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NEW TAX PRESSURES ON THE RICH

With education and justice, taxation is one of the main remaining preserves of cantonal independence. It is a field which also causes a considerable debate because of the need to harmonise 24 different tax systems. Pressures are made to bear in several cantons (mainly Basle, Zug, Berne and Zurich) towards increasing the tax burden of the rich. These demands vary greatly from canton to canton and nearly all emanate from the Socialist Party. This variety would further increase the discrepancies apparent in the various cantonal tax

systems. While this may give continued impetus to our federal structure, it presents some disadvantages. For example, one may find income tax doubling when moving from one canton to another. Thus moving to another residence could entail a change in standard of living just as it might cause problems for children because of differing school curricula.

Demands for higher income tax, which would also apply to unearned income, have been particularly strong in Zurich, where the people recently rejected proposals to have it raised from a maximum of 37.4 to 57.7 per cent.

Under these proposals, a man earning 150,000 francs a year would be taxed at 52.5 per cent of his income. Assuming that all his income were earned, he would be working six months in a year for the State. Although such figures are small by British standards, they have aroused the anger of many Swiss enjoying, on a national average, a 47 per cent income tax for this income bracket.

The well-established have vociferously attacked the tax proposals made in Zurich and elsewhere on the grounds they would cut business incentive, hit small entrepreneurs, encourage fraud and still allow loopholes for the really rich.

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