

Demolition instead of ammunition

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VISAS FOR SWITZERLAND

Since 1987 citizens from Ethiopia, Angola, Bangladesh, Ghana, Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Zaire required visas to transit Switzerland. As from now on citizens from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, India, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia and Turkey will also require such transit visas. The main reason is to stop the traffic of pseudo tourists from these countries who used Switzerland as a transit point on their way to the Common Market countries. On the other hand, citizens from Slovenia no longer require visas to Switzerland since this country is now considered to be in a stable political situation.

DEMOLITION INSTEAD OF AMMUNITION

The Ammunition Factory Altdorf (Uri), hit by a reduction of 30% in orders from the Military Department following the shrinking of the army from 600.000 to 400.000 men, has changed course and is now handling the dismantling of old railway carriages. The Swiss Railways are planning to replace over the next few years over 1200 wagons by new fully airconditioned carriages. The Ammunition Factory Altdorf is with 960 employees the second biggest employer in Uri and, thanks to this new activity in the civilian field, it has been able to avert the need to make over 300 employees redundant.

EDITORIAL

The results of the September 19 voting for a more democratic election system did not come as a great surprise to most Swiss people living in New Zealand.

But what came as a surprise was the size of the opposition to the present system. Eighty-five percent of the voters want the present undemocratic, first past the post election system abolished, a clear sign that the procedure presently in use is way out of line with today's reality.

In Switzerland a win of such magnitude would force the Government to implement the wish of the people without any further delay. But here in New Zealand, where referenda are not (yet) binding on the Government, the politicians remain almost totally unconcerned, even in the face of such overwhelming opposition.

However, the first step has been taken but true democracy, with people's initiatives and binding referenda, the way we have it in Switzerland, is still a very long distance away. The New Zealand politicians, so used to total control, will not give up their unbridled power without a hard fight. It is somewhat tragic to see politicians who are supposed to be the people with foresight, with a sense of justice and fairplay, and for these reasons appointed to serve the country and its citizens, become so self-centred, so stubborn and blind that they cannot see that the world is changing all around them and that the citizens of today must be given the right to decide on all matters concerning their country and their own lives.

To the Swiss, who have enjoyed true democracy for generations, the battle that has started in New Zealand may seem like old hat. However, since we are living in New Zealand we might as well follow this battle with great interest. For most of us, Swiss style democracy is unlikely to come to New Zealand during our own lifetime, but the younger generation might eventually enjoy it or at least something close to it.

There is still a puzzle: Why is true democracy, which after all is the most logical and fairest way for a community to live together, so hard and difficult for most politicians throughout the world to accept and to implement?

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