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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHINGER.

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## FEDERAL.

### THE 1931 BUDGET.

Estimates of the different Federal departments indicate increased expenditure with the likelihood that the year 1931 will balance with a deficit of nearly eight million francs. The disbursements for the army are more than eight millions, out of which four millions are earmarked for new aeroplanes, another four millions goes as a grant toward the Rhine regulations Basle-Strasbourg, two and three-quarter millions are necessary for financing the wheat requirements. Altogether the National expenditure shows an increase of 22.7 million francs.

### MILITARY TAX OF THE AUSLANDSCHWEIZER.

At the June Session of the National Council a postulate was presented demanding of the Federal Council the revision of the law regarding military tax, specially pointing out the well-founded complaints of the Auslandschweizer. Now, at the September Session, National Councillor Duff has again taken up this question and in a postulate demands that the Federal Council take steps regarding the levy of the military tax. That in such a short time two postulates have been presented, both dealing with the military tax of the Auslandschweizer, proves with what impatience the public is expecting an alteration of the existing rule. National Councillor Duff is putting his finger on a sore spot, namely the inequality of treatment of the military taxpayer by the sovereign Cantons. This is one of the main sources of the dissatisfaction and is the point which must be altered first, because nothing is borne with less ease by a citizen of a democratic state than 25 different treatments of one and the same matter. And this is a case where the Federal Council, awaiting a definite revision, should take administrative action, by getting in touch with the different Cantons, to remedy an almost intolerable situation. *St.G.T.*

### SWISS RAILWAY LOAN.

The Swiss Federal Railways will in all probability issue a fresh loan or loans early next year. On July 31, 1931, the 6 per cent. electrification loan of 1921, amounting to 210,000,000 francs (£8,400,000) falls due for redemption, and on December 31, 1931, the railways must refund to the Swiss Federal finance department the 4½ per cent. loan of 1926, amounting to 42,000,000 francs (£1,680,000).

There are also several other similar items to be met and the railways' available funds will not be sufficient for this purpose. It is expected that the new issue or issues will amount in the aggregate to about 300,000,000 Frs. (£12,000,000).

### RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION IN SWITZERLAND.

In 1929, Italy had 1,625 km. of electrified railway; Germany, 1,557 km.; Austria, 580 km.; France, 488 km.; and Norway, 119 km. Switzerland had, during 1929, 1,666 km., which will be increased by 476 km. in 1936, when the second electrification programme has been completed. The length of the principal lines in Switzerland is 3,703 km., and when in 1936, 2,142 km. are electrified the proportion will be 57.8 per cent., or if the various secondary lines and mountain railways be added, the total length becomes 5,485 km.; with 4,834 km. run by electricity the proportion will be 88.1 per cent.

### THE BASSANESI TRIAL.

The use of third degree methods during the preliminary examination are alleged by some of the Swiss dailies. Apart from a rigorous search at the Italian home of Bassanesi's parents which drove the father to the verge of suicide, his mother, on trying—for what she thought the last time—to see him at the hospital at Andermatt, was subjected to a rigid inquisition before being allowed an interview in the presence of the warders. During the transport to Lugano, when still suffering intensely from his wounds, it is alleged that Bassanesi had to undergo incessant questioning by the police officer in charge who vainly endeavoured to extort admissions implicating anti-fascist leaders.

## THE DEPRESSION ON THE WORLD MARKETS.

The following interesting table of the quotations at the respective exchanges shows that whilst the prices of most of the essential requisites have returned to pre-war level—or even less—the present cost of living shows very little relationship to this downward tendency.

	1913	June 1929	now.
Wheat, Chicago	68.50	113.75	78.00
Lard, Chicago	10.70	11.90	11.50
Butter, Copenhagen	2.18	2.95	2.36
Coffee, Rio, New York	9.00	16.75	7.32
Cocoa, London	58.0	41.6	27.3
Tea, London	—/84	1/24	—/104
Sugar, New York	3.12	1.77	1.12
Rice, London	7/7	13/9	12/9
Cotton, New York	12.57	18.45	10.45
Wool, Bradford	—/25	—/40	—/26
Silk, Lyon	247.00	290.00	163.00
Copper, London	65.12	74.50	43.62
Crude Oil, New York	—	4.60	2.00
Rubber, London	37.00	10.44	3.87

## A WATCH MANUFACTURER HONOURED.

The British Horological Institute has elected Monsieur Paul Ditisheim of La Chaux-de-Fonds an Honorary Fellow in recognition of the services rendered by him to the watch industry. This is the first time that the Institute has conferred this distinction upon a foreigner.

## LOCAL.

### ZURICH.

The Grand Council of Zurich, on the proposition of the Town Council, has accepted the estimates and approved the plans for the alterations of the premises No. 42 Hirschengraben for a day-home and children's crèche of the welfare department. A credit to the amount of 185,000 Frs. has been granted. To ensure the safety of the children all traffic in the Künslergasse has been prohibited. *N.Z.Z.*

Two sisters, aged 72 and 83 years, who lived in the Zurichbergstrasse, died at the same time. The younger of the two was ill and was under the care of the doctor, whilst the elder one looked after the home. Last Sunday evening the latter was in the kitchen cooking the supper when she suddenly had an attack and fell on the floor and by so doing must have opened a tap on the gas-stove. She died soon after as a result of the fall. Almost at the same time the younger sister died as the normal outcome of the illness. Neither of the two sisters knew of the death of the other. *St.G.T.*

### BERNE.

The Federal Council has prolonged the ban on hotel-building for another three years and this prolongation comes into operation on Jan. 1st, 1931. The only difference on the already existing ban is that places with more than 100,000 inhabitants are now excluded from this law, so that Zurich, Bâle, Geneva and Berne, from the beginning of next year, will be released from the hotel-building ban. *N.Z.Z.*

### BASLE.

The news of the end of the Woodworkers' and Plasterers' strike in Bâle was received with a feeling of relief not only in Bâle but throughout Switzerland. The result of this most expensive struggle, by which the general public suffered intensely, has been a very meagre one. After 22 weeks, during which the families of the strikers had to undergo severe hardships, having to exist on only small strike pay, an increase of 3 cts. or a fraction more than a farthing per hour has been gained by the workers. On the other hand the employers have gained a not inconsiderable advantage in getting the carpenters to adapt their working hours to those of the bricklayers and also in having put aside the compulsory use of the official employment department. The gain, therefore, has been more on the side of the employers than on that of the strikers.

The prophets who warned the workmen from launching into a strike which they would surely lose have been right. All building activities, especially in dwelling houses, had already begun to flag, as the production very nearly came up to the demand and the inducement for further construction was very small. Both sides have lost millions. The strike funds, although aided from all over Switzerland, were not sufficient to save the families of the 1,200 strikers from dire distress. They are now completely exhausted. The employers on their side had to refuse large contracts, which have, in many cases, been placed with outside firms. And many a man, who had never had anything to do with the arm of the

(Continued on back page.)

## Report on the

### Eleventh Auslandschweizertag

at BâLE, August 30th and 31st.

By the President of the N.S.H. London Group.

This function of extraordinary interest and importance to the Swiss Abroad took place in the great Hall of the Rathaus in Bâle on the last two days of August. The congress was called and arranged by the S.S.E., who had invited the Governments, both federal and cantonal, to be represented by the chiefs of the various departments and to take part in the discussions. The presence of Mr. Motta, chief of the political department, with a large number of other high dignitaries, was a clear indication of the benevolent and intelligent interest which the Federal Chambers take in the matters of the Swiss Abroad.

From abroad, there were present seven Ministers, nine Consuls and a great number of civil representatives of the various colonies and groups of the N.S.H. from every part of the globe. The Swiss press, also, was strongly represented.

The beautiful Hall was full to overflowing when the proceedings were opened by the president's speech of welcome. Mr. E. C. Koch, the new president of the C.S.E., discharged his duties of chairman in a most efficient and charming manner. His warm words of welcome set everyone at ease, although the physical heat of those two days was such that an invitation to take off collars and coats would have been promptly obeyed.

Here, then, was the right setting for a truly Swiss function:—The representatives from abroad with their complaints and appeals on the one side; the representatives of the federal government, mostly chiefs of their departments on the other, ready to listen and to advise. There was to be a clear exchange of opinion, a free discussion, a sympathetic mutual understanding. Each party stood to gain by the presence of the other, each member of the congress was sure to come away from the deliberations a better Swiss.

The Agenda before the conference included the following matters:—

1.—Report by the representative of the C.S.E. and the parliamentary Commission on matters of the Swiss Abroad. Nat. Councillor Dr. Pfister, a member of both bodies, gave his assurance that the federal authorities were fully aware of the value of the cohesion of the Swiss Abroad with their country. He mentioned that there were in particular, three problems which were foremost in the consideration of the authorities, viz.:—the question of the military tax; that of the war indemnities, and, thirdly, State insurance.

The speaker reminds the audience that it was the S.S.E. who first agitated for a revision of the Military tax, and that the federal council had been invited to revise the law. But he brought out the fact that the objections to the tax as such were untenable, as it was clearly a compensation for military duties not performed and in no way to be confused with income tax. The fact, however, that each Canton perceived this tax by its own peculiar methods laid it open to severe criticism.

From the discussion which followed it was apparent that the coupling of the military tax with the "Anwartschaftssteuer" caused general resentment. J. Ruof (Eidg. Steuerverwaltung) could give the meeting little hope of an abolition, or change in the perception of the tax. The vote in 1923 showed that no majority could be found for the separation, while it was impossible for the tax to become a federal matter so long as the Cantons held the existing power. Minor improvements had been effected, but the State regarded this tax as an integral part of the military service, so that the principle of its justice could not be attacked.

2.—Obligatory State Insurance. The desire of the Swiss Abroad to also benefit by the State

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