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FEDERAL NEWS ITEMS

Early in July, the Swiss Ambassador in the Republic of South Africa signed a double taxation agreement on behalf of Switzerland.

The Federal Council (except Bundesrat Spuehler who was ill) visited the Valais this year. Tradition has it that the annual excursion is made into the Canton from which the President of the Confederation hails (1967: Monsieur Roger Bonvin). Engagements included a helicopter trip to power works and barrages, the model vineyard of Château-neuf, an organ recital at the ancient church of Valère and the Abbey of Saint Maurice.

Back home in Berne, the Federal Council elected the members of the Federal Labour Commission which, according to the new labour law of March 1964, replaces the Federal Factories' Commission. The twenty-eight members represent the Cantons, science, women's organisations, employers and employees.

Although the official Government holidays (four weeks) began in July, Federal Councillors were still extremely busy, especially the Minister of Finance, Federal President Bonvin, who had talks with the Swiss Farmers' Union regarding help for the fishing industry and stabilising agricultural prices. Monsieur Bonvin also took part at the first meeting of the committee of experts who are to examine federal expenditure; the commission is chaired by Prof. Dr. Theo Keller (St. Gall). The first part of the report regarding federal subsidies was dealt with by the Stocker Commission, and now the major part of federal expenditure is to be examined by this new body. Possible improvements in administration are also covered by the new commission's mandate, whose final report is not expected before the end of 1969.

Another commission set up by the Department of Communications and Energy is to examine whether the Confederation should take over other private railways; the take-over of the Berne-Loetschberg-Simplon line has brought this question into the limelight. The commission is chaired by a member of the board of directors of the Swiss National Bank, Dr. Max Ikle.

The export risk guarantee by the Confederation was used more frequently in 1966, mainly due to a further decrease in orders in the export industries. Guarantees granted rose by 45.7% (1,643m.). Actual claims of Fr.880,000.— were met, and the fees received enabled the fund to rise from 35.4 to 43.6 million francs. Since the fund was started in 1934, 42.3m. have been paid, of which 16.9m. were refunded and 19m. came under the consolidation agreements with Argentina and Brazil, leaving an actual settlement of claims of only 6.4m. francs.

The Federal *Baudirektion* was responsible for the upkeep of 10,300 buildings in 1966, whose insurance value amounted to 1.45 milliard francs. In addition, there are several waste-water plants, roads and water installations on Confederation property. 850 new objects were started, such as the extension of the ETH (cost of 444m.). Long-term buildings which were completed include the new Chancellery in Tel Aviv and the Swiss Institute in Rome. The plans for the new federal administration building in the Marzili district in Berne have been completed. 1.7m. is required for the purchase of land in Geneva, where nine buildings are to be erected for federal personnel (PTT, Customs and Radio). Early in June, the new buildings for the Federal Office of Measures and Weights were opened at Wabern.

On the Swiss National Day, Federal Councillor Tschudi received a congratulatory message from President Johnson and the Governors of U.S.A.; it was handed to him by two young American girls now doing a practical term in agricultural work in Switzerland, and a boy scout, and the messengers were accompanied by the American *Chargeé d'Affaires* in Berne.

(*News received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse.*)

NEW APPOINTMENTS AND ELECTIONS

The Federal Council has appointed the following new Ambassadors:

Ambassador Emil Stadelhofer (hitherto in Cuba) to Japan and Korea;

Counsellor of Embassy Friedrich Schnyder (Vienna) Ambassador to Ghana;

Ambassador Fernand Bernoulli (Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Mexico) to Ethiopia;

Ambassador Jean de Rham (Japan and Korea) to follow

Ambassador Philippe Zutter in Italy, whilst the latter has been appointed representative of Switzerland in Belgium and Luxembourg.

The Tourist Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris elected the leader of the Swiss delegation, Dr. A. Martin, Director of the Swiss Office for Communications, as new President.

Dr. med. Stephan Perren, Zermatt, has been elected new head of the Laboratory for Experimental Surgery at the Swiss Research Institute at Davos in succession to Prof. Herbert Fleisch.

The new President of the International Bach Society is Dr. Oscar Hallauer in succession to Mr. Hans Mueller.

The Swiss Bishops' Conference have elected Mgr. Dr. J. Vonderach, Bishop of Chur, as new President to succeed Mgr. A. Jelmini.

The following organisations have elected new Presidents: Federation of Swiss Private Bankers: Dr. N. Baer (Zurich); *Vereinigung Akademischer Volkswirtschaften*: Dr. oec.Publ. Heinrich Reimann (Pfaffhausen); Swiss Graphic Trade Union: Jakob Thali (Basle) in succession to Central President X. Winiger (Olten) who had presided for 20 years; Swiss Dentists Society: Prof. Dr. B. Naeglin (Basle); Central Federation of Swiss Milk Producers: Dr. F. Hofmann (Burgdorf); *Schweiz. Wirteverein*: F. E. Krahenbuehl (Bremgarten) to succeed Paul Derron (Solothurn) after 16 years in office.

[A.T.S.]

DIAMOND AND IRON WEDDINGS

Four couples recently celebrated their Diamond Weddings in Switzerland: Mr. and Mrs. Arthur and Hortensia Pezzoni-Hungler at the "Bürgerspital Altersheim" in Basle, Mr. and Mrs. Emil and Berta Elmer-Frischknecht at Herisau, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Châtelain-Zimmerli at Tramelan and Mr. and Mrs. Karl and Elisabeth Staechelin-Dreher in Zurich.

Mr. and Mrs. Johannes and Trina Brunner-Zellweger celebrated their Iron Wedding at Waldstatt (Appenzell AR) on 9th July.

[A.T.S.]