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'Time Island'

A decision which has been announced by the Government of the Federal German Republic is causing a headache in Berne and has come as a real shock to those officials who are responsible for determining the timetables of the Federal Railways. It is the decision to introduce Summer Time, i.e. to advance the clocks by one hour, as from 6th April, 1980. France and Italy have already acted on these lines in 1979 — and will do so again in 1980 — and it is considered more than likely that Switzerland's remaining neighbour, Austria, will follow suit.

Switzerland is thus becoming a "Time Island" inside Europe. The logical thing to do would be to introduce summer time as well — but this cannot be done, possibly for some years to come. The reason is that the electorate — the Sovereign, as those entitled to vote are called here — have rejected, as late as in May, 1978, a federal proposal for a "Time Law", which would have given the Federal Council the authority to introduce summer time as and when it thought it necessary. The resistance against this proposal — which was rejected by 53 per cent of the popular votes — came at the time from two sources. One were

the peasants, who mounted a very lively campaign, and the other were liberal minded people who were — and are — in principle against giving the Federal Council more — or blanco — powers.

While it is true that Federal Councillor Chevallaz has tried to play down the issue of saying "Well, we shall have to advertise Switzerland by saying: this is the country where you can sleep an hour longer", it is also true that the makers of time tables, both for the Railways and the Airways, are very worried. The timetables for spring and summer 1980 for the Railways have already been agreed upon at an international timetable conference — and all the times and connections agreed upon have been based on the assumption that Federal Germany would stick to a former decision to abstain from introducing summer time.

Whether it is possible for the Federal Parliament to decide on emergency powers to be given to the Federal Council is very doubtful. At any rate, Mr. Chevallaz, in truly democratic fashion, has let it be known that in his opinion the Sovereign's verdict — rejecting the "Time Law" — would have to be respected. This meant that in his view the issue could not be raised again for several years.

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. G. A. Schmid will have his 94th birthday on 1st February and Mrs. N. Burri will have hers on 6th. Mr. Georges M. Wirz will be 82 on 8th February. Mr. Freddie Kuhn will be 60 on 11th and Dr. L. Gysin (Liestal) on 16th February. Mrs. H. Hanftwurcel and Mr. Ralph E. Maag are celebrating their birthdays on 17th February. Mrs. E. Jamieson will be 80 on 20th of the month, Mr. J. W. Bonjour-Collet 81 on the 23rd and Monsieur Armin Daeniker (Berne) will have his 82nd birthday on 24th February.

Mr. and Mrs. O. F. Boehringer will celebrate their 34th wedding anniversary on 2nd February, Dr. and Mrs. R. and L. Gysin (Liestal) their 22nd on 15th February.

Congratulations and very best wishes to all these readers and to anyone else of whose birthdays and anniversaries we are not aware.



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