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Letter from Switzerland

BY GOTTFRIED KELLER

Switzerland has two new magistrates to succeed Messrs. Brugger and Graber in the Federal Council. Their election in the Federal Chambers on 7th December went through so smoothly – it had been well prepared and programmed beforehand within the governmental political parties – that the actual happening in the Federal Palace has been dubbed the non-event of the year. The outcome, however, is satisfactory in every way, since the two elected politicians are known to be personalities of high standing and total integrity. They are Mr. Fritz **Honegger** (60) of Rüslikon-Zürich, President of the Liberal-Democratic Party of Switzerland, and Mr. Pierre **Aubert** (50), lawyer, from La Chaux-de-Fonds and member of the Social-Democratic Party. They have both served in the second chamber of the Federal Parliament, the Council of States, for a number of years, after having occupied executive positions first in their boroughs and then in their respective cantons. As Messrs. Brugger and Graber will be vacating their seats on 31st

January 1978, the two new magistrates will take office on 1st February. The distribution of the Departments falls into the competence of the newly constituted Federal Council as such. At the moment of writing it is not, as yet, known whether there is going to be a “revirement” or not, or, in other words, who will be in charge of Public Economy and who of Foreign Affairs from 1978 onwards.

From the very moment when Mr. Brugger's plant to retire became known, his Zürichois successor was as good as elected. The Canton of Zürich enjoys the traditional right – like the Canton of Berne – to send a representative into the highest executive in Berne and it has never been contested that it was up to the Liberal-Democratic Party to nominate him. Thus Mr. Honegger has had the smoothest possible passage. Amongst the Social-Democrats things went a little less sleekly, because at first four potential candidates were talked about and some even nominated by their local party organisations: Mr. Canonica, a Ticinese

living in Zürich, Mr. Meyland from Neuchâtel, Mr. Felber, Mayor of Le Locle, and finally Mr. Aubert. Mr. Meylan soon retired from the contest and Mr. Aubert won the nomination in a series of secret ballots.

The Federal Council – and indeed the Confederation – will be presided over by Mr. Willy Ritschard in 1978. Having scraped into the Federal Council four years ago by only two votes over the absolute majority, he has now become the most popular magistrate in the country. His naturalness, his earthiness and his absolute frankness have largely contributed to this.

GENEVA – NEW HOTEL SERVICE

The Geneva Hotel Association has created a new hotel information and booking service inside Geneva-Cornavin railway station. The newly installed machine gives immediate information on the availability of accommodation, and by pressing a button the visitor will be connected direct by telephone with the hotel of his choice.

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