

Home affairs

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HOME AFFAIRS.

by PIERRE BÉGUIN.

"Forthcoming Popular Referendum"

(Popular Referendum in September on the subject of the fiscal and financial problem.)

At least one more popular referendum, on the Federal plane, will take place before the end of the year. This will occur in September, after the holiday season is over. On that day, the Swiss people will once again give its opinion regarding a problem which has often occupied its mind, during the last few years, namely the financial and fiscal problem. It is practically certain that this voting will not arouse any general enthusiasm. And this for two reasons.

For one thing, it is incontestable that the Swiss people are tired of this interminable financial discussion, which comes up every two years or so. It might even be said that it never ceases. For another, not even a final and lasting project will be submitted to the Sovereign People, but only a new transitory provisional solution. One could still strive with a certain amount of ardour for the settlement of this question, for a long term. But, in order to give one's agreement to a prorogation of the present régime — with the prospect of having to go to the polls again on the same subject in four year's time — people will not trouble to come. In order that participation, which will be weak in any case because of abstentions, be superior, nevertheless, to the average, it would be necessary for a campaign on a large scale to be launched by the adversaries of the official project. But, for the present anyway, it is not certain that such a campaign will be launched.

As a matter of fact, when, at the beginning of the year, it became certain that the provisional fiscal and financial régime would be prolonged, because the final solution presented by the former Federal Councillor Max Weber had been rejected in December and that there was not sufficient time to achieve any constructive work within the space of eleven months, those who had won the day let it be known that they were resigned to such a prolongation. They made three reservations, however: in their opinion, a transitory régime during three- instead of four years, should suffice; furthermore, a brake on expenditure, that is to say a limitation of the rights possessed by Parliament in regard to the voting of credits and an extension of the popular rights to control, should be instituted; and, finally, it should be understood that the yield from the Direct Federal Tax, known as "the tax for national defence", should serve solely for the amortization of the extraordinary expenditure for rearmament, in order to show clearly that the Direct Federal Tax is an anomaly and that it must disappear as soon as the exceptional circumstances no longer justify its application.

None of these three conditions have been fully satisfied. The most that has been done is that the Federal Chambers approved a project for "putting a brake on expenditure", but this project is much more modest and timid than a popular Initiative on this subject, which was launched last year and proved very successful. Does this suffice for the adversaries

of the existing régime to undertake a vigorous struggle? It is somewhat doubtful.

For one thing, in Parliament, these adversaries have become resigned. The provisional project was voted unanimously, against the Communist votes. It is certain, however, that the adversaries of the project have taken refuge in abstention. Now, it remains to be seen whether their mandators will follow their example, on the day of the Popular Referendum, or whether they will consider it opportune to engage in a struggle. In any case, the struggle would be hopeless, for — even if it would appear to be practically hopeless to assure the triumph of a final and lasting solution — our people, in its majority, will never leave the Confederation without any resources. It will prefer to accept, provisionally, a solution even which is far from perfect. In this country there are no adepts in regard to the policy of choosing the worst, and that is a very fortunate thing indeed.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, August 27th, 1954.

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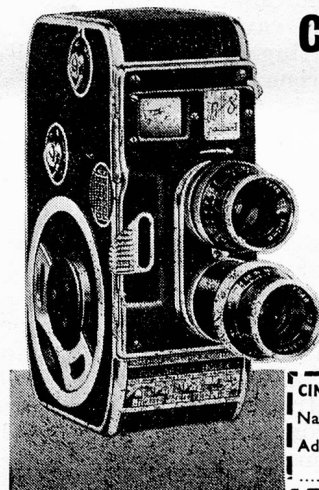


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