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## THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY ELECTS GOVERNMENT, PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATION AND NEW FEDERAL CHANCELLOR

On 4th December, the National Council and the Council of States assembled for their first session of the new (38th) legislative period of four years' duration. For the third time, National Councillor Karl Dellberg (Valais, former Socialist and re-elected as an independent candidate), opened the session as oldest M.P. He used his opening address to ask the country for more support to poorer nations, but also to see to it that the sixth of the Swiss population, which he claimed to be in material, cultural or spiritual need, be raised to higher levels, not to forget the aged and the invalids. He spoke up for the farming community and for a better distribution of the national wealth — of the 3 million breadwinners, said Mr Dellberg, only one-tenth was independent, and he pleaded for the welfare of all Confederates. He declared the session open with the postulate "**Mit Mut an die Arbeit!**"

Parliament then proceeded to elect its President for 1967-68. The Vice-President Dr Hans Konzett (Farmers' and Citizens' Party, Zurich) was chosen. He is the seventeenth Zurich M.P. who has presided the National Council since 1848.

Dr Max Aebischer (Social Christian Conservatives, Fribourg) was elected Vice-President.

The Council of States elected its Vice-President Councillor of States Emil Wipfli (same Party, Uri) to the Presidency of the Second Chamber and chose the farmer from Malans (living at Dagmersellen, Lucerne), Councillor Christian Clavadetscher, as Vice-President for the new period.

On 14th December, the highest authority of the country, the Federal Assembly, i.e. the two united Chambers, met to conduct the elections of Government and Chancellor. The session was opened by **Nationalratspraesident** Dr H. Konzett.

When the elections of the Government took place in 1963, some unpleasant demonstrations occurred. Voices were raised that in order to prevent similar manifestations of disfavour in the future, elections should be undertaken **en bloc**. Better judgment prevailed, and no change was made. Consequently, each of the seven members of the Federal Council had to present himself for re-election according to seniority.

The highest number of votes cast for the latest member, Federal Councillor Nello Celio, who received 180 votes, which is considered a sign of appreciation of the way he has conducted his Department (Military). On the other hand, the retiring President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor Roger Bonvin, stood lowest in favour with 151 votes, not surprisingly in view of the fact that his handling of finances has caused much criticism.

With the elections of the seven members, speakers combined demands for a new distribution of Departments. Whilst the Federal Councillors are not elected as expert Ministers in their fields, and the Government takes corporate and collective responsibility, it is nevertheless important that a man of Federal Councillor Celio's acknowledged abilities and integrity should be given a more important office, preferably that of Minister of Finance, replacing Monsieur Bonvin. Both the Liberals and the "Landesring" have expressed their opinions in this direction.

Parliament next elected the President of the Confederation for 1968. For the second time, Federal Councillor Spuehler has become Head of the Government. The first time was in 1963. The Cabinet used to consist of members of Liberal conviction, and it was only gradually that candidates with other political tenets were accepted. In 1891, the first Conservative was elected to the Government. In 1929, the first Farmer entered the Federal Council, the astute and forthright Rudolf Minger. At last, in 1943, the fourth large Party, the Socialists, succeeded in getting a representative into the Government. It was Federal Councillor Ernst Nobs who was a member for eight years and became President for one year during that time. He was succeeded by Prof. Max Weber who, however, resigned in 1953 when his finance proposals were rejected, and before he had a chance of becoming President. No further Social Democrat got into the Government until 1959 when Councillors Spuehler and Tschudi became the Socialist representatives amongst the four new members.

Dr Willy Spuehler was born in Zurich on 31st January 1902. He considers himself of working-class stock. He was privileged to go to university where he studied economics. His successful career took him into the Zurich Municipal Government. From 1942 up to his election to the Federal Council, he was Minister of Health and Economics in Zurich. For 17 years he sat on the National Council, and for the last four years previous to his election to the Federal Government, he served as Councillor of States.

For the first six years, he was in charge of the Federal Department of Communications and Energy, and at the beginning of 1966, he took over the Political Department.

Once again, like in 1963, the President's Vice-President was elected in the person of Federal Councillor Ludwig von Moos. Head of the Department of Justice and Police.

In autumn, it was announced that Federal Chancellor Dr Charles Oser would retire at the end of the year. He was born on 17th February 1902, a citizen of Basle and Sion. He studied law in Lausanne and Berne and joined the Federal Chancellery in 1928. In 1944, he was appointed Vice-Chancellor and as such Secretary to the Council of States. Since his election as Chancellor on 13th December 1951, he has assisted nearly all the sessions

of the National Council and has been in charge of minutes and translations, in addition to advising the President of the Council.

With the news of the pending retirement of Dr Oser, the discussion as to the duties of a Chancellor was activated once more. Should this office revert to its former importance and should certain co-ordinating duties be allotted to the holder? The Federal Council was in agreement with such an **Aufwertung** of the office as suggested in the report of the Hongler committee of experts.

The United Federal Assembly elected Dr Karl Huber, Secretary-General of the Federal Department of Economy, as the new Chancellor. He received 126 votes, whilst the Vice-Chancellor Dr Felix Weber got 51, Dr H. Bruehwiler 45 and others 8 votes.

Dr Huber is the ninth Federal Councillor in the 120 years of the Federal State. He hails from St. Gall and is a Roman Catholic. He was born on 18th October 1915, a citizen of Haeggenschwil and son of a bank employee. He had his schooling in St. Gall and studied law at Berne University. He began his career as a lawyer in St. Gall, but the war meant long interruptions through military service as Artillery officer. He entered the Federal Administration in 1941. Soon, his outstanding gift for organisation made itself felt, and before he was 40, the office of Secretary-General of the **Volkswirtschaftsdepartement** became his. He has made the Department into a model of organisation, and this augurs well for the new task as Chancellor. His knowledge is profound, but it is his courage and sense of responsibility which will no doubt stand him in good stead. Although a member of the Social Christian Conservatives, Dr Huber has not been active politically. This has been criticised in some quarters, but generally it is accepted as a good thing, for his loyalty to the country comes above all else.

The new Chancellor is married and has three children.

After the elections, the seven Federal Councillors and the new Chancellor were sworn in individually, and after the meeting was adjourned, the individual Parliamentary Parties went to the traditional meals with "their" Federal Councillors. Later in the afternoon, the new President of the National Council and the newly-elected Federal President were accompanied to Zurich where they were accorded a tremendous reception. M.P.s of Central Switzerland's Cantons escorted the new President of the Council of States and the Confederation's Vice-President von Moos to their homes.

President Spuehler, in an address at the festivities in honour of the Heads of both Federal Legislative and Executive, said that the aim of the re-organisation of the Federal Chancellery would be to guarantee the corporate responsibility system of the Government, a much more difficult thing than to adhere to a presidential system. But, he said, it was the only one which corresponded to

the ideals of Switzerland's federalistic structure. The Federal Council was going to set up guiding lines for governmental policy in the new year. This effort would have to be made, although there were limits in a country where the citizen and not Parliament had the last word.

## News of the Colony

### AUCKLAND SWISS CLUB

Sunday, 3rd March 1968 — a really remarkable sunny day in the history of the Auckland Swiss Club and the Swiss Society of New Zealand!

As far as Whangarei, Coromandel, Waikato and Wellington our Swiss friends came to celebrate with us "10 years Auckland Swiss Club" with the grand opening of our fabulous "Alphurette" on our property at Wainui. We had special pleasure in welcoming to our "Aelplerfest" Mr Erb, the Swiss Charge d'Affaires from Wellington with his wife, and once again Mrs and Mrs Villiger from the Hamilton Swiss Club.

Already at six o'clock in the morning an ox was cooking over a fire on a spit prepared by the cooks, Mr Max Bachmann and Mr Paul Wuethrich — to be ready at lunchtime. Many thanks to these two friends — this meal was a real treat and delicious!

During the day the atmosphere was unbeatable, in the true Swiss tradition. We really enjoyed the extremely good yodelling, Talerschwingen and Fahnenschwingen of the Jodel-group of Hamilton and I would like to take this opportunity in thanking them on behalf of us all.

We listened to the sounds of an alphorn and, of course, "Laendler" music was played nearly the whole day by our well-known accordionists.

Our president Mr Tony Sidler has much pleasure to announce during the afternoon the winners of the following competitions.—

Shooting: Hans Fitzi, Auckland.

Kegeln: W. Unternaehrer, Hamilton.

Steinstossen: Ernst Giger, Auckland.

Ham Raffle: Alf Meier, Auckland.

Our congratulations to these winners.

In the late afternoon people slowly departed. However, a lot of our friends stood with us around our "Alphurette" far after the beautiful sunset.

The sincere thanks of the Club go to all those who helped in any way to make this special day such a success. —B.B.