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OLD AGE AND SURVIVORS INSURANCE

The Federal Commission for the Old Age and Survivors' Insurance under the Chairmanship of Dr. Saxer had a meeting to consider various alterations which had been proposed. In particular the following suggestions were reviewed accordingly :-

- The possibility of payment of voluntary contributions.
- The replacement of the temporary benefits by honorary ones
- The raising of the income level
- The lowering of deductions for capital
- The increase of temporary benefits and better conditions for non-working widows.

The Commission decided unanimously against any major alterations at the present moment. This decision was in consideration of the fact that the scheme is hardly two years in operation and not enough experience has been gained. It is not possible to judge the final development on one year's accounts only.

On the other hand it was recommended that an enlargement of the number of those to receive benefits is desirable and possible by raising the income level and the lowering of deductions for capital. Through this most of the existing hardships can be eliminated without endangering the solid financial position of the insurance.

The Commission expressed the wish to examine whether such an alteration could be effected through a decision by Federal Council instead of lengthy legislation through Parliament.

EMPOWERING COMMISSION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL

Under the Chairmanship of President Escher, the Empowering Commission of the National Council met on November 30th. It considered a decision of the Federal Council to cancel the existing restrictions on right of settlement. In the opinion of the Commission this decision should take effect on 1st November 1950, whereas other regulations covering housing shortage should remain in force. The Commission also approved of the Federal Council's decision regarding the extension of legislation for the protection of Farm Tenants, extension of regulations regarding the Press and extension of regulations to protect the Swiss Book Trade from foreign influx.

OVER 100 YEARS' OLD TRUSTEESHIP OF COMMUNITY ENDS

The State Council of the Canton of Vaud has decided to terminate on December 31st, 1949 the Trusteeship instituted over the Community of Chardonneys/Morges in 1846. The trusteeship was instituted because on account of its small population the Community was unable to form a Council. The last Administrator, Mr L. Burckhardt was in office since 1935 and was made an Honorary Citizen of the Community in 1945.

PROJECTS FOR NEW BRIDGE IN BERN

The State Council of Bern proposes the approval of credit of Sfrs.198,000 for the erection of new access roads from the West to conform with the plans for the erection of the new Kirchenfeldbrücke bridge.

It is doubtful whether the new bridge will be made in the next 10 or 15 years. However, it will have to come sometime, and the erection of suitable access roads has to be considered as there is considerable building going on in that District. It is planned to carry out this work during the winter time in order to occupy labourers who usually at this time of the year have to be subsidized.

THE BUDGET OF THE CANTON OF SCHAFFHAUSEN

The State Economic Commission of the Parliament of

Schaffhausen proposes in a report to the Budget for 1950 to reduce the deficit from Sfrs.918,000 to Sfrs.445,000. The improvement would be reached through the curtailment in expenditure and increase in receipts.

One major proposal is that the Electricity Work of Canton should, in consideration of the unfavourable financial position of the latter, pay Sfrs.100,000 more than usual.

CANTONAL PARLIAMENT OF GRAUBUNDEN

In its Session lasting 14 days, the Cantonal Parliament of Graubunden has amongst other things finalised the budget and decided on the rate of tax for 1950. Improvements amounting to over Sfrs.1,000,000 were amended to the Government Budget, in particular an amount of Sfr.400,000 which was to be a special contribution to the Superannuation scheme of the State Employees was cancelled. Sfr 90,000 increase in receipts from Cantonal undertakings, and reduction of Sfrs.46,000 in expenditure for printed matter and office utensils were other alterations.

The Special Commission of the Cantonal Parliament also wants to reduce the amount to be utilised in 1949 for paying off the War Debt from Sfrs.500,000 to 400,000 so that the Tax reserve would again be Sfrs.600,000. On the other hand certain increases in expenditure were decided upon such as hospitals etc. The Cantonal Parliament approved of these proposals and asked the Government to introduce a special savings program for the next Session of Parliament to deal with.

HISTORICAL MUSEUM FOR AROSA

In the old Eggerhouse in Arosa a new museum for the "Schanfigg" was opened on December 4th. Many visitors from the Valley, as well as Chur and Davos were present at the celebrations which closed with a visit to the museum under the guidance of the Curator. The museum contains : literature from Arosa, Natural Science, various domestic appliances, trade tools, armaments and as the most valuable piece the old flag of Schanfigg which dates from the time before 1600.

ZURICH

The Government of Zurich has allocated in addition to Sfrs 1.8 million subsidies a Cantonal Subsidy of 1.2 million Sfrs. for the building of 109 houses with a total of 475 flats. The total building cost will be Sfrs16,000,000. Including this amount since June, 1948, 576 buildings with a total of 6014 flats (total cost 261 million Francs) have received allocations from the State totalling Sfrs.33,000,000. The Cantonal Government decided to hold a popular vote on 28th January, 1950 on the following question.

Cantonal contributions to the building of a City Hospital in Zurich.

Inclusion of State School teachers, Pastors and members of the Cantonal Police into the insurance scheme of the Cantonal employees.

A gift of Sfr5000 which came from an anonymous donor was added to the subsidy fund for the Cantonal Hospital.

M. MAX PETITPIERRE, PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER OF SWISS CONFEDERATION.

The two Chambers of the Federal Parliament elected on December 15th, Federal Councillor Max Petitpierre, President of the Swiss Confederation for 1950. 213 ballot papers were distributed, 211 handed in