

The week at home

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THE WEEK AT HOME.

By MAX NEF.

Three weeks ago, the Federal Parliament met for a short extraordinary session. This served chiefly for the purpose of coming to a final decision regarding the Draft Bill on the constitutional reform of the Federal Finances. This task was accomplished by Parliament in its joint sitting. With the exception of the Social Democrats, all the authoritative political parties agreed with the arrangement arrived at as a result of the deliberations. It is on 11th May that the Swiss People will be called upon to make their verdict known. In view of the fact that this is a matter pertaining to constitutional law, there must also be a favourable popular majority in the Cantonal majority.

The reason why the Social Democrats refused to vote in favour of the Bill in Parliament is — according to their own statement — because too little consideration was paid, during the discussions, to their own proposals and wishes. To this, it was retorted that in the case of such a, so-called, negotiated solution, based on intermediate lines, it had not proved possible for any of the Parties to obtain satisfaction, in every respect, for the wishes that they had put forward.

Further grounds put forward by the Social Democrats for their opposition reside in the fact that the Order which has now been proposed does not make sufficient means available to the State for it to be able to cope with the growing demands made on it, more particularly in the field of social welfare, without becoming indebted again. This statement is contested by the Department of Finance. The final figures for the year 1957 have just become available. Once more they show an improvement as compared with the preliminary estimate. Moreover, in spite of the easing of the taxpayer's burden, which took place two years ago, receipts from taxation have provided a surplus which, once again, makes it possible to proceed with the paying off of the National Debt. This, of course, is due to the continuation of the economic boom, which the country is enjoying.

Whereas, at the beginning of the debate, Parliament dealt chiefly with questions relating to the financial reform, which were connected with the technicalities of taxation or were of a fiscal character, long and comprehensive discussion taking place regarding tax percentages, maximum levies and minimum rates, towards the end of the session, considerations of a Party-political and Party-tactical nature came more and more into the foreground. This also led to the fact that the regulations which contain a circumscription of the Federal taxes have been limited for the present to a period of six years. This, so that the Tax Regulations should maintain the character of a mere *Transitional Order*, so that in many a circle wherein no particular pleasure is experienced at this or that Regulation, it will prove easier to vote in favour of the revised work as a whole. Before the time for voting arrives, however, a big public discussion is to be held, and it will also be necessary to give a clear explanation to the citizens regarding the complicated and comprehensive Draft Bill. The fact that this will not be done either by the Authorities or by any official circles, but by political parties and by the Press, on their own initiative, is one of the salient particularities of Swiss democracy,

as is also the fact that in Switzerland it is the citizen himself who decides on the extent of his taxation and the manner in which it is to be paid!

A DEPARTURE.

As on so many former occasions, we have once more to bid farewell to a member of the Swiss Embassy in London.

This time it is Monsieur Etienne Vallotton, 1st Secretary of Embassy, who is returning to the Federal Political Department (Swiss Foreign Office) in Berne.

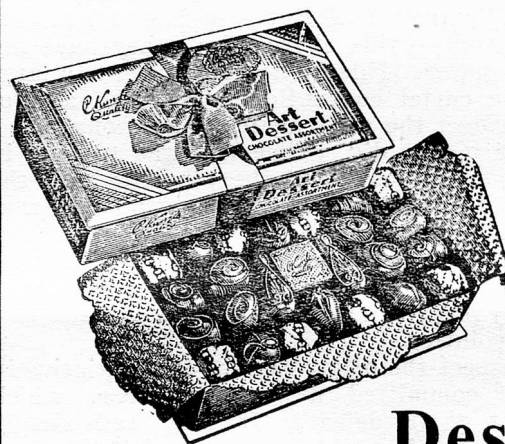
Monsieur Vallotton and his charming wife (who hails from Geneva) have endeared themselves during their three-and-a-half years' stay in London to everyone who came in contact with them. Their friendliness and congeniality have been much valued. On their arrival in the Metropolis they immediately took the keenest interest in the activities of the Colony by attending many of the social functions and meetings.

Monsieur Vallotton was born in 1918 and is a citizen of Vallorbe (Ct. Vaud); he studied at the University of Geneva (The Graduate Institute of International Studies), obtaining the degree of Bachelor of Political Science. In his military service he reached the rank of captain.

He entered the Federal Political Department in Berne in 1946. Five years later (1951), Monsieur Vallotton was transferred as Attaché to the Swiss Legation at Ankara, and in 1954 came to London, as 2nd Secretary of Legation.

We extend to Monsieur Vallotton (who is the son of a former Swiss Minister in Brussels) and Madame Vallotton our best wishes in their new sphere of activity.

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