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EDITORIAL

Now that at long last we have the beginning of a democratic form of government in New Zealand, a strange phenomenon has taken place over the past few months which illustrates how fickle the attitude of the general public can be.

Let us analyse the developments stage by stage.

Stage I: For years the people of New Zealand complained about their successive governments because the system of "First Past the Post" always resulted in a series of glaring inconsistencies.:

a) It made it impossible for smaller parties ever to be represented in Parliament.

b) The minority party which automatically became the "opposition" had next to no effect whatsoever on the decisions of the ruling party.

c) The ruling party thus was virtually free to run the country at will with total disregard not only to the wishes of the public, but also to its own election promises which more often than not were totally overturned as soon as the party came into power.

In fact New Zealand's government was closer to a total dictatorship than to a democracy.

Stage II: Under constant and ever increasing pressure from all directions, the Members of Parliament eventually and, very reluctantly, agreed to submit to the country some proposals for a more democratic form of government.

Their initial reluctance to act was quite understandable because the system of "First Past the Post" gave them the only thing that most MP's wanted and dreamed of when they entered politics: Power. For those MP's who formed the government, it meant, for a period of three years at least, an euphoric state of unbridled power which neither the opposition, nor the news medias, not the public opinion could touch in any way. To all intents and purposes, "First Past the Post" was the ideal form of government for our MP's, but certainly not for the country.

So it was understandable that our MP's held onto it as long as they could and it must be put to their credit that they eventually agreed to let go and accept the idea of a form of proportional representation.

A variety of forms of proportional representations were submitted to the country from which MMP was eventually chosen. Although MMP does not come anywhere near the true proportional representation as we have it in Switzerland, at least it is a step in the right direction and a marked improvement over the unfair and undemocratic "First Past the Post" system.

Stage III: Last October New Zealand had its first try at truly democratic elections where, for the first time, every vote counted. That the result did not meet everyone's expectations did not come as a surprise. After all, you cannot change overnight from dictatorship to democracy

without some hitches on the way. After all, Rome was not built in one day either.

Political observers predicted it would take a second election in three years time for the new democratic system to settle down. It was of course illogical that a small party with only 17 MP's could hold up the formation of a government for almost two months. But, like most politicians, Winston Peters is an opportunist. Like Rob Muldoon who took advantage of the weakness of the opposition and of his own Cabinet to become a virtual dictator, Winston Peters too took advantage of an election result which put him into a unique bargaining position, a situation which he may never find himself in again at the next elections.

Stage IV: Now here comes the amazing switch in New Zealand's politics. People who hated the dictatorial system under "First Past the Post" suddenly decided that MMP was not going to work and opted for a return to the old system. On the other hand, our MP's who originally did not want the MMP system, decided to stick it out and try to make it work against all the odds being stacked against them. Our MP's could easily have thrown in the towel and claimed that MMP was unworkable which would have placed New Zealand in a very serious political crisis.

Once again, we must give credit to our MP's who were determined to come to a compromise so that a proper democratic government could be formed.

Those New Zealanders who, at the first hitch under MMP, immediately declared that MMP was a failure and that it would have been better to stick with the old system, will never know how close they have come to see democracy fly out the window. If their wish had been fulfilled, they would have

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kissed good-bye to democracy not only for their own lifetime, but most likely for several generations to come.

Stage V: No doubt, the first results of MMP do not satisfy everyone. But do not forget, this is New Zealand's first stab at democracy. It will need time to settle down. With this first experience behind us, the next elections will most likely be more straight forward and probably less of a surprise.

Although the road to true democracy is a long and winding one, we are at least on it now and proceeding in the right direction. The next step may now be to argue for the introduction of binding referenda, similar to the way we have them in Switzerland. This may well prove to be an even harder nut to crack than getting rid of the old "First Past the Post" form of government.

PRESIDENTS OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION

How good is your memory? How many names of Presidents of the Swiss Government can you recall?

To refresh your memory, here is the list since 1915 as supplied to you by our contributor from Wellington, Emil Flepp.

Giuseppe MOTTA 1915, 1920, 1927, 1932, 1937
He was certainly one of the most popular and best known Federal Councillor Switzerland ever had.

Camille DECOPPET 1916

Edmund SCHULTHESS 1917, 1921, 1928, 1933

Another very popular Federal Councillor

Felix Ludwig CALANDER 1918

Gustave ADOR 1919

Robert HAAB 1922, 1929

Karl SCHEURER 1923

Ernest CHUARD 1924

Jean-Marie MUSY 1925, 1930

Heinrich HAEERLIN 1926, 1931

Marcel PILET-GOLAZ 1934, 1940, 1945

You will certainly remember his name.

Rudolf MINGER 1935.

Although he was President only once, few people would not know his name. He was a very well known Federal Councillor.

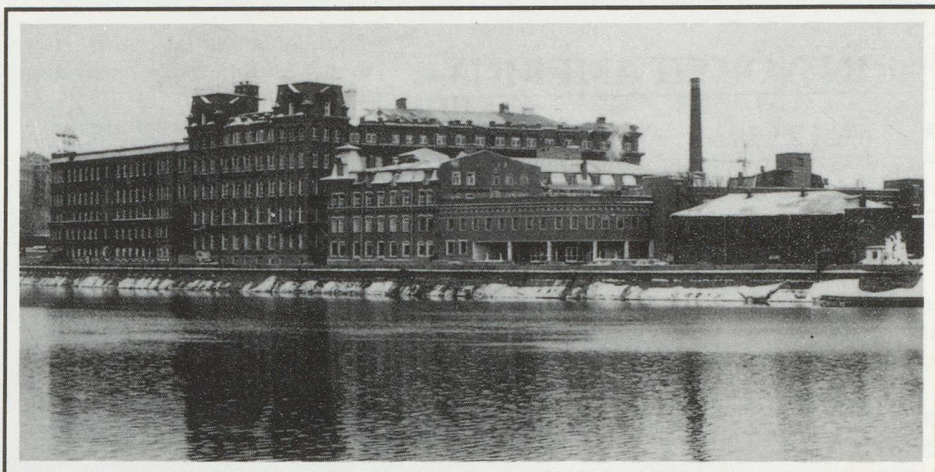
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FIRST QUALITY CHOCOLATE FACTORY FOR MOSCOW.



Red October chocolate factory in Moscow.

Moscow's Red October company has ordered a large chocolate factory from the Swiss company Buhler, a contract worth 29 million SFR. Most factory components will be manufactured at Buhler's Swiss headquarters in Uzwil (SG) and the remainder in one of their subsidiaries in Germany.

The factory is due to be commissioned at the end of 1998.

The factory units supplied by Buhler will include three computerised production lines, raw materials reception infrastructure, mixer food units, refiner

units, installations for enrichment of the chocolate (conche), air conditioning equipment and hot and cold water systems. The factory will produce both milk chocolate and dark chocolate, filler paste for pralinés and paste for coatings. This state-of-the-art chocolate factory will have a production capacity of 9 tons per hour.

The Moscow factory is the fourth large installation to be built by Buhler for Russian clients and will serve as an excellent international reference for Switzerland's chocolate industry.

Albert MEYER 1936

Johannes BAUMANN 1938

Phillip ETTER 1939, 1942, 1947

Another very well known Councillor, mainly through his physique

Ernst WETTER 1941

Enrico CELIO 1943, 1948

First President from the Tessin.

Walter STAMPFLI 1944

Eduard VON STEIGER 1945, 1951

Karl KOBELT 1946, 1952

Ernst NOBS 1949

Max PETITPIERRE 1950, 1955, 1960

This President surely needs no introduction.

Who would never have heard of him.

Rodolphe RUBATTEL 1954.

His name became famous for his law which promoted the mixing of red and white wine to get rid of millions of litres of surplus wine. This mixture of red and white wine was quickly nicknamed: "Rubatteller". In the German part of Switzerland, Rodolphe Rubattel became known as the "Weinpanscher".

Markus FELDMAN 1956

Hans STREULI 1957

128 Thomas HOLENSTEIN 1958

Paul CHAUDET 1959, 1962

Friedrich WAHLEN 1961

Willy SPUEHLER 1963, 1968

Ludwig VON MOOS 1964 1969

Hans-Peter TSCHUDI 1965, 1970

Hans SCHAFFNER 1966

From here on the names become much more familiar for most of you.

Roger BONVIN 1967, 1973

Rudolf GNAEGI 1971, 1976

Nello CELIO 1972

Kurt FURGLER 1977, 1981, 1985

Willy RITSCHARD 1978

Hans HUERLIMANN 1979

Georges-André CHEVALLAZ 1980

Fritz HONEGGER 1982

Pierre AUBERT 1983, 1987

Léon SCHLUMPF 1984

Alphons EGLI 1986

Otto STICH 1988, 1994

Jean-Pascal DELAMURAZ 1989, 1996

Arnold KOLLER 1990

Flavio COTTI 1991

René FELBER 1992

Adolf OGI 1993

Kaspar VILLIGER 1995

He is not very much liked by the anti-smokers because he produces the famous Swiss Villiger cigars.

No doubt shrewd readers will already have noticed that no Presidents are mentioned for the years 1953, 1974 and 1975. What happened during those years? Was no Federal Councillor prepared to stand for President? Honestly we do not know. Perhaps our friends at the Swiss Embassy in Wellington can throw some light onto this puzzling matter.

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