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COMMENT SWISS NEWS

On Sunday, 15th November, Swiss male citizens were invited to the polls to have their say on Mr. Celio's proposed amendment of federal tax legislation. Some 40 per cent of the electorate performed their civic duty, but Geneva once again reached the first position in the league of bad voters, with an attendance of barely 20 per cent. As the issue revolved around a change in the Constitution, it had to be passed by both the people and the cantons. Although the majority of voters said "yes" to the prospect, 13 cantons (including four half cantons) rejected it.

For 55 years the Confederation had levied a "temporary" income tax and for 30 years a "temporary" turnover tax. These two taxes amounted currently to two fifths of its resources. The temporary nature of the right to levy these taxes as well as their amount were laid down in the Constitution. This right was periodically renewed (every 5 or 6 years) by means of a federal referendum. Mr. Celio however decided, quite rightly, that a provision which had been applied for 55 years could hardly be considered as "temporary". Besides, there was hardly any possibility—especially in a day and age when the State has ever increasing responsibilities—to do away with two-fifths of central income.

The poorer and smaller cantons were in fact responsible for the failure of the vote. They felt that the financial situation of the Confederation had never ceased to improve whereas their own had markedly deteriorated in the past. This coupled with the position that tax equalisation remained to their disadvantage induced the political forces of these cantons to reject Mr. Celio's plan and hold fast to the status quo. There were other motivations, such as the fear of dismantling a treasured system of direct democracy and the desire of a radical reform of the whole tax system (as advocated by the Socialists).

There were some elements which many voters may not have been aware of. The present system of "constitutionally-bound" taxation has for example lead to a marked lopsidedness in the balance between purchase tax and income tax.

Basically all that was asked for was a little more for the Confederation to harness the economy. One would have thought that this should have been universally accepted under the present circumstances. But the attitudes of voters in 11 smaller and poorer cantons showed that what seemed desirable, almost obvious and rather plain for the observer abroad was viewed as a major disadvantage by the citizens of a mini-state afraid of letting Berne take in hand too much of its fate. Mr. Celio will have to work out a new project.

(PMB)

"THE KNIGHT OF THE ROAD"

A special jury set up to encourage motoring courtesy has named a mechanic from Adliswil (Zh.), Mr. Ueli Fueglistahler, as "Knight of the Road" for the month of October.

He had been uncommonly obliging toward a motorist who had broken down on the Grimsel Pass. Mr. Fueglistahler had stopped and discovered that the stranded car had a broken spring. He had taken it away and set out to find a garage. As all the garages in the area were closed because of holidays, he had to drive down to Interlaken, where he was allowed to perform his repairs in a garage which was also closed. He returned to the site of the breakdown, and repaired the car in the night and the fog.

The jury underlined the exceptional nature of this act. Mr. Fueglistahler had been on his way to seek his children in a holiday camp. He had given away six hours of his time and refused any recompense.

(ATS)

EPILOGUE OF THE MAJOR TROYON AFFAIR

On 7th September last, Major Troyon, from Geneva, sent his military booklet to the Federal Military Department, informing it that he was resigning from his military duties in protest against the Federal Council's lack of guts during the hijack crisis.

Following an interview with the Commander of the 1st Army, to whom he was subordinated, Major Troyon has confessed that his behaviour was incorrect and inadmissible. His conduct had not only contravened military prescriptions, but involved the Army in a public debate with which it was not concerned. Major Troyon has served a disciplinary punishment.

(ATS)

SWITZERLAND STARTS NEGOTIATIONS

Switzerland has just begun to negotiate with the Six in Brussels. These negotiations will be lengthy and delicate. What Switzerland wants from the Community is not really definable at the present stage: it will all depend on what the Six will be prepared to give. But in quite general terms, Switzerland is not prepared to *adhere* to the Common Market and be subjected to the rules laid down in the Treaty of Rome. As for the *associateship*, Switzerland's position would depend on how this term is understood. If it is to signify the type of relations binding the British Commonwealth to the motherland, then Switzerland would turn this down in the same way as complete *adhesion*. Switzerland cannot accept the following possible consequences of integration into Europe: To abandon her neutrality, to abandon her constitutional

structure (federalism and direct democracy), to lose her sovereignty, to accept the agricultural policy of the Six integrally, to accept freedom of residence and complete fiscal harmonisation without modification. On the other hand, Switzerland is prepared to accept the following points: To take part in the construction of Europe, to achieve on a wider plane what the European Free Trade Association had already realised, to be given the possibility of co-operating in the struggle against economic disturbances, to keep her commercial autonomy and remain in the current of international trade negotiations, to put an end to certain discriminations.

This "memorandum" shows that Switzerland is really seeking to get as much as she can out of Europe without, quite obviously, being prepared to sacrifice much. It must be said that Switzerland is already linked to the Six by a series of trade and customs agreements which have made her non-membership lighter to bear. The Common Market is however a most important issue because 38 per cent of Swiss exports are directed to and 58 per cent of Swiss imports come from it. Federal councillors P. Graber and E. Brugger, accompanied by a strong Swiss delegation, met the foreign ministers at Brussels of the Six in a preliminary round of talks.

SWISS PRISON EAGER TO RETURN DONALD HUME TO BRITAIN

Switzerland is trying to get rid of its most unwanted prisoner, the convicted British murderer, Donald Hume.

Mr. Hume, aged 51, was sentenced to life imprisonment just over 11 years ago after being found guilty of killing a taxi driver and robbing a Zurich bank. Since then he has made life difficult for the governor and warders of Regensdorf prison.

Mr. Emil Meyer, the governor, said he is so violent that he has been kept perpetually in solitary confinement. On a number of occasions he has attacked warders and wrecked his cell.

A minimum of three warders attend him every time it is necessary to visit his cell, either to give him food or take him on his twice daily half-hour exercise.

The Swiss authorities say they would like to have him certified insane and thus persuade Britain to take him back, on the grounds that Switzerland has no specialised institution to treat the criminally insane.

Bu Mr. Hume has thus far proved too violent and too clever for this move to succeed. Mr. Meyer said he has been unable to find a qualified psychiatrist to deal with the case.

Mr. Hugh Gilmartin, the British Consul, who is in constant contact with the prison authorities, said that during medical examinations Mr. Hume has behaved rationally and normally so that it has been impossible to declare