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FEDERAL NEWS

The new Federal Councillor, Roger Bonvin, who has assisted at all the meetings of the Federal Council since his election, has now taken charge of the Federal Department of Finance and Customs.

The Federal Assembly has elected Federal Councillor Willy Spuehler as Vice-President of the Confederation for 1962.

The agenda for the parliamentary sessions has been well packed. Amongst the most important business dealt with before the end of the autumn session on 4th October was the labour law according to which the 46-hour week (maximum) is kept till the end of 1966 and will then be reduced to 45 hours. Overtime allowed must be no more than 220 hours p.a., and after 1967, very exceptionally, 260.

The National Council also accepted the bill submitted by the Cabinet making possible the recovery of property and funds deposited in Swiss banks by victims of racial, religious and political persecution.

The National Council decided with 93:11 votes, after very lively debates, to accept the proposals by the Federal Council to take part in the United Nations loan. (See S.O. No. 1412, July 1962).

The International Wheat Agreement received unanimous support, as did the increased allowances proposal for federal civil servants.

In the new session, amendments to the existing law concerning air-traffic were discussed. These have become necessary on account of the vast increase in air traffic and cover a number of subjects such as emergency and mountain landings, flight safety as well as combat of noise, aeroplanes belonging to foreigners living in Switzerland, etc.

A revision took place of the standing orders of the National Council. Whilst no drastic changes were made, the "question hour" will disappear, which is regretted by many parliamentarians.

In the parliamentary business sessions one of the subjects on the agenda is the granting of subsidies to Cantons and Communes for many purposes: to build roads, to correct rivers, to support privately owned railways, for afforestation, elimination of inferior cattle, to foster local culture and language (viz. Grisons), to keep up institutions and schemes of the Red Cross, to enlarge the silo establishments of the Federal Cereal Administration at Altdorf, Brunnen and Huttwil. Large sums were recently involved in proposed subsidies for military buildings, battle dress for the army, and for the purchase of buildings for the Confederation as well as for the erection of an experimental cheese dairy at Uettlingen (Berne).

The Federal Council has decreed that the country's reserve stocks of bread cereals should be increased from 300,000 to 310,000 metric tons. According to a new federal decision, foreign workers in agriculture will get family allowances also for children living abroad.

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Switzerland has recognised Uganda by sending a telegram of congratulations and good wishes on the proclamation of independence.

The Federal Government has lifted the Swiss Consulate-General in Algiers to the rank of Embassy. By so doing diplomatic relations have been established with Algeria.

Dr. Robert Maurice, at present Swiss Ambassador in Brussels, has been appointed Ambassador to the United

Arab Republic, Saudi-Arabia and the Sudan, with residence in Cairo.

Dr. Jean-Louis Pahud, hitherto Ambassador in the above-mentioned countries, has been appointed Ambassador to Belgium and Minister to Luxemburg with residence in Brussels.

The Swiss Ambassador in Tunisia, Dr. Walter Bossi, has also been accredited to the United Kingdom of Libya. He will remain resident in Tunis.

The Federal Council has decided to change the rank of the Consulate-General in Leopoldville to that of an Embassy.

The Swiss Ambassador to Norway and Minister to Iceland, Monsieur Jean-Frederic Wagnière, has tendered his resignation for reasons of health. The Federal Council has regrettably accepted it and has appointed Ambassador Pierre-Henri Aubaret (Indonesia and Federation of Malaya) in his place. The Swiss Colony will remember Monsieur Aubaret from when he was at the Embassy in London.

The Legation in Guatemala has also been raised to an Embassy, and the Swiss Minister there, Monsieur Max Koenig, has been appointed Ambassador. On the other hand the Consulate-General in Shanghai will be closed at the end of the year and its affairs taken over by the Swiss Embassy in Peking.

In September, the ratification instruments of an agreement signed between Germany and Switzerland were exchanged. This provides for compensation in favour of Swiss citizens who had suffered under National Socialist measures. Ten million francs are involved.

An agreement has been arrived at with Honduras which eliminates the requirement of a visa for a stay in Honduras for not more than three months.

*News items supplied by
Agence Télégraphique Suisse (A.T.S.)*

SWISS GUARD USING ADS TO FILL RANKS

Directors of the Vatican's Swiss Guard are working against time to bring the Pope's personal bodyguard up to full strength in time for the opening of the Ecumenical Council in October.

For the first time in its 457 years, the Swiss Guard has taken newspaper advertisement to recruit. It seeks to bring the force up to its full complement of 100.

The applicants already accepted are undergoing intensive training prior to donning the picturesque 16th-century uniform of slashed blue, red and yellow and going on duty.

The Swiss Guard will serve at all the ceremonies of the worldwide church gathering in October.

Col. Robert Nuenlist, 51, who has a reputation as a strict disciplinarian, commands the men, who are the oldest of the Pope's armed forces and probably the oldest standing army in history. The other papal armies are the Noble and Palatine Guards and the Papal Gendarmerie.

The Guard still is composed exclusively of tough mountaineers from the high French and German cantons of Switzerland. German is its official language and is used for all commands.

(Amerikanische Schweizerzeitung 29.8.62.)