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Bulletins

“Hardworking” parliamentarians

The number of initiatives (motions, postulates, interpellations, etc.) at the Swiss Parliament increased significantly in the last legislature to a total of over 5,000 in the National Council alone. The number of motions in the National Council and Council of States rose from 1,290 during the 2003-2007 period to 1,952, which represents an increase of 51%. Postulates were up around 18%, while the number of interpellations rose by 19%. Many parliamentarians “grasp at initiatives to prove they are tackling people’s concerns”, wrote the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”, commenting on the deluge of submissions.

Federer in illustrious company

Swiss tennis player Roger Federer came second on a list of “most respected people”, behind Nelson Mandela, the former President of South Africa. This was the outcome of a survey by the Reputation Institute among 51,055 people worldwide. The 54 nominees were figures from politics, business, sport and culture. George Bush, Silvio Berlusconi, Mahmud Ahmadinejad and Kim Jong-Il were at the bottom of the list.

New head of the ICRC

Peter Maurer will take up the position of President of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the middle of next year. Maurer is currently the State Secretary at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and previously made a name for himself as the Swiss ambassador to the UN. He will replace Jakob Kellenberger at the head of the ICRC, who held the office for 12 years.

German-speaking Swiss overrepresented

Employees from French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland are still underrepresented in the federal administration. This has been revealed by research carried out by the news magazine “L’Hébdö”. In the Department of Defence, for example, only 10.3% of management positions are not held by German-speaking Swiss. In the Department of Foreign Affairs, which holds the top spot, 29% of the management are from French-speaking Switzerland or Ticino. The Federal Council aims to achieve the following linguistic distribution by 2015: German 70% (72.1% in 2010), French 22% (21%), Italian 7% (6.6%) and Romansh 1% (0.3%).

2,000 jobs axed

Novartis is cutting around 2,000 jobs worldwide from its 121,000-strong workforce with the aim of saving USD 200 million a year. 760 jobs will go in Basel, 320 in Nyon, and the other 900 or so positions will primarily be lost in the USA. The downsizing plans sparked major demonstrations and strike action at Novartis in Nyon in mid-November.

An expensive business

The decommissioning of Switzerland’s existing nuclear power stations and the disposal of radioactive waste will cost at least 20.6 billion Swiss francs – 10% more than previously forecasted. These figures come from the latest calculations by federal government, which calculates anticipated costs every five years. The Swiss Energy Foundation (SES) expects decommissioning and demolition costs to be much higher.

Quotations

“Now there’s someone who should definitely be burned at the stake.”

SVP President Toni Brunner about Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf

“There is no reason why our country can’t have three Federal Councillors from the French-speaking territory.”

SVP parliamentary group leader Caspar Baader, following the nomination of Federal Council candidates Jean-Francois Rime and Bruno Zuppiger

“Do I really have to become President of the Confederation? Is there no way of bypassing the post?”

Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer to one of his staff members

“I stay true to myself. And I want to be allowed to be so. It’s not always that easy.”

Federal Councillor Johann Schneider-Ammann on DRS Radio on 12 November 2011

“I’m not a populist, more a unifying figure.”

FDP President Fulvio Pelli on DRS Television

“Even our own members see us as the party for fat cats.”

Philipp Müller, FDP National Councillor

“The FDP still only represents high finance. I’ve had enough of this arrogance.”

Otto Ineichen, FDP National Councillor

“No comment, no comment, no comment...”

The chief strategist of the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), Christoph Blocher, on his financial involvement and influence at the “Basler Zeitung”

“If you can’t stand losing, don’t go into politics.”

Bruno Frick, Member of the Council of States from the canton of Schwyz, who lost his seat after 20 years in Parliament



“Switzerland is a tame country. I never encounter the devil here. If I did, I would immediately ask him if he had a story for me”, says Catalin Dorian Florescu. The 44-year-old author won this year’s Swiss Book Prize for his novel “Jacob beschliesst zu lieben” (Jacob Decides to Love). Florescu was born in Temesvar in Rumania in 1967 and has lived in Switzerland since 1982. He studied psychology and psychopathology

in Zurich. He gave up his profession as a psychotherapist in 2001 and has worked as a freelance writer ever since. Florescu describes the the jury’s decision as “courageous”: After Melinda Nadj Abonji (2010) and Ilma Rakusa (2009), this is the third time in succession that a Swiss writer with roots abroad has won the Book Prize. The first prize winner in 2008 was Rolf Lappert, a Swiss citizen living in Ireland.