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The Swiss Observer

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The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

During the month of September, 1952, the Swiss Federal Railways, carried 19.08 million passengers, 564,000 more than during the same period in 1951. Receipts: 28.01 million francs. (September, 1951: 25.89 million frs.) Goods traffic carried amounted to 1.64 million tons, 105,000 tons less than in September, 1951. (Receipts: 33.95 million francs).

Dr. Walter Nägeli, President of the Federal Supreme Court, Lausanne, and Federal Judge Dr. Eugen Blocher, have tendered their resignations.

Dr. Nägeli has been a member of the Federal Tribunal since 1933, and Dr. Blocher, since 1928.

Cantonal

During September, 1952, 844 traffic accidents occurred in the canton of Zurich. (Sept., 1951: 869). 385 persons were injured and 17 people were killed

[A.T.S.]

A serious motoring accident occurred between Kehrsatz and Wabern (Ct. Berne) when two motor-cars collided at full speed. One passenger was killed and eight seriously injured. The name of the victim is Mme. Loos of Belp. The respective drivers of the cars will be prosecuted for reckless driving. [A.T.S.]

Monsieur Victor Doré, Canadian Minister in Berne, has paid an official visit to the University of Fribourg. [A.T.S.]

Dr. Raymond Lapp of Lausanne has been appointed head of the section dealing with internal disease at the Cantonal Hospital in Fribourg. Since 1951, he had held the post of surgeon-in-chief at the Nestlé clinic. [A.T.S.]

The newly appointed Dutch Minister, Baron A. Bentinck in Berne, has paid an official visit to the town

of Basle. After a visit to the Rhine port he was received at the town hall by the municipal authorities. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The elections for the government of the canton of Schaffhausen resulted in the following being elected: Karl Waldvogel (Peasant Party); (no change), Ernst Lieb (Peasant Party), (no change), Theo Wanner (Socialist) (no change), Georg Leu (Socialist) no change, Robert Schärer, (Liberal) new. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Owing to irregularities which had occurred in the administration of the "Kursaal" in Montreux, the Board has decided to close the gambling section. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Mme. Grüning-Huguenin, the oldest inhabitant of Montreux, has celebrated her 100th birthday.

Mme. A. Chavan-Barbey, of Pully, has also reached her 100th birthday. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The "Conservatoire" of La Chaux-de-Fonds has celebrated its 25th Jubilee. There are, at present, over 500 students enrolled. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The late National-Councillor, Dr. h.c. Schmidheiny of Heerbrugg, (Ct. St. Gall) has left an amount of 100,000.—frs. for the foundation of a Trust for the "Förderung der beruflichen Weiterbildung".

* * *

Director Ernst Rösel of Buchs (Rheintal) has made a donation of 20,000.—frs. to the "Kindergarten-fonds" of the commune of Buchs. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The University of Geneva has honoured Professor Dr. Paul Scherrer, of the Federal Institute of

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R.A.C.

Technology (ETH) Zurich with the degree of *doctor honoris causa*. [A.T.S.]

The 20 million francs loan, at 3 per cent, issued by the tow Geneva has been considerably over subscribed, allocations had to be reduced. [A.T.S.]

Army

Colonel Kuenzy, born in 1904, a citizen of Basle and Adelboden, has been appointed "Unterstabscbef Front des Generalstabes" with promotion to the rank of Colonel of Division. [A.T.S.]

The following deaths are reported from Switzerland:

Jean Montet, for twenty years Manager of the Vevey branch of the Cantonal Bank of Vaud, in La Tour-de-Peilz, at the age of 68.

Nuna Donzé, artist, in Riehen, aged 67.

Karl Bischofsberger, District Judge and from 1935-1950 a member of the cantonal tribunal Appenzell I. Rh., in Appenzell, at the age of 60.

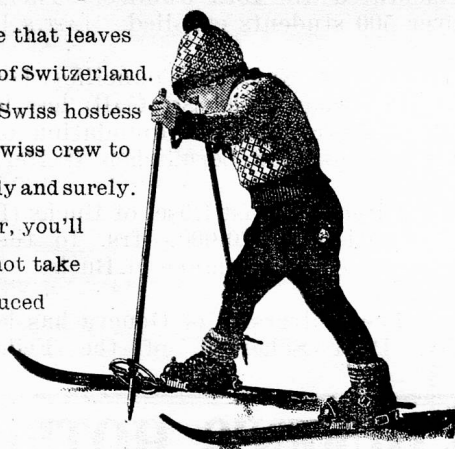
Eduard Frey-Wilson "Vizestadtammann" and a prominent member of the "Aargauer" Chamber of Commerce, in Aarau, aged 66.

Jakob Sager, for 28 years head of the commune of Schönenwerd, and a member of the "Kantonsrat", in Schönenwerd, at the age of 79.

Charles Boudry, engineer, and since 1922 head of the "Kantonalen Versuchsstation für Landwirtschaftliche Maschinen" in Morges, aged 58.

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Max Haefelin, Music-Director and composer, in St. Gall, at the age of 55.

Bernhard Widmer, from 1928-1939, a Member of Parliament (National Council) and for many years a Member of the "Kantonsrat" Zurich, in Zurich, aged 77.

Dr. Eugen Kopp, Editor of the "Vaterland" newspaper and Vice-President of the Grand Council of the canton of Lucerne.

The deceased was born in 1894 in Ebikon (Ct. Lucerne). He studied law at the Universities of Zurich, Berne and Munich, and in 1920 became a member of the Editorial Staff of the "Vaterland". In 1927, Dr. Kopp was elected a member of the "Grossen Stadtrat" of Lucerne over which he presided in 1934/35.

Frédéric Stucki, General Manager of the "Kabel-fabrik" Cortaillod, in Neuchâtel, at the age of 52.

[A.T.S.]

By order of the Swiss Military Department a military court is to inquire into the case known as the "massacre of horses of Thun," in which it is alleged that there has been wanton slaughtering of cavalry horses.

In 1950, at the time of the motorization of Swiss cavalry units, it was decided to wind up gradually the federal remount dépôt at Thun, while the federal remount dépôt at Berne was to remain. The Berne remount dépôt was to have taken over the best horses of the Thun dépôt, but, through jealousy, it is alleged, hundreds of horses instead of being offered for sale to peasants were sold to butchers.

The horses thus slaughtered included, among others, Hummer, on which Captain Moser won the gold medal at the London Olympic Games in 1948, and several other holders of many medals in Swiss and Continental competitions. It is alleged that they were sold for 100 Swiss francs each, just for their meat value, while many amateur riders here would have paid four times as much.

—oOo—

Two veteran Alpine guides have been left £50 each by Dr. Frederick Bernard Pidduck, the former Oxford physicist. One of them, Karl Biner, said that Dr. Pidduck had been a frequent visitor to Zermatt. He and his brother-in-law had often taken him on climbs.

* * *

According to the Swiss radio sheep breeding in Switzerland during the last few years has shown encouraging development. The stock of animals increased by 9,000 between 1947 and 1951, and now totals approximately 191,000 head, belonging to 25,000 owners. Herds yielded about 247,000 pounds of wool in 1950, and 261,700 pounds in 1951.

* * *

Price of petrol in Switzerland will be reduced by two centimes a litre. The price is 11½d. a litre. Price of diesel oil is also being reduced by the same amount and will be 10d. a litre.

* * *

According to figures issued by the Federal Bureau of Statistics there were 180,000 motor cars in use in Switzerland at the end of June this year, compared with 160,000 in 1951. There were also 47,000 (as against 44,000) vans, lorries, etc., and 131,000 (as

against 96,000) motor-cycles, making a grand total of 360,000 (as against 300,000) motor vehicles, without counting military transport and farm tractors. Last year Switzerland had one motor vehicle for every 16 inhabitants. This year the figure is one for every 13 inhabitants. In fact, if only people entitled to hold driving licences (18-year-olds and above) are taken into consideration, it is possible to say that one out of every 10 Swiss citizens is "motorised". The concentration of vehicles is highest in the Canton of Geneva, where there is one for every six inhabitants. From the beginning of 1946 to June this year — six-and-a-half-years — Switzerland bought from abroad 180,000 motor vehicles and nearly 110,000 motorcycles. These imports were worth a total of 1,200 mill. Sw. francs or roughly 100 mill. £.

WINTER SEASON 1953 — COMING EVENTS

March 8 Château d'Oex : Monts-Chervreuls giant slalom.

March 12-15 Davos : 3rd horse show on snow.

March 11-21 Bâle : Swiss Industries Fair
Montreux : Montreux International Ski Grand Prix competition on the Rochers de Naye.

March 14 St. Moritz : Giant slalom ski race.

March 15 Villars-Chesières : Chaux-Ronde ski Derby, downhill and giant slalom races.

March 15 Les Diablerets : Giant slalom ski race.

March 15 Saanenmöser : 18th Hornfluh standard course ski race.

March 15 Pontresina : 23rd Diavolezza ski competition.

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March 15 Lenzerheide/Valbella: Piz Scalottas giant slalom for the Mackenzie Cup.

March 19 Engelberg: Titlis giant slalom ski race.

March 19 Saas Fee: Giant slalom ski race for the Saaserhof Cup.

March 19-20 Zurich: "Sechseläuten", popular Spring festival with processions of children and guilds.

March 20-22 Zermatt: 7th Gornergrat International Skiing Derby.

March 28-29 Arosa: Three-Summits International Giant Slalom Race.

March 29 Verbier: Medran International Giant Slalom Race.

March 30 Saas Fee: Allalinhorn downhill run skiing competition.

April 2 Naefels (Canton Glarus): Commemoration of the Battle of Naefels.

April 4 Arosa: Ski competition for the Oklahoma and David Zogg cups.

April 4, 6 Adelboden: Easter skiing Derby.

April 26 Appenzell, Hundwil, Sarnen, Stans: "Landsgemeinde" (open-air Parliament). (Also at Glarus on Sunday, May 3rd.)

HOME AFFAIRS.

by Dr. Max Nef.

Discussions regarding the reorganisation of the finances of the Confederation have for years past been permanently tabled on the Agenda. There have been however certain intermediary stages, that have brought transitory solutions, which on the other hand, in consequence of negative decisions taken by the sovereign people, only served the purpose of preventing a definite proposal being put forward.

At the present time we are living under the régime of a Transitory Order, which was approved by the people and the Cantons in 1950, and which supplements the Constitutional Order of previous peacetimes. However, this Order also has already shown that it was not able to assure the necessary means for the Confederation. There still lack some 200 million francs per year, due partly to the supplementary armanent measures, for which — as will be recalled the proposals put forward for their financing were rejected by Popular Referendum on the 6th July.

The existing Finance Order is temporally restricted in respect of its most essential parts, and this up to the end of 1954. Should the discussions in the Federal Chambers and the subsequent Popular Referendum on the new text of the Constitution be brought to a satisfactory conclusion early enough for the laws for its execution to come into force prior to the termination of the present Transitory Order, then the time is already ripe to begin with the preliminary work. The Federal Department of Finance has already elaborated various preliminary questions, which have been submitted during the last few days to a small group of members of Parliament, belonging to the big Parties. From these first deliberations, it would appear that there exists a certain willingness to leave to the Confederation, in the future also, the present extraordinary sources of revenue such as the Military Tax and the Turnover Tax. On the other hand, it is demanded by those circles which represent the principle of the freest possible economy, that every imaginable means of restricting expenditure should be examined by the Government and then put into effective practice.

Among the flexible expenditure of the Confederation, there stands in the foreground, as one of the biggest items for disbursement, the money allocated in subsidies. Representing, as they do, one fourth of total expenditure, these subsidies come second, after military expenditure, on the country's Budget list. They comprise, inter alia, the Confederation's contribution to the Old Age Pension and survivors' Insurance and certain sums appropriated for keeping down cost of living.

The remainder, the so-called current subsidies, the amount of which is not legally established in all cases, and in respect of which it would be easiest to effect reductions, are utilised for various purposes. Chief among them is the promotion and the support given to agriculture, including the provisioning of the country with cereals; in this particular case, it must be admitted that in the long run, the consumer is also a beneficiary from the effects of these subsidies on the part of the Government. The second biggest group is formed by contributions in respect of transport, followed by grants for social purposes. Subsidies having cultural aims are on a more modest scale, and to these can be added other allocations for various individual purposes.

Expenditure in regard to agriculture and to transport has risen considerably since the end of the war. This is largely due to increased mechanisation, so that for the last two years half the revenue obtained from Customs duties on imported petrol has been allocated to the Cantons for various purposes connected with traffic. In regard to subsidies for agriculture, it is difficult to think of any reversion, in view of the fact that the new Law on Agriculture will come into force next year, bringing with it fresh burdens for the State.

Social welfare measures also play their share in the increase in Federal expenditure for subsidies. Should tuberculosis insurance and maternity insurance be expanded, as has been intended for a long time past, this will also add to the expenditure for subsidies.

As regards State grants for cultural aims, one is almost tempted to wish that they could be made to flow in a more generous manner as a counter-poise to appropriations for material purposes.

Experience has shown that it is very difficult to carry out cuts in regard to subsidies. Attempts have already been made to achieve this by means of general reductions of equal percentual amounts, a stereotyped measure, which no longer took into account any individual particularities. In order to meet the demands of the Cantons, Communes and individual groups of beneficiaries, it is necessary for Parliament to exercise a methodical financial policy and a strong determination for resistance, within the latitude which it possesses in the matter of granting subsidies, when any noticeable savings are to be effected in this sphere of the Confederation's expenditure. So far, however, one is apt to meet with more of a tendency towards spending on the part of individual members of Parliament, as also on that of certain parties, which has helped to contribute to the steady increase in this particular form of expenditure.

Reduction in expenditure for subsidies will be certainly one of the most difficult problems to be solved within the framework of the Finance Reform. Nevertheless, it must be solved.