

Switzerland's economic co-operation in Europe and the world

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SWITZERLAND'S ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE AND THE WORLD

The Federal Council states in its 78th report on economic policy that on the whole, prospects of new ways to co-operate between EFTA and the Common Market had somewhat improved. In a pragmatic manner, Switzerland had been able to reach agreement with EEC in several fields (a new textile agreement would come into force in July). The main accents on the activities of OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), was on the problem of aid to developing countries. The eighth session of UNCTAD (United Nations Conference for Trade and Development), took place in Geneva towards the end of January. It was mainly devoted to the preparatory work on the second "Development Decade 1970-1980". Switzerland is interested in improving conditions in developing countries both economically and socially, and certainly not from altruistic motives in the first place. Exports to the Third World increased from 15% in 1925 to 21.2% in 1968. There was 1.46 milliard francs on the credit side.

The leader of the Swiss delegation in Geneva, Monsieur P. Languetin, made a few proposals with regard to regional co-operation between developing countries. Ghana's Ambassador to Switzerland, Chairman of UNCTAD 1969, praised the "Declaration of Berne", which was issued on 19th December and signed by over 1,000 people. These committed themselves for three years to donate 3% of their income to projects in aid of developing countries each month.

In the presence of Federal Councillor Schaffner, the Parliamentary Commission of the Council of States discussed Switzerland's relation with the Common Market.

The Federal Council's report on economic measures taken during 1968 was published at the end of January. Most of these were reported in the "Swiss Observer" at the time, especially France's foreign exchange difficulties. One new item is the agreement with Morocco and Tunisia, according to which red wine in barrels will be imported into Switzerland to compensate exports of cheese and cattle. This was arranged in order to ease the surplus of cheese in Switzerland.

The Swiss trade balance for 1968 showed a marked improvement over that of the previous year. Imports: 19,425m. francs (increase of 9.2%) and exports nearly 17,350m. (increase of 14.4%).

In Geneva, a new agreement was signed on 30th January for a loan of 61 million francs, which FIPOI (company founded by Confederation and Canton of Geneva to deal with properties relating in one way or another to international organisations) grants UNO for financing the extension of the Palace of Nations in Geneva. In addition, Switzerland makes an outright donation of four million.

(By courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

SWISS ELECTORATE IN ACTION

At recent polls in Switzerland, the Thurgau citizen agreed, only just, that their womenfolk should be granted the vote in educational matters; at the same time, they accepted a proposal to spend 12.4m. francs on an extension of the Teachers' Training College at Kreuzlingen.

Several Communes in the Canton of Berne voted in favour of women's suffrage, some large ones like Aarwangen and Lyss, some tiny ones like Matten near Interlaken (96:53) and Englisberg (21:2). Another small Commune, Tomils in the Domleschg, granted the vote to women (14:9) — the sixth Commune in the Grisons to do so.

With voting participation of 68.5%, the Aargau voters elected four new *Regierungsraete* — the fifth will have to be chosen later as the absolute majority was not reached. So far, there is one new member, Dr. Louis Lang, Turgi, a Social Democrat.

With a low participation of not even 30%, the Solothurn electorate accepted four proposals, two regarding changes in the law (judges are no longer eligible as Cantonal M.P.s, and new remuneration of teachers), and two credits, one for a new *Motorfahrzeugkontrolle* at Bellach and the other for an extension of the Solothurn Babies' Home.

In the Vaud Government, the Social Democrat R. Villard had to be replaced, and his Party colleague P. Aubert was successful.

The Valais citizens voted a 2.15-million franc credit for an extension of the Cantonal Sanatorium.

The Bienne voters rejected the budget for 1969, possibly because it contained a proposal to increase taxes by a tenth. Lucens citizens said no to a proposal to introduce the proportional voting system, the result of a Socialist Initiative. A similar poll took place in Geneva where the "Vigilance" Party had taken the Referendum against expenditure of four million francs for the purchase of the former Crédit Lyonnais building. With a bare 17% voting participation, the Referendum was defeated.

An interesting light was thrown on women's interest in civic activities at Delémont where the total was 23%: 27% of the men and only 19% of the women went to the poll to agree on the purchase of a pre-fabricated school building; at the same time they rejected the proposal to buy the restaurant "La Tour Rouge".

In many Communes, large and small, water improvement schemes were accepted and garbage disposal projects. They include Romanshorn and Davos. Two small Communes, Riedholz (Solothurn) and Reichenburg (Schwyz) granted large credits each for a multi-purpose building to house school, gymnasium, civil defence, Commune Administration, etc.

In several Communes, objections had been lodged after previous elections; at Porrentruy, for instance, the election of the Municipal President was not accepted, and the votes have to be recounted. In the meantime, there is no Mayor. At Glovelier, complaints resulted in the discovery that four voters (two men and two women) were no longer resident in the Commune. Thus the seat distribution for the Commune Council was affected. The elections have been annulled.

(A.T.S.)

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