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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The Swiss Government has proposed to Parliament a revision of the constitution which would permit banknotes and other paper money to be declared legal tender. The constitution now forbids such action except in a war-time emergency.

The decree promulgated in 1936 under the emergency powers, expires at the end of 1949, and constitutional revision is necessary to continue the present measures making notes legal tender.

The proposed new article reads: "The confederation can decree banknotes and all other fiduciary money to be legal tender. It prescribes the maintenance of sufficient coverage."

In its message the Government said there can be no question of putting gold back into circulation. Experience of the last few years has shown that gold is acquired solely for purposes of hoarding or making illicit profits. The message also pointed out that Switzerland's war-time favourable balance of payments position can be reversed sooner or later this would cause a drain on the reserves of the National Bank.

* * * * * Switzerland will not need to sign a bilateral agreement with the United States under the Marshall Plan, announces the Swiss Foreign Ministry.

Switzerland will be the only nation participating in the Marshall Plan not to have to sign such an agreement.

As the result of this decision, reached in Washington following negotiations between the Swiss delegation and Economic Co-operation Administration officials. Switzerland may purchase unlimited quantities in the United States of such raw materials in short supply as wheat, oils, fats and steel.

The waiving of bilateral accord was agreed, it was stated, because Switzerland is the only country participating in the Marshall Plan not requiring economic aid from the U.S.

It is understood that the fact that Switzerland is a hard currency country also influenced the decision.

The conclusion of a trade agreement with Bulgaria was announced recently by the Swiss Government. The agreement widens and extends until the end of 1949 the trade pact signed by the two countries in 1946.

No details of the volume of trade involved in new agreement were given, but it was said that Bulgaria will supply considerable quantities of tobacco, eggs, industrial raw materials and consumer goods. Switzerland is to export clocks and watches, machinery, precision instruments, pedigree cattle and chemicals.

The Bulgarian delegation, led by Mr. Ivan Tutev, director of the Foreign Trade Department, is remaining in Berne to negotiate the settlement of compensation claims of Swiss citizens for property nationalised by the Bulgarian Government.

* * * *

Trade discussions opened in Berne between Switzerland and Spain. The Spanish mission, led by the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, is negotiating agreements to replace the trade and financial transfers pact which expires at the end of this month.

A trade mission from France will also start negotiating on trade and payments agreements with Switzerland, as the present arrangements end this month.

* * * *

Georges Brown of the Federal Political Department in Berne has been appointed Swiss Consul at Torino (Italy). Vittorio Malinverni, from Locarno, has been nominated Vice-Consul at Catania (Italy).

Cantonal

Dr. Raymond Savioz, from Grimisuat (Valais), at present Professor at the University of Mainz, has been appointed Professor of Philosophy at the Federal Technical University in Zurich. Dr. J. Lugeon, Director of the Meteorological Office in Zurich and Lecturer at the

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Federal Technical University in Zurich has received the title of Professor. [A.T.S.]

Karl Gnehm-Bertschinger, of Fischenthal (Ct. Zurich), has celebrated his 100th birthday anniversary.

[A.T.S.]

* * * * *

Dr. P. Müller, who has been awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine, was received by the government of the Canton of Basle at the Town Hall, where Dr. Zschokke, President of the cantonal government expressed to him, on behalf of the population, heartiest congratulations for the honour bestowed on him. Amongst those present were the Swedish Minister in Berne, Monsieur John Söderblom and the Swedish Consul General in Basle.

During a Luncheon offered to Dr. Müller, it was announced that the Prize, which is in the neighbourhood of £11,000, will be " free of Swiss income tax."

[A.T.S.]

* * * * *

Alois Landtwig, in Zug, has made a donation of 34,656.—frs. to the cantonal " Winkelried " Fund.

[A.T.S.]

* * * * *

The Grand Council of the canton of Berne has elected the following as members of the States-Council (Ständerat): Weber, (B.G.B., hitherto) and G. Möckli (socialist, new). [A.T.S.]

* * * * *

A fire which broke out at the town hall in Romont (Fribourg) has caused considerable damage. [A.T.S.]

* * * * *

The Gymnastic Society " Ancienne," in Fribourg, has celebrated its 100th anniversary. [A.T.S.]

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Dr. Hans Debrunner has been appointed Professor of orthopaedy at the University of Basle. [A.T.S.]

* * * * *

Professor A. Bertholet, senior of the Theological Faculty of the University of Basle, has celebrated his 80th birthday anniversary. Professor Bertholet is the author of a great number of theological and philosophical works. [A.T.S.]

* * * * *

Mr. Maurice Golay, General Manager of the " Schweiz. Bankverein " in Basle, has been promoted to the rank of Officier de la Légion d'Honneur by the French Government. [A.T.S.]

Xmas Greetings

Following former years' practice we propose to publish again in our December issue a collective greeting.

The scarcity of paper and the costs of Xmas cards, should induce many of our subscribers to make use of this facility to extend to their friends the compliments of the season.

Those of our readers and friends wishing to be included should forward name and address to our office not later than Friday, December 10th, 1948, together with remittance for 6/-.

John Jäger, a citizen of Urnäsch, who died in 1943 in New York, has left an amount of 55,000.—frs. to the orphanage in Urnäsch, of which he was an inmate at the age of nine, having lost his parents. [A.T.S.]

* * * * *

The late Madame Hedwig Zürcher-Zuberbühler, of Teufen (Appenzell A.Rh.), has left a number of Legacies amounting to 737,000.—frs. to various charitable institutions of the canton Appenzell. [A.T.S.]

* * * * *

Théophile Aubert from Corseaux, sur Vevey, has celebrated his 100th birthday anniversary. He was employed in the Watch industry up to the age of 74. [A.T.S.]

* * * * *

One man was killed, six seriously, and eleven slightly injured, when a motor-coach carrying 16 passengers, left the road near Vex (Ct. Valais) and overturned. [A.T.S.]

* * * * *

Owing to slackness of work, unemployment in the canton of Valais has set in. The Lonza Works have given notice to 250 of their workmen, the Scintilla Works in St. Niklausen have dismissed 100 work hands. The " Westschweizerische Kraftwerke " have decided to close their works in Gleusen, employing 450 workmen. The " Aluminium Werk " in Chippis have also considerably reduced their staff. [A.T.S.]

Economics

60,079 cars valued at 376.5 million francs have been imported into Switzerland during the period January, 1946, to September, 1948. Imports of motor cycles during the same period amounted to 19,500 units. America headed the list of suppliers of motor cars to the Swiss market during the first nine months of this year, with imports from that country amounting to 9,828 cars, i.e., 3,000 above the corresponding period of 1947, while imports from the U.K. declined to 4,725 cars and those from France to 3,720 cars. Imports from Italy, on the other hand, increased from 1,071 units in the first nine months of 1947 to 2,204 units in the corresponding period this year.

* * * * *

Switzerland's imports from the United Kingdom during October amounted to Frs. 22.6 millions, against Frs. 21.8 millions in August and September. The two previous months were characterised by a marked

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downward trend in U.K. exports to this country, having reached the value of Frs.38.5 millions in May.

Swiss exports to Britain in October declined from Frs.12.9 millions to Frs.11.9 millions, as compared with the previous month.

In well-informed Swiss circles it is emphasised that Switzerland has always taken care not to exceed her export limits in order not to disturb the payments arrangement entered into. If imports from the sterling area have not reached the target set, this, it is further pointed out, is not due to any import restrictions on the part of Switzerland, but rather to the prices which are becoming less favourable in comparison with other countries, and also to some extent because some British products are not available in the required quantity.

Swiss imports from the Union of South Africa, in October, amounted to Frs.1.9 millions, compared with Frs.200,000 in September, while exports stood at Frs.6.9 millions, against Frs.6.6 millions. By special arrangement, the Union is paying adverse trade balances in gold.

Imports from India amounted to Frs.1.8 millions (1.4) and exports to Frs.8.5 millions (6.1).

—oo—

The following deaths are reported in Switzerland: Franz, Carl Weber, founder of the well-known Toy Manufacturing firm in Zurich, at the age of 94; Carl Wehrli-Thielen, Founder and head of the Banking firm Joh. Wehrli & Co., and President of the Board of the "Dolderbahn," Zurich, aged 75; Ernst Brodtbeck-Handschin, Director of the "Portland Zementfabrik," Liestal and Prattelen, aged 73; Hans von Moos, for

thirty years engineer of the town of Lucerne, aged 65; Emil Teucher, for many years teacher of mathematics at the "Gymnasium" in Biel; Dr. Wilhelm Scherrer, "Kantonaler Armensekretär" of Solothurn, aged 54, Pater Desiderius Hugentobler, formerly Professor at the "Gymnasium" in Stans and for 50 years a member of the Capucine order; Charles Roch "Staatsarchivar," Geneva, at the age of 71. [A.T.S.]

* * * *

A motorist, who some months ago, at a speed of 90 km. ran into a pedestrian killing him outright, and continued his journey without stopping, has been sentenced by the District Court of Horgen to six months imprisonment and a fine of 500.—frs. (!) (He would not have got off so lightly in this country. ED.)

Faults in the electric ballast-jettisoning system and lack of petrol for the buoyancy chambers of Prof. Piccard's bathyscaphe, caused the abandonment of his projected deep-sea dive to study life on the ocean bed.

The 63-year-old Swiss-born scientist and colleagues had planned to descend $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles in the bathyscaphe, a specially-built 6ft. metal globe. A successful, unmanned dive of nearly a mile was made during the night, but pumping difficulties caused the float chamber petrol to pour into the sea.

* * * *

Two Zürich airmen named Lang and Legler have had their flying licences withdrawn and were fined 200f. each for an offence committed last November on Lake Constance.

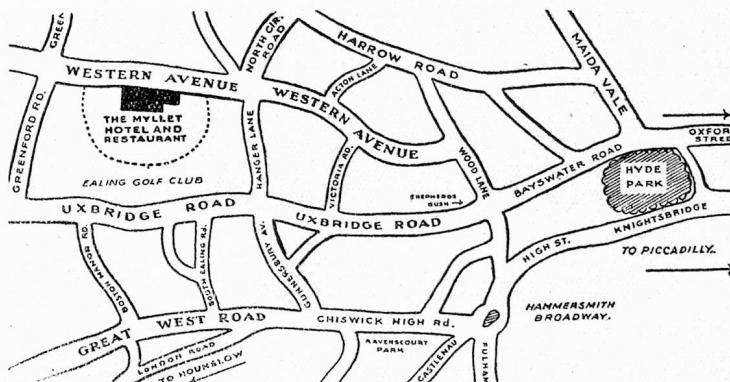
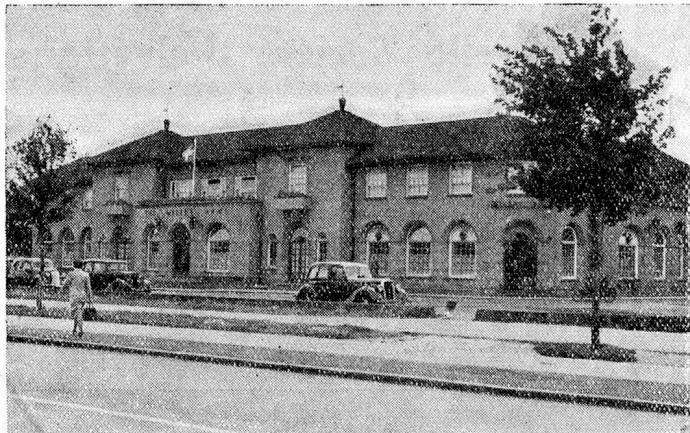
Each year at that time thousands of wild duck from the northern countries alight on the waters of the lake before going farther south. According to an

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alleged privilege granted centuries ago by the Bishop of Chur, the lakeside residents are allowed to shoot the birds on a day fixed by the local authorities. Early on the morning of the appointed day more than 100 boats each manned by two or three sportsmen assemble off the village of Ermatingen. When a shot has been fired by the police, the whole fleet rows hard towards the island of Reichenau, and the shooting begins and lasts for about half an hour, during which time thousands of birds are killed. The reason given for the shooting is that the duck destroy the fish.

On the appointed day last year when the boats started on their traditional hunt, two aircraft took off in the mist from the island and circled among the duck, causing them to fly away and to escape the shooting. The two airmen, whose intention, it is believed, was to save as many birds as possible, were prosecuted, and as it was impossible to charge them with saving the lives of the birds they were charged with having flown over groups of people at a height below 100ft. The two airmen intend to appeal.

* * *

The Swiss Universities Central Office (27, Scheuchzerstrasse, Zürich), which acts as a liaison office between foreign and Swiss universities for the exchange of teachers and professors, reports that during the 1947-48 school year 39 Swiss candidates obtained posts in English schools and six English teachers were working in Swiss schools. In most cases these students or graduates work as assistant teachers in classes where they give conversation lessons in their

native language for about 12 hours a week. The Universities Central Office also undertakes to supply foreign students and teachers with information on Swiss university and scientific life, and advises Swiss students on the possibilities of studying abroad.

A HAPPY HOME-COMING.

Nothing is more inspiring and pleasant than to see a happy crowd of children; their smiles act as a tonic in a world where there is so little now of gaiety.

This opportunity was given to me, when a batch of youngsters numbering 25 arrived at Victoria Station on Thursday, 11th November. They were Birmingham children, who had returned after a five months health cure at Davos, where they had stayed at the alpine home of our countryman, Mr. Christian Kunzle. Five months ago, they left this country suffering with bronchial troubles, their faces were pale and pinched, and no hearty laughter could be heard.

One could hardly realise, that those children who arrived a fortnight ago, were the same. Hardly had the train stopped when they jumped from the carriages with clear eyes and rosy cheeks, and what a cheer they gave their benefactor who was on the platform to receive them, it must have been a proud moment for Mr. Kunzle.

Laden with chocolates, sweets, toys and souvenirs, they excitedly related some of their experiences and when I asked one of the tiny tots how he liked Switzerland, he said, "you ought to go one day there to see it, it is a lovely country full of kind people" and when I told him that it was my country, he replied, "Why do you stop here?" Returning the compliment I said "because your country is a grand country too." "Thank you Sir," he said, with a twinkle in his eye.

This party was also met by Mr. George Tomlinson, Minister of Education, who recently visited the home at Davos and by Alderman Percy Shurmer, M.P. for Sparkbrook.

It is a great undertaking; I understand that another party is shortly going out to the sunny slopes of this famous alpine resort to gain health and strength.

On leaving Victoria Station to return home, I could still hear the happy laughter of the children whose health has been restored and who, I feel sure, will always keep a warm corner in their little hearts for our country.

ST.

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