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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The provision of further funds from taxation for extricating the Federal finances from their present unsatisfactory state will be the foremost task of the Swiss parliament which assembled for the winter session last Monday.

The "corn monopoly" has been rejected by the Swiss people by the small majority of about 6,000 votes. The Bill, i.e., a new proposed article in the Federal Constitution, sought to incorporate in the latter certain measures—rendered necessary by war conditions—so as to secure a regular supply of cereals for our daily bread. Incidentally, the Bill would have encouraged home production by guaranteeing the farmers a regular and fair price for their corn independent of the fluctuations in the world's markets, and another result would have been the elimination of the profits of the middleman. We give below the official figures so far completed, from which it will be noted that eight cantons voted in favour, the remaining 14 declining the proposal.

Cantons	Yes	No
Zürich	61,574	53,565
Bern	69,548	49,213
Luzern	13,637	19,429
Uri	1,216	2,864
Schwyz	2,108	8,839
Nidwalden	563	3,072
Obwalden	451	2,331
Glarus	3,112	3,992
Zug	2,185	3,690
Freiburg	12,934	14,848
Solothurn	13,701	12,036
Basel-Stadt	8,895	11,209
Basel-Land	7,465	9,005
Schaffhausen	6,597	4,121
Appenzell A.-Rh.	1,606	9,595
Appenzell L.-Rh.	234	2,338
St. Gallen	14,118	43,571
Graubünden	9,855	11,728
Aargau	29,589	26,131
Thurgau	14,523	14,680
Tessin	9,726	6,556
Vaud	46,538	27,548
Valais	16,900	7,500
Neuchâtel	7,286	12,114
Genève	11,140	12,330
	365,103	371,309

(The italics indicate the eight cantons which scored a majority for acceptance.)

In view of the statement broadcast by some of the opponents that the proposed bill was of Socialistic origin, it may be useful to point out that the measure was worked out by the Federal Council and endorsed by large majorities by the Swiss Diet (National Council 148 against 37 and States Council 23 against 14). The popular vote has, therefore, bluntly ignored the considered opinion of the elected representatives. The reasons are manifold. In the first instance, there is a general disinclination to invest the central authorities in Bern with further powers; the inner cantons with pronounced agricultural interest have all with no uncertain voice recorded a protest. The only two cantons which may be said to have voted in a manner consistent with their interests are Vaud and Valais, both of which have a very large agricultural population, though generally speaking, the Western part of Switzerland is rather unsympathetic to any Government proposals identified with the name of Federal Councillor Schulthess. An outstanding result is the one from the canton Ticino where the Liberal and Conservative party leaders headed the agitation against the Bill. It is evident that in the whole of Switzerland party-line voting has been thrown overboard, as a considerable number of Socialists and farmers have gone against the instructions of their respective headquarters.

A number of other cantonal proposals were placed before the electors during the last week-end. The Canton Geneva declined by a very small majority to sanction the much-debated scheme of joining, for administrative purposes, the outlying districts and thus creating a Greater Geneva.

In the cantons Baselstadt, Schaffhausen and Thurgau several proposals establishing compulsory

insurance and funds for old age, invalid and accident benefits found favour with the electors.

Dr. Paul Maillefer (Lib. Vaud) was elected, in the second poll, president of the National Council, the Socialist Gros-pierre (Berne) refusing to accept the presidency to which he was elected on the first poll, on the ground that he had never offered himself as a candidate and that the honour belonged to his colleague, Grimm. The Council, however, though evidently conceding this coveted honour to the Socialist party, was not prepared to place itself under the dictation of the well-known extremist.

The budget for 1927 of the town of Zurich shows a small deficit, though it is confidently expected that the actual results will be similar to the two previous periods; for 1925 a surplus of about six millions was recorded in the final accounts, a deficit of about half a million having been originally budgeted for. The municipal finances have during the last six years undergone a remarkable improvement; not only has the war debt of about 24 million francs been entirely written off, but the general rates have enjoyed a reduction of about 30%. Exceptionally large amounts have been—and are being—spent in connection with the housing problem and other building schemes. The municipal council is at present controlled by a socialist majority.

In conjunction with the adjoining cantons, Schwytz proposes to take measures—somewhat retrogressive—in order to counteract the rapid deterioration of the cantonal roads as the result of the heavy motor traffic, which latter is to be prohibited on Sundays altogether.

The Federal Tribunal in Lausanne has practically confirmed a decision of the cantonal courts of Vaud when a motor-cyclist who dashed with his side-car into a two-wheeled builders' cart travelling in the darkness without any lights was declared partly responsible for the accident. The latter happened a few months ago on the road from Lausanne to Geneva; the motor-cyclist saw the cart travelling on the crown of the road and promptly hooted so as to obtain sufficient space to pass. Contrary to expectation, however, the cart kept to the middle of the road and the cyclist was unable to pull up quickly enough to prevent a collision. It was afterwards discovered that the driver of the cart had fallen asleep.

The two railway stations Chur and St. Moritz are to be partly rebuilt and enlarged, the former at a cost of nearly 1½ million francs, whilst Frs. 200,000 is to be spent on the St. Moritz terminus.

The aviator Mittelholzer left Zurich last Tuesday morning on his flight to Capetown; he successfully crossed the Alps and made a short halt at Pisa (Italy) whence his wife, who had accompanied him so far, returned.

Art. Colonel Ferdinand Affolter died in Naefels (Glarus), where he lived in retirement, at the age of 79; he was for nearly forty years lecturer on military science at the Federal Polytechnic in Zurich.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

The avalanche of alluring articles in the English press extolling the charms and attractions of a winter holiday, illustrates the gigantic progress made by the Swiss touring industry in the fleeting space of a generation. In our time there was nothing more exhilarating than a bobsleigh slide down the "Friedensgasse" in Basle or, before skating on the "Landhoff," blushing fastening the skates to the barely visible boot of the girl of one's heart and being privileged to buy her some hot chestnuts from the Italian vendors always in attendance. Now the whole of the Alps has been organised from end to end, and the host of luxurious hotels and palaces are catering for the exacting tastes and whims of modern civilisation as interpreted by the pleasure-seeking youth of two continents.

### The Murren Fire.

Here is a narrative from the pen of Sir Henry Lunn communicated to some of the provincial papers:—

"On Friday morning (Nov. 19th) we received simultaneously the following two telegrams from Mr. Baroni, the manager of the Palace and Grand Hotel des Alpes:—"Hotel Alpes burning down. Fire started at the Edelweiss. Föhn blowing hard"; and "Palace building saved.

Alpes entirely burnt down." For the purpose of description I think it best to use the terms of "Palace" for the new section and "Hotel des Alpes" for the old section.

Dr. Bircher, our Swiss lawyer, and I left London at 2 o'clock on Friday. We arrived at Interlaken at 11.30 on Saturday, and heard on the telephone, to our great satisfaction, that the Palace was not burnt and that the ballroom and dining-room, common to the two hotels, were only slightly damaged; but that the Hotel des Alpes was completely destroyed. The firemen were working heroically to prevent the fire spreading to the Palace Hotel.

We motored from Interlaken to Stechelberg, where a horse had been provided for me to ride up to Mürren. We reached Mürren at 8.30, and my satisfaction was very great when I went into the dining-room of the Hotel des Alpes and found that, although the floor was under water, as was the case also in the ballroom, no serious damage had been done excepting at the entrance from the lounge, where the fire had destroyed the service rooms. The ballroom, which old visitors will remember is connected directly with the new part of the dining-room, is most miraculously preserved. The four windows looking from the lounge of the Palace into the ballroom were, of course, burnt out, and a space that measured three metres by one metre of the parquet floor was burnt. The other two thousand odd metres of the parquet floor are undamaged excepting for the flooding from water, which can soon be put right.

The roofs of both the dining-room and ballroom were nearly intact. Dr. Bircher and I took an architect with us from Interlaken, and builders and decorators speedily arrived. It was not possible to begin repairs until an inspection had taken place on Monday by the Insurance authorities, but now the work is under weigh and the architect has no doubt whatever that it will be finished in about three weeks. The amazing fact is that the palace Hotel, so near the Hotel des Alpes, has entirely escaped. "The smell of fire has not passed on it." The firemen behaved with the greatest courage, and stood through all the hurricane on the roof of the Palace pouring floods of water over the whole building. Other firemen were dealing with the dining-room and the ballroom.

The fire commenced late on the night of the 18th, and was raging until the night of the 20th, when the föhn again developed its full fury and the hurricane kept all the firemen hard at work until 5 o'clock on Sunday morning, when Mr. Baroni and the firemen went to bed, having put out the fire with the help of a heavy fall of sleet. As no trains were running, I left Mürren on Sunday by a toboggan and went down by Stechelberg in a storm of sleet and snow, as it seemed to me important to arrive in London as early as possible that all might be informed of the facts.

We have lost ninety beds in the Hotel des Alpes. The Palace, with 130 beds, and the Bellevue, Eiger, Jungfrau and Regina leave us 400 beds available for members of the Public Schools Alpine Sports Club. The Palace Hotel, the ballroom and the joint dining-room escaped the conflagration because they were solidly built."

### The Spahlinger Cure

has been the subject of a question and answer in the Ulster parliament, as will be gathered from the following extract taken from the *Belfast Evening Telegraph* (Nov. 24th):—

"Mr. M'Mullen, in the Ulster Commons on Tuesday, asked a question concerning the Spahlinger treatment for consumption, and whether it was a fact that this treatment was not available in Ulster and other countries owing to the fact that Monsieur Spahlinger had not sufficient money to place it on the market in a manner to protect the treatment and the public against spurious and deleterious imitations; and, if so, whether he would state what financial assistance the Government was prepared to give so that the treatment may be made available for all sufferers from this dread disease in Northern Ireland.

The Minister for Home Affairs: The work of Professor Spahlinger in connection with the treatment of tuberculosis has engaged the attention for some years past of the Government of Northern Ireland as well as of other Governments. In the early part of last year the Government, in conjunction with the Belfast Corporation, arranged for a special mission of Northern Ireland experts to visit Geneva with the object