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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The office of the liberal-democratic party of Switzerland, under the presidency of National Councillor Pini (Biasca) its President, has closely examined the present position with regards the federal finance reform. It received the report and proposals from its committee of experts, which was appointed at the close of the parliamentary deliberations and it was decided to publish the result of these valuable findings to overcome the dead point in the federal finance reform.

The emergency law proposal of the Federal Council, for a five year financial transitory regulation is rejected as being constitutionally incompatible with states-political interests. The party-office, which considers the proposal as being unsuitable for the creation of the political and psychological preparedness for a solution of the problem of the federal finance reform, proposes in its turn for further constructive consideration:—

(1) Another serious attempt is to be made at-once by the parliamentary conciliation conference to bridge-over the existing differences. For this purpose the conciliation conference is to receive the new proposals worked out and made by the committee of experts of the Swiss liberal-democratic party. If the conciliation conference then is able to arrive at an agreement, which also would receive the consent of both chambers, a plebiscite on such a legislative proposal should be arranged with the least delay. Should the decision be positive, a constitutional basis for the federal finance reform thus would have been created. Until the time that that act would come into force, an interim paragraph could be inserted in which the validity of the present fiscal measures, as far as they are absolutely necessary, could be extended.

(2) Should the conciliation conference be unable to reach an agreement, or if such an agreement is rejected either in parliament or by a plebiscite, then the study of the question of the whole of the federal finance reform must be resumed from the very beginning, a matter which will take years to complete. In

that case a legislative proposal for an interim regulation must be submitted to the people.

(3) Should a plebiscite for either a permanent solution of the finance reform or an interim regulation, owing to the shortness of time, not be possible before the end of 1949, then such a vote must be arranged for the earliest possible moment in the following year; a prolongation of the present powers up to that date could under the present circumstances be justified.

The party-office of the Swiss liberal-democratic party calls upon the liberal representatives in the parliamentary conciliation conference and in both federal chambers to try to find a way for the solution of the problem of the federal finance reform in the sense of these directives. [A.T.S.]

At its session on August 2nd at the Hague, the Permanent Settlement Commission which has to deal with the disputes existing between Switzerland and Roumania, at which four of its five members were present, established the fact, that the Roumanian Delegate, appointed by the Government of the People's Republic of Roumania was absent, although properly summoned by the president. In consideration of the various attempts previously made by the president to assemble a complete commission, those members of the commission present expressed their regret to have to state that under the present circumstances it neither is possible nor serving any purpose, to continue the work of the commission. They decided, however, to keep themselves at the disposal of the parties, in case these should wish to resume effectively the work of the commission in a fully attended assembly.

The Federal Council has taken note of the fact, that the procedure of the settlement commission has been wrecked through the absence of the delegate of the Government of Roumania, although it was on the initiative and request of that state that this commission was established.

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The Federal Council has decided to continue to act in conformity with the compulsory, legal and arbitration contracts of February 3rd, 1926, arranged between Switzerland and Roumania, for which purpose they have enlisted the services of Prof. G. Sauer-Hall, Professor for international law at the Universities of Geneva and Neuchâtel and who has already acted as the agent of the Council in the settlement procedure.

* * *

The Political Department in Berne reports that according to telegraphic news from the Swiss representative in Quito, that the Swiss Colony in Ecuador in general and Ambato in particular has safely survived the earthquake of 5th August. Some compatriots, however, have material damage to report.

* * *

Former National Councillor G. Duttweiler, has been elected a member of the States Council (Ständerat). He received 54,114 votes whilst his opponent, R. Meier (Socialist) registered 28,341 votes.

Cantonal

The Central Committee of the Lucerne cantonal Conservative Christian-Social party discussed the federal plebiscite which is to be held on September 11th and decided by an overwhelming majority against two votes to recommend the rejection of the initiative to return to direct democracy. [A.T.S.]

* * *

For the first time for many years, the town of Zurich has elected a Liberal as its Mayor (Town President). E. Laudolt, was elected with 48,071 votes. His opponent J. Peter (Socialist) received 30,457 votes.

H. Sappeur (Liberal) was elected as member of the "Stadtrat" with 48,068 votes, the candidate for this seat, a socialist polled 27,172 votes.

The Socialist Party in the Stadtrat, has thus lost their majority.

* * *

The communal council of the town of Zurich considered the town council's proposal for the building of a hospital for the town of Zurich at the Waid. The town council requests a credit of 20,000,000 francs for the erection of the buildings inclusive of staff quarters and road constructions. The hospital, according to the building programme is to have 243 beds for chronic cases, 54 beds for medical cases and 120 beds for a

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surgical department, in all 417 beds. The staff quarters are to have about 130 beds in single or double rooms for nurses and sisters. After consultation the cantonal council is prepared to make a grant of 10,000,000 frs. towards the total cost of 30,000,000 frs.

* * *

In the spring of this year the cantonal council of the canton of Zug received a request for a credit to build new premises to house the arts and crafts school in Zug, and for an establishment of an agricultural professional school at Cham. The government of the canton has now decided that the request was well founded and that the work should be started. The Arts and Crafts school at present has 560 students, to which number must be added 130 of the commercial professional school, so that accommodation for 800 must be considered for the new building. The cost of the building is estimated at about one million francs and the building of the agricultural winter school with partial boarding arrangements is calculated to cost 350,000 frs. [A.T.S.]

* * *

At the KABA (Bernese Cantonal Exhibition) a special day for the "Garrison Town Thun" was arranged, being considered justified as forming an important part of the Swiss military activity and being situated in the canton of Berne.

The mayor of Thun, National Councillor P. Kunz, received in the congress building of the exhibition late Federal Councillor Minger, General Guisan and a large number of high representatives of the army, the Federal military department and officers present and past who acted as instructors and commanders of

courses at Thun. In his address he referred to the close relationship which existed between the military institution and the town in its economic life. He stated that in the past year Thun was occupied by a daily average of 1,500 troops and 350 military horses, and the wages bill for the military amounted to no less than 21 million francs. Thun and the whole neighbourhood profited by it. A close comradeship between town and military institution existed always.

Colonel Zollinger (Thun) recounted how Thun became a garrison town. The beginning goes back about 150 years into the Helvetic Republic when the men from the then canton "Oberland" for their military training were billeted in the Kornhaus and the inns of the town. In 1817 the Diat designated Thun as a drilling place and garrison, and as such was officially opened in 1819. A close associate of the place was the then commander Captain Dufour, later General and also the Bernese artillery captain, Prince Louis Napoleon, who received his military education in Thun. In the middle of the 19th century the horse remount depot was established, as were the munition factory, the construction works, the arsenal and the federal barracks.

In the afternoon a very impressive military parade took place. Demonstrations showed how easy going the training was round about 1825 and how in the course of time it has changed. The recruit schools actually in training at Thun demonstrated the present day military education, the work of the army transport, motor transport and light infantry. A large number of spectators followed these demonstrations with the utmost interest, particularly well received were those of the historical times. [A.T.S.]

At the age of 76 years, rector Ernst Burri died after a long illness at the district hospital in Langenthal. The deceased earned a great reputation as a teacher and educationalist as well as for his outstanding interest in the activities of the cadet corps. For the services rendered to the latter he was called the cadet father. In the army he attained the rank of a colonel.

The labour office of the canton Berne reports that at the end of July 250 people were totally unemployed as compared with 271 in the previous month. Compared with the figures of last year at the same time, it shows an increase of 177 completely unemployed. Partly unemployed for this year were 164 people of which number 52 are from the watch industry.

[A.T.S.]

The grand council of Basle has been requested to grant an extra-ordinary subsidy of frs.158,000 for the payment of a cost of living grant to the permanent members of the Basle town theatre. To cover a probable working deficit a maximum sum of 100,000 frs. is asked for.

Orphan inspector of Schaffhausen, Paul Strub, whilst presiding at a committee meeting suddenly collapsed and died at the age of 69. In 1925 he was elected as the representative of the social democrats into the town council where for six years he was in charge of the relief of the poor. Since 1936 he was inspector of the orphanages in the canton and in 1937 was elected a member of the grand council of the canton.

The survey department of the canton St. Gall proposed to the communal council of St. Margrethen, in future to write the name of the place without an 'h', as St. Margreten. The communal council is in agreement with the proposal.

A public assembly held on August 14th in Andeer, at which members of the authorities of the communes situated along the Hinterrhein, decided unanimously, after hearing a report from Director Lorenz of Thusis and a professional opinion by States Councillor Lardelli, to submit to the "Kleine Rat" of the canton of Grisons the following resolution:—

The assembly request the "Kleine Rat" to make representation to the federal authorities to settle the still open legal and economic questions between Switzerland and Italy with regards the inter-

How do the Swiss Poor fare, who are financially supported by the Swiss Benevolent Society?

As mentioned in the recently published Annual Report:—

"A single compatriot without other income receives at least 10/- for rent and 22/6 a week for food and all other expenses. A married couple gets a minimum of 13/- for rent and 42/- for living expenses. The winter supplement for coal is 5/- per week per family."

It is only possible to pay these allowances by the generous support of the Colony. An early remittance of subscriptions not yet paid would be very much appreciated.

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national letting of the Val di Lei, with the utmost speed in order to commence with the building of the power works which are in the interests of the communes of the canton of Grisons as well as of the whole of Swiss economy. [A.T.S.]

Under the patronage of the cantonal authorities of the Grisons, the great jubilee of the commemoration of the glorious victory on the Calvern as well as the 150th anniversary of the entrance of the Grisons into the Swiss Confederation, took place at St. Moritz on Sunday, 15th August. The festival started on Sunday morning with a well attended and impressively rendered symphony concert, at which amongst the many guests were to be seen Federal Councillor Kobelt, the Swiss General Consul in Mailand, Dr. Brenni, the representatives of the Government of the Grisons Dr. Planta, Dr. Margadant, Walter Liesch and Konrad Bartsch, as well as the President of the Grand Council of the canton Dr. Dario Plozza and the Vice-President Dr. von Planta (Zuoz). The St. Moritz Calvern-play orchestra under the direction of Walter Aeschbach played works by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven.

As centre of the festivities was the final act of the Calvern play at which 450 people were taking part. This play was attended by a large audience, amongst which were many foreign visitors. It presented a colourful picture of folks customs of the past and present. [A.T.S.]

The Albigna district in the Bergell Alps has claimed two victims, members of the climbing club Alpstein. They are the 32 year old Ferdinand Bürke, locksmith in Zurich, and the 22 year old Kurt Gurtner, technician in Herisau. The two climbers were amongst the best rock climbers in Switzerland. They had completed a number of tours in the Bergell for about ten days and as a finale to their holidays intended doing a second climb of the west wall of the Piz Balsetto in the Albigna group. All went well but at the last part of the wall, when crossing a couloir, they met with some falling stones which caused them to precipitate into the depth where their bodies were found. [A.T.S.]

The States Council of the canton Vaud delivered to the Grand Council a report about the action taken against unemployment. It examined the position of the labour market and established the fact that an increase in the number of the totally unemployed concerns mostly the unskilled workers, which represent about half of the total labour force. The States Council further presents a report of what it has been doing and is continuing to do to preserve the economic purchasing power of the people, to prevent discharges, to relearn or professionally educate the unemployed in order to avoid these to have to compete with foreign workers which, however, are occupying subordinate positions particularly in farming and the hotel industry, and which are refused by Swiss workers.

With the combating of unemployment, an increase in the erection of dwelling houses is foreseen. The construction of private buildings is to be encouraged. A credit of frs. 366,740,000 is established for a work programme in case an economic crisis should take place. Assistance for distressed unemployed is foreseen. The States Council has at its disposal a sum of

three million francs to combat unemployment, which sum includes the additional credits which will be submitted for approval to the Grand Council at its August session. [A.T.S.]

At a bank in one of the villages of the canton Valais, largely patronized by foreign visitors, spurious dollar bills were paid in. The police are inquiring into the matter and the Federal prosecutor has ordered an investigation. At Sion a number of people have been interrogated and one of them has been arrested.

Humanitarian

The Secretariat of the League of Red Cross Societies reports that the sanitary actions carried out in the Lebanon, Syria and the Jordanians have made it possible to maintain a higher standard of health than one might have expected in these countries where 330,000 Palestinian refugees are living. Recently the League covered an area of 1,500,000 square metres, on which are situated 45 towns and villages, with DDT. This protected the population from mosquitos, which infected these territories and in which 1,400,000 people are living. Further a mass inoculation was undertaken. Sanitary contingents of the Red Cross League are operating in camps of Palestinian refugees.

The League further reports that from various parts of the world offers of aid for the victims of the earthquake in Ecuador are received. The American Red Cross, according to latest information has sent men and medical aid by air; Columbia sent a contingent of doctors and nurses. The Peruvian Red Cross is sending provisions. Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Uruguay arranged a pooling agreement for sending provisions and clothing. Great Britain, Spain and Australia expresse their wish to help. The International Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies announced that steps have been taken for each national Red Cross Society to accept money contributions in aid of the victims of this catastrophe. [A.T.S.]

The International Committee of the Red Cross informs all people living in Switzerland, who wish to send food parcels to prisoners of war in camps in the Soviet Union, that such parcels are now accepted at all Swiss Post Offices and are sent free of charge. These parcels, therefore, must no longer be sent to the International Committee, which would have to return them to the sender. [A.T.S.]

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Professor P. L. Mercanton of Lausanne University, in "Les Alpes" Monthly Magazine of the S.A.C., draws attention to the fact, that of 100 glaciers 13 grew, 10 remained stationary and 77 receded.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

A party of Swiss holiday makers from Zurich, some days ago had lunch at the top of the Eiffel Tower. Having finished their meal and after admiring the view, they returned to their very expensive motor-car which they parked at the foot of the tower. They were, however, unable to find it, as it had disappeared with all the contents, consisting of clothes, legitimation papers and valuable jewellery belonging to the party. The thieves had also transferred the contents of a nearby Belgian car into the Swiss auto, which was found the following day in some woods about 35 miles from Paris, completely stripped of its accessories. The loss to the Swiss party exceeds far beyond 10,000 Swiss francs.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

The President of the Watchmakers Trade Union of America, Mr. Walter Cenerazzo, is at the moment on a tour through Europe, to get his own impression of the social conditions which are prevailing, particularly in the watch-industry. After a sojourn in England, he is staying for two weeks in Switzerland. He was received in Berne by Mr. H. Schaffner, solicitor, a delegate for trade agreements, in order to discuss various points. Mr. Cenerazzo is the leading mouth-piece in the battle against import of Swiss watches into the United States. Switzerland has so far made a good impression on him and he can see for himself and on the spot that his constant assertion, of the miserable working and wages conditions in the Swiss Watch Industry, is incorrect. Before returning to the U.S.A. he will be visiting Italy, Belgium, Germany and France.

"My stay in Switzerland has been most instructive," declared Cenerazzo. "By my personal observations I have come to realize that the Swiss economy is the best organized in the whole world."

Turning to the subject of the watch industry, he stated that American watchmakers did not want to injure the Swiss watch business but that the American industry must be protected for purposes of national defence. Cenerazzo then explained that the difficulties which have arisen in the American watch market between Swiss watches and the national product result

from the difference in the cost of production in the two countries.

Praising the Swiss for the way they have resolved their social problems for workers in the watch industry, the American labour representative claimed that American watchmakers did not fare so well even though their hourly wage averaged twice as much as in Switzerland.

Mr. Cenerazzo will remain in Switzerland for several more weeks for further study of the Swiss economy and the watch industry.

[A.T.S.]

PETITES CHOSES QUI FONT PLAISIR.

"Semaine Suisse" (Service de Presse).

Le Dr. h.c. M. Schiesser, vice-président et administrateur-délégué de Brown Boveri, vient d'être appelé à la présidence de la Commission internationale d'électrotechnique. Le fait que le premier occupant de cette importante fonction soit un Suisse doit être considéré comme une reconnaissance publique du haut degré de développement de notre industrie électrotechnique.

* * *

On a commencé, en Angleterre, la fabrication en série de logements préfabriqués, selon le brevet suisse Göhner-Schindler.

* * *

En complément d'une information de New-York selon laquelle une maison américaine avait réussi à fabriquer industriellement et synthétiquement des vitamines A, on annonce que la Suisse en produit depuis longtemps par voie artificielle. La priorité de l'industrie chimique suisse dans le domaine de la production synthétique de la vitamine A est incontestée.

* * *

La première session internationale pour l'établissement des normes de télévision a eu lieu à Zurich. L'assemblée des délégués de l'Union universelle des associations d'institutions s'est tenue à Berne.

* * *

Le conseil communal de Vienne a décidé de remettre la médaille d'honneur de la capitale fédérale autrichienne à diverses personnalités suisses, pour leur activité en faveur de la population viennoise.

* * *

D'après les renseignements fournis par la Bibliothèque nationale suisse, la production suisse de livres est en forte augmentation en 1948, malgré la grosse concurrence qui lui font maintenant les maisons d'éditions de l'étranger. La comparaison entre la

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* * *

Un cours de vacances pour les écoles suisses de l'étranger a eu lieu à Bad Attisholz (Soleure). Son but était de mettre le corps enseignant résidant à l'étranger au courant des problèmes économiques les plus importants pour la Suisse. 50 instituteurs et institutrices de Milan, Gênes, Florence, Rome, Naples, Catane, Luino, Barcelone et Alexandrie y ont pris part.

* * *

Le camp de vacances pour jeunes gens qui s'est ouvert à la Lenk (Oberland bernois) réunit une forte participation internationale. Français, Suisses, Américains, Belges et Anglais, qui ne peuvent encore s'offrir un séjour dans nos hôtels, y passent leurs vacances.

* * *

A l'occasion du neufcentième anniversaire de la canonisation de l'impératrice Richarde, la sainte d'Alsace, aura lieu la première de "Richarde", pièce d'Hermann Ferdinand Schell, musique de Richard Sturzenegger (Berne), régie de Wilfried Scheitlin. La première représentation aura lieu le 28 août, devant la vieille cathédrale d'Andlau sous le patronage de l'évêque de Strasbourg et du Consul de Suisse.

* * *

A l'occasion d'une manifestation à Ottawa, le vice-président du Conseil canadien de l'Unesco a remis un chèque de 25,000 dollars au ministre de Suisse, M. Victor Nef. Ce don du comité canadien de reconstruction représente une participation aux frais de construction d'une maison commune au village international Pestalozzi à Trogen.

* * *

L'usine à vapeur "Guadaira", qui vient d'être terminée au port de Séville, peut être considérée comme une œuvre suisse, si l'on fait abstraction des quelques livraisons faites par l'Espagne et d'autres pays; c'est notre industrie mécanique qui a en effet fourni la plus grande partie de l'équipement. La construction en a été confiée à des ingénieurs suisses.

* * *

Au cours de cette année, trois excellents livres sur la Suisse ont paru en Amérique; il s'agit de "The Swiss without halos" ("Le Suisse sans auréole") de Christopher Herold; "Switzerland" de Dore Ogrizek et J. G. Rüfenacht; "Travellers in Switzerland" ("Voyageurs en Suisse") de G. R. de Beer.

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TEN-YEAR ELECTRICITY PLAN FOR THE SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAYS.

A power consumption scheme covering the next ten to fifteen years has been evolved by the Swiss Federal Railways to meet the increasing requirements necessitated by intensified train services, additional conversions of lines, and so on.

The scheme is based on the assumption that requirements in 1948 would have totalled 895,000,000 kWh. Consumption for the year ended September 31st, 1948, totalled only 877,548,000 kWh., because of reduction of services and heating in the trains, and enhanced use of steam locomotives. By adding 28,000,000 kWh. for additional annual consumption from newly-electrified lines, and a further 47,000,000 kWh. for the intensification of services, a total annual consumption of 970,000,000 kWh. has been arrived at. It is believed that the 1,000,000,000 mark p.a. will not be exceeded annually even in the distant future.

Annual production by the Federal Railways' own power stations now totals 782,500,000 kWh. To this must be added supplies from privately-owned power stations aggregating 99,000,000 kWh. annually. After extensions, now in hand, to their own power stations the Federal Railways envisage an additional 72,500,000 kWh. annually from this source alone; supplies from privately-owned power stations are expected to increase by some 43 million kWh. annually. Hence, the grand total would be 997,000,000 kWh. In practice, however, a maximum of only 898,000,000 kWh. is expected to result. The annual deficit, therefore, would be 72 million kWh.

There are various ways to cover the deficit. One is a participation of the Federal Railways in projected joint-ownership power stations. Another is the possibility, now being examined, of erecting a railway-owned power station in the Gotthard massif additional to the two railway-owned power stations already there at Amsteg and Ritom. In any case the solution will have to be part of a power scheme covering the whole of Switzerland, and in such a way as to ensure full supply even in years with prolonged droughts or dry winters, as experienced in recent years, which periodically embarrass the Federal Railways. Thus, in the severe, dry winter of 1946-7, shortage of power resulted in drastic curtailment of passenger services, the situation being aggravated by a coal shortage throughout Europe. The idea is to avoid in future years any curtailment of traffic because of deficiencies in the power supply; steam services which have to be introduced at such times prove too costly.

It is believed that there will be only a slight intensification of services in coming years, reaching a maximum of 5 per cent. (based on the 1948 total) within ten or fifteen years. Long and heavy trains will probably be gradually replaced by shorter and more frequent trains.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, September 30th, 1949.

We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: A. Aklin, E. Wyman, F. Matthey, Jos. Ecker, C. Schardt, J. Keller, M. A. Mauch-Modica, M. A. Leuba, A. Srittmatter, G. Senn.