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The Politics of Swiss Family Policy

In the introduction, I have referred to some of the major characteristics of the Swiss political system: the early introduction of democratic rights; extended integration of the general population as well as various associations and interest groups in the political decision-making process; the influence of the nation-builders' liberalism; the state structure based on co-operatives and federalism (Gruner, 1977: 16); the complex cross-cutting of various cleavages producing regional, cantonal, and local conflict lines and impeding the growth of nation-wide political alignments; and the development of particular patterns of interest articulation and conflict regulation.

In order to discuss the institutionalization of family policy in Switzerland, it is helpful to provide an overview of actors, basic principles, and mechanisms related to the political decision-making process. I shall also introduce the major participants in family policy debates and focus on particular politics in this field.

THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAME FOR POLITICAL DECISIONS

Democratic Rights

The early introduction and extension of democratic rights in Switzerland were heavily influenced by the philosophy of Jean Jacques Rousseau (*volonté générale*) and the French Revolution. In addition, older forms of democratic decision-making legitimized the introduction of universal male suffrage on the cantonal level in 1831 and on the federal level in 1848, as well as the implementation of the instruments of initiative and referendum (Riklin and Möckli, 1983: 44ff.). By contrast, women were not enfranchised until 1971, which undoubtedly led to the underrepresentation of their interests in many respects.

Already in 1848, the federal constitution provided for obligatory referendums on constitutional matters. The revised federal constitution of 1872 made it possible for the popular electorate to reject federal law via referendum (*fakultatives Gesetzesreferendum*). Further steps were the introduction of the right to partially revise the constitution by means of the initiative (1891), the implementation of

the referendum on government treaties (*Staatsvertragsreferendum*, 1921), the ex-post referendum on urgent federal decisions (*Referendum für dringliche Bundes-beschlüsse*, 1949), and the extended referendum on government treaties (*er-weitertes Staatsvertragsreferendum*, 1977).

The initiative and the referendum have frequently been used and determine political decision-making to a high degree. The use of initiatives and referendums boomed during the 1880s, around 1900, between 1930 and 1935, and in the early post-war period. Since the late 1960s the number of initiatives and referendums has exploded (Mesmer, Favez, and Broggini, 1986: 923). At the same time, the unconventional articulation of political interests through demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, and so on has rapidly increased (Kriesi, 1980, 1981; Levy and Zwicky, 1984).

The extended direct democracy promoted a certain mystification of the sovereign ('vox populi—vox Dei'). But the instruments of initiative and referendum were and are important factors in the integration of minorities. People's rights also encouraged the procedures of concordance democracy and political decision-making based on compromise. However, the referendum in particular has favoured conservative interests by making it easy to block political change (Germann, 1975: 160ff.; Kriesi, 1980: 38); the referendum also promotes the building of oligarchies (Riklin and Möckli, 1983: 56).

Political Parties

The three broad families of Swiss political parties (Liberals, Catholics, and Social Democrats) are characterized by a high internal fragmentation. The Liberals were the only ones to have maintained dominance for a certain period (1830 to 1919). However, since this 'party' covered the broad spectrum between right-wing Manchester Liberals and left-wing Radicals and State's Socialists they were forced to make political compromises such as (1) the introduction of a two-chamber system which overrepresented and integrated the peripheries and smaller cantons, (2) the implementation of initiative and referendum which strengthened political minorities as well as the cantonal system, (3) the incorporation of the Conservatives into governmental responsibility, and (4) the introduction of proportional representation for federal elections. The internal fragmentation of the Liberal family led already in the late nineteenth century to various splits within the *Freisinn*. A nation-wide party (FdP; *Freisinnig-demokratische Partei*) was founded in 1894. During the post-war period, the relatively constant representation of the FdP in the federal government always oscillated around 50 out of 200 members in the *Nationalrat*, and around 15 out of 46 members in the *Ständerat*. Although giving priority to bourgeois interests, the liberals have remained heterogeneous up to the present.[1]

The religious division is of major importance only for the Catholic party. However, the Catholics were able to establish a particular sub-society only in their traditional homelands. During the ascendancy of Swiss conservatism, between 1920 and 1970, the Conservatives moved more and more towards the centre, which allowed them to form regional- and issue-specific coalitions with both the right-wing FdP and SVB (*Bürgerblock*) or with the Social Democrats. This pragmatic co-operation with the Liberals in the federal executive reduced the ideological distance between the former enemies and led to strong representation in the national government (see Table 25). Since the 1970s, the CVP has moved to the centre of the political spectrum, while the FdP has drifted to the right wing.

TABLE 25 Socio-structural and socio-political indicators

Canton	Prop. of Catholics		Dominant Language	Economic power [a]	Voting of ct. executive [b]	Party affiliation of cantonal Executives, 1970				
	1900	1990			1917/1952/ 1987	CVP	FDP	SP	SVP	other
Zurich	19	35	German	122	P/P/P	1	2	1	2	1
Bern	14	18	Mixed	87	M/P/P	0	2	3	4	0
Lucerne	91	78	German	81	P/P/P	4	2	1	0	0
Uri	96	89	German	69	M/M/M	4	2	1	0	0
Schwyz	97	80	German	69	P/P/P	4	2	1	0	0
Obwalden	98	88	German	62	M/M/P	5	2	0	0	0
Nidwalden	99	82	German	84	M/M/P	6	3	0	0	0
Glarus	24	41	German	98	M/P/M&P	2	3	1	0	1
Zug	93	71	German	141	P/P/P	4	2	1	0	0
Fribourg	85	79	Mixed	68	M/P/P	4	2	0	1	0
Solothurn	69	51	German	93	P/P/P	1	2	2	0	0
Basel-Stadt	33	25	German	172	P/P/P	1	2	3	0	1
Basel-Landschaft	23	34	German	106	M/P/P	1	2	1	1	0
Schaffhausen	18	27	German	96	M/M/P	0	2	2	1	0
Appenzell Aus.	10	31	German	81	M/M/M	0	5	1	0	1
Appenzell Inn.	94	86	German	60	M/M/M	9	0	0	0	0
St. Gallen	60	58	German	80	P/P/P	3	3	1	0	0
Graubünden	47	50	Mixed	84	M/M/M	2	1	1	0	1
Aargau	44	44	German	96	M/P/P	1	1	2	1	0
Thurgau	32	39	German	84	M/P/P	1	2	1	0	1
Ticino	98	84	Italian	84	P/P/P	2	2	1	0	0
Vaud	13	38	French	99	M/M&P/M	0	3	2	1	1
Valais	98	89	Mixed	76	M/P/P	4	1	0	0	0
Neuchâtel	14	36	French	95	P/P/P	0	1	2	0	2
Geneva	51	48	French	143	P/P/P	2	2	2	0	1
Jura	-	81	French	-	-/-/P	-	-	-	-	-
Switzerland	*42*	*46*	*64 [c]*	*100*	*M/P/M&P*	*61*	*51*	*30*	*11*	*10*

[a] Cantonal GDP/c (1970-75) related to the GDP/c in Switzerland; [b] P = Proportional system: M = Majority system; M&P = both systems; [c] Proportion of German-speaking population in 1990.

Table 25 (continued)

	Seats in National council in 1919					Seats in National council in 1971					Seats in National council in 1995				
	CVP	FDP[d]	SP[e]	SVP	n of seats	CVP	FDP[d]	SP[e]	SVP	n of seats	CVP	FDP[d]	SP[e]	SVP	n of seats
ZH	1	7	9	6	25	3	6	8	5	35	2	6	9	9	34
BE	1	5	9	16	32	1	5	10	10	31	1	4	8	8	27
LU	5	3	0	0	8	5	3	1	0	9	4	3	1	1	10
UR	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
SZ	2	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	0	3	1	1	0	1	3
OW	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
NW	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
GL	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
ZG	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	3
FR	6	1	0	0	7	3	2	1	0	6	3	1	1	0	6
SO	1	3	2	0	6	2	3	2	0	7	2	2	2	0	7
BS	1	2	3	0	7	1	2	2	0	7	0	2	4	0	6
BL	0	3	1	0	4	1	2	2	1	7	1	1	2	1	7
SH	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	2	0	1	1	0	2
AR	0	2	1	0	3	0	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	2
AI	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
SG	6	7	2	0	15	6	3	2	0	12	4	2	3	1	12
GR	2	3	1	0	6	2	1	0	2	5	1	1	2	1	5
AG	3	3	3	3	12	3	3	3	2	14	2	3	3	3	15
TG	1	3	1	2	7	1	1	1	2	6	1	1	1	2	6
TI	3	4	1	0	8	3	4	1	0	8	2	3	2	0	8
VD	0	13	3	0	16	1	7	6	1	16	1	8	6	1	17
VS	5	1	0	0	6	5	1	1	0	7	4	2	1	0	7
NE	0	4	3	0	7	0	3	2	0	5	0	3	2	0	5
GE	1	5	2	0	8	2	4	5	0	11	1	4	6	0	11
JU	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	0	1	0	2
CH	*41*	*74*	*41*	*29*	*198*	*44*	*55*	*51*	*23*	*200*	*34*	*52*	*57*	*29*	*200*

[d] including Democrats and Liberals; [e] including Communists and members of left-wing parties.
Sources: Federal Statistical Office, Ritzmann-Blickensdorfer 1996 and computations by B. Fux

The social democratic movement appeared on the political stage already in the late nineteenth century; attempts to establish a national party, however, failed in 1879 and 1880, although the Swiss Trade Union (*Schweizerischer Gewerkschaftsbund*, SGB) started its activities in 1880. A third attempt to establish a party finally succeeded in 1888. The Social Democrats modified their programme and gradually became a democratic and reformist people's party. In line with these modifications, they continuously gained influence in the federal government, steadily increasing their seats in the National Council from seven in

1908 to 41 in 1919, a number which is about the same as those of the FdP and the CVP. In 1943 the first Social Democrat entered the Federal Council, and since the Federal Council was made fully proportional in 1959, the party has been integrated into the Swiss coalition system.

A number of smaller parties have been founded since the First World War, ranging across the political spectrum. As none of them is explicitly concerned with family policy issues, they will not be dealt with here.

The legal status of parties is that of voluntary associations. They are not specially recognized in the constitutional law, unlike the interest groups (*Interessensverbände*).

Compared to cantonal and local parties, national parties are relatively weak. They mostly have to represent a broad spectrum of cantonal and local interests. The party élites are composed of militia members, not professional politicians. National parties have few financial and organizational resources at their disposal (Ladner, 1997: 166). The weakness of the national parties can also be illustrated by the fact that the proportion of occasional voters amounts to 50%, with a tendency to increase (Gruner, 1977: 307).

National party organs tend to be federalized rather than centralized (Rappard, 1936), thus the national parties' platforms frequently deviate from those of the cantonal parties. The proportion of deviate slogans in ten federal elections between 1926 and 1953 amounted to 52% within the FdP, 1% within the SPS, 11% within the BGB, and 31.5% within the CVP. In 108 open votings in the National Council between 1926 and 1953, party unanimity was reached by the FdP only 20% of the votings, by the SPS 88% of the votings, by the BGB 50% of the votings, and by the CVP 40% of the votings. A significant number of federal parliamentarians are also lobbyists for interest groups. These proportions vary from party to party, from a low of 20% to a high of 95%.

Associations and Interest Groups

In Switzerland, early and decentralized industrialization led already in the nineteenth century to the development of a broad network of voluntary associations (*Verbandssystem*) for employers and employed which subsequently gained influence in political bargaining. The number of these associations grew from 728 in 1935 to 1,091 in 1973. In 1973, 64% of these were employer associations, 16% were those of employees and workers, and 21% were other associations.

Associations of employers and professionals have more financial resources than do parties. Compared to workers' associations, associations for the trades, agriculture, and industries are characterized by a high degree of internal organization and ideological homogeneity (Höpflinger, 1984: 171f.), which enable them to mobilize easily and represent their interests successfully. As noted above,

in contrast to political parties, the political role of associations (*Verbände*) is recognized by the federal constitution: associations are to be consulted regarding economic policies during the pre-parliamentary hearings as well as the implementation of laws.

Associations for the various branches of industry and trade are organized in higher-level associations (*Spitzenverbände*) which wield considerable influence. These higher-level associations include the executive board of the Swiss association for trade and industry (*Vorort des Schweizerischen Handels- und Industrie-Vereins*, SHIV), founded in 1870 and representing trades and the insurance, energy, and hotel industries; the central association of employers (*Zentralverband schweizerischer Arbeitgeber-Organisationen*), founded in 1908; the Swiss banking association (*Schweizerische Bankiervereinigung*); the Swiss trade association (*Schweizerischer Gewerbeverband*), founded in 1879, representing the small-scale industries, construction, commerce, transportation, and tourism; and the Swiss farmers' association (*Schweizerischer Bauernverband*), established in 1897. The Swiss trade association lobbies against state intervention and for lower taxes and social contributions; the farmers' association has successfully lobbied for various protectionist agricultural policies.

Swiss trade unions are markedly less influential than the higher-level associations for industry and trade, partly due to the relatively low level of union membership. Nevertheless, the Swiss association of trade unions (*Schweizerischer Gewerkschaftsbund*, SGB), established in 1881 and affiliated with the Social Democratic Party, does participate in the process of pre-parliamentary hearings.

In addition, there are a number of voluntary associations active in the fields of welfare and family policies, such as philanthropic and charitable associations and women's organizations. One of the most significant of these is *Pro Familia*. Founded in 1942 and not affiliated with any particular political party or religious denomination, it rapidly developed into an umbrella organization, covering more than 300 groups by the late 1960s. Since then, the number of members decreased to about 170 members, individuals, and sponsors in 1996 (Huber, 1987). *Pro Familia* is one of the few organizations directly subsidized by the federal state, though at a very low level.

The Role of the Cantons

In addition to the political parties, voluntary associations, and interest groups, the cantonal system represents most clearly the basic political principles, namely subsidiarity between the federal, cantonal, and municipal levels, and integration of minorities (Kriesi, 1980: 31ff.).

Under the principle of subsidiarity, the federal constitution delegates all powers not explicitly assigned to the federal government to the cantons. Therefore, any

federal implementation of laws requires a two-step procedure: (1) the delegation of formal authority by means of an initiative, and (2) the process of legislation. As a result, the federal government has control over only a limited number of functions and remains relatively weak, a fact that can be illustrated by the following figures: the staff of the ministerial bureaucracy amounted to only about 8,000 civil servants in 1980 (Germann, 1984). The legal status of public servants does not differ significantly from that of employees in the private sector. The composition of federal administration employees must be proportional to that of the linguistic groups as well as the political parties. The government's final consumption expenditures (*Staatsquote*) are very low in international comparison: 11.2% in 1950 and 12.9% in 1977; they have declined since then (Germann, 1984: 48).

The system of cantons reflects the historical socio-structural (centre vs. periphery, urban vs. rural areas, industrialized vs. agricultural sectors) and sociocultural cleavages (linguistic and religious divisions). Federalism has guaranteed the cantons and municipalities extensive autonomy and allows them to organize their interests in areas such as fiscal policy, education, and social services.

The dynamics of relations between the parties, associations, and the cantons has led to the development of particular mechanisms of conflict resolution.

Mechanisms of Concordance Democracy

The associational and federalist composition of the Swiss political system (Gruner, 1977, 1984) stimulated the implementation of the militia system, the principle of concordance, and the rotation of leadership in the Federal Council.

Due to the 'under-administration' of the formal political administration (Germann and Frutiger, 1978; Kriesi, 1980), a great number of semi-formal commissions (between 200 and 400) developed, called the 'militia' administration. Although this type of administration aims at anchoring governmental actors within the population, one cannot overlook the danger of the development of hidden oligarchies that are only partly politically legitimized (Kriesi, 1980; Tschäni, 1983; Fux, 1992). Based on a comprehensive empirical study, Kriesi has quantified the political elite in Switzerland (1980) as consisting of about 1,200 people, with the inner circle amounting to not more than 300 individual actors.

Since the integration of the Conservative minority into governmental responsibility and the implementation of democratic rights (referendum) in 1874 (Neidhart, 1970), the principle of concordance has been continuously expanded. This principle seeks in all policy matters a broad compromise between all actors involved in the political system. It also attempts to take into account the configuration of political forces, the regions, linguistic zones, and so on. Important steps in the expansion of this principle were the incorporation of the Catholics into the federal government in 1891, the 'peace treaty' (*Friedensabkommen*) in the metal

industry in 1937 inaugurating the social partnership between employers and employees, and the full proportionalization of the Federal Council in 1958 ('magic formula').

Finally, the rotation of leadership in the Federal Council is an important consensus mechanism. The proportional representation of four parties in the federal executive has even been emphasized by making its decisions collectively (*Kollegialitätsprinzip*). None of the Federal Council members is therefore empowered to assert any policy individually, but has to find a majority within the executive. The annual rotation of leadership according to seniority also supports a far-reaching division of power.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF FAMILY POLICIES

Generally speaking, family policy does not exist on the national level in Switzerland, neither as a concept nor as a *de facto* policy, and corresponding activities do not have an institutional base in Switzerland. Within the federal government, there is no department or ministry for family affairs. The only governmental unit directly involved in family issues was the Group for Family Protection (*Gruppe für Familienschutz*) established in the Federal Office for Social Insurance in 1947. It was re-organized as a section in 1965, and expanded into the Central Office for Family Issues (*Zentralstelle für Familienfragen*) in 1984 on the recommendation of a 1982 report on family policy in Switzerland (*Familienpolitik in der Schweiz*, 1982). In 1996, the staff of this unit amounted to the equivalent of not more than seven full-time collaborators. There is some overlap between this unit and the Federal Commission for Women's Issues (*Eidgenössische Kommission für Frauenfragen*), established in 1976, and the Federal Commission for Family Issues (*Eidgenössische Kommission für Familienfragen*), established in 1995 and composed of experts and representatives of various interest groups.

Synopsis 6 summarizes the policy-specific institutionalization of family issues in Switzerland. The federal government has jurisdiction in only three particular fields: family law, family-related cash benefits in the social security system, and housing policy. While family law does not need any executive agency, the administration of social security cash benefits has been decentralized and delegated to different cantonal and private agencies. Sickness insurance is administered by the Ministry of the Interior via a multitude of private insurance companies; unemployment insurance by the Ministry of the Economy via a system of public, union, and employer/employee agencies. The pension scheme is administered in close co-operation between federal, cantonal, and voluntary association offices.

(Notes Synopsis 6)

   [a] Federal department for justice and police (*Eidg. Justiz- und Polizeidepartement EJPD*); [b] Based on collective contracts (*Gesamtarbeitsverträge*); [c] Different cantonal directorates; [d] Federal legislation for independent farmers only (FLG); [e] Federal legislation for federal taxes only (*direkte Bundessteuer*); [f] Federal Department of Finances (*Eidg. Finanzdepartement EFD*); [g] Federal Department of the Interior (*Eidg. Departement des Inneren EDI)*; [h] Federal Office for Social Insurance (*Bundesamt für Sozialversicherungen BSV)*; [i] Federal Department of the Economy (*Eidg. Volkswirtschaftsdepartement, EVD*); [j] Federal Office for Industry, Trade and Work (*Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit BIGA*); [k] Cantonal Offices for Industry, Trade and Work (*Kantonale Ämter für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit KIGAs*); [l] Federal Office for Housing (*Bundesamt für Wohnungswesen BWO*).

Federal housing policy is administered by the federal department of public economy and the Federal Housing Office (*Bundesamt für Wohnungswesen*, BWO).

There is as yet no federal or cantonal legislation for maternity or parental leave or benefits. Child-care provision is mostly the responsibility of the municipalities and usually carried out by private agencies such as parental initiatives or non-governmental organizations. Public agencies on the local level are involved if child care is subsidized by the municipalities. In some cases, cantonal agencies are involved in the administration of child care for preschool children. The federal government has no jurisdiction in education or child care. Federal agencies administering child allowances exist only for independent farmers and employees in the public sector. Benefits are paid through a broad network operated by the cantons, voluntary agencies, or by single enterprises.

The federal government is entitled to impose taxes, although they are administered by the municipalities which are controlled by cantonal tax agencies. Social assistance is a cantonal affair in which the federal government is not involved; it is usually administered by the municipalities, frequently in close co-operation with non-governmental organizations. Services are usually provided by private agencies. Frequently, these executive bodies are supported and/or subsidized by the cantons or the municipalities under different laws.

THE POLITICS OF SWISS FAMILY POLICY

From about 1875 until the turn of the century (first phase), Switzerland passed significant social legislation concerning compulsory education, factory work, health insurance, and divorce. While family considerations were undoubtedly important to the relevant political actors, family policy as such was hardly their primary interest. Starting about 1925 (second phase), the family became a more central issue, culminating in the implementation of a family article in the federal

constitution in 1945 which is the foundation of almost all federal activities in this field. From the mid-1960s (third phase), new demographic and social trends, such as fertility decline and feminism, raised new family-related issues. Women were finally given the right to vote on the federal level in 1971, and ten years later an article guaranteeing gender equality was added to the constitution. A general reform of family law was initiated. Maternity and parental benefits and improving child-care provision became topics of popular discussion.

Not until after the First World War did the term 'family protection' appear on the agendas of voluntary associations, parties, trade unions, and other political players. Many local and cantonal voluntary associations with a political interest in the family were established, particularly in the French-speaking parts of the country, such as the *Cartel romand d'hygiène sociale et morale*, founded in 1918, and the *Ligue vaudoise pour la protection de la famille*, founded in 1923. These organizations were inspired by similar activities in France and based their activities on the ideas of patronage and Social Catholicism (Schultheis, 1988). In the German-speaking regions, comparable organizations appeared only later, during the 1930s, and the federal association *Pro Familia*, which united numerous cantonal organizations, was not formed until 1942. Charitable associations were also significant, in particular the Swiss Charitable Society (*Schweizerische Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft*, SGG) which advocated greater economic protection of the family already in the early 1920s. Although using similar arguments as the Catholic parties, they laid greater stress on eugenics and hygiene.

Women's organizations were also active in early debates on the economic protection of the family. In 1927 the Association of Swiss Women's Organizations (*Bund Schweizerischer Frauenvereine,* BSF) and the Swiss Association for Female Suffrage (*Schweizerischer Verband für Frauenstimmrecht,* SVF) established a joint commission for family allowances. However, a hearing among local women's organizations showed only a small interest in this topic and a wide heterogeneity in political opinions.

In 1929 (*Wirtschafts- und Sozialprogramm,* WSP of 1929), the Swiss Conservative People's Party (*Konservative Volkspartei*, SKVP) outlined a family policy based on Catholic doctrine. The WSP was supported by the Swiss episcopate and stressed a doctrine similar to ideas formulated in the Encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* by Pope Pius XI in 1931. The family based on marriage and headed by the husband—this model was seen as the pattern for the organization of the state. The SKVP advocated a system of corporatist organizations to regulate all social affairs, such as wages, working hours, professional education, hygiene, family allowances, and so on. Specific aims deriving from this general outline included wages that took family obligations of workers and employees into account; family and child allowances to enable women to stay at home with the children; an old-age pension scheme based on allowances for families; and housing policy fa-

vourable to families. The Conservatives, with support from the Protestant parties, thus combined pro-natalist arguments with the aims of improving the economic situation of those in rural areas and of establishing a general welfare policy. Eugenic arguments were also relevant, although these were articulated more clearly by other political actors.

Until the end of the 1920s, neither parties that were anchored in the tradition of liberalism nor those to the left of the political spectrum paid attention to family-related topics.

In 1931, the Swiss Association for Social Policy (*Schweizerische Vereinigung für Sozialpolitik*) organized a conference on the economic protection of the family, which brought together about 40 organizations spanning the entire political spectrum and provides an overview of the variety of perspectives in this field. Improved protection of families was called for mainly by the Conservatives, the Christian trade unions, and family associations, while the employers' associations and Liberals rejected protective measures as opposed to the principle of achievement-orientated wages and as disturbing relations between married and unmarried workers, although they did agree to exceptions for civil servants. A marked modification in the doctrine of the employers' organizations (*Zentralverband Schweizerischer Arbeitgeber-organisationen*) did not occur until 1942 when family allowances were seen as an addition to achievement-related wages.

In agreement with the Conservative parties, Christian trade unions advocated allowances, if they were organized on a regional level and in the form of corporatist compensation funds. The socialist trade unions opposed a 'family wage', agreeing with the employers that family-related wages would reduce workers' mobility. They also feared increasing pressure on the general wage level and that the traditional cleavage between workers and employers would be intensified. The socialists also rejected family allowances for tactical reasons: they favoured establishing an old-age pension scheme, and it seemed unlikely that both could succeed.

Other parties and associations, such as the *Bauern-, Gewerbe- und Bürgerpartei,* BGB, the *Schweizerische Gewerbeverband*, or the *Bauernverband* did not explicitly formulate a position on family policy issues until 1940.

Also various women's organisations were active in these early debates on the economic protection of the family. In 1927 the association of Swiss women's organisations (*Bund Schweizerischer Frauenvereine,* BSF) and the Swiss association for female suffrage (*Schweizerischer Verband für Frauenstimmrecht,* SVF) established a joint commission for family allowances. However, a hearing among local women's organisations showed only a small interest in this topic and a wide heterogeneity in their political opinions.

Although deeply-rooted differences kept participants from drafting constructive proposals regarding the development of a Swiss family policy, the conference did

result in the establishment of a federal commission on family protection. This commission included a wide range of the entire political spectrum and was co-ordinated by the secretary of the Swiss Charitable Society. Further, the conference spawned many initiatives to improve family protection on the local, cantonal, and federal levels.

The first such initiative came in 1929 when the Catholic National Councillor Escher proposed benefits for families with numerous children and culminated in 1942 with the initiative 'For the Family' (*Für die Familie*) which intended to delegate the competence to family-oriented activities of the federal state. Since this period was undoubtedly the golden age of Swiss family policy, it is worth discussing in more detail.

The prelude of these political discussions was Escher's proposal which explicitly referred to the declining fertility rates, the migration of the rural population to the industrialized cities, and the predicament of families with many children. Escher called for better public information about the impact of contraception and abortion, and for benefits and awards for families with many children. He explicitly mentioned the following policy fields: housing, work and employment contracts, public transportation, and the legal situation in general. Escher invited the federal council to prove the necessity of constitutional and legal modifications.

Escher's proposal combined pro-natalist arguments with conservative morals (moral decline, dwindling religiosity, increasing interest in comfort). Protestant institutions, welfare organizations and philanthropists agreed with his argument, although they did not exclude a discussion on contraception with the help of eugenic arguments (building 'good families'). The proposal was criticized by the leftist parties which condemned the liberal economy (crises, unemployment) as responsible for the fertility decline. Representatives of the Liberal parties attempted to find a moderate position.

Subsequent proposals called for implementing corporatist structures in order to democratize the economy (introducing a 'family' wage**)**, strengthening wealth formation in the middle classes, introducing family and child allowances for dependent workers and employees, introducing a system of compensation funds). In the debate on the implementation of an constitutional article (1938) giving the federal state the authority to provide an unemployment insurance, Escher tried to add a sentence according to which the maintenance, health, and social situation of the family should be respected. However, none of these attempts were successful.

The debates on the implementation of the family article in the federal constitution took on a new dimension during World War II. The federal council introduced wage guarantees for soldiers (*Lohn- und Verdienst-Ersatz Ordnung,* LVEO) in 1939/40. Because this scheme was limited in time, it was debated what to do with the resources if the measure was discontinued after the war. The po-

litical left was strongly in favour of establishing an old-age pension scheme, while the Conservatives wanted to use these resources as the foundation for a maternity insurance scheme. As a result, two competing popular initiatives were launched in 1942. The supporters of the initiative 'For the Family' (*Für die Familie*) deposit 168,730 valid signatures by 13 May 1942; two months later (25 July 1942) the leftist opposition had collected 179,910 valid signatures in favour of establishing an old-age pension scheme. The chances for the success of the second were better because the federal state already had the legal competence and because of the existing agencies within the industry and by professional associations. Because political stalemate threatened to prevent both initiatives from being realized, the two sides arrived at a compromise and agreed not to oppose each other's initiatives.

The family initiative called for the general protection of the family as a cornerstone of the state. Families' rights and needs were to be respected in the making of fiscal and social policies. The federal government was to support the economic security of families by means of family, child, and age allowances for independent and dependent workers on the basis of compensation funds, insurance, and other institutions, and the federal government was to be given the authority to establish such institutions. The federal government was to be given a role in the field of settlement and housing policy, co-operating with the cantons or with professional associations as well as private and public organizations in the execution of this policy.

The initiative was supported by a broad spectrum of political actors. Scepticism or even opposition was formulated by employers, the Liberal party, leftist parties, and trade unions. In the aftermath, the Federal Council stated a hearing among cantons and interest groups. The results showed that the wording of the initiative was criticized by a few cantons (namely those who already had legislated cantonal family policies), by the leftist groups, by bourgeois philanthropists, and by employers. Based on these results and on several scientific reports on the state of the family, the parliament decided to formulate a counter-proposal moderating between both positions. After several redraftings of this counter-proposal a solution was found that was also acceptable to those who launched the initiative. After both chambers unanimously adopted this version of a family article (cf. Appendix), they withdrew their initiative. An overwhelming majority of the population and the cantons adopted the article on 25 November 1945. This debate on the family article set the course for Swiss family policy after World War II.

After the adoption of the family article, the implementation of corresponding policies was hesitant and slow. The federal government did not use its new authority to introduce compulsory compensation funds until 1952, when a federal law on family allowances for independent farmers came into force. All cantons

passed family allowance laws for dependent workers and employees between 1940 and 1965, whereas attempts to find a federal solution for family allowances failed in 1959 and 1970 after hearings among political actors. The federal government did take an active role in housing policy but has still failed to provide maternity insurance. Interest in improving Swiss family policy flagged, even within the Conservative faction and the Catholic institutions.

This lack of interest was apparently due to several factors. By 1959, basic welfare-state institutions were in place, and the need for additional family measures appeared less urgent: old-age pensions in 1947, unemployment insurance and family allowances for independent farmers in 1951, and invalidity insurance in 1959. Second, the post-war economic upswing provided prosperity to a huge majority of the population. Third, the post-war baby boom undermined all pro-natalist arguments, while the nationalistic and public-defence arguments for family protection became obsolete with the reconstitution of post-war Europe. Last, the Nazis had effectively discredited eugenics as a basis for family policy.

It was not until the late 1960s that interest in family policy was renewed, as a result of a drop in fertility rates, economic crisis, and social upheaval including the women's movement and critique of the traditional family. In the following, I shall outline the major ideological positions on family policy issues since the late 1960s.

Conservatives on the far right of the political spectrum have attempted to resist the pluralization of family forms and the loss of traditional norms—which they interpreted as an erosion of the family as such—by opposing contraception and the liberalization of abortion while supporting financial assistance to families. In 1980, conservatives launched a political initiative, 'Right to Life' (*Recht auf Leben*), intended to protect human life from the moment of conception until death. The initiative was defeated by plebiscite in 1985. Conservatives also opposed revision of the family and marital property law, forcing a referendum on the revision in 1984, which was unsuccessful. Conservatism is particularly strong in rural and Catholic areas, which also show resistance to female suffrage: for example, Appenzell-Innerrhoden defeated several attempts to grant equal rights to both sexes and was finally forced to do so by a Federal Court decision in 1990. Conservatives have supported the 1984 federal law on maternity services, as well as the creation or upgrading of family-related federal agencies.

The moderate conservative parties such as the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP) have traditionally focused on family issues. They supported the modernization of the adoption law (1973), the children's law (1978), and the family and marital property law (1986) based on the idea of equality and partnership between man and woman. In the 1980s, moderate conservatives were quite active on the national level, led by women politicians. In addition to creating a parliamentary group in 1983 to lobby on family issues, moderate conservatives

launched about half a dozen measures: Interpellation Piller in 1981 concerning the economic situation of families; Postulate Darbellay in 1983 to investigate the unequal financial burdens of families; Initiative of the canton of Lucerne in 1983 to create a federal framework law concerning family allowances (defeated in 1986); Interpellations by Piller and Segmüller in 1985 to revalorize family policy; a proposal to co-ordinate the cantonal family allowance laws in 1986. The moderate conservative faction supports the equal rights article in the federal constitution (Art. 4, adopted by plebiscite in 1981) and maternity insurance (rejected by plebiscite in 1984 and 1987). They also supported the modernization of the adoption law (in 1973), the children's law (in 1978), the family and marital property law (in 1986). Consensus ruled between the Conservatives, the Social Democrats, and the liberal parties that all these revisions as well as the revision of the divorce law should replace a legal situation which clearly favours traditional male-dominated family forms with one favouring a family form based on the idea of equality and partnership between man and woman.

Although they were busy on the political stage during the last decade, the moderate conservatives introduced few new concepts and continued to focus on reducing the financial burden of married couples with children. Due to the sustained importance of Catholic social doctrine (*katholische Soziallehre*), the aim of reducing the financial burden of married couples with children (the *Familienlastenausgleich*) remained the 'leitmotiv' of their political activities. On the political stage, they were successful in seeing emergency tax relief for families adopted by the federal parliament in 1988, and in 1990 these measures were extended.

While family-related policies in Switzerland seem to be the domain of Christian and conservative parties, the Social Democrats have played an important role in supporting the consolidation of the Swiss social security system and the attempt to reduce discrimination against women. During the 1970s, the Social Democrat Party was invigorated by a generation of well-educated women. Not least therefore, it also became active in the classical branches of family policy. When women were granted the right to vote in federal elections in 1971, the Social Democratic Party benefited from an influx of educated women voters and became more active in family issues. The Social Democrats introduced the initiative on maternity insurance which was later rejected by plebiscite. They were more successful with the equal rights article of the federal constitution, which was adopted in 1981. In housing policy, a Social Democratic initiative led to the 1986 adoption of tenant protection legislation. In 1990, the party and trade unions launched an initiative to revise the old-age pension scheme to make it more favourable toward (married) women.

The various liberal parties have had a minor role in Swiss family policy. Although a consensus does exist with other parties regarding the continuous mod-

ernization of laws in various fields including civil law, family law, equal rights, and liberalization of the abortion law, these parties oppose any attempts to consolidate the Swiss social security system and have successfully argued that maternity insurance would increase costs or have negative effects on the labour market.

THE PROFILE OF SWISS FAMILY POLICY

In order to understand the trajectory and the profile of family policy in Switzerland, one has take into account the particularities of the political system, namely the consociational and federalist structures which are deeply rooted in the tradition of liberalism. Although these structures represent the complex cross-cutting of various cleavage lines, they have certainly impeded the growth of nation-wide welfare institutions. By contrast, on the cantonal and local levels, a broad spectrum of very fragmented and heterogeneous policies has developed which effectively integrates the interests of various minorities. Swiss family policy has to be characterized as communitarian rather than centralized.

All of the ideological groupings—liberalism, conservatism, and social democracy—developed comparatively early networks of voluntary associations that later became the predominant actors in the process of political decision-making. The dominant role of associations supported by the instruments of direct democracy (initiative and referendum) and a liberal contract law led to a complex system of interest mediation consisting of three sub-systems: the associations (*Verbandssystem*), the cantons, and the political parties, and characterized by the principles of subsidiarity and the principle of balancing differences (*Ausgleich von Gegensätzen*). Undoubtedly, this impeded the development of a strong labour movement. It also weakened the federal government which has authority over only a limited number of functions. Other results of this type of state organization are the development of influential oligarchies and a certain immobilism regarding the implementation of new policies.

Up to now, the political system has successfully guaranteed social and political stability as well as a high standard of living based on comparatively high wages and low social security and income taxes enabling individuals, couples, and families to self-organize their interests.

A certain ambivalence is apparent regarding the development of family-related incentives. On the one hand, Switzerland has a consistent history of early and innovative policies and was among the forerunners in introducing compulsory education, labour protection, civil law based on equal rights, and advance maintenance. On the other hand, deficiencies in maternity leave and benefits, parental leave and benefits, and child-care provision cannot be overlooked.

These deficiencies in particular have forced families to find individual solutions to manage family life. The absence of the state in this respect appears to have led to the extraordinary stability in demographic as well as household and family structures, for example, the long persistence of the European marriage pattern, few births out of wedlock and lone parents, to a comparatively late and hesitant integration of women into the labour force, and to a strong polarization between families and others, marked by an increase in childlessness and the postponement of marriage and childbirth. Because a broad segment of the population participated in prosperity and achieved a high standard of living, governmental discretion was accepted by the Swiss population.

NOTES

[1] 'Der mehr weltanschaulich orientierte Liberalismus der Innerschweizer, der Tessiner und Walliser bildet ein Element des Ausgleichs gegenüber dem mehr wirtschaftlich gefärbten Liberalismus der industrialisierten Kantone, und dieser kontrastiert mit dem Freisinn der vorwiegend agrarischen Kantone. Der welschschweizerische Radikalismus steht geistig bis weit ins 20. Jahrhundert hinein unter dem dominierenden Einfluss der "Radicaux-socialistes" der Dritten Republik, während die freisinnigen Reformierten der deutschen Schweiz ideell dem Nationalliberalismus oder der Fortschrittspartei des nördlichen Nachbarn nahestehen' (Gruner, 1977: 31).