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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The two Federal Chambers (National and States Council) assembled on the 14th of this month, as one body (Vereinigte Bundesversammlung) in order to elect a successor to Federal-Councillor Dr. Celio, who is shortly assuming the post of Swiss Minister in Rome.

The Assembly was presided over by J. Schmid, President of the Swiss National Council. The Federal Chancellor read out the letter of resignation of Dr. Celio, in which he announced his nomination as diplomatic representative of the Confederation to Rome, and in which he expressed his thanks to the members of the two Chambers for the always ready support which they had given him during the tenure of his office, concluding with his best wishes to the country and its people.

The President of the National Council expressed the thanks of the Assembly to Federal-Councillor Celio for the good and faithful services which he had rendered to the country during the last ten years as a member of the Federal Government, extending to him their best wishes in his new mission to preserve and develop the friendly relations between Italy and Switzerland.

Dr. Celio then expressed his thanks to the Speaker, in his native tongue, for the friendly tribute paid to him, and concluded his address with his best wishes for the future welfare of our country.

The Assembly then proceeded with the election. A joint proposal by the catholic-conservative, radical-democrat, socialist, peasant and bourgeois and liberal parties favoured the candidature of National-Councillor, Dr. h.c. Josef Escher (Brig).

219 voting papers were distributed and 219 were returned of which 22 blank, 197 were valid and the necessary absolute majority was 99.

Dr. J. Escher was elected with 165 votes.

Thirty-two votes were recorded in favour of the following candidates: Maspoli (Ticino); 17; Condrau (Grisons): 8, Various: 7.

Amidst great applause, Dr. Escher declared that he would accept the election, thanking the Assembly for

the honour thus bestowed on him. He said, that he considered his nomination primarily as a compliment to his native canton (Valais) which for the first time in the history of the Confederation was allotted a seat in the Federal Government. After having declared his intention to serve the country to the best of his ability in his high office, he took the oath.

* * *

Federal Councillor, Joseph Escher, was born on the 17th of September, 1885, in Simplon-Dorf (Ct. Valais). He studied *juris prudencia* at the Universities of Berne and Berlin after which he established himself as a lawyer and notary in Brig. From 1912 — 1920, Escher was a member of the Municipal Council of Brig and from 1920 — 1928 he occupied the post of President of the Urban Council of Glis-Brig. He sat from 1915 — 1932 in the Grand Council of the canton of Valais as a representative of the catholic-conservative party.

In 1931, he entered the cantonal government, and three years later (1934) Dr. Escher was elected President of the government of the canton of Valais. In 1925, he was elected a Member of Parliament (National Council) in which he sat from 1925 — 1932 and again since 1936. In 1948/49 he presided over the National Council. Escher has been since 1946 President of the Conservative Popular Party of Switzerland, and is a *doctor honoris causa* of the University of Fribourg.

Federal Councillor, Dr. J. Escher, is no stranger to the Swiss Colony in London; on the occasion of a visit to this country as a Member of the Swiss Parliamentary Delegation in May of last year, he attended a dinner given to the said Delegation by the City Swiss Club, on May 6th at the Dorchester Hotel, he was also present at a luncheon held in honour of the Swiss Parliamentarians by the Anglo-Swiss Society at the Dorchester Hotel on which occasion the Rt. Hon. Philip Noel-Baker, P.C., M.P., presided. During his stay in

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