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ormation

The standard of education has generally improved. But on the whole men are still better educated than women, even though the latter are catching up.

The service industry has grown in importance at the expense of manufac-

turing and agriculture. Today, only 4 out of every 100 people at work live off the land, while 30 out of every 100 are in manufacturing. Switzerland remains a country where the majority of people rent their homes (66.5%), which makes it an exception in Europe.

These are some of the trends which can help people to understand the Switzerland of today. One or two of them are explored in greater detail in the present forum. ■

Work, mobility, education

Towards the all-service society

An increase in the working population and a boom in commuting: these are the two main trends brought out by the 1990 federal census results in the fields of work, mobility and education. There were as yet few signs of unemployment at that time, although today this would certainly be prominent in the information contained in the statistics.

In ten years – from 1980 to 1990 – the number of people at work increased by 17.1%, which is twice the rate of the growth in population. For the first time,

Pierre-André Tschanz

the proportion of those at work amongst the population as a whole (the work ratio) has now exceeded 50%. This trend is particularly marked amongst women. But statistics tell us that they tend to engage in part-time employment, in contrast to men, where this form of work still plays only a marginal role. There is also a significant difference in earnings: women receive on average a third less than men for comparable jobs.

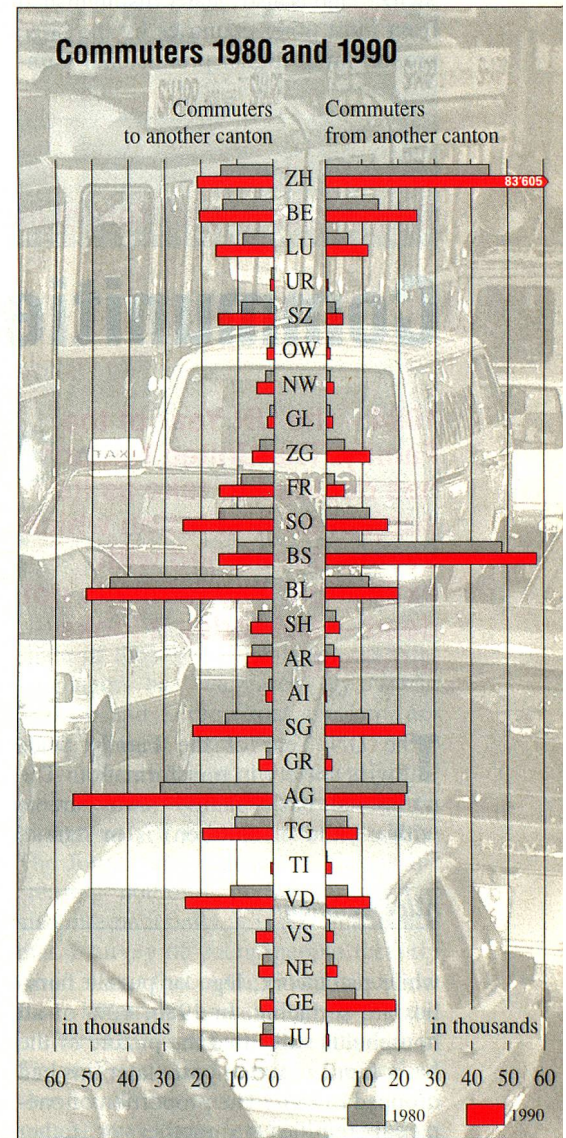
The structure of the Swiss economy continued to change during the 1980s: the agricultural and manufacturing sectors were in steady decline, while the service industry now employs 63.9% of Switzerland's working population.

The census figures contain only 2.1% of persons without work (registered and non-registered unemployed people), but the situation has changed substantially

since 1990 as the jobless rate has now reached the 8% mark (about 250,000 unemployed people) as a result of the recession which occurred in the early part of the decade. In spite of the economic recovery which apparently started in the middle of last year, we should not expect a major decrease in joblessness over the short term, since its main causes are structural.

Men in cars, women on foot

Mobility continued to increase. Today, commuter traffic is no longer restricted to the main urban centres. During the decade in question, the proportion of those working in a municipality other than the one in which they live (inter-municipal commuting) increased from 40% to 49.7%. Private cars are the form of transport most frequently used (55.8%), followed by trams and buses (20.5%). In 1990, 1.36 million people used private cars to go to work, school or their place of study, while 1.05 million travelled by public transport. Here too, there is a substantial difference between men and women: only 33% of working women go to work by car, as against 53% for men.

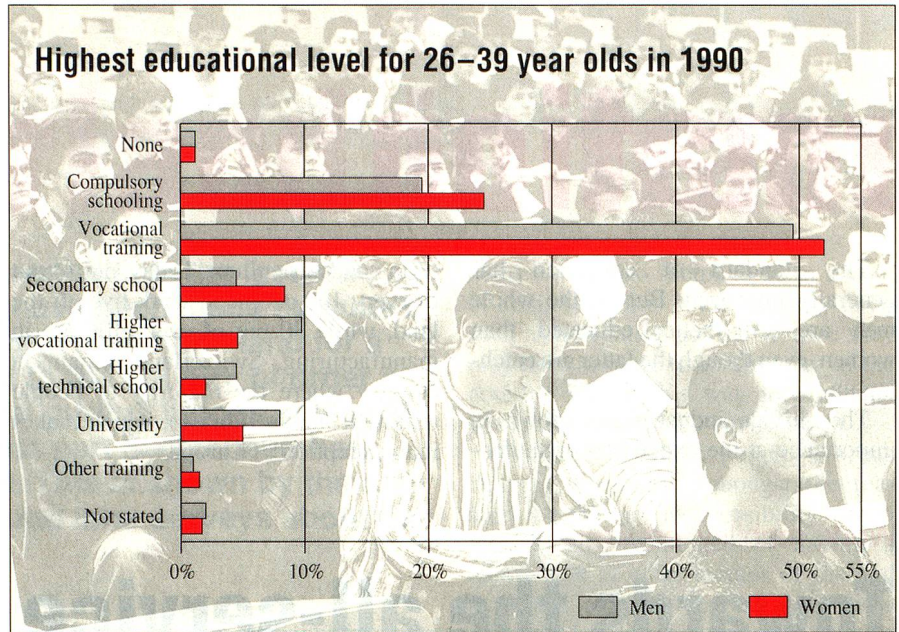


Source of data: Federal Statistics Office
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Education: high level, but...

When we take a look at education and training in other countries, we can be proud of the high level of schooling amongst the Swiss population. This is made particularly clear by the Federal Statistics Office, which last year published for the first time a brochure entitled "Education Indicators in Switzerland". Four out of five people continue to attend school after the end of their compulsory education, which puts Switzerland at the top of the international table – in equal place with Germany and the United States.

One-fifth of the entire population has benefited from higher education (university and higher professional training). But the majority (two-thirds) of students in Switzerland favour higher professional training, leaving universities at somewhat of a disadvantage. Switzerland is also clearly distinguished from most other countries by the large proportion of higher professional train-



ing being undertaken by those who are actually engaged in work (40%). Here again, there are major differences between men and women: young wo-

men are by and large less well-educated than young men. This would seem to be mainly due to the traditional distribution of tasks between men and women. ■

On the International Year of the Family

Communities thrown together

1994 – the UN Year of the Family. The United Nations has decided to take as its subject an institution which seems threatened with extinction. The family is not dead – but today it looks different.

The UN Year of the Family finds Swiss society in transformation. The traditional basic family (two parents with a child or children) is in retreat,

Alice Baumann

while patchwork, lego or puzzle families are surfacing. In 1980, 42% of all households still fitted the picture of the basic family, but ten years later this had dropped to 38%. The proportion of one-parent families (a mother or father bringing up one or several children alone) was at 12% in 1980 and had risen to 14% in 1990.

One-third of the Swiss population is made up of single people, while just over a quarter are childless couples. Divorced parents often come together to form puzzle or patchwork families. A couple, six children and four family names: that is a typical patchwork family. For when every third marriage ends in divorce, the resulting children, one-parent families and week-end fathers are not going to live alone – they create second and third families. Often newly formed couples, their joint children and the step, half and week-end brothers and sisters of these live together under one roof.

Initial research shows that these follow-on families are by no means without qualities. The extended network of relations and acquaintances teaches tolerance, builds up friendship and creates social responsibility.

The step-family is not a new discovery. It appears in Grimm's fairy tales, if in a very negative form. But neither the case of Cinderella nor the step-mother of Hansel and Gretel are exactly what the family thrown together is

The International Year of the Family has the motto, "Democratic Togetherness in the Heart of Society". A survey taken across relevant institutions in Switzerland indicated that 1994 should serve "as the starting point for new socio-political developments". The aim of policy on family matters should not be "to maintain a specific family form", but rather to contribute to creating a structure acceptable to the individual.

The Holy Family, which lies at the heart of the Christian religion and which is so highly prized, was in fact a very unusual combination. We do not know whether the parents were in fact married; how the mother became pregnant she alone knew: the Holy Child, who was born to save all the world, was a Jewish child but at the same time a child of all cultures. The stable in Bethlehem may well be seen as the symbol of the family in all its diversity and with all its surprises.

(Source: Sämman, the evangelical monthly magazine)