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IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTONS OF SOLOTHURN AND AARGAU

SOLOTHURN

The new President of the Solothurn Cantonal Parliament is the Liberal Erwin von Arb, farmer from Neuen-dorf. The two Vice-Presidents are the Socialist and teacher Walter Weber (Derendingen) and the Liberal "Ammann" Arnold Annaheim from Lostorf.

Further increases in revenue and expenditure are visualised for 1966, and the budget reckons with a surplus of about half a million francs, expenditure estimated at Fr.180,678,000.—. For the first time in the Canton, a finance plan has been worked out to cover the next five years. Urgent projects are included such as the new building for the "Staatsarchiv", Cantonal School buildings in Olten and Solothurn, hospitals, national roads, and other road construction, bridge building, Jura waterway correction and water protection. In order to complete all urgent projects, the Canton will have to run up new debts in the course of the next few years.

Generally speaking, cases of welfare assistance have decreased, but the sums spent on state assistance has gone up. In 1964, cases went down from 2068 to 1939. But the sum spent has gone up by well over a quarter of a million to nearly 3¼ million francs. Most of the cases are due to old age and sickness.

The question of votes for women in cantonal matters has been re-opened, and the Government was asked to work out plans, so that legislation could possibly be passed before the elections in 1959. The federation of women who are against suffrage have protested against the way the majority of the Solothurn Parliament "disposes" of women by "burdening them with new duties and tasks". These members are in favour of increased duties in educational, welfare and legal matters, but they are against political rights.

The Solothurn electorate had to go to the poll on 12th December to decide on five proposals. With a participation of 42.55%, they granted credits for civil defence first-aid material for the population and accepted the new regulations relating to civil defence, as well as the law granting additional AHV benefits. They rejected the credit for an electronic date computer and the new building for the motor vehicle and traffic office at Bellach.

Foreign workers in the Canton decreased in numbers by 5.4% in a year. This is rather less than the total Swiss reduction which amounts to 6.2%. The number still employed in Solothurn was 21,361 at the end of August.

In a recent statement by the Cantonal Education Department it was declared that there is no longer any shortage of teachers. But there is considerable lack of space in schools, especially in the Cantonal School.

The collections on the Federal Day of Prayer amounted to over Fr.80,000.—. The sum was divided equally into three parts for the welfare home "Bellevue" Oberdorf, the citizens' and old age home Bad Ammannsegg and the men's home in Olten.

The new chief surgeon at the Cantonal Hospital is Dr. med Anton Jud, formerly of the Inselspital Berne. The Cantonal Dentists' Association celebrated its Golden Jubilee.

The "Solothurner Nachrichten" will in future appear as an afternoon paper. The change-over was made in consideration of the staff and reduction in the number of postal deliveries to two.

At the end of the year the population of the town of **Solothurn** numbered 18,628, 67 more than last year. Of these, 2,478 are foreigners, more than half of them Italians. The "Bürgerspital" suffers from alarming lack of space, even in the operation theatres. The number of operations have nearly trebled in thirty years. As an example, maternity cases have to be put into bathrooms. The new "Bürgeramann" of Solothurn is Dr. Walter Reinert, the new "Statthalter" August Oetterli.

The new school building at **Baerschwil** was inaugurated in October. Early in January, the Karrosserie Hess AG at **Bellach** was practically destroyed by fire.

The R.C. community of **Bettlach** has decided to build a new church with vicarage, school rooms, kindergarden, a hall and civil defence shelters at a cost of 3.4 million francs. The paperworks of **Biberist** celebrated their centenary. Several large donations were made. Their former head, the engineer Gustav Eisenmann, was made an Honorary Citizen of Biberist on the occasion. The company are building a waste water plant in the Schachenwald.

Feldbrunnen's Commune Assembly decided not to join the communal waste-water project ARA Solothurn-Emme, but to construct its own. Early in December, there was a commemoration ceremony for the artist and world traveller Frank Buchser.

A mere 8.5% of the **Grenchen** electorate decided in the summer to grant a credit of over 10 million francs for a new school building. On the other hand, a record number of citizens attended the Commune Assembly in December. They rejected the Council's proposals to divide the budget for the first time into ordinary and extraordinary expenditure. As a result of their decision, no credits were available at the beginning of 1966 for road construction and other projects. In November, a monument was unveiled at Grenchen to honour the Polish fighter for freedom General Marian Langiewicz who became a citizen of Grenchen 100 years ago.

The Restaurant Bergmatten near **Hofstetten** was completely gutted by fire last summer, and in November, the main road at **Kienberg** was blocked by a landslide due to the bad wet weather.

The new part of the Cantonal Hospital in **Olten** is now in operation, and a further section of the artificial ice rink has been constructed.

The new building of the district hospital at **Thierstein** will cost 10¼ million francs. The Roman Catholic community of **Trimbach** has agreed by a large majority to give women the vote in Church matters.

AARGAU

The Aargau budget estimates revenue of 239.1 million francs and expenditure of 259 mio. The items responsible for the deficit are above all waste-water plants and road construction. The Cantonal Parliament accepted the budget and agreed to an increase from 97 to 100% in the ordinary State Tax. All three accounts for 1964 (administration, road construction and tuberculosis) had ended with heavy deficits.

The Aargau electorate (70% participation) agreed to additional rooms for the teachers' training colleges of Aarau and Wettingen as well as for a branch college at Wohlen. The citizens rejected the proposed legislation for civil defence.

As was reported earlier, a Foundation was set up by private industry for a new Aargau Technical College. Last summer, the Foundation began to collect money. A large sum of half a million francs was immediately donated by Brown, Boveri & Co., Baden. The commission studying the question of whether the Aargau should have its own university has already gathered a lot of material which will be most useful as a survey on university education in Switzerland. Several models have been prepared.

The Cantonal Parliament debated the problem of damage from fluor to the farmers of the Fricktal. An agreement for compensation by the Aluminiumhütte Badisch-Rheinfelden has been reached. From 1st October, electricity rates were put up considerably (average 23%). This means that the Aargau now pays the same as the Canton of Zurich, i.e. about 9.4 cts. per kwh.

This year in June, **Aarau** will be the scene of the 24th Federal Musical Festival. The town has always been particularly suited to have nation-wide gatherings. The new "Stadtammann" is again Dr. Willy Urech (Liberal), his deputy Municipal Councillor Willi Marti (Socialist). The first time, the Commune Assembly met at the end of November, there was no quorum, and the citizens had to be called again in December when they agreed to two new schools and a civil defence station. The budget for 1966, balanced at 15.17 million francs, was passed. A new Applied Arts College and a Printers' Training School are now in operation in Aarau.

The Commune Assembly of **Aarburg** granted a credit of 5.4 mio for a waste-water plant. New excavations outside the old Roman town at **Augst** have brought to light finds which seem to confirm the theory that they were of a Roman "mansio", an inn.

The new "Stadtammann" of **Baden** is the Liberal Max Müller (re-elected), his deputy the Conservative/Christian Socialist architect Josef Rieser. Baden's Commune Assembly appointed the relevant Institute of the ETH in Zurich to investigate Baden's air pollution. At the same meeting, the salaries of the Commune Councillors were increased to Fr.44,800.— for a full-time and Fr.7,000.— for a part-time Councillor. Baden has become a most progressive district. For the last four years, a new railway tunnel has been going through the Schlossberg. The new road tunnel (85m.) below the ruins of Schloss Stein (Schlossberg) was opened with a "Tunnelfest" in October. Also in the rocks of the Schlossberg, parking garages are being built which will serve as civil defence shelters. Near Neuenhof, the new national road Baregg tunnel is being constructed. On the NW town boundary towards Turgi, the large water purification plant is under construction. The Commune Assembly of Baden accepted a general development plan for the town at a meeting in December.

Bellach is to have a convalescence station built by the SUVA (Schweiz. Unfallversicherungs Anstalt Lucerne). Due to the increase in accidents, the centre at Baden is no longer adequate. After the new Reformed Church at **Bremgarten** had been inaugurated in summer the community decided to build another Church centre on the Mutschellen. But the Commune Council rejected the proposal on the grounds that that particular zone was scheduled for road and industrial building construction.

The present "Stadtammann" of **Brugg**, the Liberal Dr. iur Eugen Rohr, was re-elected. His deputy is the Socialist National Councillor Walter Gloor. The Commune Assembly has now been replaced by an Inhabitants' Council of fifty (15 Liberals, 11 Social Democrats, 9 Con-

servative/Christian Socialists, no Party 7, Farmers 3, Landesring 3 and Evangelicals 1). The new Technical School ("Höhere Technische Lehranstalt") of Brugg-Windisch was opened in November. **Entfelden** celebrated its millennium in summer.

As was reported previously, the Commune of **Habsburg** refused to elect a Commune Council. The cantonal authorities had to step in. After the problems had been discussed, a second Assembly was called and a new Council was elected. By this the citizens showed that they preferred a Council to a Cantonal Commissar who would have had to be appointed according to the law. **Hornussen's** electorate granted a credit of 1.5 million francs for a school and **Koelliken** 1.8 mio for a waste-water plant.

Laufenburg has a new "Stadtammann" Dr. Binkert, lawyer and "Grossrat". Dr. Hans Theiler, Socialist, has been re-elected to the same position at **Lenzburg**. The firm of Saager & Co. at Duerrenaesch has donated over a quarter of a million francs for church building operations of the parish of **Leutwil**. **Neuenhof**, too, has now an Inhabitants' Council of forty in place of the Assembly.

For 37 years, Dr. Bruno Beetschen has skilfully acted as "Stadtammann" of **Rheinfelden**. He has now retired and become an Honorary Citizen. His successor is the Liberal Richard Molinari. The largest Swiss salt store was opened at **Riburg** in the autumn. It is built of wood and holds 20,000 metric tons of salt destined for consumption all over Switzerland except the Canton of Vaud. **Schupfart's** Commune Clerk Xaver Ruffin was celebrated by his fellow citizens when he completed sixty years in office. He intends to go on with it. Schupfart is the home of the new airfield of the Aeroclub of Switzerland.

The former idyllic village of **Spreitenbach** is developing so fast that it will soon be a town. Its citizens have approved a large building project of a town centre, with shops, supermarkets, hotel, restaurants, quarters for doctors, lawyers, for artists, and including homes for old people and kindergartens, not to forget ample parking facilities. **Suhr** voters agreed to a 7-million "Bezirksschulhaus" and a new rifle range.

The new Reformed Church at **Untersiggenthal** now houses the bells from the EXPO. The last Commune Assembly of **Wettingen** took place in December. An Inhabitants' Council of fifty has now taken its place. One of forty has taken over at **Wohlen** where the electorate rejected a proposal for a full-time "Gemeindeammann".

A most modern home for mentally retarded children was opened at **Zetzwil** (towards Oberkulm). With a participation of 88%, the citizens of **Zofingen** elected the forty members of their new Inhabitants' Council in November.

(News received by courtesy of the
Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

AN OLD SWISS CARNIVAL CUSTOM "Sparks Sunday" in Liestal

As part of its annual carnival festival, Liestal, the picturesque capital of the Canton of Baselland, will celebrate its "Sparks Sunday" on 27th February. Wearing all kinds of fancy costumes, townspeople carry torches and burning brooms through the darkened city streets. The procession ends at a public square where all the firebands are thrown into a pile and continue burning, to everyone's enjoyment. Of pagan origin, the rite symbolizes the driving away of winter.

There are similar customs in many parts of Switzerland, one of the best-known is the "Sechseläuten" in Zurich. [S.N.T.O.]