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Bio-gas plant

Switzerland's biggest bio-gas plant will soon be under construction in Inwil. The environment will profit from the clean energy – and the farmers get rid of their cow shed effluent. The farmers around Inwil will be able to dispose of their effluent close by – a relief to their paddocks and the nearby lakes that suffered from the many farms and piggeries – and the air will be cleaner, too.

The new plant will produce almost 2 Mio cubic meters of gas ready to be funneled into the existing gas pipes. It is 'regular' gas and can be used for heating and cooking and for CO₂-free fuel for cars.

The waste in a year from one cow is enough to drive a car 3000 km.

Over seventy farmers have bought shares in this unique concept, and more want to come aboard. Some farms will build a 2 km long pipeline for their effluent.

The plant is planned to be operational in autumn 2008 and will cost around SFr 17 Mio. It will not be subsidized, neither by the federal nor cantonal government. It will process 60'000 tons of waste per year. The combination of processing solids and fluids and the production of fertilizer at the end is unique.

from *Tagesanzeiger/tb*

Pot smokers hope for support in parliament

Cannabis is set to make news headlines again when parliament meets to discuss a plan to decriminalise the psychoactive drug. Switzerland became notorious for its liberal drugs policy in the late 1980s but public opinion has changed in the meantime. Recent studies on the negative impact of cannabis appear to back opponents of moves towards decriminalisation. The trade in hallucinogenic

hemp would not be permitted outright, but controlled by the authorities in a bid to crack down on illegal dealers, according to the people's initiative handed in with more than 106,000 signatures in January 2006.

Supporters of a liberal cannabis policy say it makes no sense to treat the estimated 500,000 regular or occasional pot smokers in Switzerland like criminals. *si*

Volunteers play key role in Swiss society

Did you think volunteering was a feature of NZ society? Then think again:

One in two people in Switzerland does community work, according to a survey published on United Nations International Volunteer Day. The main motivation is to help others and for personal reasons, and not because the volunteers are keen to receive official recognition in the shape of a diploma or certificate.

In one of the largest surveys in recent years, about 52 per cent of the respondents said they were involved in some form of community work. It also found that four out of five people in the country

had in the past done some kind of unpaid work.

The survey showed that men in particular do their voluntary work as members of clubs and organisations, while women were committed to more informal activities in their families or neighbourhood. One in four people said their community work was as a member of a club or organisation, mostly involving sport or leisure activities. Unpaid work for political parties, environmental or human rights groups was less popular, the report noted, adding that women tended to be more involved in activities that had little prestige.

from *swissinfo*

When does Old Age begin?

According to an opinion poll, published in *Tagesanzeiger*, adulthood begins, in the eyes of the Swiss, at the age of 20, and old age at 69. Swiss women consider old age to start with 70.5 years, whereas Swiss men regard 67.5 years as old. Young people defined 62 as old; older people set the mark higher.

In my 3rd and 4th year at primary school I had a young teacher. He was really young, fresh from Teachers' Training College. For year 5 and 6 I had a teacher who was quite old – he was in his late 30s. Sounds familiar? *tb*



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