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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR DR. BAUMANN.

The Swiss Parliament has elected last week a successor to M. Häberlin, who resigned recently as the result of the rejection by the people on a referendum of the new law "for the protection of public order."

In this election, which created enormous interest, three candidates were nominated — a Socialist (Joh. Huber, President of the National Council), a Conservative (Dr. Ludwig, member of the cantonal government of Basle), and a Liberal (Dr. Baumann, States Councillor, Appenzel-a.-Rh.).

At the third ballot, Dr. Baumann, the Liberal candidate, was elected with 141 votes. Dr. Baumann was born on the 27th of November, 1874, at Herisau (Ct. Appenzel-a.-Rh.); he studied law at the Universities of Basle, Berne, Leipzig and Zurich. In the year 1898 he entered the district criminal court as clerk of the court, and later on became chief of the cantonal police department; he was at the same time a member of the "Kantonsrat." In 1905 he was elected member of the cantonal government, which post he occupied for 26 years as head of the military and police department. Four times he was at the head of the government, as "Landammann."

He was the author of a great many laws and bye-laws, which were introduced in his native canton, and he played an important rôle when in 1908 his canton introduced a new constitution.

Since 1911 he represented his canton in the States Council (Ständerat), over which he presided. The election of Dr. Baumann has met throughout Switzerland with great approval, and means a victory for the parliamentary system; it also means that the Swiss Federal policy for the moment has not changed.

LATE FEDERAL COUNCILLOR JEAN-MARIE MUSY.

M. Musy, Chief of the Finance Department, who handed his resignation (which was announced in our last week's issue) to the Federal Chambers, stated in his letter that his health forced him to leave.

M. Musy was born in 1876 at Albeuve (Ct. Fribourg); he received his schooling at the colleges St. Michel in Fribourg and St. Maurice (Valais). Later on he studied law at the Universities of Fribourg, Munich, Berlin and Vienna. After a short practice as an advocate in Bulle, he was appointed manager of the "Crédit Gruyérien," and in 1911 he entered the Grand Council. A year later he entered the cantonal government, where he took over the finance department. In 1914 he was elected member of Parliament (National Council), and in December, 1919, the two Federal Chambers appointed him a member of the Federal Government in succession to M. Ador.

M. Musy was President of the Swiss Confederation in 1925 and 1930.

THE NEW FEDERAL JUDGES.

The two Chambers of the Swiss Parliament elected on March 22nd two new Federal judges:—

M. Paul Kasser was born in 1876 at Huttwil (Ct. Berne); he studied law at the University of Berne and later on entered the chambers of M. Rutty, advocate at Geneva. From 1902 to 1915 he was President of the Tribunal at Wangen; in 1915 he was made a member of the High Court in Berne. The new Federal judge is the author of several works on subjects of law; in the army he reached the rank of a colonel of infantry.

Dr. Hans Huber was born in 1901 at St. Gallen, where he was educated; he studied law at the Universities of Berne and Zurich. In 1929 he was appointed Secretary of the Federal Tribunal, where he soon made a name for himself. Dr. Huber enjoys the reputation of being one of the most able lawyers amongst the younger generation.

SUCCESSOR TO DR. MUSY.

Dr. Etter from Zug has been elected by the Federal Chambers as the successor of M. Musy. (A short biography will follow in our next issue.)

FEDERAL CHANCELLOR DR. BOVET.

The new Federal Chancellor, Dr. Georges Bovet, was born in 1874 at Neuchâtel; he received his education at Neuchâtel and Geneva, then studied philology at the University in Berlin, but later on took up journalism. For a short time he was editor of a paper in La Chaux-de-Fonds, and later on correspondent of various Swiss and foreign papers in Berne. In 1927 he was appointed Vice-Chancellor, and as such occupied the post of Secretary to the National Council.

SWISS GOLD DECISION.

The Federal Council has officially announced that Switzerland will remain on the gold standard.

This statement was issued to dispose of rumours to the contrary caused by the resignation of M. Musy, Finance Minister.

RATIFICATION OF TREATY.

M. Barthou, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Swiss Minister in Paris exchanged ratifications of the Treaty of Conciliation and compulsory arbitration which was signed between France and Switzerland on April 6, 1933.

BANQUE POPULAIRE SUISSE.

The directors of the "Banque Populaire Suisse" have decided at their meetings of the 20th and 21st inst. to revoke the pensions of the following previous General Managers: Dr. Stadlin, Reinhard, Cassane and Steiger. M. Balmer, manager in Berne, has been dismissed forthwith.

NESTLÉ'S DIVIDEND.

The directors of the Nestlé and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co. are proposing to their shareholders' meeting a distribution of a 14 per cent. dividend.

SWISS-ARGENTINE BANK.

From the low quotations which have prevailed so long for its bonds, it has been apparent that the position of the Banque Hypothécaire Suisse Argentina was not satisfactory, and it was generally anticipated that a re-organisation of the organisation of the concern would be found necessary. The reconstruction of this Swiss-Argentine Mortgage Bank, which is affiliated to the Crédit Suisse, has now been made known, and the drastic character of the writing down indicates the extent to which the institution has been affected by the world upheaval.

In the first place, the shares of a denomination of 500 francs are being written down to a mere franc; this means the cutting of the share capital from 10,000,000 Swiss francs to 20,000 francs. With regard to the outstanding bonds, the interest for the current year will not be paid.

Furthermore, one-half of the outstanding bond indebtedness of 40,000,000 Swiss francs is to be converted into Six per Cent. Preference shares, while the rate of interest on the other half is to be reduced from 5 to 4 per cent. It is also announced that 2,000,000 francs' worth of the newly to be created Preference shares is to be cancelled altogether and placed at the disposal of the company by friendly parties.

As only to be expected, the cause of this mortgage bank's difficulties is the Argentine economic crisis, the depreciation of the peso and the imposition of transfer restrictions, which have prevented remittances being made in respect of interest on loans. The present board is to tender its resignation and the name of the concern is to be changed to the Swiss-Argentine Mortgage Company.

NEW PRESS LAW.

The new law for limiting the freedom of the Press has come into force. Its most important provision is that newspapers printing articles liable to disturb the good relations of Switzerland with other States will receive one warning, and if that is ineffectual, will be suppressed for a definite period.

SWISS COUNCIL TO PROMOTE FOREIGN TRAVEL IN SWITZERLAND.

The Swiss National Council on March 16 adopted without discussion a decree granting a special credit of 1,500,000 francs (£93,750) to establish a Federal Council for the promotion of foreign touring in Switzerland by a reduction of fares during 1934-35.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The death is reported from Zurich of Dr. Fritz Weber, a noted eye specialist, at the age of 64. Dr. Weber completed his studies in Paris, Vienna, Berlin and London, and enjoyed a large practice at Zurich since 1900.

* * *

M. Denner, a prominent Freemason and Master of a local Lodge, was attacked by five members of the "National Front," who snatched an attaché case from him, in the belief of thus getting possession of some masonic secrets. The council of the "National Front" has informed the Press that they disapprove of this action, and that the five members have been at once dismissed from the movement.

* * *

Dr. Maurer, head of the Federal Meteorological Office in Zurich, has resigned from his post for reasons of health. He is succeeded by Professor Dr. Mercanton in Lausanne.

LUCERNE.

Dr. Winiker (Catholic-Conservative) was elected a member of the cantonal government in succession to Dr. Erni, who recently resigned. Dr. Winiker received 22,512 votes; his opponents, Kaufmann (Liberal) and Dr. Arnold (Socialist), received 17,572 and 4,125 votes respectively.

GENEVA.

M. Paul Adam, for many years editor of the "Tribune de Genève," has died at Geneva at the age of 59. Mr. Adam was the founder of the Geneva Press Association.

BASLE.

Karl Joël, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Basle, has celebrated his seventieth birthday. Professor Joël has been connected with the university since 1892, first as "Privatdozent" and later on as professor.

* * *

Professor Dr. Labhardt, head of the "Basler Frauentspital" and at present rector of the University in Basle, has celebrated his sixtieth birthday. Professor Labhardt has been connected with the Women's Hospital since 1912.

LAUSANNE.

Federal Judge Dr. Emil Kirchhofer has celebrated his 25th service jubilee. Born in 1871, in Schaffhausen, he entered the Supreme Court in 1909 as successor to Dr. Adam Gysin.

APPENZEL-a.-Rh.

The newly-elected Federal Councillor, Dr. Baumann, received a great reception on his arrival at Herisau. Amidst the pealing of bells and a greeting of 22 gunshots, he made his entry into the capital, where the cantonal government received him *in corpore*. Landammann Ackermann welcomed the new Federal Councillor, congratulating him on entering into the Federal Government. Dr. Baumann, deeply moved, thanked his friends for their hearty reception, declaring that he would do his utmost to safeguard the constitution and work in the interest of his country, regardless of party politics.

GRISONS.

Two employees of the Bernina Railway were killed by an avalanche which damaged the track near Pontresina. The two men, Giovanni Cortesi and Giovanni Maffina, ran along the track to give the warning to an on-coming train, when the avalanche overtook them.

VALAIS.

Parise, for years the undisputed queen of the famous race of fighting cows bred only in the Swiss Val d'Herens, has lost her throne to a little dun cow called Venise.

Tradition demands that each spring before herds leave their winter quarters on the plains for the Alpine pastures, a queen must be designated. Recently, therefore, all the queens of the different Alpine herds went into the lists at Sion to do battle, and Parise and Venise met in the final clash.

Once in the arena these temperamental creatures charged each other. For ten minutes they stood with horns locked and forefeet planted in the soil, thrusting, wrestling, and butting with fierce energy for supremacy.

Then, with a moo like a groan, Parise broke issue and trotted dejectedly away in token of defeat. Venise was then solemnly proclaimed queen of the queens of the canton of Valais.

Until she, in turn, is dethroned, Venise and her particular herd will enjoy, unchallenged, the best regions of the summer grazing grounds.