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"She has stepped out of the Swiss franc coin to go on a journey, and finally settled down at Basle" writes the expatriate Swiss sculptress Bettina Eichen about her "Helvetia on the move". Our Forum is also concerned with a journey, namely the long, long trail taken by Swiss women in their search for equal status. (Photo: Rolf A. Stähli)

Editorial

In Principle – "of course", but in practice?



For many decades the men of the two half-cantons of Appenzell had refused to allow their women to take part in the periodical open-air ceremonies (the "Landsgemeinde") at which cantonal issues are decided by a show of hands. But this spring, the issue came to a head: the men of Appenzell-Outer-Rhoden decided to let their female co-citizens enter freely their exclusive circle.

"Only" one single canton remains in which human rights are not taken too seriously and – 18 years since women were accorded the right to vote at the Federal level! – political decisions in cantonal matters are taken without the women having any say: namely the twin half-canton of Appenzell-Inner-Rhoden. One can finally write off the absence of voting rights for women in a single half-canton under the heading of "Political Eccentricities", even though this is clearly contradictory to the letter and spirit of the Federal Constitution, which lays down that "Men and women have equal rights". In any case however, seen against a wider background, this situation represents only a minute – though eyecatching – item in the range of sectors in which the equal status legally accorded to women is not observed. What is today the "condition féminine" in Switzerland? What is happening, on what sections of the road to equal status is one slowed down by obstacles? Our "Forum" pages are this time concerned with these questions.

Almost everybody agrees on the "principle", also men: women's status and interests should be promoted, they ought to be represented in all bodies and groups, and of course have the same rights therein as the men. But when it comes to concrete matters, such as wages and salaries, the "principle" tends not to be fully implemented. One can estimate that the difference in earnings attributed to discrimination against women amounts to from 7 to 16%.

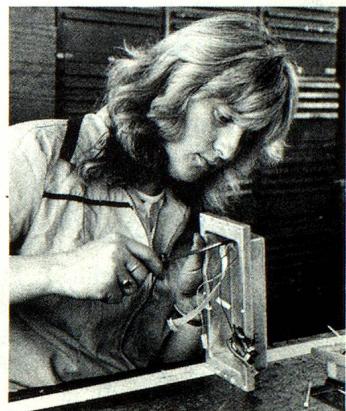
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Women are in most bodies and associations under-represented or not represented at all. Such is the case for instance, alas, in the editorial team for this magazine. All the same, our group of publications owes much to one lady: Nelly Silvagni-Schenk, head of the magazine "Messenger Suisse" which is published in Paris. We must today say good-bye to this pioneer of the press for the Swiss Abroad, as she is leaving us to begin her well-deserved retirement. Her name is closely associated with publications for Swiss Abroad, as it was her "Messenger Suisse" which served as a model on which our magazine "Swiss Review" was patterned.

Another farewell will soon be called for. Our colleague Marco Zaugg will be leaving our editorial staff in autumn. In him we are losing a very capable collaborator. His dedicated commitment, his editorial and journalistic expertise and his talent for conceptual thinking have been just as exemplary as his devotion to detail. Our best wishes accompany both Nelly Silvagni-Schenk and Marco Zaugg for their respective futures.

Jürg Müller, lic. phil. I, Editor

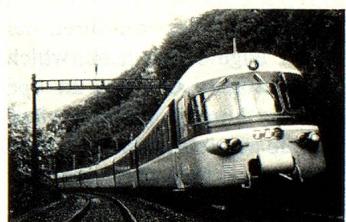
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