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ure which appeared in the French-speaking press and claimed that the payload-range ratio was within specifications, "keeping in mind the unique possibilities of vertical take-off and landing". The article went on to say that alterations needed to satisfy Swiss standards would present no difficulty and would be guaranteed by the British Government.

It says that the "Harrier" has reached its full maturity, thus contradicting the Swiss expertise, and recalled that the American Navy has used it successfully for over a year.

The chances that the Military Department will turn back on its decision and reconsider the "Harrier" are however remote.

## TOURIST ITEMS

### "Ski for You" wins more applause

The short film "Ski for You" released under the patronage of the Swiss National Tourist Office and the Swiss Ski School Association (Production: Condor-Film & Co.) has been awarded no less than seven distinctions of international importance. Just recently, the film obtained the "Premio Olimpico Nazionale Italiano" at the "Concorso Internazionale di Cinematografia Sportiva" in Cortina d'Ampezzo and the "Prix Spécial" at the 4e Festival international CIDALC du film sportif in Reims. Millions of people have already seen this colour film on TV, in cinemas and at "narrow film" shows.

### Alpine Gardens in Switzerland

Lovers of Alpine flora are discovering Alpine gardens in many different regions of Switzerland. One of these, the "Schynige Platte" is to be found in the Bernese Oberland, overlooking the Lake of Brienz and lying at a height of 2,000 metres. Nearly all Swiss mountain plants grow there varying between gentian and heather. Over 2,000 people visited this garden each week last year. Flora from the Jura bloom in the botanical garden of Weissenstein near Solothurn. Mountain flora is best seen in the Alpgrün garden at the Bernina Pass. About 7,500 plants of 550 different sorts grow in the Alpine garden of the Schatzalp above Davos. The highest Alpine garden in Europe is at the Rochers de Naye (above Montreux) and boasts of many rare kinds of Alpine flora.

### Europe's first Alpine rose-testing Garden in Switzerland

The sunny and car-free resort of Braunwald has yet another attraction to offer its visitors this summer—the first Alpine rose-testing garden in Europe. 2,120 roses of 144 different kinds and eleven categories have been

planted in five areas of the village by the Association of Swiss Rose-lovers. The aim of this experiment is to find out which roses are best suited to Alpine climate by allowing them to bloom at an altitude varying between 1,200 and 1,900 metres. Due to its

altitude and climate, Braunwald is apparently an ideal testing ground and this will be going on for a period of five years. Visitors to Braunwald can admire these roses in bloom from mid July right till the first snowfall.

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# A SWISS WOMAN'S INTRODUCTION TO PARLIAMENT



*What does it feel like to sit as a woman at the National Council for the first time in Swiss history? Miss Tilo Frey, Radical National Councillor from Neuchatel tells us in the following article reprinted by courtesy of Pro Helvetia. Not only was Miss Frey the first Swiss woman to stand for election to the National Council, where she is currently serving on several of its committees, she is probably the first national councillor to bring a touch of Africa to the austere Chamber. Born in the Cameroons in 1923, her father was a Neuchatelois and her mother was Peuhle and thus belonged to the proudest nomadic tribe of West Africa.*

*After training to be a teacher, Miss Frey taught shorthand and type-writing at the Commercial College of Neuchatel in 1962. She was Principal of the Girl's Vocational School since 1972. As a member of the Radical Party, she entered the Communal Parliament of Neuchatel in 1964 and was its President in 1970-71.*

There can be no doubt about it. One of the most satisfying experiences of my political career has been the election of twelve women to the Federal Assembly. I do not refer especially to my own election. I am thinking rather of the fact that women as such were elected for the first time.

In 1919, Neuchatel was the first Swiss canton to vote on a proposal to give women the franchise and the right of election at cantonal and communal levels. There was still a long way to the day when Swiss women obtained these rights in Federal affairs, on 7th February, 1971, and to the day when they were finally qualified to sit at the Federal Assembly, on 31st October, 1971.

This final step reflected the wish of the Swiss people to associate themselves with the opinion prevailing nearly everywhere in the world that the franchise is a universal human right to be conceded to women as well as men, even under circumstances particular to Switzerland, where the demands of civic duties are unparalleled, since the citizens not only elect members to Parliament but also have to vote on Initiatives and Referenda.

### The inaugural bouquet treatment

It was with a feeling of deep satisfaction, and even of jubilation, that I entered in the National Council Chamber on the first day of the Winter Session, on 29th November, 1971, in the limelight of Press and television cameras. It was a memorable day, a festive occasion. The desks of the new women members were adorned with flowers. Congratulatory messages poured in. Welcoming smiles lit up the faces of our new male colleagues. Attendants were most obliging, pressmen most attentive. It was enough to

turn our heads.

But I will not dwell on these first day externals and rather seek to present the reader with a few thoughts on the novel situation brought about by women participating in Swiss parliamentary life. Interviews and press articles suddenly took a new turn. Reporters and journalists were not mainly interested in what national councillors, male or female, were thinking but in the feelings of *these* women newcomers. They were fascinated by the new "woman M.P. phenomenon" and behind their questions we always read the almost nagging question: "What do these women propose to do?"

The public, impatient to know everything about us, hardly left us time to look around. Yet this curiosity was a little unreasonable because it takes just as long for a woman as it does for a man to acquire parliamentary experience. In fact, it may take longer for us women because men arrive with the advantage of their previous professional experience. We often have to contend with fairly widespread prejudices. Somehow the public expect that women's approach should be based on something quite different than for men. Yet women M.P.'s can't turn everything upside down overnight and neither do they want to. A woman M.P. is anyway eager to acquaint herself with the nature of the problems facing the house before proceeding to act.

### Subconscious male paternalism

She is in fact inclined to abide by a respected tradition, fully aware of her inexperience. She cannot fail to beware of the kind of hollow militancy which is so much easier in political life than in other walks of life and which can be particularly hazardous in politics.

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On the other hand, and this may seem to contradict what I have said so far, I have noticed that we were treated with a distinctly paternalistic attitude. With the sincere intention of being helpful and without the slightest thought that he might appear more paternalistic than collegial, a charming male colleague remarked: "I have been keeping an eye on you dear lady! You did well to vote as you did!"

There is no doubt that this was meant as an encouragement, but the speaker did not realise to what extent he was motivated by an innately masculine attitude showing that he had not yet fully realised that women had become his partners in a field of activity hitherto reserved for men. I do not mean to be disparaging in any way and paternalism towards women is certainly not a general attitude—yet this is something that affects those women arriving for the first time on the federal political scene. A dialogue is under way but I think that we women will have to inspire confidence for one or two years before our reactions to a particular situation are deemed to possess logic, reason, frankness and, let us hope, political maturity. Male condescension may at present still be provoked by our own attitudes. As "novices" we are reticent, even shy—but this will pass.

### The intellectual demands of Parliamentary life

For my part, I quickly found my feet thanks to the consideration received on all sides. It was something I hardly expected, although I was already familiar with it from my work in municipal and cantonal councils. The two chambers have a heavy agenda and a lot of work, whatever the critics might say. The evenings, which are sometimes taken up by social obligations, can be an opportunity for useful exchanges of political and professional views. Since these discussions are informal, they can be more cordial and confidential.

Fellow national councillors are inspired by a strong feeling of responsibility. This is convincingly demonstrated by the swearing-in ceremony held in an atmosphere of contemplation and impressive silence. Everyone present could hear the oath being pronounced in three languages: "In the name of God Almighty . . ." I can bear witness to the fact that every one in that chamber was moved by the feeling that it is his duty to serve the nation. At that moment I experienced something that had come down to us through the ages: At important moments, the Swiss turn to God for succour, just as they did in the Pact of 1291.

Yet a woman remains a woman, although she is still in certain ways the kind of person people want her to be. I admit that it was an unexpected pleasure to have a first afternoon free of all official duties. An afternoon off, like a school girl going window shopping. But it was not only the pleasure of looking for antiques or visiting fashion boutiques. I felt in something of a holiday mood, experiencing a kind of release, as if I had done something in the previous strenuous week to earn this freedom to be myself. Here I was, at last, permitted to escape from the flood of regulations, laws, messages from the Federal Council, administrative texts and speeches by German-speaking councillors which, since I am French-speaking I found, to my shame, difficult to understand.

The first session was of course only a foretaste of the future. The tasks awaiting us will by no means be easy to accomplish. The work of every parliamentarian involves problems of allocating his time, of preparation and of acquiring the necessary knowledge. Every M.P. must become familiar with the administrative machinery, whose mysteries take a long time to understand and which often seem rather cumbersome.

I do not mean to sound pessimistic but only give a realistic picture. I have had a similar experience in learning to be conversant with the machinery of cantonal and municipal administration.

The women members of parliament must be aware of the problems facing the legislative and must be clear about the responsibilities they have assumed.

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