

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 32 (1969)
Heft: [7]

Artikel: The Parliament in Berne
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942233>

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THE PARLIAMENT IN BERNE

Spring Session 1969

Whilst stone masons and workmen were engaged in brightening the outside of the Swiss Parliament, the two Chambers sat to decide on matters of importance to the Confederation. With 90 to 19 votes, the National Council accepted the decree regarding **compulsory permission for foreign banks** intending to open branches in Switzerland.

For over a year, the two Chambers have been trying to reach agreement on the Bodenrecht, the new proposed **law on land and property**. The majority has now accepted the following formulation:

- The Confederation sets up principles by way of legislation which will compel the Cantons to use the land sensibly and to adhere to orderly town and country planning.
- The Confederation promotes and co-ordinates the efforts of the Cantons and supports them.
- Within the Confederation's competence, it considers the requirements of national, regional and local planning.

So far the constitutional basis. Now it will be up to the electorate to agree or dissent. The most important question remains what will be done with this basic principle.

There were women's demonstrations outside the "Federal Palace" whilst Parliament was sitting. Their opposition was against the Government's proposal to sign the Human Rights Convention before **franchise** in federal matters had been granted Swiss women. This demonstration was in no way connected with the statement by Federal Councillor von Moos a few days later who said that the Government would prepare a draft bill by the end of the year, which, if accepted by the electorate, would grant women suffrage on a federal level.

A federal **poison law** is in the making, according to which all dealings with poisons would be subject to permits.

In the Council of States, it was **agricultural questions** which stood in the forefront. The small Chamber accepted a credit of forty million francs for an agricultural research station at Grangeneuve (Fribourg). The Council, after lengthy debate, accepted the federal decree to promote cultivation of sugar beet.

The "Buehrle affair" came up, and whilst the Government's decision to give new arms orders to the said concern was acceptable, the whole question of **arms exports** remains open, and the Council of States has asked for a report by the expert commission set up by the Government.

The second week began with a debate on the **partial revision** of the **penal code**. Criticism was voiced of the Department of

Justice, which was not capable of undertaking the necessary administrative work. This was one of the reasons why the whole revision was taking so long.

The National Council had to deal with a new draft of the **tobacco law**, the first one having been rejected by the electorate. There will now be no price control on cigarettes.

A commission of experts which includes eight women, is preparing a revision of the **family law**. It will be done in four phases; the first will deal with adoption rights, the second with the status of the illegitimate child, the third with marital property and the last with guardianship law.

The Council of States debated the creation of an **Intercantonal Mobile Police Force**, to be used for international conferences, in catastrophes and for general keeping of order and peace. The force would have 600 men in three regional companies. The Chamber gave the proposal a favourable reception.

A more difficult passage had the new federal law regarding the effort to **co-ordinate civil and military defence** in a new directional organisation.

In the third week, the National Council concluded the discussion on the partial revision of the penal code by **agricultural questions** which stood in dealing with the **juvenile penal law**. Three types of detention places are planned for youthful offenders over 17: the therapeutic home, the educational institution and the training school. A new class of offenders is being created, "the young adults" between 18 and 25.

The Council of States debated the **tenants protection rights**. It did not agree with the Government's proposal to include it in the **Obligationenrecht**. It will go before the large Chamber in June.

Miscellaneous questions brought up in the National Council include the attack on the Israeli aeroplane, the insufficient news service of the Army, reporting on youth troubles and alcoholism.

(By courtesy "Schweizerisches Kaufmannisches Zentralblatt" Zurich)

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