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HOME NEWS

The proposal of the National Council to prohibit night work in bakeries is being resolutely resisted by the interested trade, which maintains the necessity of the present status enabling them to commence work at 3 o'clock in the morning.

Federal Councillor Edmund Schulthess, the President of the Confederation, celebrated last Friday (March 2nd) the 60th anniversary of his birth; the event was suitably celebrated at Brugg (Zurich), his native town.

Proportional representation, as far as the Regierungsrat (the executive) is concerned, has been rejected by the electors of the canton Aargau, though the constitution of the Grosse Rat is, and has been since 1920, based on this system. The present initiative was launched by the Socialists and secured about 21,000 'ayes' against about 33,000 'noes,' the voting participation showing an exceptionally high percentage (86%).

The police court at Cully (Vaud) has sentenced a Lausanne business man, Mr. Ernest Müller, to 23 months' imprisonment for manslaughter; when driving last July through Lutry at a speed of over 50 miles an hour, his car ran against a house corner and one of his passengers subsequently died from the injuries received in consequence of the impact.

Having maliciously crushed to death two of her keepers (the last one last Monday), the only elephant in the Zoological Gardens at Basle has now been shot by one of the officials.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Zum 60. Geburtstag des Bundespräsidenten.—Am 2. März 1868 ist in der aargauischen Gemeinde Villnachern als Bürger von Brugg und Zürich Edmund Schulthess geboren worden, der nach einem steilen Aufstieg zu den höchsten Ehren der Eidgenossenschaft heute seinen 60. Geburtstag feiern kann. Ein Charakterzug trat schon in seiner Jugend scharf hervor: Ein starker Ehrgeiz, gepaart mit hoher Intelligenz und grosser Arbeitskraft. Nach einer glänzenden politischen Laufbahn in seinem Heimatkanton, die ihn schon im Jahre 1897 auf den Präsidentenstuhl des Grossen Rates führte, trat Schulthess im Jahre 1905 in den Ständerat ein. Als Bundesrat Deucher 1912 starb, wurde Ständerat Schulthess am 17. Juli jenes Jahres in den Bundesrat gewählt. Dreimal übertrug ihm das Parlament die Würde des Bundespräsidenten. Der Staatsman, der wie kein zweiter der lebenden Bundesräte im Kreuzfeuer des politischen Kampfes steht, überschreitet morgen die Altersgrenze rüstig und in ungebrochener Kraft. Und doch ist sein gewaltiges Arbeitsmass beinahe sprichwörtlich geworden.

Bundespräsident Schulthess pflegt die in sein Ressort fallenden Geschäfte, die vor das Volk gebracht werden, mit der hinreissenden Verve eines geistvollen Debatters zu vertreten, aber auch mit der mächtig aufwallenden Kraft der Ueberzeugung im Meinungsstreit zu verteidigen. Daher ruht es, dass Bundesrat Schulthess von so vielen Mitbürgern bewundert, von so manchen gefürchtet, von allen aber wegen seines fruchtbaren Wirkens im Dienste der Allgemeinheit geachtet wird.

Die Tätigkeit des Vorstehers des Volkswirtschaftsdepartements ist markiert durch die grossen Etappen auf dem Gebiet der Sozialpolitik, nämlich durch den Ausbau der Fabrikgesetzgebung, der Arbeitslosenfürsorge und des Arbeiterschutzes, wie durch die verfassungsrechtliche Grundlage der Alters- und Invalidenversicherung. Und die reiche Tätigkeit des Magistraten ist ja glücklicherweise noch nicht zum Abschluss gelangt, sondern befindet sich erst in ihrer vollen Entfaltung.

Noch ist wenig mehr als ein Jahr verstrichen, dass der Bundespräsident im Kampfe um das Getreidemonopol sich selbst in den Vordergrund gestellt hat. Es ist ja klar, dass eine so scharf umrissene Persönlichkeit in einem solchen Falle ganz besonders der Kritik ausgesetzt sein muss. Man gibt aber nur der Wahrheit die Ehre, wenn man feststellt, dass Bundesrat Schulthess auch die Kritik,

wenn sie gerecht war, anhörte und das Gute daraus entnahm. In so manchem Falle ist er auch über persönliche und gehässige Polemik hinweggegangen. Es liegt nicht in seiner Natur, nachträgliche Rache zu üben.

Ein abgeschlossenes gerechtes Urteil über den Staatsmann Schulthess wird erst die Geschichte fällen können. Der Mitwelt ist es aber eine angenehme Pflicht, ihm zum morgigen Tag den dankbaren herzlichen Glückwunsch zu entbieten.

—Nat. Zeitung.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

The Stockport Comedy.

Though fair play and common sense have triumphed, it is quite evident that the political element has played the star rôle in this controversy. The voting at the Stockport Town Council when the order to Messrs. Escher Wyss & Co. was confirmed by the odd vote, was on Party lines, the Conservatives being against and the Liberals and Labour for placing the contract with the Swiss firm. The once classical country of free trade is undergoing a radical change and in its clamour for protection—more palatably described as the safeguarding of industries—any slogan is good enough as long as it appeals to the patriotic and sentimental feelings of the masses. Combines and trusts dictate the prices, and the correcting influence of healthy competition is eliminated. Some forcible statements were made at the meeting of the Stockport Council: Sir Thomas Rowbotham asserted that "not a single honest and straightforward tender had been received from any one of the British firms," and the Socialist Councillor Scott-Morton declared that it was their duty "to break the ring of the British electrical industry." The proceedings had attracted a crowd of interested spectators who could not find room in the public gallery and the novel expedient was resorted to of allowing the public to take possession of about twenty unoccupied seats in the council chamber. None of the large London dailies have reverted to the matter apart from reporting that the order had been placed with a Swiss firm. We reproduce the leader from the *Manchester Guardian* (Feb. 28th):—

"Stockport Town Council did the wise and honourable thing yesterday when they decided not to tear up the contract made with a Swiss firm of engineers for the supply of a new turbine. But the discussion revealed a state of things which is far from reassuring. The Electricity Committee of the Council had invited, and received, many tenders, both British and foreign, for the work; the successful offer, from the Swiss firm of Messrs. Escher Wyss and Co., was accepted partly because the price named was £17,000 less than the lowest British offer, and partly because the design appeared to be a peculiarly suitable one. Some vague doubts were thrown on the competence of the firm to execute the work, and were emphatically dispelled by the investigations of a special committee. When the Swiss tender had been accepted, not before, one of the British firms, all of whom are members of the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association, made a tardy offer to reduce its price by £10,000 if the contract were transferred to it. That was not an offer to which any responsible body should have listened. It proclaimed abroad that, whether in concert or no, British firms had tendered at a price far above what they were ready to take. The Swiss firm had from the first named a price and stood by it, and it would have been scandalous to deprive it of the contract. Still worse, if contracts properly concluded are to be hauled back and reassigned the gate is opened to all kinds of manoeuvres. Firms or combines could agree to hold out for a fantastic price in the knowledge that, if undercut, they could climb down rapidly and supplant a genuine low tender. To stimulate home industry is an admirable thing, but home industry cannot expect to live by excessive charges upon local authorities."

With reference to the remarkable pamphlet issued by the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association with its fanciful statements discrediting Swiss generating plants in this country and enlarged upon in practically all the London dailies, we find the following dignified retort in the *Electrician* (Feb. 24th) from the Chairman of the York Electricity Committee:—

"In the brochure recently issued by the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association on "Foreign Plant in British Power Stations," reference was made, among others, to

the City of York electricity undertaking, regarding the purchase of foreign generating plant by that authority.

The brochure proceeds to "prove" how much money the ratepayers of York have lost owing to the short-sighted policy of their Council in neglecting to purchase turbo-alternators from the members of the Association.

I propose not to deal with the purely political side of the question—that is a matter for which the electorate of this country is responsible but to deal only with the actual facts. Page 17 of the brochure states:—

"Allowing for the fact that the foreign plant was, on an average, about 20 per cent. less in price than the British, each of these undertakings has actually paid 80 per cent. more than the British price if differences in operating efficiency are considered, and they have now perhaps the most expensive plant in the country. The real losses incurred by these three undertakings in four years lies actually between £70,000 and £80,000."

Let us examine the "facts" as presented by the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association. In the summer of 1924 the York Corporation advertised for tenders for a 6,000 kW turbo-generator with condenser, steam piping, etc., and on examination of these tenders we find the quotations for the turbo-generator (which was the only portion of the plant not of British manufacture) as follows:—Oerlikon (Swiss) £10,795; the British firms' prices ranging from £18,840 to £20,079. Again, in 1925, tenders were invited for similar equipment, and the following quotations were received:—Oerlikon (Swiss) £10,280; the British firms' prices ranging from £16,573 to £19,405. Even a most casual glance over these figures show that the foreign plant was considerably more than "about 20 per cent. less in price than the British," as stated in the brochure—the British prices ranging from 60 to 90 per cent. above the Swiss, the latter figure being for a turbine of similar steam consumption to the Swiss.

So much for the capital cost of the plant: let us now turn to the running costs. In addition to the low capital cost, it will be noticed that the guaranteed steam consumption of the Oerlikon machine was lower than any of the British offers, and in actual test after erection the Oerlikon plant gave results 8 per cent. better than the maker's guarantee. This proves conclusively that whatever loss there may or may not have been due to the thermal efficiency of the York undertaking, it can in no way be attributed to the purchase of a Swiss turbine.

The pamphlet of the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association will not hoodwink a single person who has but a nodding acquaintance with electric power stations by comparing the thermal efficiencies of two undertakings and throwing the whole of the difference on the turbine efficiency. The Association know, probably better than anyone, that other very important factors come into the picture. The efficiency or otherwise of the boiler house plant is by far the greatest cause of difference between individual stations.

The figures of comparison can, therefore, only be for the edification of the man in the street, and are a deliberate attempt to mislead the public. It is to be regretted that an Association comprising the leading electrical manufacturers in this country should stoop to such tactics for mere propaganda.

As a matter of fact, on each of these turbines the Council has actually saved the capital charges on £8,000 for 20 years, amounting to £14,000; also an annual saving of £240 in the fuel bill based on the actual output of the last two years.

The York City Council is as anxious as any other body to place orders within this country. An opportunity was given to the British manufacturers at the time to make an offer similar to that which has occurred at Stockport, where a British tender for a turbine has been reduced by about £10,000 but at York no such offer was forthcoming, and the Council did not feel justified in paying the higher price to the detriment of its ratepayers and undertaking."

The Zones Dispute.

The following historical data and critical survey of the present position appeared in the *Times* (Feb. 25th). If it is supposed to be an unbiased retrospect it is wide of the mark and might just as well be a translation from a French journal. The article forgoes the non-ratification of the Convention by the French Senate and we are afraid that this