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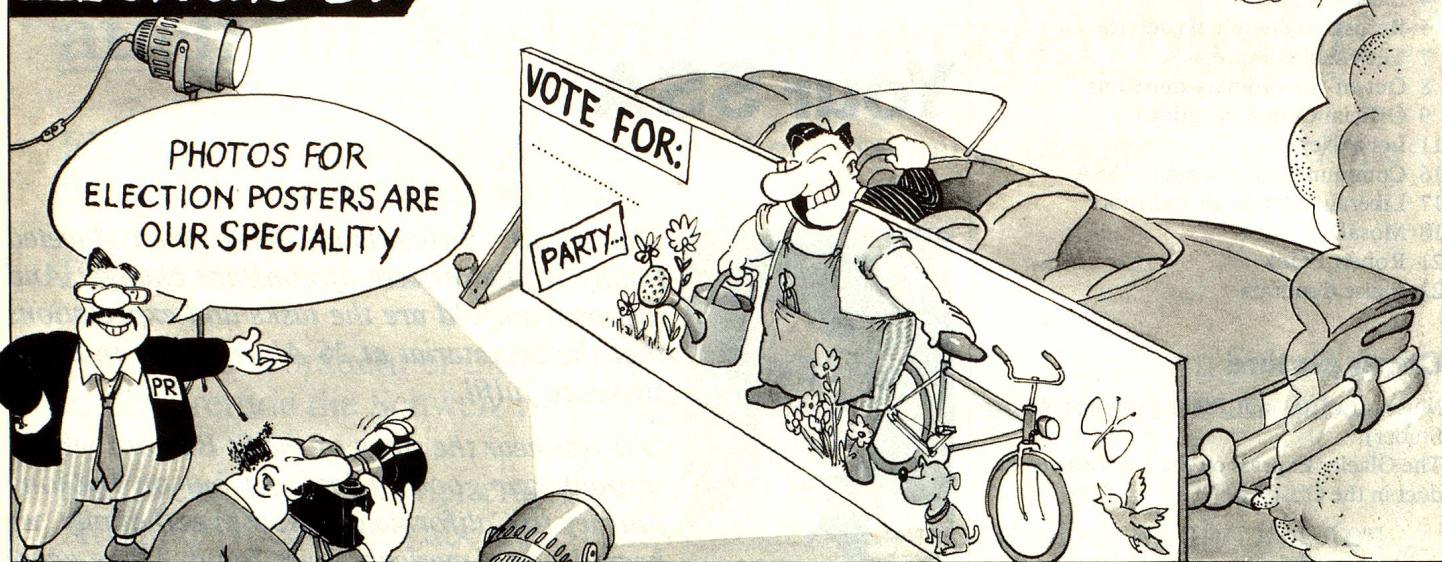
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ELECTIONS '87

Andreas Oehen 87



October 18th, 1987: polling day – payday

Green is the word

Environment, asylum, women: these are the three main themes of the coming Federal elections on October 18th. But it is not so cut and dried as all that, for until then, perhaps quite other tinder could still find its way into the headlines. There is much at stake: all 200 National Council seats and the majority of the seats of the Council of States are to be reoccupied.

Who will win? One thing is certain: the four large parties – the Social-Democrats, the Liberals, the Christian-Democrats and the Swiss People's Party, are threatened with erosion. The smaller groupings will try to snatch a few crumbs of power from them. The Greens, the *Landesring* and the «Nationally»-minded of all colours nurse enormous ambitions.

False hopes, however, are equally out of place. Federal elections seldom result in spectacular shifts of seats and votes; the proportional system of the National Council breaks the force of landslides and the almost universal majority system of the Council of States prevents them from being triggered.

Protection of the environment:

Item number one

Environmental protection already completely dominates the political landscape. German-speaking Switzerland, where there is particular concern about the dying forests, is intensively occupied with ecological questions. But French-Switzerland and the

Ticino, too, have not been spared by the Green wave: two of the most committed ecological parties, headed by Daniel Brélaz and Laurent Rebeaud, are from the cantons of Vaud and Geneva.

As from now, apart from a few exceptions, all political Parties are imbued with a strong sense of duty towards the environment.

Even the traditional bourgeois parties such as the Liberals, the Christian-Democrats and the People's Party are today concerned with ecological and environment-protection matters. Not that these old-established groups had previously ignored environmental protection: for them it was but one subject among others.

Even the small Liberal-Democratic Party which is represented particularly in Basle and western (French-speaking) Switzerland has devoted a congress solely to the ecology. However, this party will lose its two expert environmentalists because the *neuchâtelois* Jean-François Aubert and the *genevoise* Monique Bauer are no longer standing as candidates. It is not sure whether their suc-

cessors are likely to be imbued with the same convictions.

Somewhat further to the left, the parties are much more strongly committed, ecologically. Environmental protection is already the central theme among the Social-Democrats but it is certainly the *Landesring* (closely associated with the Migros) and the POCH (Progressive Organizations of Switzerland – to be found in the vicinity of the extreme left) which have progressed most energetically in this direction.

The same can be said of the «nationalistic» groups of parties of all political shades. From its very beginnings, the National Action has been much concerned with environmental protection – that is, to the extent that its preoccupation with the fight against «over-foreignization» has allowed it time to do so. Incidentally, the founder of the NA, the Bernese Valentin Oehen, left it and set up a new party, the Ecological-Liberal Party of Switzerland, which gives priority to the ecology. In any case, the Greens, with Brélaz and Rebeaud, will have to fight against strong competition on October 18th.



Have the haters of strangers miscalculated? And the refugee question? And the foreign population? Here, too, the parties specializing on this subject matter, first of all the *Vigilants* and the National Action, could be in for a nasty surprise on October 18th should the traditional bourgeois parties which hold the majority in the Federal parliament, as in the Federal Council, get pleasure in taking the wind out of their sails. Today, the law on political asylum is being applied far more rigorously than ever before and the number of applications for asylum granted under it has declined considerably. Insofar as its present asylum policy is concerned, Switzerland is hardly distinguishable from most of the other countries of Europe.

In short, it is not certain that the nationalists will achieve the breakthrough their adherents are hoping for but, with luck, they will at least succeed in strengthening their position in parliament.

Will the women have better luck?

Last but not least – the women. They represent the great unknown in the coming federal elections. Four years ago – for the first time since the introduction of women's suffrage at federal level in 1971 – they gained no ground. On the eve of the new elections, 24 out of 246 parliamentarians of 6 parties are women: just 10 per cent.

The other parties in the two chambers number no women in their ranks, yet everyone is anxious not to appear hostile to women. The Swiss People's Party, prodded by its chairman Adolf Ogi, from Berne, tries very hard to shed its markedly masculine image.

The Liberals who, every once in a while, exemplified the same inglorious reputation, succeeded, with the help of the left, in bringing

Advance of the Greens in Zurich and Geneva

The elections to the Zurich cantonal parliament brought the Greens a landslide victory on 5th April. The «ecologists» won 18 seats and are now, with their total of 22 seats, the fourth-strongest party in the 180-member cantonal great council. The National Action also made gains, improving its representation from 2 to 6 seats. Losses were mostly for the account of the bourgeois parties: CVP, FDP, SVP and EVP.

Election success of the Greens also a week later in the Geneva municipal elections: at the first go they won 11 of the 80 seats in the city parliament, thereby becoming the third-strongest party.

ing about the election of the first woman Federal Councillor in history, namely Elisabeth Kopp, from Zurich. Not to be beaten, the CVP (Christian-Democratic Party) elected Eva Segmüller, from St. Gallen, as President – the first woman ever to become a party chairwoman.

Women are being listened to more and more within the left-wing and opposition parties.

The Social-Democrats, for example, are determined to go even a step further: at least a third of the places on the electoral list are to be reserved for women. The POCH set the corresponding limit even higher.

Will the representation of women on the topmost political committees again go up? Let us wait and see.

Georges Plomb

Make-up of Parliament and Federal Council on the eve of the elections:

	Federal Council	National Council	Combined Chambers
Liberal Party (FDP)	2	54	14
Christian-Democratic Party (CVP)	2	42	18
Social-Democratic Party (SP)	2	47	6
Swiss People's Party (SVP)	1	23	5
Liberal-Democratic Party (LPS)		8	3
Landesring (LdU)		10	10
Evangelical People's Party (EVP)		3	3
Progressive Organizations (POCH)		3	3
Worker's Party (PdA)		1	1
Partito Socialista Autonomo (PSA)		1	1
National Action (NA)		3	3
Vigilants		1	1
Ecological-Liberal Party (OeFP), Oehen		1	1
Environmentalists		3	3
Total	7	200	246

Refusal to do military service

Civilian service soon?

Despite much effort, we have not yet succeeded in finding a satisfactory solution for the objector to military service in Switzerland. This year, however, a new proposal which seems to have better chances of success than earlier initiatives is to be laid before parliament.

Switzerland, with its militia army, expects its citizens to do military service. Whoever refuses to do military service, without cogent reason, is punished and as a rule sentenced to six months imprisonment. But, besides quite a few malingerers, there are also young men who oppose military service from genuine inner, moral stress. Punishment of such conscientious objectors today appears unjust to by no means a few fellow-citizens.

Council of Europe calls for civilian service

Incidentally, the problem arises not only in

Switzerland but also in all democratic states. A number of Western democratic countries have accordingly been seeking fairer solutions to the question of conscientious objection: some have introduced alternative, civilian service which allows military service objectors to serve their fatherland in another way.

The problem has also been debated in the Council of Europe which comprises 21 W. European democratic states. In 1967, 1977 and in January last the Council of Europe Assembly called upon the governments of its member-countries to create a civilian, al-