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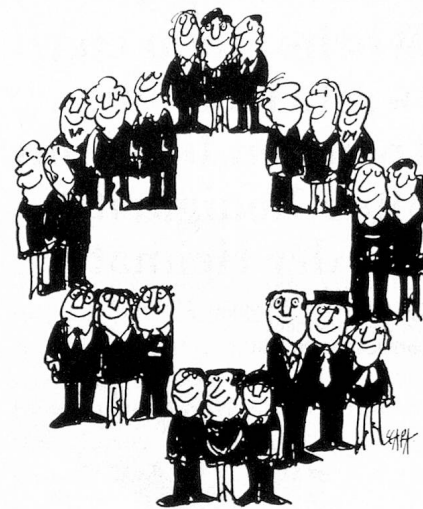
Federal elections in October A win for the Right?

(G. Pb) The deadline is the 23rd of October, 1983. The Swiss nation will elect the main body of the members of the Federal Chambers; the entire National Council and the majority of the Council of States. Who are the likely winners? The Right Wing with the Liberals, the Radical Democrats, the Swiss People's Party, or even the National Group for People and Fatherland? Who might be the losers? The Social Democratic or Communist Left Wing, the Independent Union? The significant unknown factors: the Christian Democrats, the new parties forming the Group for the Protection of the Environment. It is still anyone's guess what the outcome will be.

These speculations are based on the results obtained in the most recent cantonal and local elections. There was a swing to the traditional and nationalist Right almost everywhere, whereas the Left and the Independents lost ground and the Christian Democrats marked time. As far as the Group for the Protection of the Environment is concerned, a great deal depends on the success of the attempt they are currently making to form a coherent union.

The big parties in the government and the small ones outside

The election campaign leading up to the 23rd of October is all the more complicated by the fact that power is divided amongst the parties in Switzerland to an extent unequalled in the rest of the world. The big parties form the government while the small ones are excluded. This formula has functioned comprehensively



since 1959. The four most important groupings – the Social Democrats, the Radical Democrats, the Christian Democrats and the Swiss People's Party – are represented in the Federal Council more or less proportionally, as well as in a large number of cantons and municipalities. This is the magic formula.

In most other pluralistic democracies, the battle for supremacy is fought out between two big parties or coalitions, only one of which finally wields the power of government. On the other hand, in Switzerland, each large party or coalition has a share of this power, which is a startling discovery for the uninitiated observer.

Let us take a look at the Swiss parties, one after the other, and see how they are preparing themselves for this peculiar contest.

The Social Democrats – avoiding the worst

Up to the end of 1982, the *Social Democratic Party* was predicted to be heading for the heaviest losses in the coming federal elec-