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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The petition against the Luxury Tax has received 408,698 signatures and was handed in at the Federal Palais.

All people resident in Switzerland, from the age of eighteen, were entitled to sign. The petition is aimed at abolishing the Luxury Tax, levied since 1942 and also of preventing the introduction of a constitutional basis for the levying of a Luxury tax. The petition was signed by 18% housewives, 5.4% by employers, 55.5% by employees, as to the 21.1% others no social position can be ascertained, as no indication is given with these signatures. If the 21.1% in question are calculated according to the known percentage of housewives, employers and employees, it would result that 91% of the signatures are derived from employees and 9% of employers and independents. The petition was supported by a great number of associations.

* * *

A Committee of the National Council, which had to examine the proposal of the Federal Council regarding the joining of Switzerland with UNESCO, met at Geneva under the presidency of National Councillor Adrian Lachenal (Geneva) and in the presence of Federal Councillor Max Petitpierre. The Chief of the Federal Political Department, as well as Counsellor of Legation Philippe Zutter, Chief of the International Organization of the Political Department, explained the various questions which would arise by joining UNESCO. After discussion the Committee resolved unanimously to recommend to the National Council the adoption of the Federal Council's proposal.

* * *

The Federal Council at its session of September 3rd has fixed the producer's prices for potatoes for human consumption. The price fixed for 100kg. delivered rail station is frs.17.— to frs.20.— according to kind. The Alcohol administration may allow an additional frs.2.— for "Bätzi" as a quality charge. As in former years the Alcohol Administration is bearing a share of the freight on whole waggon-loads.

According to a proposal by the Federal Council to Parliament, a credit of 33 million francs is to be opened for the provisional continuation of the building of dwelling houses, based on the decision of October 8th, 1947, for the furthering of the building programme. The message of the Federal Council further states, that according to an inquiry by the cantons, a federal subsidy of about 48 million frs. for some 18,000 dwellings would be required by the end of 1948. "This amount probably will prove too high and we would like to limit our proposal for a provisional continuation to a guarantee credit of 33 million frs." The message continues:

"The cantons of Uri, Obwalden, Nidwalden, Appenzell I.R. and Valais had decided to stop the building activity. These decisions, as well as the fact, that in cantons and communes where a plebiscit regarding building credits have been taken, the indifference shown by the voters, and even where the proposal was not rejected, the majority was so small, that a halting of the building activity is to be expected."

* * *

The agreement of April 30th about frontier traffic between Switzerland and Austria foresees a mixed commission, which has the duty to facilitate the execution of the agreement. The Federal Council has appointed the following gentlemen to form the Swiss delegation: Director of Customs, E. Widmer, President of the delegation; H. Marti, Chief of the Commercial section of the Federal Economic Department, and Prof. G. Flueckiger, Director of the Federal Veterinary Department.

* * *

The Federal Council has appointed Colonel of Brigade, Arnold Steiger, to be Director of the Department for Military Science at the Federal Military School (E.T.H.) in Zurich, as from September 1st, 1948.

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Colonel Steiger, born 1896, at Flawil (St. Gall) is Commander of the Mountain Brigade 12, and Professor for Romansch languages at the University in Zurich.

* * *

The Federal Council has appointed Mr. Fritz Baechtler, Judge in Solothurn, a member of the Council of the Swiss National Bank in place of National Councillor Johannes Huber, deceased.

* * *

The customs receipts for August, 1948, amounted to 29.3 million francs, or 5.6 millions less than in August, 1947.

In the first eight months of this year the total Customs receipts amounted to 285.7 millions francs, compared with 258.2 millions in the previous year.

* * *

The Swiss Government has been invited to send a delegation, in the capacity of observers, to the third General Conference of UNESCO which will take place at Beirut.

The Federal Council has delegated the following: Jean Piaget, Director of the International Office of Education at Geneva, and Bernard Barbey, Counsellor of Legation in Paris, to take part at the Conference.

Cantonal

Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster and Primate of England, during his stay in Switzerland is stopping for 10 days at the Institute Ingebohl near Schwyz. He is accompanied by his brother, who as Pater of the Order, is personal Secretary to the Cardinal. [A.T.S.]

* * *

A girl pupil of the fourth class elementary school in Einsiedeln was stung in the foot by an insect. An acute case of blood poisoning set in which caused the death of the girl. [A.T.S.]

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Reckless driving caused a serious accident in Zurich, when a motor-car driven at excessive speed (90km.) collided with another car. Five people were injured, three seriously. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The traditional "Knabenschiessen" took place in Zurich (Albisgütli) on Sunday, September 12th, 1948. In spite of bad weather there was a record attendance. Amongst the distinguished visitors were General Guisan, Army-Corps-Commander Wille and Colonel of Division Nager.

Werner Pagnoncini of Zurich and Poschiavo (age 14) was declared "Schützenkönig" with 33 points. (In last year's competition he only scored 18 points).

The "General Guisan Wanderbecher" was won by Fred Labhard of Zollikon-Zurich (age 14) with 31 points.

Further awards were made to: Josef Carisch (b.1935); Bernhard Fleig (b.1933); Hugo Fehr (b.1932) and Jürg Zinsli (b.1935).

* * *

The 55 year-old commercial employee, Theodor Rothenfluh, from Höngg near Zurich, collected mushrooms in the woods. These were prepared for a meal by his wife for the following day. Sometime later the whole family was taken ill and taken to hospital, showing signs of poisoning. The father has since died and the three other members of the family are still on the danger list. [A.T.S.]

* * *

In the manor-house of Bubikon (Zurich) a special exhibition was opened in memory and in honour of one of the most important historians, Johannes Stumpf, in which his life's work is fully represented. The Chronicler Stumpf originally came from Bruchsal, in Baden, became Swiss by being presented with the citizenship of the town of Zurich. The memorial address was given by Professor Fritz Blanke (Zurich). Johannes Stumpf was Prior of the Order of St. John at Bubikon from 1522 to 1543. It may be assumed that he wrote to a large extent his extensive Swiss history whilst at the commandery. The exhibition which is under the patronage of the Manor house Society (Ritterhaus Gesellschaft) of Bubikon is open from the 6th to the 23rd September. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The late Jakob Haab, in Zug, has left an amount of 20,000.— frs. for charitable purposes. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The 100th anniversary of the town of Berne becoming the Federal capital, was celebrated by a procession of 10,000 school children carrying torches and lanterns through the principal streets of the town. All the lanterns were designed, and made by the children themselves. Some of the most original designs were loudly cheered by dense crowds of onlookers, who lined the streets which were darkened for the occasion. [A.T.S.]

* * *

During the month of August, 1948, altogether 431 road accidents occurred in the canton of Berne. Three hundred and forty-six persons were injured and twelve killed. [A.T.S.]

* * *

In Ranflüh, in the Bernese district of Signan, a 35 year-old mother of four children used paraffin to light the fire. The paraffin can exploded and the woman was so badly injured that she died shortly afterwards. [A.T.S.]

A start was made at the beginning of this month at the foot of the Great St. Bernhard pass with the filming of "Barry" by Karl Anton. The film represents the life history of the well-known St. Bernhard dog "Barry" who saved 41 human lives and at the forty-first lost his own, as he was accidentally shot by the man whose life he saved. The principal rôle is being played by Pierre Fresnay. [A.T.S.]

Mr. Louis Clerc, director of the Federal Aviation Department, in Berne, has celebrated his 60th birthday. After having been active as a solicitor in La Chaux-de-Fonds, he joined the Federal Aviation Department in 1932, of which he is director since 1941. He occupied himself mainly with the drafting of the regulations of aviation, the arrangements and installations of civil airfields and with the reorganisation of air traffic after the war.

Mr. Clerc represented the Confederation at many international Air congresses, particularly the one at Chicago in 1941, at which the important convention was drawn up which settled the legal position of the present international air traffic. Mr. Clerc is a colonel on the General Staff. [A.T.S.]

The "Nouvelle Revue de Lausanne" reported a case of accidental exchange of children, which had already occupied the public mind a year ago in Fribourg. Two boys, born at the same time at a hospital in Fribourg, through the carelessness of a nurse, were exchanged and brought up in families to which they did not belong. On the occasion of a procession, one of the mothers recognised her son in a group of children. She at once took the necessary steps which had to be taken. The matter was so much more difficult, because the boys had a totally different education and one of the families was French-speaking and the other German. Eventually the mothers agreed to submit their children to a number of experts. The findings of the Swiss and Foreign professors, which were only made known a few days ago, made it quite clear that an exchange had taken place. Each family has now taken their respective boy who belonged to them.

The occurrence has given rise at Hospitals and women's clinics to measures being taken, that such

an exchange cannot happen again. It must, however, be stated that Hospitals have to overcome all sorts of difficulties, not least the shortage of staff. [A.T.S.]

The 70 year-old civil engineer, Richard Mallet, resident in Paris, who passed his holidays every year on his property in Murten, went on an excursion in the district of the Schwarzsee, when above the Schwefelbergbad, he fell over a rock and was killed. His body was taken to Murten. [A.T.S.]

A 29 year-old engineer in a motor car stolen in Bern, knocked down a cyclist in Fribourg, as he was about to return to Berne. The cyclist was seriously injured. The motorist did not stop, but later was intercepted by the police at Flamatt and taken back to Fribourg, where he will have to answer for his misdeed. [A.T.S.]

Theodor Labhardt, senior partner in the well-known banking establishment Labhardt, in Basle, has celebrated his 70th birthday anniversary. (M. Labhardt, who at the beginning of this century was a member of the staff of the Crédit Lyonnais in London, was a member of the Committee of the City Swiss Club, and many of the older members still remember him, and wish him many happy returns of the day. Eo.)

The trial of the 28 year-old driver, who ran his tram into a stationary tram train on the Aeschenplatz in Basle, causing the death of six passengers and a large number of severely wounded, started on September 6th. He is accused of manslaughter, careless wounding and negligent driving, thereby causing disturbance of the traffic by not putting on the brakes at the proper moment. (On going to Press, we hear that he has been acquitted.) [A.T.S.]

The Administrative Council of Georg Fischer, A.G., Schaffhausen, will propose at the next extraordinary General Meeting on October 1st, 1948, to increase the Share Capital from thirty to forty million francs, in order to increase the working capital as well as the financing of the building programme of dwelling houses and the continuous modernisation of their

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works. The new bearer and registered shares are to be offered to the present shareholders at the nominal value, plus 2% certificate tax, payable on December 1st, 1948, and entitled to dividend from January 1st, 1949. [A.T.S.]

Mr. and Mrs. Krüsi-Schmid commemorated their diamond wedding day on Saturday, 4th September, at the Obere Schwende, in Speicher (Appenzell A.R.).

[A.T.S.]

The Organising Committee of the Federal Music Festival, in St. Gall, submitted to the six music societies of the town, which acted as hosts, its provisional balance-sheet. The result shows a net surplus of frs.60,000.— [A.T.S.]

A chair lift was officially inaugurated in Arosa — Hörnli. The undertaking started in 1945 as a sky lift and last summer was remodelled into a chair and sky lift. At the end of July it was provisionally given over to traffic and has already conveyed over 9,000 passengers. The lift is 2,650m. long and overcomes a difference in height of 682m. and can deal with 750 skiers per hour. [A.T.S.]

The Annual Assembly of the Association for Swiss Folk Costumes was held in Aarau with 400 delegates present. It was decided to hold the Folk Costume Festival (Trachtentag) in 1949, in St. Gall and Appenzell I.R. The Association numbers now about 15,000 members. [A.T.S.]

At the plebiscite in the canton of Aargovie regarding the law for the augmentation of pensions to the Old Age and Dependents insurance as well as to the Railway ticket tax, the law and the tax were rejected by 46,968 no against 17,489 yes. All the eleven districts rejected both. [A.T.S.]

Professor Alfred Carrard, President of the foundation for Psychotechnic and director of the Institute for Applied Psychology in Lausanne, died in Lausanne at the beginning of this month. Born at Montreux in 1889, Prof. Carrard obtained the diploma as Civil Engineer and doctor of technical science at the E.T.H. in Zurich. He published essays about psychotechnical tests, pedagogy and direction of personnel. He was also Professor extra-ordinary at the E.T.H. In the army he held the rank of colonel of Engineers and directed during the whole of the war the news service of the 1st Army Corps. [A.T.S.]

The death has occurred at Avenches (Ct. Vaud) of M. Adolf Pidoux, veterinary surgeon, a former mayor of Avenches and member of the Grand Council of the canton of Vaud, at the age of 63. In the army he reached the rank of colonel in the veterinary service.

[A.T.S.]

The police of the canton of Vaud again draws the attention to the activity of Spanish swindlers as was done in previous years. These Spaniards pretend that owing to a lawsuit now pending they are unable to leave Spain to travel to Switzerland where they are to collect a sum of 68,000 dollars. They induce Swiss people to travel to Spain for further information and on several occasions it has been ascertained that the victims return to Switzerland completely robbed.

At the age of eighty-four Gustave Krafft, pharmacist and former teacher of natural science in Lausanne and Morges, died in Paris. He was scientific collaborator of a number of western Swiss newspapers, author of many scientific works, and since 1925 possessor of a prize from the French Academy of Science. He was promotor of cremation in the canton de Vaud and presided over the International Association of Societies for Cremation. He was further president of the Société de Renseignement in Lausanne. He lived in Paris since 1931. [A.T.S.]

On Thursday, 2nd September, four young mountaineers from the Valais left Zinal to go to Zermatt via the Matterhorn. On Friday morning the climb began in good weather. The tourists passed the night probably in the summit regions, in order to start their descent early in the morning, although the weather suddenly changed. They got into a blizzard, but were able to reach the Solvay hut, where they evidently succumbed to cold and fatigue. The bodies were brought down by two rescuing parties.

The dead were the 28 year-old lawyer, Urbain Zufferey, from Sierre, single, the married Constant Zufferey, who owned properties in Sierre and St. Luc, the married René Zufferey, who was also established in Sierre and St. Luc, and the married lawyer, Albert Lathion, from Sion. [A.T.S.]

Owing to the heavy rains in the first days of this month the district between Charrat-Martigny and

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Saxon is under water and forms a complete lake of some 120m. wide. The rail traffic on the Simplon line between Sion and Martigny, however, has never been completely stopped and is now again working normally. The height of the Rhone has now slightly gone down, but the damage to the farmers is considerable. The telephone communication in the Simplon region was for a time interrupted. Landslides have occurred in several parts of the Valais, and the Simplon pass between the hospiz and the village of Simplon had been closed for several days.

Further landslides are reported from the Lötschental. The roads to St. Niklausen in the Nicolaital, the road Ernen-Binn and the Furka from Gletsch to the Pass height were closed for some days. [A.T.S.]

At the International Congress of old pupils of higher Commercial schools in session at Neuchâtel, it was decided to form an International Association of former students of higher Commercial schools. The seat is to be in Switzerland. A provisional Committee, under the chairmanship of Paul Richème, president of former students at the Commercial school in Neuchâtel, was formed of which Fritz Kämmler, in Neuchâtel, has taken over the secretaryship. [A.T.S.]

During the celebration of the century of the Revolution and in commemoration of the liberation of Besançon, the canton of Neuchâtel sent a liberty tree from the forests of Le Locle, which are bordering on to the Franche Comté. The president of the States Council of Neuchâtel, M. Camille Brandt, was present when the tree was handed over. [A.T.S.]

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The 10 million francs loan issued by the "Caisse Hypothécaire du canton de Genève" as $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. has been over-subscribed. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Owing to the very heavy rainfalls in the Valais causing the Rhone and its tributaries to rise enormously, the level of the lake of Geneva rose by 14cm. In order to bring the water again to the normal level, and to facilitate the inflow in the lower Valais, the sluices at the Pont de la Machine in Geneva and those of the power works of Verbois were opened as much as possible. This, on the other hand, caused a rise of the Rhone at the outflow of the lake and many cellars in the Jonction Quarter are under water [A.T.S.]

Army

The Federal Council has issued the following instructions with regard to calling up of Swiss citizens liable for military service who are living abroad:—

In case of part war mobilisation of the Swiss army, Swiss living outside the borders of the Confederation will not be called back.

Should a general mobilisation of the Swiss army be decided upon, all Swiss citizens having reached the age of forty are liable to be called up.

The Federal Military Department will determine from which countries Swiss citizens, liable for military service, will be called up. [A.T.S.]

Humanitarian

The children's aid organisation of the Swiss Red Cross has been able, in spite of the difficult political situation, to arrange a transport of 450 boys and girls from the town of Berlin for a three months stay in Switzerland. They arrived at Basle on the 17th of this month, and will be distributed amongst Swiss families. [A.T.S.]

Economics

The serious tension in Swiss Argentine trade relations during the past few months appears to have been alleviated considerably, the Swiss National Bank having agreed to grant Argentina certain facilities beyond the existing trade agreement.

Argentina in turn has declared her willingness to put an end to her discrimination against Swiss goods. A decree to this effect is expected to be published shortly by the Argentinian Central Bank.

* * *

The "Economist" writes under the heading "Gold Losses to Switzerland," the following:—

"A report issued this week by the Swiss Federal Council gives the interesting information that during the first two years of the working of the Anglo-Swiss payments agreement of March, 1946, the United Kingdom had to transfer to Switzerland 440 million Swiss francs in gold, of which 305 million francs were paid during the second year, that is, in the twelve months to the end of February, 1948. These gold remittances came to an end as a result of the supplementary agreement signed last January. By this both parties undertook to maintain payments between Switzerland and the sterling area in approximate balance, leaving Switzerland's holdings in sterling at the agreed ceiling of £15 million.

It is probable that the supplementary agreement, with its basic objective of preventing Swiss accumulations of sterling beyond this gold point, provides an explanation of the new arrangements for crediting interest on Swiss Nominee Assets referred to in *The Economist* of July 24th last. The new arrangements, under which the interest on such assets is paid to the credit of a sterling account appropriate to the residence of the beneficial owner and not of the nominee, means that an accumulation of sterling on Swiss account is prevented. Whether or not this suits Swiss interests, it certainly accords with the British Government's expressed desire 'to bring payments between Switzerland and the sterling area into balance and so avoid further losses of gold.'"

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The economic information unit of the Treasury announced last week that detailed arrangements for tourist travel to Switzerland between November 1st, 1948, and February 28th, 1949, have been completed by an Anglo-Swiss committee. A limited amount of currency will be available for this period, of which a quota of 45 per cent. has been reserved for independent travellers and 55 per cent. for travel agencies. The amount authorized will be based on the duration of stay in Switzerland, and on the scale of hotel charges in each case within the basic annual allowance of £35 for adults and £25 for children.

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