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HOME NEWS

Thanks to motor traffic the accounts for 1927 of the canton Uri close with a surplus of about Frs. 50,000. No less than Frs. 284,000 has been levied from motorists in taxes and tolls for the use of cantonal roads which, in addition to the Federal subsidy of Frs. 160,000 for the upkeep of Alpine roads makes a total of Frs. 444,000; only Frs. 250,000 have been spent on road improvements and repair, the remainder having been used for other purposes.

The first sitting of the new session of the Aargau Grosse Rat was opened under protest from the members against having their daily attendance allowance (Taggeld) reduced from Frs. 6 to Frs. 3, at which figure it was fixed by a popular vote last November, when an increase to Frs. 10 was officially suggested.

The Zürich Grosse Rat has voted a sum of Frs. 2,000 to enable some local school teachers to visit Vienna in order to study the Socialist teaching methods in that town.

A new bill regulating the service conditions of civil servants and municipal workers in Zurich was accepted by the electors last Sunday; annual holidays of from 9 to 24 days are fixed for the different categories and no foreigners may be employed without the consent of the Council. It also legalises the complete stoppage of the municipal tramway service on May 1st (Labour Day!)

As a counter-move to the creation of a citizen police force—special constabulary—in Geneva the local Communists propose to form amongst their comrades a labour guard ostensibly to keep order at Labour demonstrations.

Some surprise has been caused in political circles of the canton Ticino by the hasty extradition of the two Italian soldiers who had deserted from an Alpine regiment and crossed the frontier at Camedo.

A salute of 22 guns officially opened last Saturday (Feb. 11th) the Winter Olympic Games at St. Moritz. On the evening before, the diplomats and representatives of foreign sports associations were received at the Palace Hotel by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Optional ski instruction is to be introduced at the municipal schools in Berne; on the payment of one franc the pupils are supplied with the necessary outfit during the winter term.

Charged with defalcations, the director—Dr. Franz—of the Kammgarnspinnerei Interlaken A.G., the largest factory in the Bernese Oberland, employing about 350 hands, has been placed under arrest.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

De mon strapontin.—La statistique établit qu'il y a, en Suisse, 138,000 vieilles filles. On ne s'en aperçoit guère. C'est que, à part les toujours inévitables exceptions, nos vieilles filles ont su garder le sourire. Elles pensent, comme le philosophe: "Puisque le bonheur n'existe pas, lâchons d'être heureuse sans lui."

Il n'y a que quatre cantons où le nombre des hommes est supérieur à celui des femmes: Fribourg, Valais, Uri et Obwald. Dans ce dernier demi-canton on compte 6,983 hommes et 6,973 femmes, un vrai paradis.

Le sexe masculin paraît souffrir davantage du mariage, en général, que le sexe dit faible, car il y a, en Suisse, 64,000 veufs et 169,000 veuves. Il est vrai que celle-ci sont inconsolables!

Les femmes se marient plus jeunes que les hommes et vivent plus longtemps. Sur les 190,000 jeunes gens de 14 à 19 ans, il y en a 162 de mariés, tandis que sur les 194,000 jeunes filles du même âge, 1,413 sont déjà épousées.

L'air suisse étant particulièrement sain et généreux, les vieillards sont nombreux chez nous. On trouve 353 hommes et 606 femmes de 80 à 94 ans et 29 hommes et 71 femmes de 95 à 100 ans. Enfin, un homme et deux femmes ont plus de cent ans. L'homme, malheureusement, est célibataire, ce qui va renverser des doctrines solides.

Ajoutons que le canton de Vaud est habité par 85,000 Confédérées, dont 36,000 Bernoises. Par contre 41,000 Vaudois sont dispersés dans les autres cantons.

Le sculpteur impécunieux et le fisc inexorable.—Nous avons conté, le mois passé, comment, sous prétexte d'économies, on encombrait les coins et recoins du Parlement avec les oeuvres d'huile, de gyps et de plâtre envoyées par les peintres et sculpteurs suisses candidats aux bourses de la mère Helvétie. La commission chargée de proposer au Conseil fédéral les jeunes (?) talents qu'il convient de soutenir, vient de terminer ses travaux. Les toiles et statues qu'elle a distinguées sont, pour l'heure, exposées dans la salle des Pas Perdus du Conseil national. Il ne s'y remarque rien de bien transcendant, si ce n'est quelques modelages un peu hardis et un groupe de dames point de tout vêtements mais arborant des couleurs éblouissantes. (On nous assure que c'est là le premier prix.) D'une façon générale, la commission a désigné moins de bénéficiaires que d'ordinaire, mais leur fera obtenir des bourses plus considérables. Elle estime avec raison qu'il vaut mieux encourager peu d'artistes, mais des bons, plutôt que de donner des illusions à trop de jeunes, incapables d'arriver, plus tard, à quelque chose,—en Suisse. Parmi les Romands figurent trois sculpteurs et deux peintres,—saut creux,—et, sous réserve de ratification par le Conseil fédéral de la liste des bénéficiaires, qui sera publiée dans huit jours.

Mais ce n'est pas surtout des "primés" que j'ai à vous entretenir...

Un des candidats, un sculpteur bernois, qui ne manque pas de talent, mais de pécune, comptait sur la bourse qu'on ne manquerait pas de lui accorder, pour payer ses impôts. Les trois maquettes qu'il envoya ne trouvèrent, hélas, pas grâce devant les esthètes de la Commission. Tandis que le percepteur pressait notre sculpteur.

Celui-ci eut un geste héroïque: —Puisque l'Etat fédéral ne vaut pas des oeuvres de mon génie, que l'Etat cantonal s'en contienne, s'écria-t-il.

Et il avisa incontinent le Fisc que, dans l'impossibilité matérielle où il se trouvait de se mettre en règle avec lui, il lui donnait en garantie les fruits de ce labeur que la Bureaucratie ne sait pas estimer.

Le Fisc accepta cette combinaison. Et l'on vit, vendredi matin, ce spectacle inédit en ces lieux augustes: le petit homme à barbe noire, de l'Office des poursuites, descendre d'une camionnette, en compagnie de deux commissionnaires, et procéder, en plein escalier du Palais du Parlement, à la saisie et à l'enlèvement des trois oeuvres de l'artiste impécunieux et méconnu: un motif de tonbeau funéraire représentant une sorte de "las de vivre," (à la Hodler) assouffi une Judith en bois et le buste en gyps, du professeur Forel, de fameuse renommée.

—La Tribune, Lausanne.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

The League Capital.

The diplomatic correspondent of the Daily Telegraph would like us to believe that there is some serious talk of transferring the League's seat from Geneva to Vienna. We find the following in its issue of Feb. 8th:—

"In some quarters it is denied that any 'negotiations' on the subject had taken place between the European Chancelleries, which is literally true. But I wrote of informal 'soundings,' not negotiations. Moreover, I am in a position to state that the capitals consulted in this roundabout way have included, among others, those of the Little Entente Powers, as well as Paris, Rome and Berlin.

It may be added that no sooner had the matter reached the ears of Dr. Stresemann than the German Foreign Minister, in a discreet but emphatic manner, intimated plainly to the Austrian Government that any proposal for such a transfer would be resented by Germany and meet with the latter's resolute opposition. Whereupon most of the Austrian advocates of the change, among whom Monsignor Seipel, the Chancellor, is said, rightly or wrongly, to have been included, hastened to drop the proposal as impracticable.

The prospective offer by Austria of some of the old and magnificent Hapsburg palaces for the use of the League may have attracted certain League members on grounds of economy. But the "Red" complexion, in a municipal sense of Vienna, would hardly provide a suitable background for the League; while the neutrality of a country like the present Austrian Republic,

without either army or strategic frontiers, would be difficult of defence in time of war. The relative ease with which Switzerland could safeguard her own neutrality in the event of a European conflict is an advantage to the League which could hardly be found elsewhere.

However, it may be that the fear of the removal of the League's seat from Geneva may induce the local hostelries and shopkeepers to moderate their charges to visitors during League sessions.

The last paragraph, which seems to carry more weight than those "negotiations," shows where the boot pinches our correspondent; it is a complaint often voiced in the English Press. A reference in the Daily News (Feb. 7th) puts the main question in its proper light:—

"From a diplomatist lately at Geneva I learn that no importance need be given to the proposal, revived in Paris and elsewhere, for the transference of the League of Nations' headquarters from Geneva to Vienna.

It was raised nearly two years ago, and was believed to have been disposed of then. No better reasons exist now for the suggested move than then, and, on the other hand, new and substantial reasons against it are to be found in the gift by the Swiss Confederation of a site for the League of Nations Palace to be erected, and in the acceptance of plans for the new building.

At Vienna there are interests which favour the idea. Its realisation, however, would make of Austria a neutral State, and put an end to hopes of union with Germany, and it would therefore be opposed by the Pan-Germanists and friends of the so-called Anschluss.

Geneva is central, but quite far enough away from London. Sir Austen Chamberlain, the Foreign Secretary, already finds it difficult to attend the Council meetings four times a year, and would have them reduced to three. It would be more difficult still to attend at Vienna."

League Radio Station.

The opposition offered by our Government to the erection of a League radio station at Geneva does not strike us as very convincing if the following from the Daily Telegraph (Jan. 27th) correctly describes the position:—

"The question of the erection of a League of Nations wireless station at Geneva is just now occupying the attention of an expert committee under the chairmanship of General Ferrié, Director of Military Radiotelegraphy in the French War Ministry.

This wireless station would be established at the Secretariat of the League, and, in time of crisis, would enable urgent wireless communications to be carried on with the countries concerned, particularly European countries, and would at ordinary times be serviceable for the purpose of telegraphic correspondence connected with the League.

Such a wireless station would be under the entire control of the Secretariat of the League, and would be worked by officials of the League independently of the Swiss Post Office or any other post office. The station would have a range at least covering the whole of Europe. The cost of erection is estimated at £20,000.

The Swiss Government is opposing the plan on the ground that it would infringe on Swiss neutrality, and the Swiss military authorities are particularly against it. On the other hand, the League insists that it is not in the same category as an Embassy or Legation in Switzerland, and that the use of a wireless station by the League is for peace at all times; that its messages are not of a provocative nature; and that it does not represent any particular State but fifty-two States. Moreover, it would be impossible for it, in case of emergency, always to depend on a wireless station which is at Berne and not at the seat of the League.

It is pointed out with reference to the letter which Mr. Kellaway published in the Daily Telegraph on Dec. 3rd, stating that the Marconi Company was about to erect a station at Geneva, that there is at present no sign of such station being built. Moreover, such a station, if erected, would be only for the use of newspaper correspondents and other private traffic, and would not be exclusively a League official station.

The Assembly of the League last September passed a resolution urging the Council to continue inquiries in regard to the establishment of a radio-telegraphic station at the seat of the League, as well as a landing ground in the neighbourhood of the seat of the League for an air