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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Great disappointment has been caused in government circles by the rejection of the Federal bill having for its object to place the employment of 54,000 civil servants on a basis harmonising with modern requirements. The proposed reorganisation of the pension fund necessitating heavy taxation for disposing of the large accumulated deficit seems to be mainly responsible for the unexpected result. The figures so far available show that 288,876 voters were in favour of the measure whilst the opponents reached the formidable total of 483,214. There were four cantons only that accepted the bill, viz. Uri, Baselstadt, Geneva, and Ticino, the latter with a respectable majority. St. Gall and Zurich — cantons with a predominant industrial population who might be expected to be in sympathy with this social reform — recorded practically the largest majorities against.

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In view of the heavy sacrifices borne by mobilised citizens, the military exemption tax (Militärsteuer) will be doubled as from the present year.

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Semi-official reports appearing in the Swiss press give some idea of the gigantic efforts necessary to meet the cost of the mobilisation, which including maintenance of the army during 12 months, is about 950 million francs. In the first instance a capital levy of 1½ to 3% payable by three yearly instalments is contemplated; this would yield about 450 million francs. Secondly it is proposed to appropriate about 300 million francs from a fund deposited at the Swiss National Bank and which represents the profits obtained on the devaluation of the Swiss franc some two years ago. Thirdly the existing war or crisis tax (on interest, dividends, coupons, etc.) will be increased and prolonged for thirty years; an annual income of about 100 million francs is thereby anticipated. As the ordinary budget of the Confederation is likely to balance with a deficit of 70 to 90 million francs for a good many years, a turn-over tax of 2% is foreshadowed; this tax would not be cumulative and would probably become chargeable to the retail trade.

More than half the imports of sugar during October, i.e., 12,510 out of 24,390 tons, were received from Great Britain.

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Women ambulance drivers are now an accepted feature in the Swiss army; some 250 of them underwent a special course of training in the military barracks at Basle.

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A proposal to abolish vivisection in the canton Baselstadt found 7,415 supporters whilst no less than 23,639 voted against it. The matter has been ventilated in the local press during the last few weeks and was preceded by heated arguments from both sides.

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A general increase of from 10 to 20% in the subscription rates of newspapers and periodicals will take effect on the 1st of January next. The new rates are subject to confirmation by the Federal price control office which also has the right to substantiate their justification by an examination of the account books.

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The offices of the "Neue Basler Zeitung" have been occupied by the local police authorities for the purpose of a search and thorough examination. It is stated that about 80,000 copies of this daily paper were regularly dispatched to Germany while the sales in Switzerland did not exceed 1,200. Mystery veils the identity of the persons responsible for the publication but it is believed that a certain Hans Jenni, in Zurich, is the spiritual backbone of the venture; he was one of the so-called "loyal confederates" (Bund treuer Eidgenossen) whose activities formed the subject of a recent prosecution before the Federal Penal Court. In the meantime a civil action is pending with the Basle court: the Neue Basler Zeitung is claiming

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