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DEMOCRACY AT ITS BEST

Switzerland has seven Cabinet Ministers (Bundesraete). Each of them is in charge of one or more portfolios, such as education, defence etc., the same as in New Zealand, but with the one crucial difference that they belong to different political parties. Two are Social Democrats, two are Liberals, two are Conservatives and one is Independent.

It is in effect a continuous coalition government, laid down in the constitution.

A few months ago, the unusual position arose when three Ministers resigned and had to be replaced. Each one of the political parties involved put up their candidate. The election was carried out by the general assembly (Bundesversammlung) and brought the amazing result of none of the proposed candidates being elected, although the ones elected were, of course, members of those particular parties who had to replace their minister.

This may sound cumbersome and is perhaps slow motion politics—but it works. Political peace and particularly industrial harmony proves this when I compare a Swiss labour force of about three million without the loss of a single working day in 1973 with New Zealand's labour force of say one million and a loss of 257,909 working days up to November 30 of last year.

Need I say any more?

—Arnold Biland.