

Home affairs

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1954)**

Heft 1230

PDF erstellt am: **25.04.2024**

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HOME AFFAIRS.**(Summer Session of the Fed. Chambers. Enumeration of some of the items of the Agenda to be discussed. Modification of laws, etc.)**

by MAX NER.

On the Tuesday, after Whitsuntide, the Federal Chambers will meet for their regular Summer Session, which will probably last for three weeks. According to the Federal Constitution, the Federal Assembly must handle all those subjects which come, constitutionally under the competence of the Confederation and are not attributed to another Federal Authority. In this sense, the Federal Parliament is the Supreme Authority in the Confederation. Constitutionally, it is the Federal Chambers which are primarily the legislative authorities, but it is also incumbent upon them to supervise the Federal Administration, at the head of which is to be found the Federal Council that is to say the Government.

During the forthcoming Session there is various legislative work to be dealt with, such as the revision of existing Laws, or the examination of Draft Bills for the putting onto a legislative basis of new affairs that have cropped up.

The Draft Bill of a Law which had been drawn up as a precautionary measure for the prevention of economic crises and for the creation of employment, is to be modified in regard to its provisions which were meant for former times, and must now be adapted to new conditions and requirements. A certain matter which, although it already figures in one of the provisions of the Law of Obligations, but must now be normalised in a special little Law, concerns the Regulations of the so-called Collective Labour Agreements, which have now taken on such importance in economic life and have helped to preserve labour peace. At the same time, the possibility of declaring such agreements as being generally obligatory, will also be settled. In view of the fact, however, that both these problems still give rise to considerable controversy, a somewhat lengthy debate on these questions may be anticipated.

Turning to quite a different field of activity, there is the Draft Bill of a Law to be dealt with which contains the instructions for the execution of an Addenda to the Constitution, which was recently voted by the people and the Cantons: this concerns the fight which is being waged against the pollution of the waters, and aims at intensifying it. In regard to this Law, the chief thing to be done is to define the competencies and the duties of the Confederation and the Cantons on the one hand and of private enterprise on the other.

In the domain of riverine rights, there are also several questions to be settled in connection with the construction of a new power station at Rheinau, just below the famous Rhein Falls near Schaffhausen. The Federal Council had granted a concession for the construction of such a power plant, some time ago, and work on it had been started. However, for reasons founded on the desire to protect the natural beauties of that region, opposition was raised by certain groups of the population and attempts are being made by means of an Initiative to have this permit for the building of the power station cancelled. This however would not only raise economic, but also very serious legal questions, in view of the fact that this matter comes within the scope of international law as

the Rhein, in this spot forms the frontier between Switzerland and Germany, and the latter country is also interested in the construction of the Rhein power plant, and is partner to an Agreement on this subject. This problem will also give food for a good many discussions.

A number of other Initiatives — or popular appeals — concerning modifications of the Constitution are tabled for discussion by the Federal Chambers, in preparation for future Popular Referendums. Some of them refer to Parliament's competency in regard to expenditure, which, in the opinion of the initiators of the future referendums, should be restricted in order that greater economy could be achieved in national expenditure, whilst others — with the same aim in view — want an increase in the control exercised over the administrative organisation and administrative activities.

As regards the control to be exercised by Parliament, there are a whole series of proposals awaiting deliberation, one of the principal of these being the handling of the annual statement of accounts by the Federal Council and the auditing of the State Account for 1953. A few demands for credits, as for example an appropriation for the extension of the experiments now being made in television to the French-speaking regions of the country, and another for the acquisition of new-type fighter aircraft for the Army, complete the long list of items on the Agenda for the coming Summer Session of the Federal Assembly. We would also mention the Proposal put forward for the prolongation of the validity of the existing national financial régime, and also the question of Switzerland's membership of the European Payments Union. Relations with foreign countries will also form the subject of debates, this in regard to two Agreements for the avoidance of double taxation, which have to be ratified.

This time, no one can say that there won't be plenty of work for the Federal Assembly!

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, July 16th, 1954.

We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: O. Wuest, J. Boos, C. A. Aeschmann, F. Streit, F. A. Brawand, J. A. Steiner, F. Bassi, E. Laechler.

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