

# News from the embassy

Objektyp: **Group**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1957)**

Heft 1309

PDF erstellt am: **21.07.2024**

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### AN EDITOR SPEAKS.

By PIERRE BÉGUIN.

#### "The First Feminist Victory in Switzerland."

On different occasions and in various Cantons, the citizens who alone constitute the electoral body, have been called upon to decide on the problem of women's participation in the political life of the country. The results have always proved to be negative. Even if it appeared evident that the political parties had come to recognize the necessity for a reform, it was always found that, in the secrecy of the ballot-boxes, the citizens continued to show a real repugnance to sharing their political prerogatives with their wives, their mothers, their sisters and their daughters.

Recently, however, the suffragist cause in Switzerland achieved a success. The male citizens of the Canton of Basle decided, by a majority, that the right to vote on Communal matters should be granted to women. This was the third time that a vote of this kind had taken place in Basle-City. The following figures will show the extent of the evolution which has taken place in this regard in the minds of the voters: before the war the proportion of "ayes" amounted to 37 per cent; these rose to 45 per cent in 1954, and attained an absolute majority, with 60 per cent, on this occasion. These would appear to be signs of a movement which can no longer be denied.

Of course, one must not exaggerate the importance of this decision. In Basle-City most of the affairs to be dealt with belong to the competency of the Canton, which, apart from the city itself, possesses only two small Communes. Thus, the burghal authorities possess only extremely restricted powers and competencies. In this way a positive vote is of less consequence here than would be a similar vote on a Cantonal or Federal plane. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the systematic opposition shown by the adversaries of women's suffrage has now been shattered, and that, for the first time, a political authority of our country will welcome women as members.

What should also be recognized is the psychological importance of this poll, especially if one remembers that another vote, entailing quite different consequences, is to take place next year. The whole of the Swiss people will be called upon then to decide whether they wish to grant to all the women the right to vote, to elect, and to be elected, in regard to Federal matters. This proposal for a reform originated in a

"postulate" submitted last year to the Federal Chambers. The Federal Council followed up this proposal and drafted a project for a constitutional reform which should easily navigate through the parliamentary shoals.

It will be then, however, that the big struggle will take place. Or, to be more exact, it will be then that it will prove possible to judge whether the citizens of the other Cantons have evolved in the same way as those of Basle-City and if they intend to go much further, that is to say, if they are ready to establish civic equality in a much more important field, namely that of Federal matters. It is impossible to foresee or to predict success. But there is one thing that can be said without fear or proving mistaken, and that is that if the suffragettes are defeated next year it will be for the last time. It is now merely a matter for patience.

### NEWS FROM THE EMBASSY.

The Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker gave a cocktail party on Monday, November 18th, at the Embassy, to introduce Monsieur Maurice Jaccard, Chef de section Département Politique, Berne.



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