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HOME NEWS

The Federal Council has handed to the French Government last Monday the official note, declaring its inability to ratify the Zones Convention, and expressing the hope that this will not adversely influence the relations between the respective frontier districts.

Federal Councillor Motta has presented a report, setting out the steps which have been undertaken officially in order to disengage our country from the adverse economic influences caused by the occupation of the Ruhr.—The loss incurred by the Swiss Federal Railways as a consequence of the decrease in traffic, higher coal prices and cancellation of contracts for the delivery of material required for the electrification, is estimated to be in the neighbourhood of ten million francs.

The total amount spent in Switzerland up to end November, 1922, for the purpose of combatting and mitigating unemployment is, according to calculations made by the Federal Labour Office, 453.2 million francs. To this grand total the Confederation has contributed 254.4 million, the cantons and municipalities 181.5 million, and factory owners 17.2 million francs.

The Federal Council is contributing an amount of Frs. 50,000 for the erection of a wireless telegraph station at Lausanne.

Since March 1st, the Swiss Legation in Vienna has taken under its protection nationals of the principality of Liechtenstein who reside in Austria.

The staff of the special police for the control of foreigners in Switzerland has, during the last twelve months, been reduced from 143 to 35.

According to official figures just published, 5,722 Swiss abroad have been assisted and repatriated, at the expense of the Confederation, during the year 1922. Germany, France, Austria and Italy are the countries in which some of our nationals fared badly. The total amount so spent in last year's budget amounts to about half a million francs.

16,722 automobiles and 5,902 lorries were registered in Switzerland on December 31st, 1922; the number of motor cycles was 9,387 and of those with side-cars 2,243.

The accounts for 1922 of the canton of Vaud record a deficit of nearly 7½ million francs, which, however, is 2.7 million lower than the budget anticipations.

On a second poll, Brenno Bertoni (Liberal) and Antonio Riva (Conservative) were elected representatives of the canton Ticino in the Federal States Council. The former secured re-election with 10,292 votes; Antonio Riva, who polled 7,650 votes, is a newcomer, although in previous years he has been member of the National Council. He is a lawyer in Lugano and prominent in cantonal political life.

Three proposals were submitted to the people of the canton of Aargau last Sunday: one, reducing the salaries of teachers by 10 per cent., was confirmed by a large majority, whilst the other two (increase in property tax, and issue of a 10 million francs loan) were carried by a small majority only.

In the canton of Zurich a project, sanctioning the appointment of women as officials of the law courts, was rejected by 59,890 against 17,018 votes.—The citizens of the town of Zurich have ratified a new agreement with the "Tonhalle" company, in accordance with which the yearly subsidy will be increased from 20,000 to 30,000 francs.

A popular vote in the canton of St. Gall endorsed a new decree, reducing the number of judges from seven to five and making other changes in the legal procedure, which will result in a yearly saving of Frs. 15,000.

AN INTERESTING LECTURE ON SWITZERLAND

Those who have followed the course of commercial lectures at the City of London College have wondered that, amongst the many countries dealt with, Switzerland was not included. This omission has now been rectified, and we are pleased to announce that Dr. Pierre de Wolff has consented to lecture on March 26th, and will deal with the history and development of Swiss commerce, industry and finance; their relations to the English and Colonial market will come under special consideration. The Chair will be occupied by the Swiss Minister.

The lecture will be delivered at 5.15 p.m. on Monday next at the City of London College, White Street, Moorfields, E.C. 2, and is free to the public.

Swiss Watches continue to hold their own.

The present year has so far added new laurels to our watch industry. We have already reported the results of tests, published by the Washington and Neuchâtel observatories, but the figures published now by the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington demonstrate anew that the Swiss watch industry, in spite of unfavourable conditions, is able to maintain its high standard of workmanship. Both, first and second places have been secured by our compatriots, and the following are the points awarded to the different Swiss firms:—Zenith Watch Co., London and Le Locle, 96.8 points; Paul Ditisheim, La Chaux-de-Fonds, 96.4 points; Louis Brandt et Frère, Omega Watch Co., Bienné, 96.0 points; Longines Watch Factory, St. Imier, 95.8 points; Fabriques Movado, La Chaux-de-Fonds, 95.6 points.

It will be noted that the highest number of points (96.8, awarded to the Zenith-Watch Co.) is only one-tenth of a point below the world's record of 96.9, held by Paul Ditisheim, of La Chaux-de-Fonds, who on the present occasion is second with 96.4.

Concours International de Réglage de Chronomètres.

(Communicated.)

Le concours international de réglage de chronomètres institué à l'Observatoire de Neuchâtel, en 1923, à l'occasion du centenaire d'Abram-Louis Breguet, commencera le 25 avril pour les chronomètres de marine et le 25 mai pour les autres chronomètres. Des fabricants de chronomètres de plusieurs pays ont déjà annoncé leur intention de participer à ce concours.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Switchgear.

The *Engineer* (March 9th) gives an abridged specification of a British patent, granted to Brown, Boverie & Co., of Baden, Switzerland, for an Improved High-Voltage Switch Plant.

Telephones of Europe.

Readers of *The Swiss Observer* will remember the efforts, made by our Colony in London, to obtain greater facilities for telephone calls to Switzerland. According to *The Times* (March 10) an International Conference was to be held last week at Paris, to "discuss the possibility of extending, on a commercial basis, the present radius of long-distance calls on the international trunk lines."

"The conference has been called by the French Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, and the countries to be represented will include France, England, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Portugal. It is expected that the experts will limit their preliminary consultation to an examination of the engineering problems of direct communication, and to a review of the volume of traffic which could be looked for if increased facilities were provided. Further conferences will be necessary before a practical scheme can be put into operation."

International telephony as yet is in its infancy, but business houses in London have already realized the value of the existing system, and a few people have actually anticipated the romantic potentialities of a Continent completely linked up by telephone. Firms with European branches in cities like Paris, Berlin, Brussels and Milan can by a system of retransmission of messages use the trunk telephone lines to keep in daily touch with practically the whole of Western and Central Europe. Using telephony alone, or in some cases a combination of the telephone and the telegraph, they can beat the ordinary telegraph services by many hours. Rome, for instance, can be reached by two relays at Paris and Milan; Riga can be 'called' through Brussels and Berlin; the Balkans, or at any rate Jugo-

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Slavia, through Brussels, Berlin and Vienna; Madrid through Paris. An urgent need for certain information was recently conveyed to Riga by telephone, and a reply was received in London within six hours.

This exploitation of existing facilities is only made possible by the employment of staffs in the relaying centres, and involves skilled organization and initiative. Occasions arise when an operator, say, in Milan, finds the Paris line choked with messages or put out of action by a storm. His care would be to find an alternative route, and he would probably work through Geneva, as Geneva can transmit direct to London. The complications are beyond the resources of the average commercial man, and telephonic communication across several countries will not, and in fact cannot, be generally adopted until the Governments of the European nations consent to the establishment of some kind of unified system which will abolish the need for retransmission. Under present conditions each country operates its telephones as a local business, and although the nations may be mutually interested, they must, when their own boundaries are reached, hand over the business to others."

"*Caterium censeo*" that international frontiers will have to go, if progress has to be achieved!

Spahlinger Treatment.

Our readers will surely be very pleased to read the following, which appeared in the *Sunday Chronicle* (March 11th):—

"The article of Dr. Leonard Williams, in the *Empire Review*, on the Spahlinger treatment is quite illuminating. The Swiss bacteriologist has now tided over his financial difficulties, and we will have the serum in this country before long."

"Wives Domesticated by Order"

was the alluring title of an article in the *Sunday Pictorial* on March 11th, and the wives referred to as being so domesticated were "Swiss wives." The writer of that article, Henry Devon, has quite a number of flattering things to say about Switzerland and its population, and the scheme about which he writes with such gusto evidently pleases him. Alas, we have to report a letter, written by our friend, Dr. Paul Lang, to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* (March 9th), which dispels the pleasant illusion:—

"Sir,—In your issue of March 3rd you publish an article on compulsory domestic training, in which you mention that Miss Edith Sellers speaks in the *Cornhill Magazine* about a Swiss Bill which, she says, 'in some cantons will soon become law,' and which would compel all girls to have one year's compulsory domestic service before they reach the age of twenty."

May I be allowed to draw your attention to the fact that no such Bill is in preparation, either in the Swiss Confederation or in the Swiss cantons. The origin of the article is probably the so-called 'Motion Waldvogel,' which stipulated for civil service of one year's duration for every young citizen of either sex; in the girls' case it might, of course, be called domestic service. This motion was adopted by the National Council some time ago, and the Federal Council will therefore report on the matter, but whether it will do so in an affirmative or negative way will be seen when the report, for which there is no time limit prescribed, will be issued. No cantonal authorities are, to my knowledge, planning any similar measure, and the optimism of social reformers in this country, who like to look upon Switzerland as a pioneer in compulsory domestic service, is for the time being anticipatory.—Yours, etc., Paul Lang, Secretary of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique."

All the same, we must confess, the idea of getting our girls to "do their bit" in their particular sphere, has much to recommend it.