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IT HAPPENED IN CENTRAL SWITZERLAND

URI

With Uri, yet another Swiss Canton showed a surplus in the annual accounts for 1963. Income of Fr.9,364,381.— was Fr.141,865.— higher than expenditure. The new Uri "Landrat" held its constituting meeting on 15th June. The newly elected legislative will be in office for four years. The new "Landammann" is Dr. Alfred Weber (Altdorf). The President of the "Landrat" is Franz Muheim, the Vice-President Franz Jaeger, both from Altdorf. The number of members is now sixty against fifty-four hitherto.

On 24th May there had been a plebiscite in which the electorate voted an additional three million grant for the enlargement of the Cantonal Hospital and accepted the draft Bill for a cantonal old age and dependants' insurance.

Erstfeld accepted a credit of 4.7 million francs for a new school with a swimming pool and one million for the renovation of the present schoolbuildings and Commune Chancery. The new Power Station on the Goescheneralp, which was inaugurated last September is now fully operational.

The number of road accidents on Uri territory went back in 1963 from 462 to 435. This includes the bad military accident near Wassen in September, which caused three deaths and considerable damage.

"The Fortress St. Gotthard Today" was the theme of an address given by Colonel Wohnlich (Andermatt), when the old soldiers met for a ceremony of remembrance of the active military service on the Gotthard 1914-1918.

In July, part of the latest James Bond Film "Goldfinger" was made in the Gotthard region.

SCHWYZ

The eighth volume of the results of the federal census of 1960 shows that the Canton of Schwyz has increased its inhabitants from 44,168 to 78,048 in 110 years, nearly 77%. In ten years Freienbach has grown by nearly 40% (23 communes out of the 30 have increased their population). Riemenstalden shows the biggest decrease (20.3%).

In 1960, 93.6% were Roman Catholic and 6.2% Protestant. Only 6.9% of the inhabitants were foreigners, mostly Italians, as well as Germans and Austrians.

The annual accounts for 1963 showed a small surplus, though the extraordinary accounts ended with a deficit of Fr.605,000.— mainly owing to expenditure for road construction, building and water protection. Over 18½ million francs were spent in three years on roads in the Canton of Schwyz. New regulations regarding roads are to replace those of 1849 and those regarding road building of 1929. In 1935 there were 1,215 motor vehicles in the Canton, in 1963 15,807. There is now a new Traffic Control building in Schwyz. Unfortunately, traffic accidents also increased from 302 in the first six months of 1963 to 342 in the first half year of 1964. The "Schwyzer Strassenbahnen A.G." stopped operating at the end of the year, and six buses are now in service.

Also at the end of the year, the electorate succeeded in launching an Initiative demanding an immediate partial revision of the tax laws. A protest against the holding back of the waters of the river Muota in connection with the building of the hydro-electric power plant has been lodged.

A T.V. team worked for a week in the Hoelloch in the Muota Valley to make an educational documentary film.

The Cantonal Council was elected by the Schwyz electorate at the end of April, the new number being limited to 100 (105 before the people voted for a reduction last September). The Liberals have lost most of these seats.

On 20th July, Schwyz became a federal army centre (Eidgenössischer Waffenplatz) with renovated barracks.

OBWALDEN

The annual accounts for 1963 of the Half-Canton of Obwalden showed a deficit of Fr.156,806.—. The population of "Unterwalden ob dem Wald" increased by 4.6% in the years 1950-1960 when there were 23,135 inhabitants. Foreigners accounted for 5.3%.

In May the electorate accepted constitutional amendments according to which women should also be eligible into the Educational Council, now called Education Department. The Canton has decided to join the intercantonal concordat for an agricultural technical college at Zollikofen (Berne).

The Commune of Engelberg voted a credit of 4½ million francs for a new schoolbuilding "im Aeschi". In June, the nine new bells for the Abbey Church of Engelberg were inaugurated. The Abbey is to be renovated. The Protestant Church of Obwalden celebrated its centenary last autumn.

NIDWALDEN

"Unterwalden nid dem Wald" counted 22,188 inhabitants in 1960 according to the census of that year. This is an increase of 14.4% in ten years. Of the 1,665 foreigners nearly three quarters were Italians.

The 1963 accounts ended with a deficit of Fr.201,000.—. The extraordinary accounts regarding road construction, subsidies for the Stansstad-Engelberg railway and a new hospital building were balanced.

Road accidents have gone down from 179 in 1962 to 156 in 1963. On the other hand, the number of deaths have gone up from six to ten, seven pedestrians among them. Whilst the number of vehicles have increased by 40% in the last four years, the number of injured have gone back by 10% every year. In 1962, the Police took away 58 driving licences, in 1963 73, mainly on account of drunkenness.

On 4th July, at its first meeting after the Lands-gemeinde, the Nidwalden "Landrat" elected the director of the Cantonal Bank, Karl Niederberger from Wolfenschiessen, as its President.

Nidwalden has decided to begin the scholastic year in the autumn in future. This will start in 1965, at the same time as in Lucerne.

LUCERNE

The Weekly Review of the "Sunday Times" carried an article by Vincent Cronin on 28th June, in which the writer says that around Lucerne the countryside was a kind of chocolate-box scene. And that was precisely what he liked about Switzerland. He went on to say:

"The piquant thing is this: that whereas we today like Switzerland because it is restful, soothing and predictable, our great-great-grandfathers valued it for just the opposite reason — because it was wild, rugged and awesome, while their wives found it "romantic", meaning that the unfamiliar rock formation gave them giddy ideas.

Listz, Marie d'Agoult and George Sand rode mule-back through the Swiss Alps in 1836, shuddering delightedly at precipices, torrents and gathering storm-clouds, while Wagner, who required dramatic surroundings, lived ten years at Tribschen and drew from the lake his "Meistersinger". In a slightly different mood Matthew Arnold described Lake Lucerne as the most beautiful place in the world, qualifying this beauty, after true deliberation, as "solemn".

"Few people today would call Lucerne solemn. Placid, yes, and very restful. But not solemn. Nor after we have flown in at 20,000 feet, do the mountains seem, as they did then, "sublime" and "tremendous". The aeroplane has humbled the Swiss Alps, but perhaps that is a good thing. We can enjoy less pompously and with less strain Lucerne's many other attractions."

Many were the organisations which have chosen Lucerne as a background for their meetings. In November, for instance, it was the "Europa Union", the Swiss movement for the unification of Europe. In the spring, the Interparliamentary Union's permanent commissions met in Lucerne to prepare the plenary session which is to take place in Denmark at the end of this month.

An international exhibition on boats and water sport was held in the "town of lights", and the Swiss Girl Guides' Association met there. Early in May, the fifth Swiss meeting of sergeant-majors took place, and at the end of the month, the famous "Amts- und Wyberschiesset" of the Entlebuch was held at Schuepfheim. Every five years this contest takes place, and apart from 1,381 men, nearly 400 women competed. The Harmonica World Festival was organised in Lucerne in June, and at Vitznau the congress of the Federation of Anglo-Swiss Clubs. The British Ambassador Sir Paul Grey was present. On 28th June, over 100,000 spectators attended the "Seenachtsfest" when a thunderstorm competed with the fireworks display.

The day of remembrance of the Battle of Sempach in July 1386 was combined this year with a special act of

remembrance of the two world wars of fifty and twenty-five years ago.

The cantonal accounts of 1963 ended with a surplus of Fr.800,000.— (income 144 million francs).

A very expensive project is under discussion, that of improving the traffic conditions in the Seetal, which will cost well over 100 million francs. The Lucerne road regulations, one hundred years old, have been replaced by up-to-date laws which include parking regulations. In future, every new building is to provide its own parking facilities.

Traffic accidents in the first six months of the year have gone up to 969 (1963: 914). They caused forty deaths, 242 badly and 332 slightly injured; all figures are up over last year.

The electricity plant Lucerne-Engelberg is to be extended at the cost of 5.3 million francs, whilst over three million francs are required for the enlargement and renovation of the Cantonal Hospital. The "Progymnasium" of Beromünster is to be enlarged, and the old Lucerne Slaughter House of 1900 is to be replaced by a new building.

Planned are a new beach on the Tribschen estate, two gymnasia at the Hintermusegg, and a new radio station for the Lucerne Police. A project of an oil refinery near the Wuwilermoos is under discussion.

The Municipal Council of Lucerne has bought the Museo Rieder at Morcote (Ticino). The new director of the Central-Swiss Technical College is Prof. Josef Ottrubay, dipl. ing. ETH.

Finally, in February the whole of Central Switzerland was affected by a considerable earthquake which was particularly strong near Sarnen.

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