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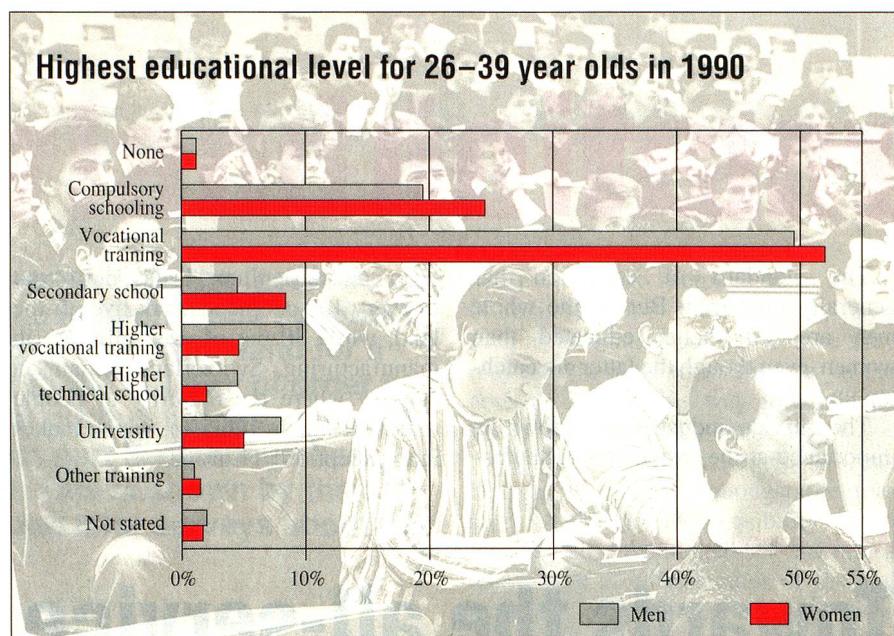
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Education: high level, but...

When we take a look at education and training in other countries, we can be proud of the high level of schooling amongst the Swiss population. This is made particularly clear by the Federal Statistics Office, which last year published for the first time a brochure entitled "Education Indicators in Switzerland". Four out of five people continue to attend school after the end of their compulsory education, which puts Switzerland at the top of the international table – in equal place with Germany and the United States.

One-fifth of the entire population has benefited from higher education (university and higher professional training). But the majority (two-thirds) of students in Switzerland favour higher professional training, leaving universities at somewhat of a disadvantage. Switzerland is also clearly distinguished from most other countries by the large proportion of higher professional train-



ing being undertaken by those who are actually engaged in work (40%). Here again, there are major differences between men and women: young wo-

men are by and large less well-educated than young men. This would seem to be mainly due to the traditional distribution of tasks between men and women. ■

On the International Year of the Family

Communities thrown together

1994 – the UN Year of the Family. The United Nations has decided to take as its subject an institution which seems threatened with extinction. The family is not dead – but today it looks different.

The UN Year of the Family finds Swiss society in transformation. The traditional basic family (two parents with a child or children) is in retreat,

Alice Baumann

while patchwork, lego or puzzle families are surfacing. In 1980, 42% of all households still fitted the picture of the basic family, but ten years later this had dropped to 38%. The proportion of one-parent families (a mother or father bringing up one or several children alone) was at 12% in 1980 and had risen to 14% in 1990.

One-third of the Swiss population is made up of single people, while just over a quarter are childless couples. Divorced parents often come together to form puzzle or patchwork families. A couple, six children and four family names: that is a typical patchwork family. For when every third marriage ends in divorce, the resulting children, one-parent families and week-end fathers are not going to live alone – they create second and third families. Often newly formed couples, their joint children and the step, half and week-end brothers and sisters of these live together under one roof.

Initial research shows that these follow-on families are by no means without qualities. The extended network of relations and acquaintances teaches tolerance, builds up friendship and creates social responsibility.

The step-family is not a new discovery. It appears in Grimm's fairy tales, if in a very negative form. But neither the case of Cinderella nor the step-mother of Hansel and Gretel are exactly what the family thrown together is

The International Year of the Family has the motto, "Democratic Togetherness in the Heart of Society". A survey taken across relevant institutions in Switzerland indicated that 1994 should serve "as the starting point for new socio-political developments". The aim of policy on family matters should not be "to maintain a specific family form", but rather to contribute to creating a structure acceptable to the individual.

The Holy Family, which lies at the heart of the Christian religion and which is so highly prized, was in fact a very unusual combination. We do not know whether the parents were in fact married; how the mother became pregnant she alone knew: the Holy Child, who was born to save all the world, was a Jewish child but at the same time a child of all cultures. The stable in Bethlehem may well be seen as the symbol of the family in all its diversity and with all its surprises.

(Source: Sämann, the evangelical monthly magazine)

trying to achieve: namely, ideal building blocks in the sense of a patchwork or lego game.

Scarcity of examples

But patchwork has to be very carefully sewn together, and a lego game requires concentrated effort. The new family form has to respect different emotional worlds, spatial claims, educational principles. These experiments in living have few past examples to build upon. With the exception of Christiane Brunner, last year's candidate to the Federal Council, scarcely any prominent Swiss citizen has departed from the traditional small family unit. In addition, there are as yet no statistics, since no official book-keeping has been carried out about the number of successful and unsuccessful follow-on families. "We know more about hen houses than we know about families", Ruth Ruttmann, head of the Education Division of Pro Juventute Switzerland, told a newspaper interviewer. Estimates based on figures from neighbouring countries would suggest that about 20% of the Swiss population is involved in these new family forms.

What actually is a family? Pro Juventute has worked out the following definition: "A family exists when adults

live together with children and young people in a responsible and caring way with the intention of permanence". The meaning is as simple as it is plausible: it is not the form but the quality that counts. A family is where you feel at home.

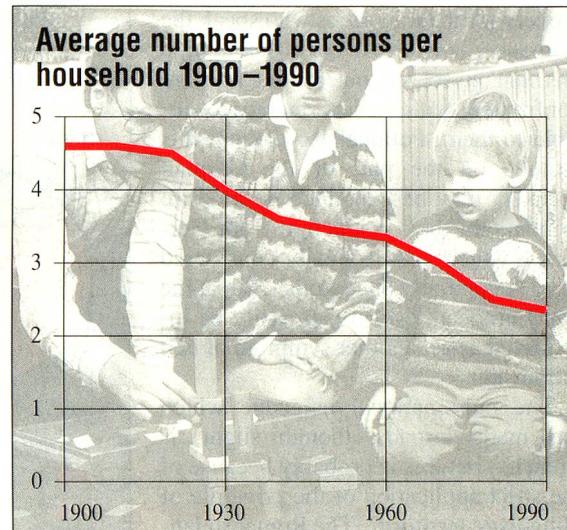
Only 200 years old

After all, the small or basic family – the institution on which so much value has been laid – has only existed for the last 200 years. So the family is not the rock of ages or an indestructible fortress, but rather a form of living together marked by economic, social, cultural and political circumstances. In central Europe during the pre-industrial era, there was no real separation between work, home life and leisure nor between relations and friends. People who lived together under one roof formed an economic community.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, industrialisation and the division of work led to a

dissolution of this form of domestic life. The economic community was replaced by one based on emotion. The sentiments of privacy and intimacy which are typical of the modern family arose from this development. But it also had its dark side: while professional life outside the home and political activity were re-served for men, women were restricted to the family.

The position of women in society has changed and is still changing, and family reality will follow in its wake. ■



Language and religion

Language diversity grows – church attendance sinks

For the first time in Swiss history, non-national languages (at 8.9%) have overtaken Italian (7.6%). This is one of the central linguistic facts to emerge from the 1990 census. As to religion, the number of people not belonging to any denomination has sharply increased.

The census shows that within the total population of Switzerland – including Swiss and resident foreigners – significant changes have taken place in the language sphere. This is mainly due to three distinct factors.

The first is that the number of immigrants from traditional European countries of origin has dropped, and some of those who immigrated previously have been naturalised – particularly in German-speaking Switzerland. This is one reason for the 2.2% drop in the propor-

tion of people claiming Italian as their mother tongue. The fact that Italian has ebbed outside its traditional language area is because for very many second or third generation Italian immigrants it is no longer their mother tongue. But the census nevertheless shows that 14.5% of Switzerland's population are able to speak Italian.

The second factor is that the proportion of foreign residents from other European and non-European countries has gone up. Compared with 1980, the

share of those who speak non-national languages has increased by 2.9%. Turkish and Serbo-Croat speakers account for most of this rise.

Thirdly, 10.9% of the resident population claim they speak English, although only 0.9% are native speakers. The former is a category which is increasing not only in Switzerland but also internationally. It is no coincidence that a survey of young people recently made shows that in the French and German language areas English is the preferred foreign language – although in Ticino French and German are ranked above it. Worries voiced by some people suggest that English may soon become the language in which Swiss from different ends of the country will be best able to communicate – particularly if