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NEWS AT RANDOM

The new President of the National Council is Mr. Hans Stähli, a personal friend of Federal Councillor Minger; he was born in 1889 in Schwanden and has during his political career been associated with agricultural interests. He has been a member of the Council for over 20 years. Dr. Albert Zust from Sursee and Lucerne will preside over the States Council. He is a lawyer by profession and practised in Lucerne where amongst other positions he acted as chief judge.

* * *

In reply to an interpellation suggesting the taxation of foreigners, the Federal Council stated that existing inter-state agreements regulating the residing of foreigners generally precluded the imposition of such a tax. The Federal Council added that an alteration in this direction suggests itself but that the present time is not opportune for initiating negotiations. This, however, would not prevent the enactment of counter measures against those nationals in whose countries Swiss were subjected to a less favourable treatment.

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One of the first duties of the new parliament will be the election of the "cabinet." Following tradition, Federal Councillor Pilet-Golaz will be President of the Confederation and Federal Councillor Oprecht Vice-President.

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At the request of the army command the Federal Council has issued a decree prohibiting in the army, or addressed to members of the army, all propaganda directed against the security of the state or criticising our Constitution; this is aimed in the first instance against communist activities.

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A dispute between the judiciary bodies of the cantons of Zurich and Schwyz made it necessary for the Federal Court to intervene; the latter has now given a decision in favour of Schwyz. The matter arose from the discovery of an organisation which manufactured and sold spurious spirits. These spirits were admittedly fabricated in the canton of Schwyz, but imbibed in the canton of Zurich. Both cantons claimed the privilege of bringing the malefactors to trial; Zurich had already instituted proceedings which are now abandoned.

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Over 60,000 cyclists are now registered in Basle; on the other hand 41% of the former 7,800 motorists have withdrawn their cars from the roads.

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Pending the ultimate introduction of the trolley-bus system new tramway cars have been installed by the Zurich municipality. Though much larger than the old ones they are said to result in a considerable saving in operating expenses. A new feature is a device — in charge of the driver — which automatically opens and closes the doors at the official stopping places and also lowers and lifts a stepping board, thus thwarting the graceful jumping off and on always so much admired and envied by the older generation. As many as eighty passengers can travel comfortably in one car, i.e., 23 seated and the remainder standing or strap-hanging.

* * *

The marked decrease in the use of private cars due chiefly to high taxation and in a lesser degree to the rationing of petrol is having far reaching consequences. About 50,000 workers are losing their livelihood and have to be supported by the respective communes; the Confederation is foregoing about 25 million francs in import duties on petrol and cars and about half this amount is lost by the cantons in licences and car taxes. The automobile trade is approaching the authorities with certain proposals to alleviate this serious crisis; a gradual reduction of the car tax is suggested which would benefit specially the heavy cars.

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During 1938 some 1750 foreigners have been naturalised in Switzerland. Zurich, Basle, Ticino and Geneva have received most of them; a decided reticence is prevalent in the inner cantons. No foreigners have been adopted in the two Appenzells.

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The re-instatement of the former Sunday postal service including the delivery of letters in the inner cantons is the object of an official démarche urged in Berne by the governments of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden.

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Dr. Julius Dedual, a former National Councillor for the Grisons, died in Chur on the 75th anniversary of his birth.

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An amount of Frs. 90,000 has been left to philanthropic institutions in St. Gall by Jakob Zähner who died recently in America.