

News at random

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

Prof. Dr. Paul Keller has been appointed general manager and president of the Swiss National Bank in succession to director Ernst Weber, who will retire at the end of March 1947 having reached the age limit; the vice-president, Dr. Paul Rossy, has declined the office. Prof. Keller, who comes from St. Gall, has never been a member of the Board, but is an expert on monetary questions; he has been the head of many Swiss delegations for negotiating commercial and financial agreements and is well known in London.

When the Secretary General of U.N.O., Mr. Trygve Lie, visited Geneva and Berne last August the question of establishing a European branch at Geneva was discussed with members of the Federal Council. The matter has since been examined from the standpoint of Swiss neutrality; there is, of course, a keen desire to see the old League of Nations Palace revert to its former usefulness. In order to elucidate a number of points, Councillor of Legation Daniel Secretan has been sent officially to Washington.

The appointment of Mr. André de Blonay to an administrative post in Unesco at Washington has given rise to critical comment in some of the English dailies. M. de Blonay has so far been engaged in students' relief work in Geneva and will now take charge of External Relations of Unesco. The "*Evening Standard*" says that his salary will be £1,750 a year free of income tax in addition to more than £1,000 for living expenses. He is one of the first neutrals to obtain an appointment under UNO, of which Switzerland is not yet a member.

From the beginning of the next parliamentary session the councillors of our two chambers will be adorned with earphones which will transmit simultaneously translations of speeches delivered in French or German.

At a labour meeting in Zug, Fed. Counc. Nobs declared that the financing of the Federal old-age insurance scheme was still causing anxieties.

The imposition of fresh taxes seems to develop into a perennial institution. The war profits tax justified by the abnormal conditions during the last few years will give up the ghost at the end of the year as far as the name is concerned. The substance, however, will not be lost and a "supplementary" Wehrsteuer will be levied for the next three years: Personal incomes exceeding 25,000 francs p.a. will have to forfeit an additional 10% to the State, if over 50,000 francs the subtraction reaches 20%; firms and limited companies are allowed a return of 8% on the invested capital before the liability for this additional tax becomes operative.

Cantonal

The canton Uri is burdened with a disbursement of Frs. 300,000 being its annual contribution to the Federal old-age insurance fund. The Regierungsrat found this levy unbearable but in order not to jeopardise this great social measure proposes to introduce a special law for an additional tax raised from death duties and donations.

ROYAL VICTORIA HOTEL

ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA

(Extract from the "*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.")

"The Swiss Students staying in England celebrated their National Independence by beginning in earnest at the best Hotel in the South of England, namely, the **Royal Victoria Hotel, St. Leonards-on-Sea, in Sussex**. In this Anglo-Swiss establishment a warm welcome was extended to the visitors.

During the excellent dinner, music of Tchaikowsky and Mozart was played by the orchestra, which, after the dinner with versatility switched to dance music and Swiss tunes and dances; English guests succeeded in dancing in the Continental style and all enjoyed themselves.

Greetings were exchanged between the two oldest democracies over the microphone.

It is quite clear that the Swiss are welcome guests in the United Kingdom."

An Anglo-Swiss society has been formed in Zurich for the purpose of maintaining, developing and strengthening relations with this country in every sphere of activity. Prof. Dr. Max Huber, president of the International Red Cross, presided at the inaugural meeting; Prof. Dr. H. Straumann was elected president by acclamation. In the beginning the seat of the society will be at Zurich, but will later on move to whatever location determined by the residence of future presidents. The aims are tentatively stated to be: the arranging of lectures and debates by prominent British exponents in the fields of literature, arts, science, economy, etc.; establishing contact between members of the society and British visitors to Switzerland; organising exhibitions, concerts and theatre "tournée"; compiling a register of addresses for the exchange of visitors and students of both countries. Among the patrons are the names of Chs. R. Paravicini, former Swiss Minister in London, and Dr. William E. Rappard.

Bad luck seems to follow the boating displays at Zurich. Five boats of the Limmatklub were out on a routine exercise; four had passed the locks but the fifth one encountered a strong current, turned over and landed the five occupants in the river. The 27 year old Arnold Nüssli, a S.F.R. employee, said to be a good swimmer, was drowned, his body being recovered 1½ hours after the accident.

Excessive speed is said to be the cause of three people losing their life on the outskirts of Zürich. Two

cars driving at about 60 miles an hour were approaching a heavy lorry parked on the side of the road; the one in front was able to swerve to the side but the second one, an Opel, dashed into the back of the lorry and recoiled. The driver, Marc Béguelin, a watchmaker living in Zurich, and the fair companion sitting next to him, were thrown out while the other lady in the rear seat died on the way to hospital.

In his address at the official opening of the Fiera Svizzera in Lugano, Fed. Counc. Petitpierre stated that the aim of our generation would be the maintenance and development of social peace. A collective system which eliminated private enterprise and transferred the whole of responsibility for our economy to the State would have serious consequences and result in the gradual impoverishment of our nation.

An authoritative statement in the Bernese Grosse Rat gave the following six reasons for the present exceptional "trade boom": (1) a lively export fostered by export credits, (2) the stocking of foreign essential wants, (3) changing industry from war to peace production, (4) partial continuance of war industry, (5) indifferent competition from abroad, and (6) increased employment necessitated by conversion to peace industry.

After Winston Churchill spoke in the session chamber of the Bernese Grosse Rat and subsequently apologised for his indifferent French, one of the Councillors, on being asked whether he understood him, is reported to have replied, "Extremely well, as he spoke the pure Français d'Emmental."

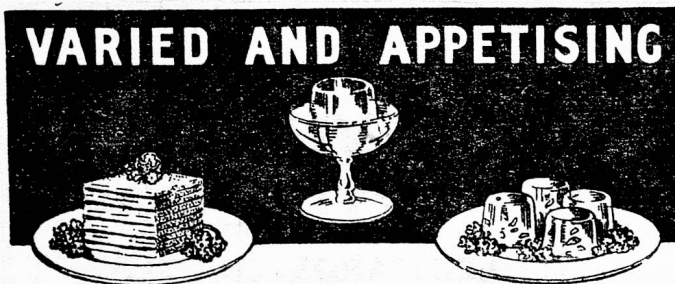
Irregularities in the cantonal food control office at Liestal which came to light as long ago as the summer of 1943 have been finally disposed of by the courts at the end of last month. Fourteen officials were charged with theft, defalcations, suppression of documents, etc., and the court found that none of the offenders had derived any material advantage or profit and that the lack of organisation resulting in confusion encouraged careless and irresponsible administration. The manager has been sent to prison for eight months and his assistants received lighter sentences.

Laufen, not far from Basle and the northmost township of the canton Berne, celebrated its 650th anniversary; it was ceded to Berne in 1815 as part compensation for the latter's renunciation to certain territories belonging to cantons Vaud and Aargau.

A further convoy of 300 Swiss repatriates from the Russian occupied zone of East Prussia has arrived at Basle; they are spending the first few weeks at home in a quarantine camp at Rheinfelden.

The recent strike of French customs and treasury functionaries was fully exploited at the frontier controls at Basle; one retired S.F.R. worker managed to smuggle over a quarter of a million Swiss francs whilst a Belgian left our country with about half a million Swiss francs worth of currency and watches sewn in his clothes.

The Basle court had to deal with another fatal motor accident. A motorist travelling at an excessive speed on the road from Reinach to Basle endeavoured to overtake a furniture lorry and noticed too late a horse-drawn cart in charge of a farm labourer travel-



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ling in the same direction. The cart was knocked over and the farmhand died soon afterwards. Three years' imprisonment, the temporary loss of the driving licence and a fine of 200 francs was the sentence (!).

The hamlet of Alterswilen near Kreuzlingen has collected no less than 1,500 pairs of boots and shoes to be distributed among the people of Konstanz.

In spite of earlier reports to the contrary, the tobacco harvest in the Ticino promises good average returns. The shortage of labour has been overcome by postponing the commencement of the new school term. Additional help in the plane of Magadino has been secured by arranging for 50 Italian girls to cross the frontier every day from Luino.

In the canton Vaud a government proposal to establish a chemical laboratory as a separate annexe to the University at Lausanne was negated by the electorate by a small majority; the cost of the necessary ground would have entailed the expenditure of 1½ million francs.

The sharp storm of Friday, September 20th, lifted three private planes which were deposited on the small airfield at Planeyse near Colombier; all three collided and were destroyed.

The depredations of the unknown foreign squatters which a "Times" correspondent has now discovered to be a "panther trio" are continuing along the upper Rhone valley without hindrance; in the Turtmann valley a shepherd has lost in one night eight sheep.

In the meantime the cantonal police have appealed to hunters far and wide for assistance and parties from other parts of Switzerland are joining in the drive. Meets and hunts are being arranged similar to the fox hunts in this country.

Votes for women did not find favour in the canton Geneva though the voting a fortnight ago showed a slightly improved support compared with previous occasions. The proposal, championed by the parties of the left, was rejected by 14,065 against 10,925 votes. On the other hand, 12,509 against 11,463 voters allowed

wives of civil servants to accept posts as school-mistresses. Not quite half of the electors went to the polls.

Army

In the budget for 1947 an amount of over 83 million francs is earmarked for war material and equipment.

A Morane plane out on routine exercise crashed on September 25th near Vorderklapp; the pilot, Lt. Rudolf Hunziker, a 25 year old technician living in Bienne, was badly hurt and died soon afterwards in hospital.

During training two Messerschmitts collided near Raron (Valais) with the loss of the pilots engaged; they were: Lt. Peter Kilchenmann, a 32 year old lawyer in Berne, and Lt. Ed. Vifian, a 27 year old carpenter from Schwarzenburg.

Economics

The recent restrictions imposed on foreign visitors who exported in their luggage chocolates for friends at home has induced the belief that a new rationing scheme is in the air. The Federal Council has definitely refuted this anticipation, stating that the present production of all kinds of chocolate exceeds by over 40% the pre-war home consumption.

Qualitatively good and plentiful — especially in the western part — was this year's vintage described at the autumn meeting of the vine-growers' association; there is, however, no prospect of cheaper prices.

After the hotel interests the shopkeepers are voicing their complaints in the Swiss press; in spite of the large number of visitors the season has been one of the worst, they maintain. When the hotel bill has been paid out of the £75 allowed little is left for the purchase of watches, nylons and the traditional souvenirs (!).

Trade organisations are making strong representations to the government urging that imports of foreign films be restricted to 300 per year. At a general meeting of the Chambre du Cinema Suisse, It was pointed out that, during 1945, 600 full-length films had been

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shown in the country whereas Switzerland possessed only 350 picture houses with a total of 128,000 seats.

A new line of foreign trade seems to develop in the dog business. In August last 146 dogs were imported, chiefly from France and England (in the whole of 1945 the number did not exceed 350) and the average price was in the neighbourhood of Frs. 75. The few dogs exported realised an average of 500 francs.

The sequel to the recent increased milk price is a higher retail price for butter and cheese, the first costing 80 cts more and the latter an additional 30 cts per kilo.

Two members of the Gothard section of the S.A.C. fell to their death on the Kröntenostgrat; they were Alfons Brühlhart from Altdorf, and Louis Kaiser from Aftinghausen.

In regard to the introduction of nickel coinage in this country it will probably be news to most of our readers to learn that Switzerland was the first country to experiment with it; it was used as an alloy in 1850. In 1881 a pure nickel coin was minted and issued and proved a great success.

A citation is quoted by "*News Review*," September 26th, by Prof. Dr. Arnold Lätt, a one-time colleague of ours who was the first editor of the "*Swiss Observer*." It reads: "It clearly appears Britain destined once more to be the Land of Hope for the future, as it is the Land of Glory after one of the finest hours in its long and eventful history."

Here is a short description of our National Park taken from the last issue of "*Countryman*" which will be read with interest:

"The Swiss National Park, in the Lower Engadine up against the Italian frontier, is an extensive nature reserve, rather than what we understand by a national park. It is all above 5,000 ft., and consists mainly of dense coniferous woodland, grassy alps, rocky mountain-sides and snow-capped peaks. Its chief glory is its herd of 1,200 chamois — almost extinct when the park was founded — together with 350 red deer, 200 roe-deer and nearly 100 ibex. The park also boasts two of the remaining dozen pairs of golden eagles in Switzerland.

We have much to learn from the Swiss attitude towards wild life. Even working-class families in industrial towns like Zürich know about and are proud of the more conspicuous members of the fauna, like marmots, chamois and ibex. Picture a Motherwell family boasting of the red deer and grey seals in a Scottish national park, and you will see the difference. There is evidently a very thorough propaganda for wild life in the Swiss schools. Public awareness of the park and its natural amenities is helped by the fact that it was bought by public

subscription, largely by the one-franc contributions of school-children. Consequently there are thousands of Swiss who feel a proprietorial interest in it.

The governing body of the park represents the Federal Council and two voluntary bodies, one of which, the Swiss League for the Protection of Nature, provides almost all the finance and amenities. Scientific survey and research in the park are in the hands of a special scientific commission; lack of funds, however, prevents the employment of full-time workers. Nearly all the valuable research so far done has been the work of professional biologists in their vacations.

The Swiss have demonstrated admirably how a first-class nature reserve can be combined with public access to an enjoyment of natural beauty. The public may follow only certain specified tracks, but the park is so large — over sixty square miles — and so steep that this is no hardship, and there is plenty to see. The League maintains an excellent hostel in the Val Cluozza right inside the park, where beds and meals are available for walkers. When I was there a telescope was trained on an eagle's nest about half a mile away, and chamois and red deer could be seen feeding peacefully on the opposite slope of the valley. At 4.30 in the morning I saw nutcrackers, alpine choughs, crested tits and crossbills a few yards from the hut."

An exception from the general run of articles appearing in the English Press extolling "the land of plenty" is a description of the place where the foundation of our successful hotel industry is laid. It is taken from the "*Irish Independent*," September 24th:

"It is with good reason that the Swiss are sometimes defined as a nation of hotel-keepers. They are unrivalled in this sphere, which seems as much their own as that of watch-making.

Swiss hotels are not only the most modernly equipped, luxurious, and well-managed in Europe, but like Paris hats, they set up a universal criterion.

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There is, therefore, nothing surprising in the fact that the Swiss also teach this art, and every activity appertaining to it. The Swiss Hotelfachschulen, or Hotel Training Schools, in Lausanne, Zürich and Luzern, are world-famous.

From mid-June until September, the Hotel Montana in Luzern functions normally as a luxury hotel for summer visitors. A palatial white building perched high on the hillside, with its own private funicular, it commands an exquisite panorama of lake and mountain. The sweeping view from the restaurant terrace is one of the loveliest in the world.

On September 9th, the Hotel was closed to the public, and completely taken over by a staff of teachers and a multitude of aspirants to various branches in the art of hotel keeping. Here in this vast, beautifully-equipped building, they learn their trade in both theory and practice, from A to Z.

Many of them are the sons and daughters of hotel-keepers, destined to enter the parental business. Others vaguely hope to work their way up to acquiring hotels of their own some day, and are taking the first step on the long road.

The Hotel Training School in Luzern was founded as far back as 1909 by the Union Helvetia — The Central Union of Swiss Hotel and Restaurant employees — and belongs to them. It is subsidised by the Confederation, by various Cantons, and by the Municipality of Luzern, and this makes it possible to keep the fees at a modest level. The school has only been established at the Hotel Montana since 1944.

There are 120 pupils this term — men and women. The foreign element is mostly Scandinavian — from Norway, Sweden and Denmark — with a few from Czechoslovakia. The courses are all held in German, and pupils must possess a good working knowledge of that language. The Montana School has been visited by British and other foreign hotel industry delegations in an informative spirit, to enquire into the teaching methods, and get some useful slants on the mooted proposal of setting up similar types of institutions in Britain and the Scandinavian countries.

There are three separate branches of study, broken up into a whole lot of sub-divisions, which make the entire programme extraordinarily comprehensive. First comes the general division, which comprises a technical course, a language course (French and English), and a secretarial course. The technical course consists of thorough tuition in the hotel business, and the jobs and duties of employees in the various branches of service.

The secretarial course includes book-keeping, advanced technical correspondence in English, French and German, the arts of reception and room letting, publicity and propaganda, typing and office usages.

The second major branch of study is the cookery course, which includes visits to the market, to butchers, and various other sources of comestibles. This course is supplemented by a special course for intricate sweets, cold dishes, special diets, and decoration. The composition of menus and the keeping of individual recipe books are part of the theoretical training.

The third major branch is the service course,

supplemented by a special course in bar service, including the composition of cocktails, and the intensive study of wines and drinks in general. Other special sub-courses include carving and serving aboard ships on the high seas. Obviously nothing is left to chance in coaching such as this, which is downright Germanic in its devastating thoroughness.

During term the students live in the hotel, and practise their arts on each other. In the summer months they often take on temporary jobs to get in a bit of the real thing, and return to the school in the autumn. In term time the budding chefs cook the meals, the embryo waiters and waitresses serve them, and other service students do the rooms, so that the pupils enjoy all the advantages of practical training in the exact conditions in which they will later have to work.

Herr Zellweger, the efficient Head of the School, showed me over the lovely classrooms (which seem to have been chosen for their enormous windows and distracting views over the lake), where the theoretical part of hotel-running is demonstrated with a blackboard and rostrum, in the requisite schoolroom atmosphere.

We then visited the students' diningroom — an abbreviated section of the huge terrace restaurant — and the spacious kitchens which are, of course, the pièce de résistance of the whole school. Spacious and airy, with their gleaming floors and white enamel stoves and boilers, they had that scrupulous, almost defiant cleanliness that strikes one so forcibly in every aspect of Swiss life.

I marvelled at the enormous electric ranges, and giant white enamel electric boilers for soup and vegetables, with what appeared to be about a four-gallon capacity. All the saucepans in use were copper, and an enormous coal range supplemented the electric ones. We paused before the last word in coffee-making machines — another super-structure — and the horizontally rotating electric grill, which enables meat and poultry to retain its juice in the cooking process, instead of dripping down as it does in the vertical turning-spit method.

Refrigerators take up the whole side of a smaller kitchen, while another is entirely devoted to the preparation of various meats. The chef's own diningroom, adjoining the principal kitchen, has the bare-to-the-bone surgical cleanliness of an operating table.

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And here is something for our fair readers sent to the "*Birmingham Mail*," October 1st, by a lady visitor who has been impressed by the way the hot iron is handled for pressing clothes in our country:

"To press garments with a professional touch, always test the heat of the iron beforehand, bearing in mind that the heat must suit the material. Knowing this is not really difficult.

In testing the heat of the iron, dip your finger in cold water and let a drop touch the iron. If it stains, it is just the right heat for woollens. To be hot enough for starched goods, the iron must fling off the drop without so much as its leaving a mark.

Taffeta, crêpe-de-chine, georgette — in fact, all delicate fabrics, especially in pastel shades — are apt to fade if too much heat is applied, and the silks will go 'papery'. So see that the iron is just nicely warm for all materials of this kind.

Silk scorches easily, and the best plan is to press it very carefully on the *wrong* side, with little or no moisture. An the iron should be fairly light in weight. To press a seam in silk garments it does not need wetting, but it is essential that the iron be kept moving all the time.

Velvet needs a treatment all its own, since ironing it flat on a board or table will quite spoil it. A method we use in Switzerland is to stretch the material, wrong side uppermost, then quickly press a hot iron backwards and forwards over this side of it.

For woollen garments that require ironing, wet-press on the right side. Wet a heavy cloth thoroughly, then wring it out and place on the garment. Press with a hot iron very lightly. Dry-pressing may cause the garment to show the mark of the iron, or become shiny.

If the pressing has been done properly the garment will be slightly damp after you have finished, so hang it carefully where it will not wrinkle. Go lightly — pushing the iron heavily only results in stretching the material."

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SWISS ARCHITECTURE.

The Exhibition of Swiss Planning and Building now on view at 66, Portland Place, W.1, till October 26th, has been commented upon in flattering terms by all the papers that have found space to refer to it, in fact in reading some of the reviews one might even discover traces of an inferiority complex. This picture is in no way obscured by the indistinct statement of Mr. Aneurin Bevan (who has recently returned from a holiday spent in the Ticino) "that he found no evidence that neutrality had stimulated building." Here are a few extracts:

"*The Times*," September 28th:

"The main trends of contemporary Swiss school building, as explained by Herr Alfred Roth, a Zürich architect, keep the number of classrooms per school as few as possible. A one-storey building is preferred for larger as well as small schools. Classrooms should face south-east to avoid afternoon over-insulation, and schools of normal size include special rooms for needle-work, housekeeping, music and art. Gymnasiums, showers, toilets, etc., are connected by covered passage-ways, and there is a nursery school in the immediate vicinity. Finally, each school has a day room and refectory where children of parents at work can stay over lunch-time or after school and have their meals.

No account of Swiss school activities would be complete without mention of the Pestalozzi Children's Hamlet, of which a model is included in the exhibition. The village is being built to house over 350 war orphans between 3 and 15, who will have the opportunity to spend several years in home-like surroundings in the care of 'foster-parents.' The scheme is financed by voluntary donations, and school children and students from Switzerland, France, Austria and Holland have volunteered to help in the building of the village.

The Swiss theory of education is still based on the sound ideas of their great eighteenth-century educationist, Heinrich Pestalozzi. The present aim of the school architect is still the small homely school designed to suit the nature and needs of children. Buildings such as those of the Zollikon primary schools and the kindergarten at Wehntalerstrasse, Zürich, indicate that this objective has, in certain instances, been attained."

"*Cavalcade*," September 28th:

"Opened at the Royal Institute of British Architects in Portland Street was one of the most stimulating and instructive shows seen in London for a long time. It is the Swiss Planning and Building Exhibition, designed to exhibit outstanding pioneering work done by Swiss architects and landscape artists during the last two decades.

In the practice of their art, Swiss architects have had one decisive advantage: their work is grounded in a centuries-old tradition of freedom and democracy which has prevented the excesses of overlaid ostentatiousness or the squalor of slum areas.

When Winston Churchill delivered his address in Zürich he was speaking in one of the most beautiful modern university buildings in Europe, set in a city that is probably the best-built, most efficiently planned in the world, and the intellectual and industrial centre of a country which is an exemplar of how peoples of