

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 25 (1963)
Heft: [2]

Artikel: News from cantons and communes
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942364>

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News from Cantons and Communes

THE news of what happens in Switzerland comes to the Editor by courtesy of the Swiss Telegraphic Agency (A.T.S.). It covers every sphere of national life. To select what will interest the reader is no easy task. Several hundred sheets have to be read every week, and whilst that in itself is interesting, to make a choice is agony. If is impossible to give any detailed account of, say, the political life of the Federation, the Cantons and Communes. Nevertheless, much that is interesting occurs every day, and a selection of what happens may present a picture of our very lively democracy.

During the past few weeks, many Cantons and Communes have discussed their budgets, and most of them show a deficit. But it was like that last year, and yet, the majority finished with a surplus. The last of the annual accounts have recently been presented, viz., those of Winterthur which showed a comparatively small surplus at a total income of over 51 million francs. 10.6 million of this goes towards extraordinary traffic requirements. For fourteen trolleybuses alone nearly five million francs were allocated, the same models as Geneva and Schaffhausen. The combined order of forty buses allowed a reduction of Fr.25,000 each—the cost per bus amounting to the fantastic sum of Fr.350,000. Talking of new vehicles, Basle, too, has budgeted 18.3 million francs for trams and buses. Basle shows an extremely favourable financial position; the state funds have increased by over 23½ million francs to nearly 71 million.

The improved financial position was also mentioned at the opening of the autumn session of the Grisons Cantonal Parliament, though that Canton is still amongst the financially weakest Cantons of Switzerland. The Grisons government has asked for a credit of 88 million francs for 1963, 25 million of which will be used for the Bernhardin tunnel and 12 million for road improvements.

The sound financial state of most Cantons and many Communes has enabled them to consider increased salaries to civil servants, teachers, etc., sometimes in the form of cost-of-living grants, sometimes by offering higher family allowances, pensions and insurances. Zurich and Berne will introduce children's allowances also to foreign workers.

Other increases authorities have decided on are higher refunds of expenses (daily allowances) to Members of the Cantonal Parliament in Berne, and to those in Appenzell-Ausserrhoden.

Much money has been spent on or has been budgeted for new buildings even by many very small Communes. It is not difficult to understand that the Basle Parliament voted a credit of 28 million francs for the extension of the buildings of the Swiss Industries Fair (Mustermesse), or that the Government of the same Canton increased

its subsidy to the Institute for Tropical Medicine, that towns like Zurich and Schaffhausen build youth hostels, Berne votes enormous sums for a water purification installation. But what is surprising is that a small Commune like Wilderswil near Interlaken allows a credit of two million francs for the installation of a sewerage and drainage system, Cornol (Porrentruy) one million and Opfikon (Zurich) 8½ million for new schools. The Canton of Baselland has just completed a forty-million-franc hospital at Liestal and a new project for a hospital on the Bruderholz near Basle is under discussion, as well as a new high school. Bellinzona (Ticino) is planning new Law Courts for the Livino Valley, Aargau a new women teachers' training college, Zug an agricultural college; several towns will have improved or new slaughter-houses (Fribourg), police quarters or prisons, so for instance Solothurn which has planned a modern building for prisoners on trial, a building with a roof-garden, and with running water and a lavatory in every cell. The Lucerne hospital will be considerably enlarged, and Winterthur has voted for an emergency hospital for civil defence to be included in the new staff building of the cantonal hospital. Over 5½ million francs have been allowed by the Lucerne Town Council for new cemetery projects providing an additional 3,000 graves. In the Ticino Fr.650,000 have been voted for a psychiatric observation centre at Stabio. The citizens of Glarus accepted a credit of 1.3 million francs for the Gas Works to produce non-poisonous gas.

Huge sums are being budgeted for roads all over Switzerland—motorways (Baselland debated the national road from Basle to Augst for four hours!), improved existing roads and improvements in towns. Zurich asked for a credit of 19 million francs for the construction of road tunnels and fly-overs. Very large sums, too, are being spent on blocks of flats. Berne is to have flats for teachers. Geneva proposed a new congress house, but there was great opposition and a referendum was started. This was, however, withdrawn as soon as the authorities postponed the planning of a congress house and it was felt that in view of the shortage of houses the 20 million project of flats for lower income groups should have preference. Zurich budgets 23.8 million francs for a project for flats and garages at the "Lochergut."

Several railway stations are in the process of renovation and large sums have been earmarked for this purpose. Geneva, Solothurn and Berne are amongst them. Berne has budgeted 7.2 million francs to help the private railway companies on its cantonal territory. Schwyz voted a contribution towards renovating the convent of Muothathal. Baselland doubled its contribution to the commercial school of the Mercantile Society in Basle-Town.

The Canton of Lucerne and the Communes have to pay for a stock of bandages and cotton-wool which has been built up in case of war. The Canton's share alone amounts to 1.3 million francs. Several

Cantons have made allocations for the National Exhibition in 1964 and to the Red Cross, as well as to the "Pro Juventute" organisation. Money has also been given for cultural purposes. Special allocations have been made by authorities in cases of damage caused by the recent bad weather, and in Zug to compensate farmers for losses sustained through swine plague.

The business dealt with in the various Cantonal and Commune Councils varies greatly. Elections of the Commune Councillors for 1963 and for other offices have been taking place. In the Cantons where there is still a "Landsgemeinde" the agenda has been prepared. Some minor items like increasing the chimney sweeping tariff by 10% in Glarus and fixing the price of salt for 1963 in Fribourg had their place on the agendas just as did subjects of great importance like introducing the five-day week for all Solothurn municipal civil servants (except police, teachers and caretakers of museums and schools), or the creation of a "Lizentiat der Rechte" at Basle University and the consequent alteration of the law in order to allow licentiates to function in the law courts like ordinary graduates of the faculty of law. In Zurich three initiatives were brought to the Cantonal authorities asking for a separation of church and state. A debate on thalidomide also took place in the Zurich Parliament, as well as in Berne, where it was stated that the cases of deformed babies due to the drug in Switzerland amounted to five only, possibly six. In the Grand Council of Vaud complaints were raised that legislation did not prevent certain harmful drugs from being sold. A discussion on dangerous drugs also took place in the St. Gall Council.

The retiring age of Councillors of States and other Councillors came under discussion in several parliaments, so in Berne where an age limit was not recommended.

Baselland has proposed separate taxation of the wife's income, and the two Basle announced that they would not follow the other Half-Cantons' example of having combined special days at the National Exhibition, but to hold their Cantonal days in two parts in order to underline the marked difference between the two Half-Cantons. Schwyz decided not to allow Sunday opening of shops in December, and in Thurgau a proposal has been put forward that oil tanks for central heating should be constructed above ground for safer checking.

Bingo, which is known under "Lotto," seems to become more popular, too. Valais and Fribourg have started legislation in order to prevent excesses. As the report from Fribourg puts it, it should be kept as a community game with a "family" character.

Several Cantons accepted applications for naturalisation, e.g. Bern 37, Fribourg 7, St. Gall 32. In the Schaffhausen Parliament the alarming increase of bad posture and spine complaints amongst adolescents was debated, and the Federal authorities were criticised for increasing the

bakers' wages which meant the Schaffhausen had the most expensive bread in Switzerland. The Solothurn Commune Council complained about the ugly television and radio aerials which spoil the old town, and in the Upper Valais, where it is not possible to receive the German-Swiss T.V. transmissions, plans for relay stations are being studied. Also from the Valais comes the news that Sierre has more than 10,000 inhabitants now and has thus become a town. In 1900, Sierre had only 1,800 inhabitants.

Land speculation was the subject of two reports. The Baselland Parliament requested the Federal Parliament to take legal steps in order to prevent exploitation. In the Ticino at the celebration of the "Jungbuerger," the young men who have come of age during 1962 were asked not to take up an easy speculative work—especially not dealing in land—but to do honest hard work and to devote themselves to the political life of the Canton. The executive body of Muraltto has rejected two projects for sky-scrapers. And the final news from the South is that there is a new Ticinese party, "Independent Union."

The Cantonal Police force of Schaffhausen is to have six frogmen and a police patrol boat on the Rhine, where boating has been on the increase. The Canton of Neuchatel has built a bridge to replace the level-crossing at Meudon between the French and the Swiss part of Les Verrieres. It is 72 metres long.

Finally, in Berne the Cantonal and Municipal Governments gave a reception to the Diplomatic Corps. Several Federal Councillors and high military officers were amongst the 200 guests at the "Rathaushalle." This reception takes place every four years.

(Based on News received by courtesy of A.T.S.)

Laugh a little . . .

Mr Brown had been out fishing but did not get a single bite. Later he went into a fishshop and asked the shop assistant to throw him three snapper.

"Why should I throw them?" asked the vendor.

"So that I can tell my family that I caught them. I may be a bad angler but I certainly do not want to be a liar as well!"

—From Nebelspalter

W A N T E D

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