

Parliamentary summer session

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

Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1968)**

Heft 1551

PDF erstellt am: **11.08.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694181>

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PARLIAMENTARY SUMMER SESSION

The National Council and the Council of States met for their summer session on Whit Tuesday. The first big matter the National Council dealt with was the Federal Law for higher education (*Hochschulförderung*). The debates matched the importance of the subject, for it is the first time that the Confederation concerns itself so massively with university education. As a temporary solution, Federal Council and Government had put aside 200m. francs for 1966 to 1968. This was now to be anchored in law, and in the second week, the National Council accepted the draft by 130 to 0 votes. With it, 1,150m. francs will be available for improving university education between 1969 and 1974. The law also provides for better co-ordination between the universities in order to put some pressure on the Cantons concerned, to undertake a much needed reform of structure and study, which should include the right of the students to speak at the University Conference. The Council of States supported the other Chamber resolutely. It may be added that the birth and development of this law could serve as a course in civic instruction. It was drafted by the Home Office (Department of the Interior) and dealt with rigorously by the Parliamentary Commissions and by Parliament.

In the spring session, the National Council had already agreed to a new pay structure and social benefits for the Civil Service (*Bundespensional*), which would cost an additional 190m. francs to be paid by federal kitty, Federal Railways and the PTT Services. The Council of States has now accepted the proposals, too.

In the second week, the two Chambers met jointly and considered the appeal for mercy by the Jura terrorist Jean Marie Joset, who had committed arson and made explosive attacks. Parliament refused his request, and he will now have to serve a heavy sentence of seven years. With their decision, the Federal Assembly condemned force as a means of settling political differences.

The Council of States has not yet been able to agree with the other Chamber with regard to the new *Bodenrecht*, and the draft will have to be discussed again in the National Council in September.

The National Council spent several meetings on the Annual Business Report of the Government. The *Geschäftsprüfungskommission* of the two Chambers had done excellent work and taken their mandate of checking and supervising federal administration most seriously. With the new system, the Chambers are able to keep an eye on things, especially since the two Commissions have received a secretariat each. The attack this year concentrated on the Federal Tribunal, and its report was accepted with a small majority only.

The Council of States accepted the federal accounts for 1967, which were considered in the National Council in the last week of the Session.

The outcome of the debate on the Guiding Principles of Swiss Government, which the Federal Council had submitted for the first time, was reported already in our issue of 28th June when the document was dealt with.

The Council of States considered the message by the Federal Council concerning the Old-Age and Dependents Insurance (AHV). There will be a report on the Development of the AHV in one of our next issues. The pro-

posals made by the Federal Council include an average increase of benefits of 25% and a rise of one to five per cent in contributions. The National Council will deal with it in September.

In the fourth and last Session, it was money, money all the way in the National Council. First, the accounts for 1967 with the deficit of 156m. francs. Federal Councillor Bonvin who has since taken over the Department of Energy and Communications, presented also the new law on Finance administration. The debate showed that the new Finance Minister Celio will have his hands full before the new *Finanzordnung* is acceptable. From 1st January 1969, a Federal Councillor will earn 110,000 francs (as against 80,000 hitherto) and receive 30,000 (20,000) francs in expenses. The President of the Confederation will get an additional 12,000 francs (10,000) for expenses. The Federal Chancellor's salary will be 90,000 (58,000) francs with 10,000 francs expenses (none so far). The pay of a Federal Judge is to go up from 70,000 to 85,000 francs, and that of an Insurance Judge from 62,000 to 85,000 francs. These increases are generous, but much needed. In the wake of this generosity, the allowances for National Councillors were also discussed, and a proposal that the 70 francs per day plus 20 francs for lodging, which they receive at present, should be replaced by an annual fixed sum of 3,000 francs. But the debate showed that the whole subject should be examined again before a final decision is taken. Incidentally, the Councillors of States are paid by the Cantons.

On 26th June, the National Council debated matter concerning the Press and its freedom, as well as the freedom of the individual regarding telephone tapping and other infringements.

(Based on reports by courtesy of "Schweizerisches Kaufmännisches Zentralblatt".)

PLEBISCITES IN JUNE

On 9th June, the citizens of the Canton of Glarus elected the 81 members of the Landrat. The Liberals are still the strongest Party with 29 seats (+ 1); the Democrats number 24 (- 1); the Social Democrats won a seat from the Conservatives who now have 13, with the Socialists numbering 15.

The Horgen voters elected Hans Schaeppi to the Commune Council (second poll), which gives the "Landesring der Unabhängigen" a seat for the first time. Voting participation was 70.8%

Schaffhausen citizens rejected the "Landesring" Initiative on financing garbage removal by 3,444 to 2,733 votes. Voting participation was even higher here with 76.4%. 80% was registered at Neuhausen a week later, when citizens accepted both projects, a *Bauordnung* with corresponding building zone planning and a credit for 1.25m. francs for a sports centre at Langriet.

Solothurn voters agreed to the project for a school (*Heilpaedagogische Sonderschule*), and the Canton of Neuchâtel accepted various credits for amelioration projects (voting participation only 13.7%). The citizens of the Canton's capital rejected the planned centre to be constructed on territory claimed from the Lake.

In Baselland, men granted their womenfolk full voting rights by 9,374 to 4,395 votes. Accepted, too, were the revised school law and the insurance law (earthquake damage).