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opened. Between La Rasse and Les Chaux (5905 ft), a new skilift link has been established. A road link has now been made between Villars and Les Diablerets over the Col de la Croix, where cross-country ski-ing can be enjoyed.

#### **WENGEN (4265 ft), Bernese Oberland**

The famous International Laub-erhorn Ski Races—a world cup event held for the 43rd time—will take place on 13/14th January, 1973.

#### **ZUOZ (5617 ft), Grisons**

This charming Engadine village offers peace and relaxation. At the disposal of winter visitors are three skilifts, skating and curling rinks, a toboggan run, Swiss Ski School, riding stables, a new cross-country ski-ing course of some 11 miles, as well as six miles of tended paths for walking. Zuoz has 10 hotels and pensions with a total of 350 beds. This season's calendar of events includes the Zuoz Curl-weeks from 26th December to 1st January, 13th to 21st January, and 5th to 15th February, the Muntatsch Giant Slalom on 32nd December, the Albanas Giant Slalom on 28th January, and the traditional Engadine "Chalanda Marz" popular festival on 1st March.

#### **ZWEISIMMEN (3281 ft), Bernese Oberland**

The picturesque holiday and winter sports resort can boast the longest gondola cableway to Eggweid-Rinderberg (6600ft), climbing 3481 feet in a journey of 5529 yards, that is nearly  $3\frac{1}{4}$  miles. The carrying capacity will be increased by 60% this winter. From Rinderberg, many interesting downhill runs can be made. Furthermore, Zweisimmen has four skilifts, an aerial cableway, a skating rink, indoor tennis facilities and—since July 1972—a new heated indoor swimming pool with a self-service restaurant.

# COMMENT

## TELEVISION AND THE CONSTITUTION

The two chambers of the Swiss Parliament devoted more than two full days of debate at the beginning of this month on a postulate (written question to the Government) by two members of the Swiss People's Party asking the Federal Council to pave the way for a new Article on Radio and Television in the Federal Constitution to defend the objectivity of information.

They also asked the Government to take the necessary steps to strengthen the supervision of Radio and Television programmes and to overhaul the management of the Swiss Broadcasting Company. Rarely had a postulate—dozens of which are tabled at every session—attracted such a debate. Its proposals were adopted by a sizeable majority in both Houses.

The two men—National Councilor Erwin Akeret, a journalist from Winthertur, and State Councillor Fritz Krauchthaler, hotel owner in Wynigen finding that the Swiss Broadcasting Organisation lacked in objectivity, considered that the solution to the problem lay in adding yet another article to the Federal Constitution.

The first criticism one is tempted to levy against the postulate is its tendency to make excessive use, or abuse, of the Constitution. Why should every problem that crops up be mentioned in that fundamental charter and involve the cost and complication of a referendum? This seems to be an unnecessary cheapening of the Constitution, leading to a probable cheapening of democracy as well. The problems of Radio and Television can certainly be dealt with in a normal parliamentary way, without recourse to the people, the great majority of whom are satisfied with what they see on the "box"

anyway.

The second point is that the motivations of the two parliamentarians are almost petty. Their postulate was based on a hastily written and researched report by the Press Service of the Peoples' Party in Berne. Picking 37 programmes out of an estimated 6000 programmes broadcasted during the past 18 months, the authors of the Report find material for a number of criticisms.

They said that coverage of the Jura has been one-sided. A programme on South America had expressed support for revolutionary fighters. The general trend of home coverage was aimed against the concept of global defence. Parliamentary reports had been biased and the majority of problems were covered by Television in a progressive light whenever possible. Finally, the informers in Berne were accused of having connections with the New Left, and a panel monitor was charged with having slanted to one side.

An internal 300-page enquiry carried out by the broadcasting services generally rejected the implications of these findings and established that only a quarter of the programmes quoted as examples had actually given rise to criticism by viewers.

Promoting Radio and Television services to the status of a constitutional issue would in fact enhance the influence of the State on programmes. This would certainly not be equivalent to unbiased coverage. The two parliamentarians had obviously been concerned about the conversation of the "establishment" and worried about left-wingers being allowed to air their views. Impartiality and subservience to the establishment are not necessarily the same thing. A broadcasting network that would prevent views of every tendency from being expressed would conflict with democratic principles. Obviously, regularly revised standards and norms conforming with the survival of society should be respected. Thus an eulogy of rape and murder should preferably be censored.

However, all depends on the context of presentation. Apart from the news, which *must* be objective and very rarely isn't, the news media should reflect all the tendencies of democratic societies in programmes which offer scope for personal expression,—this involves plays and features, but not special reports—which belong to news. The other side should of course be given the same chance to express its point of view. As a British playwright recently told Mrs. Mary Whitehouse, who had criticised his lack of religious decency, the "viewers are the judges". If they do not like what they see, they can switch to another programme.

With French, German and Italian stations beaming their programmes from across the border, this is not difficult in Switzerland. (PMB)

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