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FEDERAL APPOINTMENTS

It is a well-known fact that a great deal of important work is done by the Federal Parliamentary Commissions. Between 8th January and 26th February, no fewer than forty meetings were fixed, half of these, according to the nature of the business, outside the capital. Such Committees include one on parliamentary reform, one on increased subsidy for scientific research, one on the problem of foreign workers, especially in connection with the agreement with Italy, one for the road tunnel through the Gotthard; other subjects dealt with by Commissions are old age insurance, the credit for the new Swiss Embassy in London, and, also concerning the Swiss abroad, the continuation of permits for land purchases in Switzerland. Apart from these commissions, there exists a large number of committees, consultative commissions and sub-committees. Early this year, the personnel of Federal Commissions was appointed for the period 1965/68. So for instance the members of the Swiss United Nations Specialised Agencies' Committees such as FAO and UNESCO.

At the end of 1964, there were 17,500 employees in the central federal administration (Military Dept. 8,340, Finance and Customs 5,120, Home Affairs 1,360, Political 910, Economics 840, Justice and Police 520, Communications and Energy 250, general, including Federal Chancellery and Tribunals 160). These had to be appointed for a four-year period.

The Federal Court of Justice in Lausanne under its President Bundesrichter Haeberlin has also been newly appointed (for two years).

The new Swiss Ambassador in India and Nepal is Monsieur René Faessler, at present Ambassador of Switzerland in Peru. (*The Swiss Colony in Great Britain will remember Monsieur Faessler from his stay as Economic Counsellor at the Swiss Embassy in London (1954-61).*) [A.T.S.]

ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

In its seventieth report to Parliament on economic co-operation in Europe, the Federal Council states that in spite of difficulties the work is continued in the European Economic Community, especially regarding customs and a unified agrarian policy. The gap between the "Six" and the "Seven" has become bigger, and Switzerland is determined not to miss any opportunity to help in the lessening of the economic rift. Switzerland advocates individual pragmatic solutions in fields where no political principles are involved.

The report refers to the World Economic Conference and its agreement to co-ordinate technical assistance in which Switzerland plays an important part.

At the meeting of the Consultative Council of EFTA in Geneva in November, Switzerland was represented by Dr. H. Homberger, Dr. W. Jucker, National Councillor Dr. M. Weber and Prof. G. Cavallero. Later in November, the Council of the European Free Trade Association and the Council of the Association EFTA/Finland held a meeting in Geneva at ministerial level. The Swiss delegation was led by Federal Councillors Wahlen and Schaffner. This meeting was held on the eve of the opening of the "Kennedy Round" in GATT, to which at present 64 states belong, and six countries, including Switzerland, are provisionally associated. Several countries take part in the negotiations on the basis of special agreements.

Federal Councillor Wahlen, as Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe, attended

a meeting of the Consultative Assembly in Strasbourg at the end of January.

The ninth meeting of the EFTA Consultative Committee also met in January in Geneva. The Swiss delegation consisted of the same gentlemen as in November, with the addition of Dir. Juri and Minister Dr. O. Long, head of the Swiss EFTA Delegation.

At the Conference of Ministers of EFTA in Geneva in February, a large Swiss delegation was headed by the two Federal Councillors Wahlen and Schaffner. It also included Ambassador Stopper and Minister Weitnauer.

The two Federal Councillors met the British Ministers Mr. George Brown and Mr. Douglas Jay for talks lasting three hours.

Federal Councillor Wahlen already had talks with Mr. Brown when he was in London to attend Sir Winston Churchill's funeral.

New agreements recently concluded between Switzerland and other countries are:

Alterations in the customs accounts and turnover tax with Liechtenstein, passport and customs clearance with Austria, communal development of water power and frontier adjustment at Emosson with France, social insurance also with Liechtenstein and with Austria, consolidation of debts with Brazil, extension of the trade agreement with Cuba, trade and technical co-operation with Malta. New economic negotiations are in progress with Germany. [A.T.S.]

A BIG FOREIGN ORDER PLACED IN SWITZERLAND

The National Union of Sugar Producers in Mexico has entrusted the Swiss engineering firm of Bühler Bros. with the installation of a large plant for storing raw sugar and loading it on ships. The project includes the construction of a hangar in the port of Vera Cruz, big enough to hold 40,000 tons of raw sugar, as well as the necessary wharves for loading ships. The sugar is unloaded from railway cars and trucks at the rate of 400 tons an hour, while loading on to ships is scheduled to take place at a rate of 800 tons an hour. In addition to the main plant, the Swiss firm will supply seventeen conveyor belts of a total length of 2,800 feet and a capacity of 400 to 800 tons an hour; six conveyor belts of a total length of 1,310 feet and a capacity of 400 tons an hour each and one travelling loading tower with a mobile outrigger and a trimmer with telescopic tube for capacities up to 800 tons an hour; a second loading tower is to be supplied later. The new plant will be put into operation this year; it is the third to be ordered in Latin America from the same Swiss engineering firm. [O.S.E.C.]



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