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Spring meeting of the Council for the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen

Serious discussion on the federal constitution

The spring meeting of the Council for the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen concentrated on the status of our countrymen abroad in the federal constitution. The meeting was held on the occasion of the inauguration of the donors' plaque at Swiss Abroad Place.

The reform of the federal constitution is a matter which also concerns the Swiss Abroad. The new draft was presented in Swiss Review last year (6/95), and it was stated that everyone had been asked to voice their thoughts in the consultation process.

In parallel, the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad has itself launched a consultation process amongst Swiss associations and institutions af-

filiated to it. This concerns the constitutional articles specifically referring to the Swiss Abroad. The Council has now worked out a position paper to be presented to the authorities. This deals mainly with the new Article 43 – which is Article 45^{bis} in the present constitution.

The Council proposes that the commitment of the federal government to the Swiss Abroad should be

made more binding. Support for the institutions of the Fifth Switzerland should also remain fixed in the constitution.

The question of possible representation of the Swiss Abroad in parliament gave rise to lengthy discussion. The Council decided against working out a formal proposal in the context of the constitutional reform but rather to put the question in general terms to the responsible federal authority for examination. At the same time it was emphasised that for many years the Council itself has represented the interests of the Swiss Abroad with success.

The Council was provided with up-to-date information on the negotiations with the federal authorities on a possible reform of the optional old-age and disability insurance scheme for the Swiss Abroad. It once again emphasised its view that an opportunity for Swiss Abroad

to join the official Swiss insurance scheme in some way or other should remain open.

The Council also assessed the first participation in federal elections by Swiss Abroad entitled to vote by correspondence. It approved a number of proposals on solving practical problems which had cropped up in the exercise of these new voting rights.

With Schweizerklub Telemark in Norway the Council was again able to welcome a new association abroad.

RL

AJAS

Any questions on education or training in Switzerland? AJAS, the Association for the Training of Young Swiss Abroad, can help in many ways. Its 1995 annual report gives detailed information on all AJAS activities. You can order it from:

AJAS, Alpenstrasse 26
CH-3000 Berne 16

A picture from the project "Our Parliament in Form and Colour" was presented to the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad at the recent meeting of the Council for the Swiss Abroad. In 1991 – Switzerland's 700th anniversary year – a painting 8.4 x 8.4 metres square was put together with the participation of members of parliament. Its 700 parts are now to be sold. The proceeds will go to the Swiss Landscape Fund. For further information and orders please contact: Peter Wildhaber, Gehrenholz A3, CH-8055 Zurich, Tel. and Fax: 41 1 463 33 68

Evocative symbol at Swiss Abroad Place

Swiss Abroad Place in Brunnen has now been enriched by an evocative symbol. A granite block was unveiled in the presence of many prominent figures. The plaques attached to it describe the history and purpose of the Place and also list the donors.

Professor Walther Hofer, president of the Council of the Foundation, referred to the important role played by Swiss Abroad Place during the 700th anniversary celebrations. On August 1, 1991, the festivities reached one of their high points with the reception of the entire Federal Council by the Council for the Swiss Abroad and several hundred of our compatriots from all over the world.

Since then – as part of the Way of Switzerland – it has been visited every year by many walkers from within Switzerland and abroad. In 1998 the Place will once again be used for commemorative events during the celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the federal state.

Antonella Bettata, a member of the Council for the Swiss Abroad, stressed the

importance of the Place for young Swiss Abroad. Even though most of these are well rooted in their countries of residence, they still find here a symbol of Switzerland which brings them into contact with their country and the values of their forefathers.

In conclusion, Jean-Jacques Cevey, president of the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad, referred to the dual

significance of the Place. It is a symbol of the solidarity of our countrymen abroad with Switzerland, and it also reminds those of us who stayed at home of the vital contribution which the Fifth Switzerland makes to our country in so many ways.

RL



**The donors' plaque at Swiss Abroad Place
(Photo: SSA)**

SSA Summer Camps **Sun and Fun**

The SSA Youth Service's multisport summer camps will again take place in Tenero, Canton Ticino, from July 21–August 3 and August 4–17. Details and registration from: SSA Youth Service Alpenstrasse 26 CH-3000 Berne 16