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PARLIAMENTARY SPRING SESSION

The two Federal Chambers met in Berne from the end of February to the middle of March. The main topic was finance, a subject which has been dealt with in the first columns of this issue.

The National Council decisively rejected a proposal to introduce a service for **conscientious military objectors** (106:15). Whilst the respective Parliamentary Commission and the Plenary Session agreed that a Civil Service would not be compatible with the Federal Constitution, a Postulate was submitted to the Federal Council asking it to study a suitable method of dealing with conscientious objectors.

The report of the Federal Council regarding **electricity supplies** was accepted. Whilst the advocates of water-power had their say, they, too, had to agree that in the future, atom power would have to be prevalent.

The Council of States did comprehensive work in debating the **revision of the penal law**, and the National Council accepted the 74th report on **economic measures** in connection with inter-state commitments. In this connection, Federal Councillor Schaffner once again explained Switzerland's attitude to **European integration**, which is still based on "wait and see". The situation could change if the British efforts to join the Common Market were crowned with success.

The new Federal Councillor Celio presented the fifth "**Mirage**" Report. He demonstrated clearly that he knew what he was talking about, and that he was aware of the complications connected with armament and delivery of the planes, although he was not yet responsible for the latest report.

Technical Assistance to developing countries was another subject for debate. For the period ending on 30th June, the credit granted amounted to 90m. francs. The Federal Council proposed 100m. for a similar period of 2½ years. An amendment was suggested to cut it by six months in order to create "a better impression abroad". In view of the precarious financial position, Parliament defeated the amendment, but Federal Councillor Spuehler promised to make new credit proposals earlier should the financial state improve considerably within the next year or so.

The National Council also debated the proposed grant of 150m. francs to **private railways**. According to the railway law of 1957, the Confederation is obliged to subsidise them. Of the 240m. so far granted, 190m. have been used. Applications received would require a new credit of 250m., but Parliament decided on 150m.

An important subject for debate was the draft prepared by the Commission under National Councillor Dr. R. Tschaepaet, Mayor of Berne, regarding **administrative jurisdiction** (*Verwaltungsgerichtsbarkeit*). A modern conception has been put forward, and three solutions are to be considered by the Federal and the Insurance Tribunals. 1) Separation of Federal Tribunal and Insurance Tribunal as hitherto. 2) Formation of a Federal Administration Tribunal with seat in Lucerne, in which the Insurance Tribunal and the Administrative Juridical Chamber of the Federal Tribunal would be combined. 3) Incorporating the Insurance Tribunal into the Federal Tribunal as second Administrative Juridical Chamber with seat in Lucerne.

The President of the Confederation reported that the **economic boom** had slightly abated, and that conditions were healthier. The emergency programme of the Federal

Council (Building and Credit Limitations) will have come to an end in March. The so-called *Anschlussprogramm* which was to follow the emergency regulations, has shrunk to not much more than the revision of the National Bank law. The National Council accepted the proposed extension of *Finanzkontrolle*, which in essence is a revision of the law governing finance control, which serves both Parliament and Government. With the revision, the independence of this institution is to be demonstrated in opposition to the ever-growing power of the administration.

The Federal Council was invited to study the political, legal, military, scientific and economic consequences of a **non-proliferation agreement** as at present being debated in Geneva. Sooner or later, Switzerland will be asked to sign, and Parliament wishes to know the Government's attitude.

A further 5m. francs was voted towards the cost of extending the Central Laboratory and **Blood Bank Service** in Berne (total cost 21m.).

There was dearth of subject matters up for debate in the National Council, and a number of individual proposals and questions were put, i.e. increased **fight against alcoholism**, **reform of university education**, which would allow not only the training of graduates but also secure expert lecturers, and again the cost of **maintenance of the National roads**, which, according to the law, is the business of the Cantons. The Confederation can only give financial help if the burden is too great for any one Canton. For the time being, no subsidy of the national road police force is possible.

No fewer than six individual Postulates and Interpellations were put forward regarding **freedom of radio and television**. This was with reference to National Councillor Koenig who had attacked the Federal Council in the "Weltwoche" for influencing the Swiss Radio Corporation who, consequently, dropped a certain programme from the air ("Mini Menig- Dini Meinig" by Dr. Gmuer). Federal Councillor Gnaegi defended the Government and announced a Constitutional Article regarding radio and TV.

Before the end of the session, a question was put regarding **Stalin's daughter** Mrs. Svetlana Allilujewa. The Swiss Cabinet had granted her permission to stay in Switzerland on a temporary basis. The exact place where she is resting and recuperating has not been disclosed. It is believed to be the Bernese Oberland, but the Swiss authorities have agreed to respect her wishes to be left alone. The Swiss Press with the exception of the "Blick" and some foreign correspondents, have acquiesced.

(Compiled from news and reports received by courtesy of A.T.S., "Basler Nachrichten" and "Schweizerisches Kaufmännisches Zentralblatt".)

SINGING AND GYMNASTICS

Singing and Gymnastics are two of the most popular recreations in Switzerland. Both will reach their annual highpoints in early summer, occasions in which the Federal Government and the people at large will participate. The Swiss Singing Festival will be held in Lucerne from 19th to 21st and 26th to 28th May, while Berne will play host to the 67th Swiss Gymnastics Meet from 18th to 25th June. Both are old, traditional events, celebrated in the immortal writings of the great Swiss author Gottfried Keller, and both bring together the country's finest and keenest competitors in friendly competition.

[S.N.T.O.]