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# The Swiss Observer

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married pensioners. This could be a reflection on the health of elderly marriages, but according to a women's organisation, this is not necessarily so. Many elderly women are apparently ignorant of this scheme while others consider that the halving of the couple's pension should be done automatically.

## The harm of studded tyres

The Federal Council has awarded subsidies totalling 4.35 million francs to Vaud and Berne for the re-surfacing of the first stretches of National Highway N1 (Gland—Lausanne, Berne—Koppingen and the Bipperamt stretch) which have been worn out prematurely owing to the use of studded anti-frost tyres. The two cantons had appealed for financial aid to the Confederation because their road budget could not cover this additional expense. The Federal Council accepted the demand. Article 36 2—5 of the Constitution allows the Confederation to help out cantons who are generally responsible for road maintenance, under certain special circumstances.

## TIPS TO BE BANNED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY ON 1st JULY

The automatic inclusion of service charges or hotel and restaurant bills, which has been a practice in the main cities for several years, will shortly be enforced throughout the country. As from 1st July, people will be able to enjoy a meal in full awareness of what they are spending. There will be no nasty surprises after coffee or embarrassed mental calculations. The relief and simple logic of an inclusive bill is to be generalised following the decision by the Federal Council to extend an agreement signed on 5th December last between the country's catering and hotel organisations to the organisations representing the employees of this sector.

# Comment

## A CANTON BANS HUNTING

For the first time in the history of mankind, a community has decided to ban all hunting on its territory. This is the outcome of a vote that was held in Geneva on the weekend of 11th—12th May. A fifth of the electorate (which is considered as a good figure in Geneva) turned out on a sunny day to the polls to give a 5—2 majority support to the sponsors of an initiative banning the hunting of all mammals and birds throughout the canton. The vote was the outcome of an initiative backed by 24,000 signatures. It means that the hunting issue will be inscribed in the constitution. This had been criticised by most local parties, who considered the issue too trivial to be mentioned in the Canton's most important legislative text.

The outcome of the vote, in which the people also rejected counter-proposals by the Geneva Executive to authorise hunting but increase its restrictions, showed the small influence of politicians who had all either defended the initiative or supported the counter-proposal barring one exception.

In fact, many commentators considered that the verdict was a show of sentimentality and not backed by commonsense. They noted that the tiny canton's fauna was adequately protected by existing regulations and that hunters offered a service to the community in eliminating animals representing a health hazard or causing a nuisance to farmers. Now that hunters are banned, it will be necessary for the authorities to keep the animal population under control, they said. Even before the vote, the game-keeping services were called to destroy several dozen foxes, boars, wild cats and other animals every year. The new situation will also give a great impetus to poaching.

Sharing this feeling, voters in country areas supported the Executive's counter-proposal but were, of course, far outnumbered by the townspeople.

There was a possible element of social vindictiveness in the issue at hand. The sponsors of the initiative had condemned the "cruel, dangerous and

useless entertainment" of a mere 500 registered hunters. At all events, it reflects once more that environmental concern had become deeply established in the mores of the Swiss people.

This concern will show even more as local opposition builds up against the planned construction of a nuclear power station at Verbier. The Federal Department of Transports, Communications and Energy has given its authorisation to the project following the advice of federal committees on nuclear safety and environmental protection. But the cantonal and communal authorities are far from agreed on the construction of a major power station to be cooled directly by the Rhone, and a drawn-out struggle reminiscent of the battle over the Kaiseraugst installations can be expected.

# SWISS EVENTS

## Chilean refugees adapting fast to Swiss life

354 refugees from Chile have settled down in Switzerland since the Army Coup in that country last September. Of these, 229 have enjoyed official help, 43 have entered by their own means and 82 have been helped by a church-sponsored charitable organisation. Not all the refugees have definitely been allowed to stay. But while their situation is being examined by the authorities they are rapidly integrating into Swiss life. The Central Office for Refugees said that nearly all these refugees now had a lodging of their own and a stable job.

## Elderly couples prefer to be pensioned together

Very few married people have availed themselves of the opportunity offered to them on 1st January, 1973, to draw their own half of their joint Old Age Pension individually. Demands for separate disbursements have been registered from only ten per cent of

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