

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Band: - (1930)
Heft: 439

Rubrik: Prepaid subscription rates

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BÖHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

EDITED BY DR. H. W. EGLI WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE LONDON COLONY.

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 9595

Published every Friday at 23, LEONARD STREET, LONDON, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 10—No. 439

LONDON, MARCH 22, 1930.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM AND COLONIES	3 Months (13 issues, post free)	3/6
	6 " " " "	6/6
	12 " " " "	12/0
SWITZERLAND	3 Months (13 issues, post free)	Fr. 7.50
	6 " " " "	14/0
	12 " " " "	28/0

(Swiss subscriptions may be paid into Postcheck-Konto Basle V 5718).



HOME NEWS

FEDERAL.

SWISS SUFFERERS IN GARRONNE VALLEY.

About 300 Swiss families are domiciled as farmers in south-west France and at least 20 of them have lost everything they had in the terrible floods which recently devastated large tracts of the Garonne valley. Others of our compatriots have suffered considerable damage. The calamity of our kinsmen is the more tragic as most of them have with much labour and patience only just managed to get their farms in a decent state. Most of our emigrants to the south-west of France acquired neglected farms in the years 1922-25. It needed many years' labour to make those farms capable of yielding a decent living. Just as they were beginning to enjoy the fruits of their self-denying efforts this terrible calamity has overtaken so many of our compatriots. Although the French Government will no doubt assist all the sufferers it seems certain that our countrymen will require substantial help also from the home country to enable them to renew their efforts in maintaining themselves in the foreign country. Several of the leading newspapers in Switzerland (*Bund*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Journal de Genève*) have started collections on behalf of our unfortunate compatriots. We hear that the Federal Government has sent a contribution of 100,000 French francs to the French relief fund.

HELP FOR SWISS AGRICULTURE.

There is probably no country in the world where so much is done by the Government for agriculture as in Switzerland. Our peasantry receive annually about 30 million Frs. in subsidies of various kinds. The wheat growers enjoy a guaranteed minimum price and soon the schnaps-distillers will also be assured of a purchaser (the Government) for the whole output at a "reasonable price." The tobacco growers receive Federal help in the form of credits without interest, the importation of cattle for slaughter is entirely stopped for the benefit of our own cattle farmers, new credits are being spoken about for improving the quality of the butter and cheese production. And now the farmers demand that our tariff on foreign foodstuffs should be raised to give them further help.

At long last our Parliamentarians, apart from the Socialists who have always done it, begin to kick, as was shown at last week's agricultural debate in the National Council. Even the Federal Government, which has such a tender regard for the agricultural interests, shows no inclination to give way to the latest demand of the farmers. Instead, the Federal Council announced the intention of drafting a special article for the Constitution giving a legal basis and comprehensive regulation of the many forms of help given and yet to be granted to our agriculture. It is surely time that some logical plan and restrictive rules be elaborated for this purpose, ensuring agriculture of a fair degree of help, but at the same time bringing it home to our otherwise excellent farming population that this process of exterior help at the expense of the industrial population cannot go on for ever and ever, but that the peasants must help themselves by rationalisation and modernisation of their undertakings.

THE ALCOHOL REFORM.

For the second time the Swiss sovereign, i.e. the whole electorate in Switzerland will be called upon, on the 6th of April, to decide on the future of the darkest spot in our national life, the "schnaps" pestilence. In 1923 a first attempt was made to restrict the unlimited constitutional right of any and everybody in Switzerland to distil drinking spirits, so as to reduce the alarming consumption of this poisonous sort of beverage in our country—amounting to some 1,200 railway wagons per annum. Per head of the population that consumption amounts to 6.7 litres p.a., a discreditable record for the whole world.

In 1885 the then rampant production of spirits from potatoes was successfully restricted by a new article in the constitution. Since then

the distillation of spirits from fruit has increased by leaps and bounds so that new restrictions became necessary. A first attempt at subjecting all distilling operations to Governmental control failed in the plebiscite of 1923 because the peasants would not, in the urgent interest of our national well-being, forego their constitutional liberty. Since then long and protracted negotiations have been carried on between the Government, Parliament and all the interested parties and organisations with the pleasing result that modification of the previous restriction scheme has been agreed to by most interests, including the farmers' own organisation. According to this new plan, the fate of which will be decided on the 6th of April, the distillation remains free to those who have the necessary apparatus but they may only utilise their own fruit. The whole production will be bought up by the Government at a "reasonable" price amounting to 5 francs per 100 kg. of fruit distilled. No new distillation apparatus may be erected and after 15 years all distillation will be subjected to a concession being acquired for an annual fee. The Government will buy up existing apparatus at an agreed price. In order to reduce the consumption of spirits the price charged by the Federal Monopoly will be raised considerably, the proceeds to be devoted to the Insurance Scheme for the Aged and to the furtherance of the production and marketing of table fruit. The Government undertakes to buy table fruit from the peasants and has for that purpose already installed suitable storage accommodation which will keep the fruit fresh until the summer of the following year. It is to be hoped that this truly inspired work of social, hygienic and economic reform will not be vetoed again by the petty and selfish interests of parts of our democracy, which has otherwise such a creditable record for common-sense to show up to the whole world.

FEDERAL JUDGE OSER.

On the 15th inst. Federal Judge Dr. Hugo Oser, who has held his position since 1912, died at Basle at the age of 67.

LOCAL.

ZÜRICH.

Albert Müller-Müller, domiciled in Lucerne, had his car stolen in Zurich. Shortly after the discovery of his loss, he saw his car in the Talstrasse, and a man and a woman by it. He immediately went across the road and, grabbing the woman by the arm, asked for the man's name. The man, on Müller's approach, had stepped aside. This question led to a discussion with the man, and Müller requested a passer-by to fetch a policeman. Suddenly four reports rang out, and Müller was lying on the ground mortally wounded. The murderer and his companion ran away before they could be stopped. The police are making strenuous efforts to trace them and offer 1000 Frs. reward for information leading to their arrest.

Shunting operations in Zurich's main station led to an unusual accident. Through somebody's error, two trains were guided on to the same track. Unfortunately, the weight of the trains prevented an effective brake action on the short distance separating the trains. One carriage was lifted and fell on the small shunting engine, crushing Albert Schmid to death. He leaves two children. N.Z.Z.

BERNE.

The building commission of the town of Berne advises the removal of the Bubenberg monument from its present emplacement to the upper part of the Hirschengrabenanlage.

Cesare Orelli, for many years private secretary to M. Giuseppe Motta, died in Bern aged 64. N.Z.Z.

A forest fire broke out near the Kurhaus Beatenberg, Thun, which, owing to the dry weather, rapidly spread in an alarming way. The fire brigades from various neighbouring villages were summoned and rendered heroic services. Fortunately snow and rain began to fall and thus helped to extinguish the flames. A whole forest has been destroyed and the damage is considerable. The cause of the fire is a mystery. T.G.

SOLEURE.

Adolf Lüthy, proprietor of the old-established booksellers Lüthy formerly Jent, died at Soleure, aged 63. N.Z.Z.

BASLE.

A car ran down a party of 15 members of the Basler Jünglingsverein on the road between Birsfelden and Muttenz. The car turned a somersault. All the young men were injured, three of them seriously. Seven are in hospital, and one of them is on the danger list. The owner of the car and his chauffeur were slightly hurt. N.Z.Z.

APPENZELL.

The accounts of Appenzell A.-Rh. for 1929 show a surplus of 522,477 Frs. The surplus foreseen in the budget was only 25,704 Frs. N.Z.Z.

The celebration of the "Funkensonntag" has caused a sad accident at Gais. While a catherine wheel was drawing everybody's attention, sparks set fire to other fireworks and to a sack of powder. The explosion literally split in two the right hand of a 16 year old boy; only the thumb and index finger can be saved. His face was also burned. N.Z.Z.

Another accident on the same day is reported from Itlisberg near Niederbüren. A few boys had filled an iron pipe with powder. When they fired their "cannon," the pipe was blown into the air and crushed in the skull of 6-year old Daniel Hiltbrand. In spite of an immediate operation the little boy died. St. G.T.

ST. GALL.

The St. Gall town council proposes to pay 6,000 Frs. to the Sântisbalm A.-G., if this company can prove that it receives from other sources sufficient additional funds to ensure the continuation of the railway over Sealp-Meglisalp to the Sântis peak. The cost of this work is estimated at 25,000 Frs.

The Art-Stone works at Staad are to be increased considerably, as the present accommodation is insufficient to fill rapidly the numerous orders in hand. This is very pleasant news, as other industries thereabouts are not fully occupied. It is stated that other firms producing these stones are also fully occupied. St. G.T.

AARGAU.

A 14-year old boy at Lupfig has owned up as the person who caused the fire in the straw-covered dwelling of Ernst Wüsch, basketmaker. His excuse is that he desired to see the fire brigade at work. St. G.T.

THURGAU.

Mrs. Flury at Anwil-Wies set fire to her house and barn. She states that she was frightened in the isolated house, as she had been molested by beggars and tramps, and that she thought it best to burn her house down in order to get accommodation nearer her husband's place of work. N.Z.Z.

VALAIS.

The wooden bridge at Visp, the last big bridge of the kind, is to be demolished. N.Z.Z.

VAUD.

Owing to negligence of a young man the mill "de la Golie" at Mollens near Bière was completely destroyed by fire.

Mr. Auguste Reymond, Director of the cantonal library at Lausanne since 1905, has died at Pully. T.G.

The accounts of the town of Lausanne for 1929 show a surplus of Frs. 223,180 whilst the budget provided for a deficit of Frs. 14,500. N.Z.Z.

NEUCHÂTEL.

One night last week a young man had to be transported to the hospital at Porrentruy for an urgent operation. It appeared that he was shot in the stomach by a night watchman. His condition is serious and the affair has so far not been cleared up.

The police have arrested two of the men concerned in a recent case of robbery at La Chaux-de-Fonds. Clothing worth about Frs. 1,500 has been recovered, but a sum of Frs. 1,000 is missing.

The association of lawyers in the canton, after having been consulted by a committee of members of the Swiss Bar, have decided in favour of wearing their robes when in court. T.G.

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