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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The postal service from and to Switzerland continues to be very unsatisfactory; as far as we can gather no newspapers have come through at all unless sent by airmail which latter is also erratic. According to an official statement issued at Berne the ordinary mail to Great Britain travels via Basle-Müllheim-Müllhausen-Belfort-Paris-Lisbon as the frontier at Geneva is closed. The airmail is loaded at Zurich for Stuttgart where it is held up for censorship and then dispatched to Lisbon.

* * *

In the National Council a short discussion dealing with the introduction of a Federal death duty terminated with a negative resolution. Federal Councillor Wetter though not excluding the possibility of future Federal legislation preferred to leave the matter to the jurisdiction of the cantons as heretofore. The parallel of the English death duties was not applicable, he said, as in the latter country no annual property tax was levied.

* * *

Another socialist motion seeking to limit the payments of dividends to five or six per cent. met with a similar fate. Federal Councillor Wetter in his reply stated that during the last twelve months about a third of the capital invested in Swiss undertakings went without dividends and the average dividend on the remainder was at about the rate as was earned by debenture or mortgage holders; it was a fallacy to base the argument on the nominal capital of companies as in a good many instances the present shareholders had acquired their shares at a much higher price.

* * *

A new and far reaching initiative is being launched; it seeks to add to our Constitution a new article which eliminates speculation in land and residential property. Agricultural land can only be acquired by persons who actually cultivate the land for their own existence.

* * *

A draft decree—both alarming and reactionary—is being discussed in parliamentary circles and commissions and has no less an object than the denationalisation of Swiss citizens living abroad who have committed offences against the independence or security of the

State. This obnoxious notion has obviously infiltrated from abroad; it offends against one of the basic articles of our constitution and would lead to an arbitrary treatment of our constitutional guarantees. The bill is in charge of Federal Councillor von Steiger.

* * *

The Federal Council discussed in camera several military and economic questions. The new call-up procedure would, it was stated, place the army in a state of thorough preparedness.

* * *

Dr. Peter Vieli has been appointed Swiss Minister in Rome; he was born 52 years ago at Rhäzüns (Grisons). From 1924 to 1931 he belonged to the staff of our Legation at Rome and was subsequently made a Councillor of Legation. Most of his official career was spent at Berne until in 1937 he joined the Credit Suisse in Zurich where he occupied a leading position.

* * *

The cost of living index to the end of December, 1942, is given as 199.6 (June 1914 — 100) which is an increase of half per cent. as compared with November; since the beginning of the war the increase has been 45.5 per cent.

* * *

The index figure for wholesale prices is stated to be 214.8 per cent., which is an increase of nearly 100 per cent. since the outbreak of the war.

Cantonal

On account of lack of space to accommodate the steadily increasing number of students the Zurich educational authorities have been forced to refuse admission to the Gymnasium to scholars residing in adjoining cantons; the Gymnasium is a public state school devoted to the classical side of education.

* * *

The population of the town of Zurich has increased during the last year by 3096 and had reached at the end of December last 339,622.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Samedi, le 6 Mars à 1 p.m. au Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, (near Green Park Tube Station).

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal.

Divers.

Admissions.

Continuation de la discussion sur l'activité du Club.

Démissions.

Les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt auprès de Mons. H. Bingguelly, 167 Clapham Road, S.W.9. (Téléphone: Reliance 4150) Le Comité.