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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

FEDERAL.

REFERENDUM AGAINST THE TOBACCO TAX.

For the Referendum of the Tobacco Tax, which has been initiated by the Communist party 31,565 signatures have been collected, or 1,565 names above the number required.

REPORT OF NATIONAL BANK.

The Federal Council has approved the accounts of the Swiss National Bank for 1930, which show a net profit of £284,380, as against £272,441 in 1929. A sum of £20,000 will be paid in the reserve fund of the bank, £50,000 will be employed in paying a dividend of 5 per cent., and £10,000 in paying a super-dividend of 1 per cent., while the remaining £204,380 will be paid to the Federal Treasury for distribution among the Cantons.

The main object of the Board throughout 1930 was to prevent a further rise in the value of the Swiss currency, and great quantities of foreign money were purchased to that effect. Part of these sums were subsequently converted into gold and deposited in London and New York. At the end of 1930 the Swiss National Bank had over £40,000,000 in gold and in gold currencies, which might be of some use should the foreign capital deposited in Switzerland be withdrawn.

The enforcing of the new legal dispositions providing for the replacing of bimetallism by the gold standard resulted in a big increase in the amount of the gold reserve, which represented an average of about 70 per cent. of the banknotes circulation. The ultimate object of the board is to put gold coins into circulation again in Switzerland, but the board thought it better to postpone that part of its programme, because in the present unfavourable economic circumstances gold coins might not only be hoarded in Switzerland but also exported to the neighbouring countries, with the consequence that they would have to be replaced at the expense of the National Bank as well as of the world gold market.

SWISS WEATHER REPORTS.

Not for fifty years has Switzerland experienced such Arctic conditions as prevailed during the last few days. There has been incessant snow since Saturday evening, and reports from all over the country tell of a phenomenal mantle of snow. In several towns the snow is so deep that tradesmen had to deliver their goods on skis, and in the capital itself the streets resemble a winter resort. The snow is lying to a depth of nearly three feet, and the city is alive with skiers, young and old, from children going to school to middle-aged business men going to and from their offices.

At Basle traffic is almost at a standstill owing to the difficulty of clearing the streets. In the mountain areas conditions are even worse. Already two trains have been derailed owing to the depth of the drifts, but fortunately, without loss of life.

SWISS PARLIAMENT.

The Spring Session of the two Chambers will begin on March the 16th.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The Chocolate Works Lindt & Sprüngli have decided to start a pension Fund for their employees. An amount of 800,000fr. has been handed over to the administrators of this Fund.

N.Z.Z.

BERNE.

Colonel Grimm, for many years a well-known member of the Instructors corps, has sent in his resignation for reasons of health. The Federal Council has accepted same with thanks for his great services rendered to the army.

N.Z.

Dr. C. Moser, a member of the Bernese Government has been elected President of the

Cantonal Bank in Berne. This appointment will necessitate his resignation from the Cantonal Government.

N.Z.Z.

Some time ago, a Society was founded to study the question of a Zoological Garden in the Elfenau. The preliminary negotiations with the Authorities have now been completed and the work will begin shortly.

J.S.

The directors of the Banque Populaire in Berne have appointed M. H. Flückiger as Manager in Berne. M. Flückiger was until now, Manager of the Cantonal Bank in Berne.

J.S.

FRIBOURG.

The death is reported from Fribourg of M. E. Bise, at the age of 72. The deceased has held a professorship at the University since the foundation and was its rector in 1903. Professor Bise was an authority on International law and took a great interest in the political development of the canton of Fribourg, he was for many years a member of the Grand Council. In his younger days he edited the "Liberté."

N.Z.Z.

GENEVA.

M. Frédéric Reverdin, an eminent chemist with an international reputation has died at Geneva at the age of 82. The deceased held various high University degrees amongst them he was doctor "honoris causa" of the Universities of Geneva and Zurich.

J.S.

ST. GALL.

Miss R. Scherrer, who lived for many years at Ebnat—Kappel, died at St. Gallen; she left about 50,000fr. to various institutions in the canton of St. Gallen.

SCHAFFHAUSEN.

The town council of Schaffhausen has obtained a loan of 4,000,000fr. at 4 per cent. from the Banking firm Gebr. Oechsli of that town. This amount will be used for the conversion of the 5,000,000fr. 4½ per cent loan which falls due on the 31st. of October 1931.

V.

GRAUBUENDEN.

Mrs. Baulter, who murdered the Swiss writer Cuno Hofer, at a Hotel in St. Moritz a few weeks ago, has been transferred from the hospital at Samaden to the Asylum Waldhaus. The examination of the dossier has not yet been concluded.

R.B.

SOLOTHURN.

M. Casimir von Arx, late State Councillor, died in Olten at the age of 79. M. von Arx was a well-known personality and has rendered many valuable services to his native canton and to our country. He was a Member of Parliament for 35 years, and during a considerable period he was Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Swiss Federal Railways. He was also a director of the Federal Bank (Eidgenössische Bank).

N.Z.

SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAY.

Statistics for 1930.

During 1930 the Federal Railway transported 171,000,000 passengers, being 586,000 more than last year. In the goods department there was a considerable reduction, the total being 18,800,000 tons—a reduction of 900,000 tons on last year's figures. Traffic receipts from passengers amounted to 158,700,000 fr., an increase of 2,500,000 fr. on last year, but the goods traffic receipts show an adverse difference of 14,700,000 fr., being for 1930, 231,000,000 fr. Extra receipts amounted to 28,800,000 fr. (28,300,000 fr. in 1929). The total receipts for 1930 were 418,546,035 fr., which is 12,811,857 fr. less than in 1929. The total expenses were 272,475,770 fr.—an increase of 8,369,000 fr. in 1929. As a result of the diminution of receipts and an increase of expenditure the gross profit for 1930 is 21,182,235 fr. less than in 1929, being 146,070,255 fr., as compared with 167,251,540 fr. in 1929. The final result is a net profit of 451,000fr. From the gross profit the most important item deducted is 140,000,000 fr. for the annual payment towards the "déficit de guerre."

July was the most favourable month for passenger traffic, and with the exception of February and September, the months showed a reduction in goods traffic as compared with 1929.

SWITZERLAND AND ITS RELATIONS TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The tidings of the discovery of the New World were brought to Switzerland at an early date. A group of simple people, anabaptists of Zurich, appear to have been the first inhabitants of our country to have considered crossing the ocean in search of a new home. Somewhat later, this idea was taken up by the scientific world, and, in particular, by Professor Sebastian Münster of Basle. Söldner figures also among the earliest emigrants.

From then on, Swiss settlements were created in many regions and these early pioneers already took an active part in the cultural, political, religious and economic life of their new fatherland.

Everyone is acquainted with the eventful destiny of General John August Sutter of Rünenberg, Basle (1803-1880), who, at one time, was considered to be the richest landed proprietor of California.

During the Great War also, a number of Swiss enlisted under the American colours. We will mention, first of all, Edward Walter Eberle (1864-1929), whose father, a farmer from Wallenstadt, had already emigrated to the United States.

The puritan conception of law, such as was prevalent in Geneva during the 18th century influenced strongly the legislation and Constitution of the American Union. In later days, it was Switzerland's turn to invoke the example of its great sister Republic in the course of its governmental struggles.

But not until early in the 19th century, did the two nations really come into close contact, when the steadily increasing emigration necessitated the creation of Swiss consulates at Washington and New York, to which the American government reciprocated in 1830 by creating a consulate at Basle.

The unceasing flow of emigrants to the United States, forms a chapter of itself, and constitutes, undoubtedly, the most important link between the two Republics.

Between 1820 and 1925 approximately 30,000 Swiss emigrated to North America. The total number of emigrants, in the course of centuries, is officially estimated by American statisticians at about one million. The United States have always been the country of predilection for Swiss emigration. From 1900 to 1910 not less than 60% of Swiss emigrants chose that country for their new home.

Whereas the principal incentives of the earlier emigration were of a religious or political nature, from the beginning of the 19th century on, emigration was prompted nearly exclusively by economic needs or ambitions.

As concerns our trade relations with the United States, the latter became firmly established around the middle of the 18th century. Up to the beginning of the 19th century, Swiss calico manufacturers had delivered large quantities of their products to the Southern American States, in exchange for which Switzerland received tobacco. Jakob Christian Zollikofer of St. Gall, the first Swiss merchant within the present territory of the United States, founded a factory of his own in Virginia. When around 1850, protectionism became increasingly the key-word of the majority of European States, America became the principal outlet for our standard sport articles. This branch of our export trade was flourishing until business was seriously curtailed by the recent increase of customs duties. In 1913 Swiss exports to the United States constituted about one tenth of our total exports. The prohibitive tariff law of 1930 has dealt a heavy blow to our export trade. Although it is to-day almost impossible to form an opinion as to the practical consequences of this law, the storm of protestations which it aroused, indicates clearly enough that Swiss exports to the United States are thereby seriously affected. The steps taken by the Federal Authorities marked the culminating point of a campaign of protestation, to which practically every country throughout the world has adhered.

Imports from the United States attain today an average value of approximately 2000 million Swiss francs (about 8% of our total imports). The principal products are: corn, raw cotton and tobacco, chemicals and raw copper. The automobile and machine industries (agricultural and tool machinery), the electro-technic industry and rubber tyre manufactures have also increased