

Votes for Swiss women

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1953)**

Heft 1216

PDF erstellt am: **26.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694561>

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In order to combat this legend, a Foundation was created, under the name of Pro Helvetia, and charged with the task — with far too modest means at its disposal — of engaging in a certain amount of cultural propaganda abroad. Thus, during the last few years exhibitions of art, books, architecture and posters, have been organised in most of the big capitals. Up to the present, it is the exhibition of posters which have proved most successful. In this very special sphere of applied art, Switzerland has enjoyed some quite remarkable success. Her poster artists have a following throughout the world. A minor art, you may perhaps remark. But, if a poster, affixed to the walls of the towns and seen by thousands nay, by millions of persons, is a work of art, its design a thing of beauty and its colours both pleasing and striking, it can be one of the most valid expressions of the art of our times.

I only speak of the poster, as an example. In a great many other domains also, Switzerland is creating and working. She possesses artists of value, sculptors, writers, composers of music, and architects whose works deserve to be known beyond her frontiers. Up to now, her federalist structure has hampered an organised intellectual and cultural radiation, as it is understood to-day. The other countries were engaged often in intense propaganda activities Switzerland did nothing. As a result, it was often concluded, quite wrongly, that she was not interested either in the arts, or letters, or science. Finally, she decided to take more active steps in regard to her cultural propaganda abroad, and this led to the creation of an organ having a national character, whereas, within her own frontiers, everything that is of a cultural nature is entirely dependent upon the Cantons.

VOTES FOR SWISS WOMEN.

When reporting in one of the recent issues of this paper on a function held by one of the Swiss Societies in London, I expressed the hope, that perhaps one day Swiss women would get the vote, adding "although most of them seem not to want it." This statement, I remarked, "may brood trouble for me."

It has, I have received a rather lengthy and somewhat rambling letter signed only with the initials B.L., no address was given, postmark London, W.1., and on top of this communication was written in block letters "NOT FOR PUBLICATION".

A letter not properly signed, nor an address given, comes pretty nearly into the category of an anonymous communication, which invariably goes straight into my "large" waste-paper basket.

This time, however, I feel tempted to reply to my correspondent B.L., in order to refute the accusation which she is making that I am "utterly incompetent to grasp the importance of the matter" and that my remark was "flippant and not according to facts."

Before I go any further, I should make it quite clear, that I am in favour of Swiss women getting the vote, as I consider that it would be beneficial not only to them, but also to our country.

The writer then goes on to ask, whether I have never read in Swiss newspapers, that the women of the cantons of Geneva and Basle have by a test poll voted with an overwhelming majority in favour of votes for women.

To this, I venture to say, that as far as I remember, the attendance at the poll in both cantons was remarkably small, and the majority equally so. Not having the exact figures before me, I will not challenge her statement that there was a majority, although not overwhelming.

I am further accused that my remark, that women in Switzerland do not want the vote is "malicious, and the least said stupid". In the above mentioned report, I wrote that "my statement was based on facts", and for the elucidation of my "polite" correspondent, who, I assume, is a lady, I might mention that for some years after the last war had ended, I discussed this matter, when on holiday in Switzerland, with many of my female compatriots in various parts of the country.

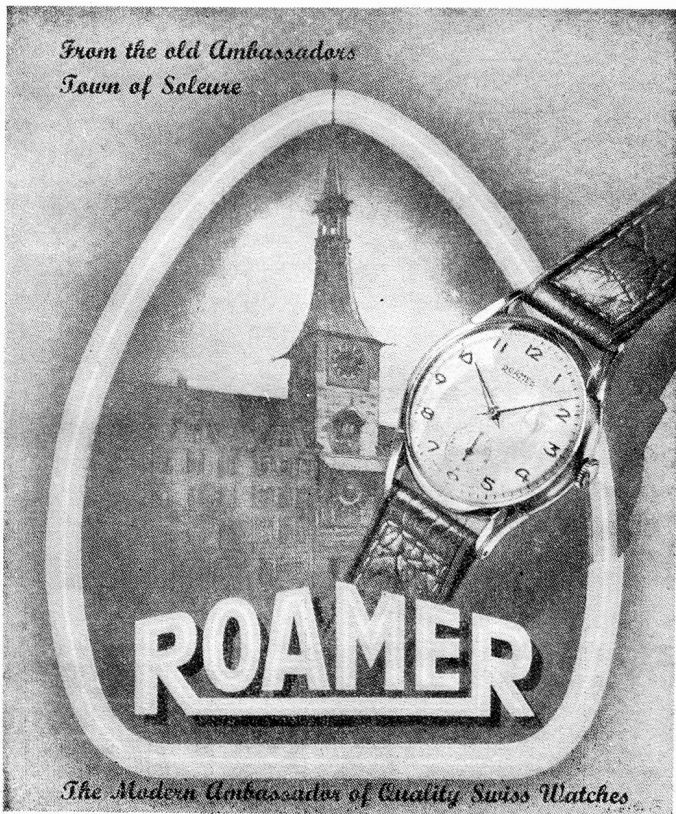
It is true, I did not tell them that I was connected with any news-paper, nor did I disclose that I personally was in favour of "Votes for Swiss women."

Now for the benefit of B.L. I will acquaint her with the result of my conversation with women in all walks of life, professional, office workers, servants, house-wives, peasants, etc., etc.

My notes made at the time show, that amongst the 31 women whom I interviewed over a period of three years, 14 were keen on getting the vote, 7 were not interested at all, 8 against it, and 2 had no personal opinion. Surveying these figures I came, not unreasonably, to the conclusion that there was no great enthusiasm amongst Swiss women to be put on the voting register.

In her closing lines B.L. invites me to give this question, which she declares is of "paramount importance to Swiss women" a second thought, "if my brain will allow it".

It is not for me to advertise the capacity of my



brain, I must leave it to others to judge, but following her invitation, I have given this question a "second thought" and offer here a few suggestions, which might bring the desired result, and I will start with a question, namely "Why did British women get the vote? Answer: "Foremost because they tenaciously and untiringly fought for it."

True enough they made, mildly said, a bit of a nuisance of themselves. Their leaders and followers went on hunger strike when locked up, they threw themselves underneath horses, and buses, chained themselves to various gate posts, slapped the faces of politicians and policemen, they went to prison, etc., etc., in short they became a public menace. Result: "They got the vote."

This encourages me to give a word of advice to Swiss women in general. If they really and truly want to be put on the voting register, they must change their tactics, and they must, perhaps in a less violent manner, imitate their British sisters.

Here are a few suggestions, which if carried out, might have the desired result, although it might get me into serious trouble with the authorities at home when on my next visit to Switzerland.

To begin with I suggest that throughout our homeland teams of women should be formed going from Restaurant to Restaurant snatching the playing-cards out of the hands of those men who, for hours are playing Jass, such as "Zuger, Bieter, Schieber, Kreuzjass etc." meeting their indignation with such slogans as "Votes for Women", "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity."

Then again every woman instead of kissing her husband good-night or good-morning should, before closing or opening her bewitching eyes, scream as loudly as possible "Votes for women."

A further useful piece of propaganda might be if the wives insisted on accompanying their husbands for that "Sunday afternoon walk" — which more often than not, is only a pretext to play skittles, or Jass, or watch a football match — and bring it home to them in course of the conversation, that "Votes for Women" is the only solution to bliss and happiness in their conjugal homes—.

If this does not seem to work, I suggest, that during the periodical sessions held in Berne of the Federal Parliament, women with posters "Votes for women", should invade the public galleries of the two Chambers, throwing hand-bills and pamphlets down in the "arena", and generally behave in such

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a manner which would oblige the "Speaker" to suspend the sitting.

They also might imitate "Dutty" and break a few windows at the "Palais Fédéral".

To make it still more clear how eager and determined they are to reach their goal, I suggest that one or two of the agitators should jump into the bear pit in Berne, leaving it to the bears to decide whether their cause is a righteous one. (May I suggest that B.L. is volunteering for this heroic act of devotion to a great cause). I consider this demonstration a very effective one.

Thus men all over the country would be reduced to such a state of nerves, that they would readily and willingly give in, and at the next poll would unanimously agree that Swiss women should be put on the voting register.

Nothing in this world of ours can be obtained without fighting for it, and I wish them good luck in their grand fight for

E Q U A L I T Y .

ST.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, November 27th, 1953. We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donation over and above their subscription: Th. Erb, A. R. Tissot, E. Goodbehere, Dr. G. G. Kullmann, G. Godet, J. B. Brutsch, J. H. Meyer, Walter Weber, O. Brullhard, W. Flory.

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