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The health cost explosion

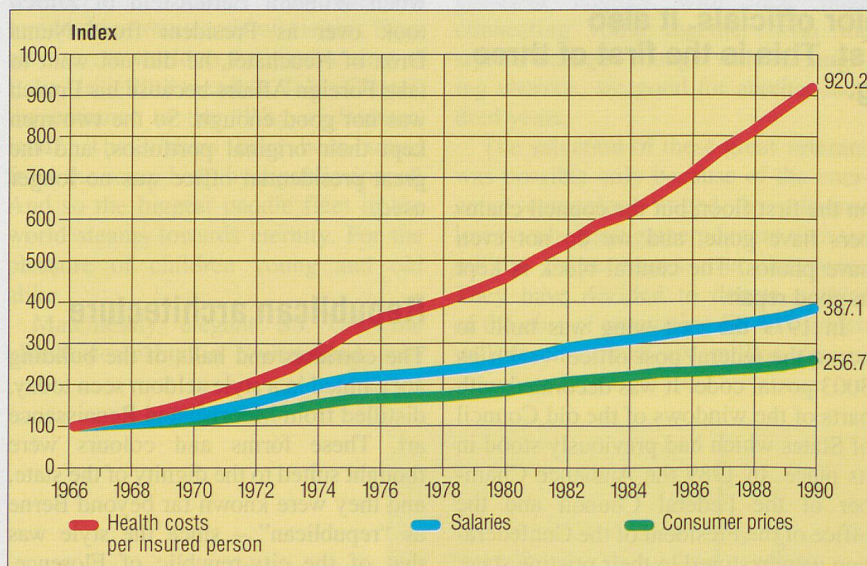
For the second time in two years, the Federal Council and Parliament in its autumn session had to meet the explosion in health costs with an emergency programme. A parliamentary majority is in favour of a package including a

doctor's fee ceiling for a limited period, a franchise of ten francs per day for hospital stays and possibly limiting basic insurance to essential benefits. Such measures should help to prevent the threatened collapse of Swiss health

care, or at least keep the system going until much-needed reforms are introduced.

But in spite of this immediate aid programme, most health insurance funds will have to raise their premiums yet again, which will come as an additional burden on Swiss purses. Statistics issued by the Federal Office for Social Insurance show very clearly just how much health costs have risen: between 1966 and 1990 health costs per insured person multiplied by more than nine, while salaries were up only four-fold and consumer prices a mere two and a half times (see chart). Incredibly, hospital costs went up fifteen-fold during the period in question.

The emergency programme will have the effect of putting a brake on rising costs in the short term, but in the end deep-seated reforms are inevitable. Those responsible for health costs in the administration, the political parties and the health insurance funds themselves have been aware of the problem for years, but they have not (or at any rate not yet) been able to agree on a solution.



Swiss exhibition pavilions favoured

The World Exhibition in Seville closed its doors in mid-October. In the first few weeks the number of visitors was below expectations, but by the last day the target of 36 million entries had been passed. About two million people visited the Swiss pavilion which had been so very controversial – at least at home. The exhibit's artistic director, Adolf Burkhardt, is very happy with the result. About 80% of the visitors were Spanish, and there were of course many Swiss amongst the rest.

Switzerland was also successful at the Special World Exhibition in Genoa, known as Columbus 92. This was visited by a total of 1.7 million people; and

600,000 of them went into the Swiss pavilion – organised by the Swiss National Tourist Office acting for the Coordination Commission for the Presence of Switzerland Abroad – making it one of the most popular foreign exhibits. This success was due mainly to the fact that visitors could become actively involved in the exhibit through a series of games.

(See Swiss Review 2/92)

Half a Nobel Prize for Switzerland

The Americans, Edwin G. Krebs and Edmond H. Fischer, share this year's Nobel Prize for Medicine. But Fischer is also a Swiss citizen. Born in Shanghai, he was educated and trained in Switzerland, where he started out as an external lecturer. The two biochemists from Seattle in the state of Washington received the prize – worth about Sfr. 1.6 million – for their work on metabolism functions.

Paralympics: Swiss successes

With its single solitary medal – tennis champion Marc Rosset's gold – the Swiss team at the summer Olympics in Barcelona was a bit of a disappointment. But the record has been rounded up by the performance of Swiss paraplegics at the 9th Paralympics which always follow the Olympic Games. Switzerland received as many as 35 medals, well up on the record number obtained at Seoul in 1988. With three gold medals in the 800 metres, the 5,000 metres and the marathon, wheelchair racer Heinz Frei was the most outstand-

ing member of a very successful team. The ten-day Paralympics featured 3,000 athletes in 621 different sports – and they were watched by more than 700,000 people. But the day has long gone by when the mere fact of participation was often enough to win a medal. In the men's 5,000 metre wheelchair race there was a starting-line of 50. This made the Swiss result an extremely good one, particularly since the best athlete four years ago, Franz Nietlisbach with six golds, was absent this time because of injury.

Point of view

The daily news could drive us straight to despair. The heart can't take in all these tragic events – we need our intellects to process them. It is one of the contradictions of human life that we carry on even though we know we are mortal.
(Hugo Loetscher, writer, holder of the 1992 Great Schiller Prize)

Holidays for Swiss Abroad children

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad is again organising holidays in Switzerland for Swiss Abroad children in order to strengthen their contact with the homeland.

When? July 5 – August 21, 1993 (for any three weeks)

Where? – In a Swiss family
– At a holiday camp organised by us
– At a Swiss children's institute

Who? Children aged 7 to 15 of Swiss nationality or whose mother was born Swiss.

Registration: Before March 31, 1993

Ski camp: December 27, 1993, to January 9, 1994 (two one-week camps)

Registration: Before September 30, 1993

Application forms and further information may be obtained from Swiss diplomatic posts or directly from the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad. The forms must be sent to the diplomatic post at which you are registered.

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad
Holiday Scheme
Wattstrasse 3
CH-8050 Zurich
Tel.: 41 1 313 17 17

Fifty Switzerlandds

Between mid-August and mid-September of this year the Bernese sculptor, George Steinmann, has built up a memorial – standing between the west wing of the Federal Parliament and the elegant "Bernhof" – which is composed of 50 pieces of stone from 50 regions throughout the world which call themselves Switzerland.

On the initiative of Walther Leu, director of the Swiss National Tourist Office, and with the help of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, 160 particularly attractive areas, regions, landscapes, mountain districts and valleys have been identified which have baptised themselves with the name of Switzerland. For practical reasons a decision was made to use just fifty pieces of stone, and these were obtained through Swiss diplomatic posts and Swiss associations.

Texts: René Lenzin



Merry Christmas from the editorial team

It is not only the content of Swiss Review which has changed but also the editorial team, as you can see if you glance at the impressum. We would like to take this opportunity not only of wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, but also of sending you a little present: a group portrait of the team – so that you can have some idea of whom you are dealing with. Our own New Year resolution is to continue sending you an informed, varied and entertaining Swiss Review. We hope we will succeed and that your pleasure will crown our efforts.