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search Centre for Swiss Politics at Berne University, as many as 72 per cent of soldiers under 32 voted against the army. This majority of young people in favour of a comprehensive peace policy, which the initiative also called for, could be interpreted as a new form of self-assurance of a generation, but for the time being this result stands somewhat in isolation as an example of a distinctive political consciousness.

**Young people do not take part in politics**  
Young people will hardly be represented in the forthcoming parliamentary elections of 20 October. Jean-Pierre Bonny, a Radical Party

National Councillor, supports the candidature of Martin Weber, captain of Berne's football team, Young Boys, "because with people like him we can prove that not all young people are left-wing." However, although Weber is standing for the Young Radicals, he too is already 34.

Why paint such a gloomy picture of Swiss youth in this anniversary year? "They have everything they want!" This could be the very reason for the desperate attempts to break out of society, whether into extreme consumerism, excessive violence or extreme right-wing acts. We've seen it all before, young people forced

to try out increasingly extreme ways of life in a society in which nothing is sacred any longer. Drug addicts especially try desperately to dissociate themselves from the competitive and consumer society, and are thus doing nothing else but trying out its extreme forms. To attract attention, to stand out – in short: to have an identity – is infinitely more difficult for a boy or girl nowadays than it was 20 years ago for Josef Estermann, now Zurich's mayor, and his generation... "What do they want, they've got everything!" But whether Anne, Franco or Peter, there's one thing that many young Swiss haven't got: a real belief in the future. *Bänz Friedli*

What do young people think about their elders? A survey

## "They Should be a Bit More Laid Back"

Older people are pig-headed, set in their ways and blinkered, say young Swiss. Nine young people give their views on the generation conflict.

**Barbara (18), office worker**

I get on well with my parents. We never had more than the usual friction like when I used to have to be home before midnight. I think adults could be a bit more laid back. Recently I was standing in a queue and when someone – a foreigner at that – pushed forward a bit, there was suddenly a lot of fuss. Young people aren't so narrow-minded about such things. I'm not scared of becoming old – I'll just let things take their course.

**Patrice (23) student**

My grandparents sometimes think they can boss me about. They're dreadfully authoritarian – you just can't argue about anything with them. Most people aged 50 and over think we should obey them straightaway. I think we should talk to each other more. And if parents want their children to do something they could explain the reason. All in all I think older people shouldn't be so pigheaded.

**Pascale (21) trainee construction draughtsman**

I don't like the narrow-mindedness you often find in older people. You want to stage a party and you immediately get complaints from neighbours about the noise. Maybe young

people are doing things their elders would like to have done when they were young but weren't allowed to. What I like about being young is that you don't have any ties.

**Andrina (23) secretary**

I can't say I have any problems with people older than me. My best friend is 38. I also res-



The difficulty of finding oneself. Bored consumerism.



pect older people's experience. Only I get fed up when 70-year-olds forget that for young people now the world looks quite different from what it did for them when they were young. Other demands are made on us and we face other problems. Besides, the world we were born into was made by previous generations, not by us.

**Eveline (19), trainee radiography assistant**

I'm glad I get on well with my parents. We go to concerts together, for instance. But I think it's wrong that my father expects me to wait on him hand and foot. For me my grandparents are the ideal old people. They've stayed young in heart and are always doing something or other. I'd be glad if I could talk with all other people the way I can with them.

**Geraldine (19), clerk**

My father is a typical Italian. He finds it difficult to come to terms with the fact that I'm growing up. For instance, I always have to be home for the evening meal, and if I want to eat out occasionally I have to tell him a week in advance. Of course I put up a fight against this sort of thing, and I've learned how to



Hostility to foreigners. (Photos: Michael von Graffenried)

stand up to him. That's probably the reason why my younger sister now has things a bit easier. What I dislike about older people is that they give you idiotic looks in the tram if they don't happen to like your clothes. We're not hippies just because we put on something comfortable.

**Jan (20), electronics technician**

Older people are very often in a rut. They've become inflexible, no longer live according to their feelings. I've just been to France. It was different there – the old and the young talk to each other. In Switzerland there's a fear of meeting one another. But I'm looking forward to being older. I think that at 35 I'll have achieved things I still have to work on in the near future. Still, I hope that I'll stay open-minded and also that in later life I'll still be able to do things together with young people.

**Sven (22), student**

I don't have great problems with my parents. Sometimes my father comes into my room and turns my stereo set down. He's also not come to terms with my riding a motorbike and keeps quoting accident figures to me. Generally speaking I think older people wear blinkers and can only look pigheadedly straight in front of them. A lot of things would be different if they were a bit more open-minded and tolerant. They ought to cast their minds back a bit more and remember

what it was like when they were young. And ask themselves whether the mistakes that were made then shouldn't be avoided today.



**Gottfried Honegger**

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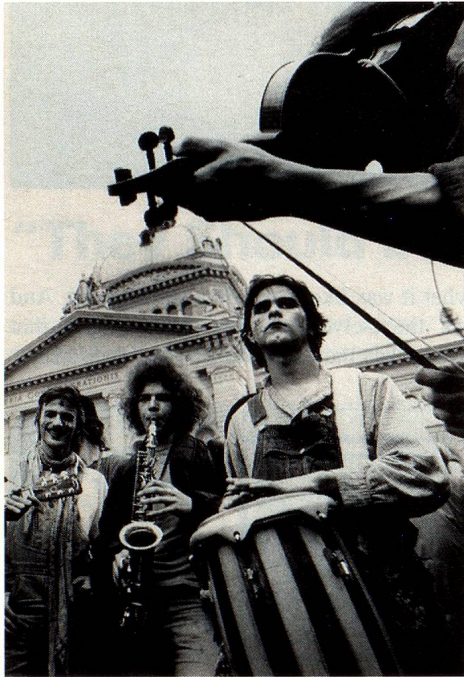
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Philipp (15), secondary school pupil

Grown-ups always think they're capable of doing everything. I also think they don't trust us youngsters enough. And they say we've no manners. That's not true – or only by way of exception. I believe they stop us doing a lot of things because they used not to be allowed to do them when they were young. I hope I never forget that I was once young.

Daniel Meier, editorial writer, young people's magazine "DIALOG"



Revolt against the system. (Photo: Michael von Graffenried)

## The New Federal Youth Promotion Law

*In the last few decades a number of sociological surveys on youth have reached the conclusion that today's young people suffer from a lack of practical opportunities for taking up their social responsibilities. Many young men and women seem imbued with a feeling of indifference and discouragement which prevents the harmonious unfolding of their personalities. In the absence of appropriate conditions in the various spheres of life in which young people are involved, such individual self-realisation will certainly be impossible; alongside the family, the school, the workplace and the church, we must place the youth organisations whose task it is to foster and promote youth work programmes. It is with this aim in view that the federal government has laid down the basis for a national youth policy in the Federal Law on the Promotion of Extracurricular Youth Work (or Youth Promotion Law) which came into force on January 1, 1991.*

*The federal government has in fact been supporting extracurricular youth work programmes organised according to the guidelines of the Federal Department of Home Affairs since 1972. The idea of a Youth Promotion Law is based on parliamentary proposals put forward as a result of the various reports on the disturbances among young people in the 1980s published by the Federal Commission for Youth Questions, as well as on the political commitment evinced by youth associations. In December 1987, the message from the Federal Council containing a draft for the Federal Law on the Promotion of Extracurricular Youth Work was laid before Parliament. This contained the basic concepts for future youth policy and youth work at the national level – for example, the precise definition of "youth" as a category, the objectives of youth policy, the jurisdiction of the federal government as against those of the cantonal and municipal authorities, etc. The parliamentary debate which followed was marked by strong controversy, particularly on the subject of special holidays for young people. However, the law was finally passed by Parliament on October 6, 1989.*

*The Youth Promotion Law regulates two main areas of activity: holidays for young people and support for extracurricular youth work by the federal government. The treatment of holidays for young people contains a real innovation. A provision is now anchored in the Swiss Code of Obligations by which apprentices and other young people in employment up to the age of 30 are entitled to unpaid leave amounting to five working days per year in cases where they are involved in voluntary work with cultural or social institutions, for example as leaders of group events, organisers of youth meetings, experts in youth sporting activities, participants in further training courses for leaders or people in charge of youth work, etc. After an understandably difficult introductory phase, this private law provision seems now to be well accepted by both young employees and employers.*

*On the question of support for extracurricular youth work by the federal government, the Youth Promotion Law divides its promotional activities into two categories: financial and non-financial. The second category includes the provision of federal printed materials to all youth organisations financed by the federal government free of cost, as well as the loan of military and sports materials for youth leader training courses, also free of cost.*

*The Youth Promotion Ordinance of December 10, 1990, and the guidelines on the calculation of financial aid issued by the Federal Department of Home Affairs on March 1, 1991, regulate the principles by which the annual federal grant for the promotion of extracurricular youth work – amounting to about Sfr. 4.1 million for 1991 – is to be distributed.*

*During the preliminary discussions on the Youth Promotion Law one of the main concerns of youth associations was that the training of youth leaders per se and youth sports leaders should be put on an equal footing. The Federal Office for Cultural Affairs took full account of this concern in helping to frame the law. It should be added that a small part of the annual credit is to be made available in the form of financial help for specific projects. This provides an opportunity for the federal government to support domestic and international projects which would not normally be regarded as belonging to the activities of a youth organisation. This means that new ideas and concepts for youth work may be promoted, such as international youth theatre exchange, programmes for promoting creativity in the fields of literature and journalism for children and young people, participation of Swiss young people in assistance programmes for developing countries, etc. The new Youth Promotion Law is intended as the foundation for a progressive national youth policy. In comparison with other European countries it puts Switzerland well in the forefront in this respect. It may be hoped that the law will be taken as a model for similar legislation at the cantonal and municipal levels.*

Mario Frasa, head of the Youth Section at the Federal Office for Cultural Affairs.

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