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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

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### FEDERAL.

#### VOLKSBANK AFFAIR BEFORE PARLIAMENT.

As was to be expected both Chambers have sanctioned the Government's plan to come to the aid of the "Schweizerische Volksbank." M. Musy, Minister of Finance explained the reason which prompted the Federal Council to help this institution, he pointed out, that it was essential, that the support should be forthcoming at once, so as to avoid a still bigger catastrophe. —The consequences of the vote in support of the Government's proposal means that the latter is authorised to subscribe to 200,000 shares of 500 frs. each amounting to 100 million francs.

#### NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE BANQUE POPULAIRE SUISSE.

The Federal Council has appointed Dr. Haab, a former Federal Councillor, Chairman of the newly organised board of the "Banque Populaire Suisse" (Schweiz. Volksbank). The latter has accepted this post, and, according to his own wish, does not claim any remuneration; in his letter of acceptance, he wrote, "I wish to render my country a service, and therefore do not require any payment."

#### GERMAN-SWISS "SCRIPS" AGREEMENT.

As a result of the negotiations which took place in Berlin last September, a basic agreement was reached with regard to the payment of interest on Swiss capital invested in Germany. By this a 100 per cent. transfer of scrips was assured for Swiss creditors. The concession was won by the Swiss because certain market possibilities in their country could be utilized for the sale of German goods.

A Protocol was signed at the beginning of October embodying the detailed terms of the agreement between the two countries regarding the application of the German Transfer Moratorium as affecting the payment of interest on Swiss capital invested in Germany. The Committee for Germany of the Swiss Bankers' Association with the help of the Swiss National Bank, the Federal Post Office, and the Association of Swiss Banks, arranged the manner in which the transfer mechanism works.

With regard to the articles that Switzerland agreed to accept from Germany outside the normal quotas, in order to furnish the necessary currency for the payment of interest, coal and coke were the chief items, to which were added sugar, malt, and several other products. At the same time the German Gold Discount Bank bound itself not to use any scrips to further "additional exports," exclusive of the afore-mentioned commodities, to Switzerland. It is hoped that this decision will have the effect of liberating Swiss industries from the "additional export" competition in respect of all other classes of goods, although, naturally, on all other markets Swiss exporters will continue to be faced with this competition.

#### SIMPLON CAR TUNNEL.

Plans have been drawn up for the conversion of the second shaft of the Simplon railway tunnel — the longest tunnel in the world — into a motor road.

This conversion would greatly reduce the inconvenience which is at present caused on both the Italian and Swiss side of the Simplon when the pass is closed during the winter months.

The Simplon tunnel is 12½ miles long. It connects Brieg and Isella on the route to Milan and was opened in 1906. The second shaft was completed in 1921, but was never used.

### CANTONAL ELECTIONS.

The electors of the canton Basle have agreed to an extra tax (Krisensteuer) for the current year, it is expected that this tax will yield about 3½ million francs. During the Municipal elections, which took place at Thounne, (Ct. Berne) the various parties received the following votes: Bourgeois and radicals 74,304; Evangelical 10,104; Socialists 82,999. The strength of the various parties in the Municipal Parliament are as follows: Bourgeois Party 18, (21); Evangelical Party 2, (2); Socialists 20, (17). The elections for the Conseil Général at St. Imier ended with a victory of the Liberal party, which obtained 23 seats against 18 for the Socialists.

### CHOCOLATE AND HORSES.

Tariffs are notoriously two-edged swords, and a very piquant situation has arisen as a result of the Free State Government's policy in this regard. During recent years the Swiss Government has been one of the Free State's best customers for horses. Colonel Ziegler has been a familiar and popular figure in Dublin for several years, and the Swiss Army has been buying most of its best horses in this country. Some time ago, however, in pursuit of its policy of selfcontainment, the Government, in its wisdom, saw fit to place an embargo, or a prohibitive tariff, on Swiss milk chocolate, with the result that several Swiss firms that had been doing a substantial trade with the Free State suffered considerable losses. It appears now that the Swiss may not buy any more Free State horses unless the Government is prepared to do something to help their chocolate manufacturers. There is an old French proverb, dating from the time of the Swiss mercenary armies, which says, "Pas d'argent, pas de Suisses." So far as Ireland is concerned it can be paraphrased— "Pas de chocolat, pas de chevaux."

### LOCAL.

#### ZURICH.

The extraordinary General Meeting of the "Schweizerische Bankgesellschaft" took place last week at Winterthur. The shareholders accepted the proposition of the directors to reduce the share-capital from 100 to 80 million francs, by the purchase and cancellation of shares.

Mme. Haefliger-Hurlimann, aged 36, residing at Oerlikon has, together with her 3 children, aged 7 and 2 years and 2 months committed suicide by turning on the gas tap. The unfortunate woman committed this terrible deed in a fit of acute depression. Her husband, a commercial Traveller was away on business.

#### BERNE.

M. Schmidlin (socialist) is the successor of Professor Marbach, (socialist) who recently resigned his seat in the National Council. The new member was born in 1898 in Berne, and studied political economy and law at the University of Berne. He is a member of the Municipal Council since 1923. In 1929/30 M. Schmidlin was Editor of the "Basler Arbeiter Zeitung."

The citizens of Berne are to have bear steaks with their Xmas dinner this year.

Three fully-grown animals in the Municipal Bear Pit are being slaughtered for distribution; they are, of course, to be replaced by a new family shortly — for Berne would not feel itself without its bears. These animals are as historic an institution as the wolves of the Capitoline, in Rome.

#### BASLE.

Professor Dr. Jakob Wackernagel has celebrated his 80th birthday on the 11th inst. at Basle. Professor Wackernagel, in spite of his great age is still an active teacher at the University of Basle.

#### SOLOTHURN.

Colonel Jos. Otter, commandant of the Schiessschulen in Wallenstadt is retiring at the end of the year. Colonel Otter hails from the canton of Solothurn; during the active service he was in command of the mountain-brigade 9. From 1919-22 he alternatively commanded the 23rd and 6th Infantry Brigade. Since 1919 he was entrusted with the command of the "Schiessschulen" at Wallenstadt. Colonel Otter, who has seen 40 years of service in the Army is also one of our finest marksmen.

### FRIBOURG.

National Councillor Gross (radical) has resigned from the Grand Council of which he was a member for the last 25 years.

### GENEVA.

The newly elected Socialist Government in Geneva has wasted no time in living up to their promises made during their electioneering campaign. A meeting of the Socialist party, which took place last Friday, has appointed National Councillor Dicker, as its President, in succession to M. Ehrler, who has entered the cantonal government. The latter will retire from Parliament, and will be substituted by M. Rossiaud. The question of the Foundation of a Cantonal Bank will be at once tackled. The Swiss Federal Railways have been invited to give their opinion with regard to the erection of a Goods Station at La Praille.

### ST. GALLEN.

Dr. Th. Holenstein, a former National Councillor, has celebrated his 75th birthday anniversary. M. Holenstein entered the Grand Council in 1887 and was a member of this body until 1932. He was a member of Parliament (National Council) for 26 years, and was for many years one of the leading politicians of the canton of St. Gallen.

National Councillor Dr. Guntli, President of the Swiss Catholic-Conservative Party has died at the age of 61. Through the death of Dr. Guntli, the canton of St. Gallen is losing one of its leading politicians; he was born in 1872 at Vilters, and later on studied law at the Universities of Munich, Strassburg and Berne. In 1901 he established himself as an advocate in St. Gallen. He entered the Grand Council 21 years ago, of which he remained a member until his death. In 1928 he entered Parliament. (National Council); in the Army he held the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

Dr. A. Geser-Rohner, has entered Parliament (National Council) in succession of Dr. Guntli who died a few days ago. Dr. A. Geser was born in 1868 at Waldkirch, he spent his youth at Gossau, and studied law at the Universities of Innsbruck, Freiburg i/ U., Lille and Zurich. For over 25 years the new member is in a leading position in the Embroidery firm of Jakob-Rohner and Co., in Rebstein.

### VAUD.

Dr. Ernest Wilczek, Professor of Botany at the University of Lausanne has resigned from his post, which he has held for the last 40 years.

The unemployed of the canton of Vaud at the 30th of November number 4139.

M. Henri Baudenbacher-Roth, former Manager of the Hotel du Grand Pont has suddenly died at the age of 62.



## A Personal Matter

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