomaly still recently had a live backing among Swiss males, the 1959 referendum on the issue of equal federal-political rights for women produced 654,939 "no" against 323,727 "yes" ballots.

Still, the seed has been sown and the number of women-backers has increased gradually, so much so that

during the '60s over 50 votes on the political rights of women were held on the cantonal and communal levels. Vaud and Neuchatel were the first cantons to grant their women a say in cantonal affairs (1959), Geneva followed in 1960, Basle-town in 1966, Basle-country in 1968, Ticino and Fribourg in 1969. All these cantons except Basle-land have also given women the right of vote in communal issues. Graubünden, Berne and Zurich have allowed their communes to vote themselves the female right of vote.

Now this portentous problem has reached the federal level once again. The Federal Council has submitted to Parliament a proposed improvement of the 74th article of the Federal Constitution, outlined in our "Swiss News" items. The Council backs its proposal in a 40-page "message" designed to answer every critic.

The isolation of Switzerland was not a determining factor. It was rather the contradiction between the increasingly important role played by women in the economy, the increased freedom of their lives and the "woman at home" image. This called for a more realistic attitude towards the problem of womens' right of vote.

What is more surprising is that the message contains lengthy arguments to convince the women who *don't* want the right to vote! No, it says, the right of vote will not imperil the condition of women, neither in their homesteads nor in society. No, the right of vote will not tend to increase the disinterest in direct democracy. Yes, women *can* bring constructive views on the problems affecting them more particularly, even though they may be less interested in other more specifically masculine topics.

There is a "Union of Swiss women for the female right of vote" and there is the pending "Union of Swiss Women against the female right of vote". The first union probably gathers together all the intellectual, politically-active, aggressive, "proud-to-be-women, men-with-the-baby, equal-opportunity-for-women, no-more-down-treading" elements. They stage banner-carrying processions, meet in committees and send representatives to the European Human Right Convention. The second is less publicised and less typified. A few years ago in Zurich, when the right of vote for women came up and was rejected by the people, it placarded a very conspicuous bill reading "Totale Verpolitisierung unseres Lebens? NEIN!" all over the city.

These militant elements, fighting against the right of vote, may be getting rarer to find, but the fact remains that the overall majority of Swiss women are just not interested in the political equality which their men are gradually working out for them. The reporter for the "Europa" programme

on BBC 2 (Thursday, 19th January) discovered that for himself when he interviewed a good half-dozen women on the beach in Geneva and could not elicit one enthusiastic answer. A Swiss lady of my acquaintance, who watched the programme, was appalled by the lack of ambition of her compatriots. Although this may be arguable, it seems that Swiss women are more subdued and less open to the world at large than their French and English counterparts. For this reason, there's no saying that Swiss women would appreciate being vested with the moral obligation of going to the poll, they may even find it a little embarrassing! The majority of women are not ready in their minds to seize the right of vote, the majority of men are probably not much further ahead. After all, only five cantons have given their women the full right to vote, and, since the referendum must draw a "yes" not only from the majority of the people, but also from the majority of the cantons, the odds are that the time is not yet ripe for such a referendum.

(PMB)

## SWISS NEWS

### FEDERAL

#### The CERN

Switzerland has agreed to contribute to the construction of a new, gigantic 300 GeV particle-accelerator to be built either in Belgium, Germany or France. The project will be under way the day these three CERN-countries stop haggling on the location of the new machine. Germany has posed the erection of "super-CERN" (CERN standing for "Centre Européen de Recherches Nucléaires") on her soil as a condition to her financial participation.

(ATS)

#### Measures taken by the Government to cool down the economy

Switzerland has been having precisely the opposite problems to those of Great Britain in the past years. In Switzerland the economy is overheated, going too well and booming uncomfortably whereas it is depressed in Great Britain. The Federal Council has decided to install an "export deposit" of 5%—the exact opposite of the import deposit which still takes effect here.

The export deposit is in fact the most controversial of 13 foreign-exchange, home-demand-reducing, monetary and banking measures introduced by the Federal Council with the definite intention of putting a brake on the economy. These demands include: reduction of the export-risk guarantee by 5%, reduction of the engagement of federal civil servants, blocking of building licenses, lowering of customs duties and speeded up instalment of the complete Kennedy Round tariff reductions,

increased hire purchase down-payment (from 30% to 35%).

The exporter will now have to surrender to the custom authorities 5% of the purchase value of the exported goods. He will be able to recover this money either entirely or in instalments when the Federal Council decides that the economy allows it. Its main considerations will be the stability of supply and demand at home, and the situation of the export market.

An overheated economy has the advantage of making everybody wealthier and materially contented. In the case of Switzerland, it has a few disadvantages, such as excessive dependence on foreign manpower, speculation on the franc and increased cost of living. The overflow of the alien residents in the country has been partially due to the attraction of Swiss prosperity. The more the economy overheats and gets out of hand, the harder an eventual recession would strike. The present measures are designed as a hedge against the economic uncertainties of the future.

The export industries have naturally grumbled at the deposit scheme. They have considered it as an unfair treatment, but the Federal Council put forward the argument that the industries directed towards the home market had had to suffer more from past economic dampening—measures then the export industries. Moreover, the boom in exports had been partly responsible for the present agitated state of the economy. Some firms have been increasing their turnovers by 30% last year, a figure which has nothing to do with normal expansion.

Some industries, especially the watch industries, are determined to fight against the export deposit. Last year, Swiss exports rose by 15% and imports rose by 17%. The trade balance therefore deteriorated, although this was amply compensated by invisible exports such as tourism, banking, insurance and foreign investments.

(ATS)

### Women's right of vote

"Each Swiss who has completed his 20th year and who is not deprived of his active rights of citizenship by the legislation of the canton wherein he has his domicile is entitled to vote" (1) "However, federal legislation may lay down uniform provisions on the exercise of this right" (2). This is how the right of vote of Swiss citizens is constitutionally laid down. In the closing session of last year, the Federal Council proposed the following amendment to the article: "All male and female Swiss have the same rights and duties in respect of federal votes". The second and third paragraphs remain the same as the two paragraphs written out above. The fourth paragraph will read: "The voting procedure in the case of communal and cantonal matters is governed by cantonal law". At the end of last month the Federal Council submitted a message strongly backing its proposal to Parliament. The chambers will now have to agree on the constitutional amendment which, like every alteration of the constitution, will have to be submitted to the people in a referendum. The date of this referendum has not yet been decided. The Government may well decide to wait for the psychologically-ripe moment.

(ATS)

### THE FILM FAIR OF SOLOTHURN

During four January days from nine in the morning to midnight, cinema fans from all over the country could see some 56 Swiss films produced during the year. This was the fifth "Swiss Film Exhibition". Not a festival (which involves a prior selection and a final prize) but a showcase of practically all the output of the year. There was no jury, so that everybody could present his production. This inevitably meant that a lot of chaff was mixed with the good grain and that the four days were very trying for the cinema enthusiasts who lasted throughout the presentation.

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