

News at random

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

To the figures which we published in our last issue showing the constitution of our new National Council may be added the following observations. Roughly speaking, a third of the seats in the lower chamber will be occupied by new councillors. The success of the socialists recalls a similar achievement in 1919 after the last war when the party was returned with a gain of no less than 22 seats (41): in the last elections in 1939 the socialists lost five seats probably due to the hurried mobilisation. With the exception of Neuchâtel they maintained or increased their strength in all the cantons; additional mandates were secured in Berne (3 now 13), Zurich (2 now 12), Glaris (1), Zug (1), Fribourg (1), Basle (1 now 3), Baselland (1 now 2), Ticino (1 now 2), and Vaud (1 now 3). The radical party who now plays second fiddle has consistently been a loser ever since 1925 when it numbered 60 councillors. The third strongest party, the catholic-conservatives, have lost an adherent each in Schwyz, Baselland, St. Gall and gained a seat in Fribourg. Of the remaining smaller parties the Landsering (Duttweiler) is on the down-grade in Zurich, Berne, Basle and Geneva.

* * *

The new States Council (Ständerat) is now composed of 19 catholic conservatives, 12 radicals (2 less than before), 5 socialists (2 more than before), 4 farmers, citizens and artisans, 2 liberals, 2 democrats.

* * *

National Councillor Ernest Wetter, our "Chancellor of the Exchequer," has resigned for reasons of health from the Federal Council of which he was the doyen. Born at Winterthur in 1877 he started his career as a local schoolmaster, studied national economy in Zurich, Paris and London subsequently taking up an appointment at the "Handelsschule" in Zurich. At the age of 45 he occupied the post of director of the Commercial Division at Berne and was elected to the National Council in 1919. After a close contest with his socialist opponent Klöti (Zurich) who obtained 98 votes against his 117 Wetter entered the Federal Council in 1938.

The National and States councils assembled in common session on the 15th of this month to elect our cabinet ministers for the coming year. 232 Councillors were present and the first one to be elected was Federal Councillor Marcel Pilet-Golaz who secured 154 votes — a notable success in view of the generally accepted belief that the socialists intended to have him replaced by one of their own leaders; he is the only representative of the French-speaking cantons. The nominee of the socialists Henri Perret from LeLocle remained second favourite with 59 votes. Federal Councillors Philippe Etter and M. Celio were confirmed with 163 and 164 votes respectively and M. Kobelt with 163. The remaining two Stampfli and von Steiger were returned with flying colours having 194 and 183 ayes in their favour. The seventh seat, formerly held by Ernest Wetter who resigned for reasons of health, was filled by Ernest Nobs, the socialist president of the town of Zurich, who was supported by 122 councillors. The New Federal Councillor hails from Aarberg and has been a member of the National Council since 1919; for the last 28 years he has been a prominent member in the civil administration of Zurich.

* * *

Federal Councillor Stampfli was elected president of the Confederation with 197 votes and Pilet-Golaz vice-president with 147 votes.

* * *

A total of 532 million francs were subscribed when the eighth Federal war loan was offered for subscription; it was submitted in three lots of 100 million each, viz 2½% cash bonds with a currency of five years, Federal stock of 3¼% with ten years and third lot 3½% with 20 years' currency. The amount will cover about a tenth of the mobilisation expenses so far incurred. The result of the subscription affirms afresh the unshakeable confidence of our people in the Federal Council and its financial policy.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu mardi le 11 janvier à 7h.15 et sera précédée d'un dîner à 6h. précises au Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal.	Démissions.
Admissions.	Divers.

Cette Assemblée sera en forme d'un "Bierabig mit Esse." Les Membres sont priés de s'inscrire par écrit pas plus tard que le 4 décembre auprès de Mons. P. A. Moehr, Hon. Sec., Imperial House, Kingsway, W.C.2. Prière de s'abstenir de téléphoner.

LE COMITE.

A Spanish-Swiss trade agreement, signed in 1940, has been renewed after an exchange of Notes between the two Governments. Spain will continue to export to Switzerland wines, oranges, almonds, hazel nuts, dried apricots and cork. Switzerland's exports to Spain include the basic products of our chemical and pharmaceutical industries, as well as other goods vital to Spain's economy.

* * *

The Federal Council has issued a statement to the effect that 23 Swiss nationals were killed during the recent bombardments of Hamburg.

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At the Palais Federal in Berne it was stated that no member of the Swiss Legation in Berlin was injured during the recent raids on that town.

* * *

Prof. William E. Rappard contributed a few weeks ago an article to the "Journal de Genève" of which the following is a translated extract telegraphed by Reuter's correspondent: "We know that the independence of our country has, in all recent crises, found convinced and active defenders beyond the Channel. These sentiments are not only explained by our gratitude towards those whom, notwithstanding the nature and exigencies of the struggle, have never prohibited our importing from overseas the bread which we cannot draw in sufficient quantity from our own soil. They are also based on the experience of those who have had the privilege of living in the moral intimacy of the British people at war and have conceived for them an admired friendship. Before the war the foreigner sometimes came up against the coldness of the British and an apparent indifference towards the non-British world. Now all this reserve, in which we were inclined to suspect some arrogance, the war seems to have dispersed."

* * *

It is rumoured in Berne that the Federal Council has recently considered the expediency of taxing the tremendous amount of foreign capital which since the outbreak of the war has sought refuge in the vaults of our banks. This fugitive capital which is continually increasing exceeds at present sixty milliard gold francs and has for the most part been "entrusted" to us by the plutocracy from across the Rhine. A tax of only one per cent. per annum would cover very

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nearly six months mobilisation expenses, i.e., the extraordinary cost imposed upon our country by the present world conflagration.

Cantonal

In reply to an enquiry in the States Council relating to the subsidy to be granted to the cantons Glaris and Schwyz for the construction of the "Pragel" route, Federal Councillor Stampfli stated that the cost originally estimated in 1937 to reach two million francs would exceed now four million francs.

* * *

The former editor-in-chief of the "Vaterland," Anton Auf der Maur, died in Lucerne at the age of 65 from heart disease; before joining the staff of the leading catholic paper in 1926 he was editor of the *Basler Volksblatt*. The scion of an old and distinguished Schwyz family he played a prominent though unostentatious part in home politics and was highly respected by friend and foe for his integrity and honesty of purpose.

* * *

The 1944 budget of the canton Zurich registers a deficit of 5.2 million francs whilst the 1942 accounts closed with a surplus of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million francs.

* * *

The district court of Horgen (Zurich) has awarded Frs.10,000 damages to National Councillor Grimm for defamation of character against National Councillor Duttweiler; the latter will have to pay another Frs. 5,000 for costs and special damages.

* * *

Swiss tourism and the international art of cooking are to form the main items of an exhibition which will be held at Berne after the war as soon as circumstances permit.

* * *

The farmers in the canton of Berne are employing a considerable number of Italian military and civilian refugees whose temporary work on the land is of vital importance. These refugees have, of course, no knowledge of German or French, nor have our peasants found it necessary to study the language of our southern neighbours. The widely-read "*Schweizer Bauer*" has come to their help by publishing in its columns agricultural phrases and words in Italian with their equivalents in German and French.

* * *

Berne University has celebrated its 109th anniversary. On this occasion Miss Rittmeyer, from St. Gall, was appointed doctor honoris causa for her researches about Swiss creations in jewellery and her studies of religious and secular art in Switzerland. Mr. Ernest Moll, director of the electric power works at Innerkirchen, for his works on the development of the Bernese and Swiss electric industry in general was equally so honoured.

* * *

The death is reported from Berne of Prof. René de Saussure, author of numerous books on arithmetic and geometry.

* * *

The commune of Herzogenbuchsee has granted a credit of Frs.224,500 in order to assist in the establish-

ment of a chocolate factory which is a new industry in this district.

One of the new National Councillors for Solothurn, Ern. Flückiger (Radical), found himself unplaced when a recount established the fact that the next candidate on the list actually scored 31 more votes than was originally recorded; Joh. Meier will take his place.

A Swiss Academy of Medical Science has recently been founded in Basle; it has published a very bold and comprehensive programme of its proposed activities. The medico-pharmaceutical industry and other interested parties have subscribed a foundation capital of 1.2 million francs and it is expected that annual contributions of about half a million francs can be anticipated.

Appenzell A.Rh. is petitioning the Federal Council with a request to devote more attention to the difficulties caused by the mobilisation to cantons and communes and to create an inter-cantonal fund of compensation.

The Chamber of Commerce of the canton of Grisons examined the question of an artificial lake in the Rheinwald. After having heard opinions for and against the project, the Chamber of Commerce stressed the economic importance of this power works in the Hinterrhein. The State Council is asked to take an early decision.

The impact of a stray bomb which descended harmlessly in the village square of Samaden on October 1st blew out over 5,000 glass windows in 92 adjoining buildings.

Frs.900,000 will be spent on alterations at the hospital of Chur; 42 rooms will be reserved exclusively for the use of the staff.

By the payment of a 1st dividend of 8% the liquidation of the Banque d'Epargne de la Côte aux Fées (Val de Travers) is coming to an end. As long ago as 1938 the bank was declared insolvent on account of heavy losses incurred and including the present distribution the creditors have received altogether 68% of the money due to them.

The University of Lausanne has been endowed with a Chair (school) of architecture.

Dr. Jacques Roux, pupil and nephew of the famous surgeon Cesar Roux, died in Lausanne at the age of 59.

Coal mining in the canton Valais which promised to solve some of our fuel difficulties has come to a standstill. Out of about twenty mines originally exploited only one or two pits are working and about 2,000 workmen have been dismissed. Unexpected obstacles have arisen in selling this particular coal which has not found a ready and well-disposed market. It is stated that large quantities of coal (anthracite) have accumulated at the pitheads and that present deliveries of the superior German coal will cover our country's requirements for this season.

When the 1944 budget of the canton Neuchâtel was discussed in the Grand Conseil one deputy expressed his surprise that while a deficit of 2½ million francs was anticipated an amount of Frs.50,000 was charged for celebrating the centenary of the Neuchâtel Republic which will take place in 1948.

According to recent statistics Neuchâtel is the canton that employs the largest proportion of its inhabitants in the watch industry, namely 53.4%.

The State Council of the canton of Geneva decided to proceed with the reconstruction of the cantonal hospital and to regroup the poly-clinics. The realization of the project will cost some thirty million francs and will be extended over a long period. The work which will start with the regrouping of the polyclinics is to be taken in hand in about a year's time. A credit of Frs.1,200,000 has already been voted for this first part of the work.

A "comité d'étude" has been formed in Geneva to study — and report on — the possibilities and prospects of holding an annual international exhibition on the pattern of the Leipzig Fair.

The cycle works of Courfaivre have, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of their establishment, assigned Frs.100,000 to a special fund to finance an old-age insurance scheme for the benefit of their staff.

Army

October 6th last was the 1500th active day of service of our Army since the calling up of our frontier troops, on August 29th, 1939. However, except for the General and several high commanding Officers, not many soldiers have been able to put this record number into their military service-books, since each single body of troops gets leave from time to time. But each member of any type of troops or arms can muster several hundred service days since the beginning of the mobilisation. This means a great sacrifice for most men and their dependants, yet it was made, and will be made in future, without a murmur, for to the last man each one knows that only in this manner can peace be preserved for the country.

Nouvelle Société Helvétique.

LONDON GROUP.

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will take place at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, on Saturday, January the 15th, 1944, at 2.45 p.m., preceded by a lunch at 1 o'clock, price per head 7/6. A social Tea will follow the Meeting (3/6 per head).

THE COUNCIL.

Please advise the Hon. Treasurer of the number of seats required without delay.

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Economical Imports in October amounted to Frs.113.2 millions, a decline of Frs.4.2 millions compared with September. Exports totalled Frs.110 millions, an increase of Frs.15.4 millions. Quantitatively exports were more than 20 per cent. higher. For the first ten months of 1943 imports exceeded exports in value by Frs.209.2 millions, against a corresponding excess of Frs.482.5 millions a year ago. Imports are 15 per cent. down by value and 8 per cent. by volume, while exports are respectively 8 per cent. higher and 20 per cent. lower.

The abnormal drought has brought our rivers down to their lowest level for the last forty years. Drastic economies in the use of electric power are being enforced and street lighting is being reduced by half.

A "vintage" year can be expected from the present vine harvest as far as the western part of our country is concerned. Though only 65 million litres of wine — against 75 and 83 in the last two years respectively — are likely to be the result the quality is of a rare excellence. (Our Swiss restaurants and club secretaries will do well to order early!). This is under present conditions in the nature of a windfall as our viticulture is practically relegated to districts where the ground is too steep and arid for any other cultivation. For example the celebrated vineyards of Lavaux on the banks of the upper Lac Lemman are situated along a steep slope rising to a very high altitude where for generations stonewalls or terraces have been built and maintained by carrying up from the lake stone and boulders to the extent of about three million cubic metres.

Traffic An order of the Army Council renders any traveller on the railways or any other public conveyance liable to be stopped and asked for the production of his identity papers.

The International Red Cross Committee disposes in our country of nine large railway yards where some-

thing like 4,000 ten-ton lorries are assembled containing essentials and comforts received from all corners of the world for the benefit of the two million human beings herded behind barbed wire and other civil internees in belligerent countries. The daily turn-over in these depôts is between 150 and 170 ten-ton loads and since the beginning of the war about 220,000 tons have been distributed to relatives in ten different countries. At present a collection is being made in Switzerland on behalf of prisoners of war for educational and fictional literature which is meeting with a great response; in Basle alone over 145,000 volumes have been accumulated.

Humanitarian According to an official census there are at present more than 65,000 refugees of varied nationalities in our country. The Federal Council had to grant a new credit of three million francs for the building of huts where those hitherto only temporarily housed could find secure and healthy homes for the winter. The hundreds of children from war-faring countries who were clothed and fed in hospitable families or children's homes are not included in the above figures. Another group is formed by prisoners of war, invalided or unfit for service through tuberculosis who have been cared for in alpine sanatoria. At Leysin during the last two years invalids from the French army are admitted as fast as space is available by departures: recently over a hundred Finns have found a temporary haven.

Since the beginning of the war our people have raised about seventy million francs in voluntary contributions for the various Federal collections. Over fifty million francs were given to the "Don National," the Swiss and International Red Cross, the Children's fund, the winter aid and the Pro Juventute and Senectute. Not officially recorded are appeals made for benevolent purposes of a local character.

"Pro Juventute" has issued this month the usual four charity stamps. A portrait on the 5cts. stamp reminds us of the great leader in agriculture, Emmanuel von Fellenberg (1771-1844), while the other three denominations picture typical Swiss flowers.

Spirited protest meetings were held by the students of the Basle and Zurich universities to register sympathies with the treatment of their Norwegian comrades. The "Manchester Guardian," December 7th, says the following about the Basle demonstration: "Basle University students and professors held a protest meeting against the arrests in Oslo. Professor Reinhard, the rector, expressed his indignation and profound grief at the arrests, which, he said, "represent a brutal violation of liberty and an attack on the freedom of science and letters." A delegate for the students protested against "the slavery which is being put into practice in Oslo," and expressed the resolve of Basle students to defend liberty by every possible means. A resolution expressing abhorrence at the Oslo events was passed and is to be sent to the Basle authorities and the Swiss Federal Council. A collection was made for Norwegian students and professors."