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Locomotive for a Day

by George Hoekstra

Above: Re460 037-5 in special SOS livery at Neuchâtel on the 20th February 1998.

Photo George Hoekstra

The first private train running in Switzerland under the "open access" system, allowing third-party use of the infrastructure, was operated by the Swiss Rail Unions on Friday the 20th February 1998. The main union the S.E.V. rented a locomotive and some coaches (including a 'posh' saloon!) and operated it with their own staff from Zürich to Neuchâtel.

The President of the S.E.V. Ms. Ernst Leuenberger, who this year is also President of the National Assembly and thus (in the absence of any royalty) is considered to be the highest ranking Swiss, told the invited press about the unions concern about the coming changes. "Deregulating-Dismantling" was the general feeling. The situation in

Britain today was quoted several times as a warning! An act of co-operation was signed with representatives of the German, Austrian and Luxembourg rail unions.

The locomotive was specially decorated for the occasion No. Re460 037-5 (ex "Ajax") was about to be redecorated anyway, so it was possible to create a special "SEV Open access Service" (SOS) loco for the day. From Neuchâtel the whole train went straight to the SBB works in Bienne to be stripped of the stickers. It has since appeared in its new Post livery (details in SBB Stock changes p.45)