

Revision of the federal constitution

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1973)**

Heft 1672

PDF erstellt am: **26.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691169>

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their way to cash it when they were arrested at Geneva airport on a warrant issued by Interpol. The London bank had in fact discovered that the documents shown by the three were forgeries. False documents had also been used in their dealings with the Geneva bank.

A Geneva court held charges of forgery against the three and kept them in custody pending a decision. F375.000 bail had been claimed but the three adventurers could not raise this sum. The 2 million francs belonging to Uganda were transferred back to London.

Motobiking down the Montblanc

A young Frenchman working in Geneva staged a world premiere in descending a glacier rising 14,000 ft. high on the Montblanc on a motorbike. Alpinists scaling the Dome du Gouter were no little surprised to hear the bursts of a 125cc Honda piloted by Patrick Morand, 27, rolling down a 30 degree incline, its spiked-tyres gripping on the soft midday ice. This was not considered by the experts as a great exploit, but it was *new*. The next similar feat might be the descent of the Montblanc in a wheelbarrow.

NEW DRUG RACKET DISMANTLED

A new drug ring responsible for introducing half a ton of cannabis into Switzerland has been dismantled. The organisation was led by a 34-year old shopkeeper from Aarau. The market value of the drug it had managed to bring in the country last year was over 2.5 million francs. Limited quantities of opium and cocaine were also dealt with by the racket, 67 members of which have been named and 12 arrested.

The Zurich police had been aware of this racket for some time but was not in a position to act until four compatriots were arrested in Beirut with 54 kilogrammes of hachisch in the boot of their car. They were about to ferry the vehicle to Europe in order to introduce its load into Switzerland. The racketeers supplied themselves in Lebanon and transferred much of the drug by plane via Syria. An Englishman, aged 45, who with his wife and four children and some domestic animals had managed to deliver drugs into Switzerland in a converted lorry, was also involved. He has been arrested in France.

The whole case is presently being investigated by the Zurich Police.

citizen's participation in the country's legislative process with the right of launching a legislative initiative. At present, it is only possible to launch an initiative leading to an alteration of the Constitution, but not to the inscription a new law on the Statute Book. Federalism would be preserved but the responsibility of Cantons would be outlined in more general terms. The Constitution would state that Cantons are free to exercise their "sovereignty" in all domains left open to them by the Confederation and its laws. Many view this formulation as a further increase in the Confederation's control.

The State would have a stronger hold on the economy. Although freedom of trade and industry would be guaranteed, the right of the State to break this rule under special circumstances would no longer be considered as exceptional provisions. This idea falls in line with proposals to sponsor an initiative for an economic article in the Constitutions.

As a result of pressures by Socialist circles, the new Constitution would alter the country's bicameral system. The Council of States — an Upper Chamber with only 44 seats, two from each canton and one from each half canton — would be considerably enlarged so as to allow for more Socialist representation. The Council of States has presently only four Socialist or left-wing members. The new Constitution would allot two State councillors to every half-Cantons; two, three, four or five to whole Cantons, depending on their population. On the other hand, the effectives of the Federal Council would be kept at seven members in order to preserve the collegiate system of decision-making. The work of the country's should be reduced by an adequate reorganisation of federal departments. Parliamentary procedure would also be simplified by substituting federal decrees by laws voted in the two houses.

It was initially planned to draft a new constitution by the end of next year, which will coincide with the centenary of the 1874 Constitution, but there is little chance that the new text will be ready by then.

Money to combat Separatist demos

The Bernese Parliament voted to spend 430.000 francs on re-enforcing the Cantonal Police so as to deal with demonstrations by Jurassian Separatist. Following a series of demonstrations in Berne, Brussels and Saignelegier last August, the Executive announced that a special police "task force" would be set up. This poan was adopted despite strong opposition from delegates representing the three tendencies in the Jura: Separatism, anti-Separatism and the "Third Force". The funds will be used mainly to re-equip the forces.

Revision of the Federal Constitution

Modern Switzerland celebrated its 125th anniversary early this month. The country's first Constitution, which gave birth to the federal state as we know it today, came into force on 12th September 1848. This Constitution, which was drafted less than a year after the end of the Sonderbund War, replaced the Federal Pact concluded by the Cantons in 1815 at the end of 17 years of French presence. It was designed to prevent the recurrence of internal conflicts such as the Sonderbund War by linking the 22 cantons more closely together. The 1848 Constitution was revised in 1874. Now, almost a hundred years later, it is planned to proceed with a total revision of this second Constitution.

The recommendation to overhaul the Constitution was first put to Parliament in 1965. A Commission chaired by former federal councillor Fritz Wahlen started work with circulating a very complete questionnaire to a wide spectrum of organisations and political groupings with the purpose of obtaining a representative answer to the question whether a revision of the Constitution was necessary. The study of the unnumerable replies and the Wahlen Commission's efforts in synthesizing them and drawing

practical conclusions involved considerable work. In a recent press conference, Dr. Wahlen reviewed this work and announced that a new commission with only one or two members from his own commission would be set up to draft concrete proposals on the basis of the work carried out so far.

Dr. Wahlen stressed that pruning unnecessary and outdated articles, adapting the Constitution to the situation prevailing today was what its revision was all about. But this enterprise should be understood as an accomplishment, an improvement of the nation's Charter, and not a break with the past prompted by dramatic developments of the kind embodied in the 1848 and 1874 constitutions.

The new Constitution would also contain a Preamble underlining the respect of human rights and human dignity. It would also preserve the call to God which most replies to the Wahlen Questionnaire wished to maintain.

One of the envisaged constitution's innovations would be a charter of "social rights" which would encompass education policy and environment.

In a chapter devoted to political rights, the Constitution would increase the