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Autor: Farmer, Colin
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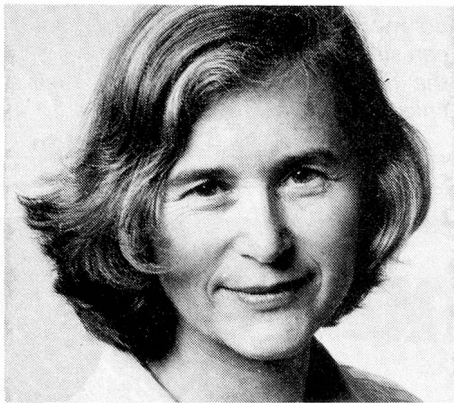
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Colin Farmer

Frau Bundesrätin!

Now the Swiss have their own 'Queen' Elisabeth



Elisabeth Kopp – Switzerland's first woman cabinet minister

POLITICAL history has been made in Switzerland with the election by parliament of the country's first ever woman cabinet minister.

Forty-seven year old Radical MP Elisabeth Kopp succeeds Justice and Police Minister Rudolf Friedrich, who is resigning because of ill health.

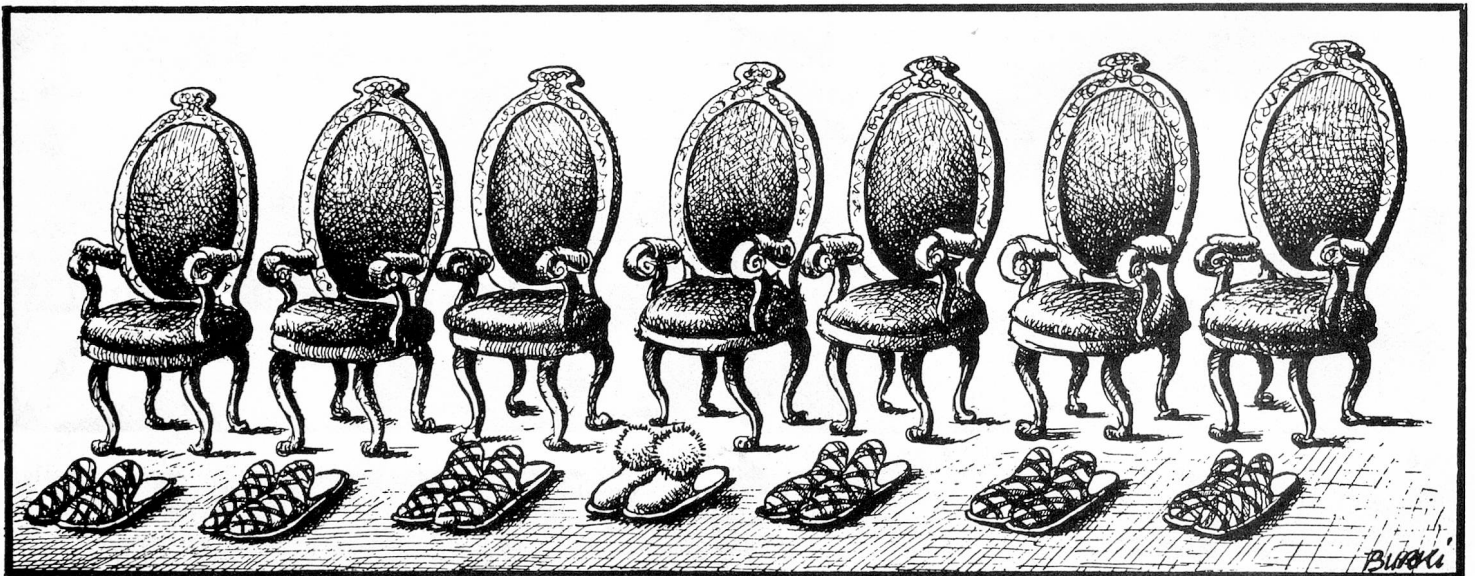
Election came on the first ballot, with Mrs Kopp winning 124 of the 241 valid votes from members of parliament. Her nearest challenger, Radical Party president Bruno Hunziger, polled 95 votes.

As the result was announced, male colleagues applauded and a parliamentarian from another party presented her with a red rose.

Said Mrs Kopp: "This is a success not for me personally but for all Swiss women". And the male chairman of the joint parliamentary session told the assembly: "This day will go down in history. Equality of rights was not complete as long as there was no woman member of the Swiss Federal Council (cabinet). This election will be acknowledged by all women as a recognition of full equality".

Retiring Rudolf Friedrich is also a member of the conservative Radical Party. This party is one of the four which make up Switzerland coalition cabinet.

Daughter of a former director general of the Swiss National Bank, Mrs Kopp is mayor of Zumikon, an affluent community in Canton Zurich. She was elected to the Swiss



— courtesy 24 heures

...reporting from Berne

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Notre «reine» Elisabeth

parliament five years ago, and re-elected last year by a large majority.

Known for her strong views on family and environmental issues, Mrs Kopp is considered likely to represent a large section of Switzerland's female population – regardless of their party allegiance.

Her election came only 10 months after parliament rejected Switzerland's first female candidate for a cabinet post, Socialist Lilian Uchtenhagen.

That failure threatened to break up this country's "magic formula" coalition, when some Socialists demanded their party's withdrawal from the government. But the move was defeated by a special Socialist Party congress.

Although a public favourite for election, Mrs Kopp's bid for the vacant cabinet post had come under strong attack from some right-wing politicians and backstage opponents within her own party.

Anti-Kopp elements claimed she was unfit to hold high office because of allegations against her lawyer husband. Hans Kopp was suspended from practising in court for six months in 1972, and was chairman of an investment company that folded amid press criticism two years ago after extensive speculative buying on the stock exchange.

But he and his wife rejected allegations against him as groundless – and Mrs Kopp said she believed the attacks may even have swung sympathy votes in her favour.



Switzerland's Queen Elisabeth – courtesy Bruckebauer

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