

Parliamentary summer session

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PARLIAMENTARY SUMMER SESSION

This year's summer session of the two Swiss Chambers coincided with the outbreak of hostilities in the Near East, and the atmosphere was depressed. The Parties would have liked to issue a communal declaration regarding the crisis, but they were not successful, and it was left to them to make individual statements. These were unanimously in sympathy with Israel, giving a true picture of the feeling of the Swiss population.

The first week saw the Council of States accept the report on development aid, though there were warning voices regarding help to countries which had prepared the war.

With 111 : 12 votes, Parliament supported the opinion of the Government that it was a *Kollegialbehörde* and as such should retain the power to distribute the Federal Department. The Motion that Parliament should be the deciding factor was thus defeated. Parliament also rejected a proposal that speeches in the Chambers should be impromptu and not read from full manuscripts.

The National Council approved unanimously the accounts for 1966, which showed a surplus of 5m. as against a budgeted loss of 238m. francs. Against the Government, Parliament decided on an unconditional tax amnesty. There was also strong opposition to the double taxation agreement with France. Finance Minister Bonvin also accepted a Postulate regarding an increase in pay for the federal employees.

Partial revision of the Military Penal Law was tackled by the National Council, with its proposed changes for more enlightened treatment of conscientious objectors. But some kind of civilian service is still not acceptable.

In the second week, the traditional summer outings of the Parties took place, and amongst the business in the National Council was the report by the Government on its activities in 1966. The debate included Switzerland's attitude to United Nations. Entry should and would be studied, but one thing was certain that a plebiscite at this moment would be fruitless.

Without opposition, the Council of States granted 300m. francs for military buildings and shooting centres, a walking-out coat and rain-coat for the soldier.

In the third week, the debate of the *Geschäftsbericht* brought some sharp criticism to bear regarding reduced services of the PTT, which affects the daily papers rather badly. The reduction in service could only be made good by a further 1,000 staff, now that the PTT personnel has been granted shorter hours as from 1st January 1968.

The reorganisation of the Federal Military Department did not cause much concern in the National Council because of the excellent preparatory work and hearings which had been done by the 27 members of the Commission.

A fourth week had to be added to the session, and even so, the National Council was not quite able to complete its business. The main debate concerned the tobacco tax law. The Government was of opinion that Swiss legislation should fall in line with EFTA demands which are for the same tobacco duty on inland and imported smokes. Heated arguments for and against price maintenance finally resulted in a 74 : 72 vote for it.

A unanimous vote for a considerable improvement in the invalidity insurance was passed by the Council of States. And the National Council dealt with a few interesting questions shortly before the end of the session. This provided the welcome opportunity to praise the results of

the Kennedy Round negotiations and to deplore the division in the Common Market. The Swiss application is still pending and will remain so for the time being.

(Based on reports in the "Schweizerisches Kaufmännisches Zentralblatt".)

RECENT DEATHS IN SWITZERLAND

The following deaths have been reported from Switzerland :

Edmund Buchenhorner (91), Eptingen, founder and head of the *Mineralquelle* Eptingen and owner of Bad Eptingen; Commune Councillor and one of the first car drivers in the Canton.

Ernst Herzog (69), Basle, for many years Chairman of the Management of the Federation of Swiss Co-operative Societies; at barely 25, he became President of the Basle *Arbeiterbund* which is the *Gewerkschaftskartell* today; member of the Basle Parliament in 1923, then of the Berne Parliament from 1926; two years later he returned to Basle as Secretary of the *Arbeiterbund* and once again *Grossrat* until 1966; National Councillor since 1935.

Arthur Spoehel (50), Berne, well-known mountain guide who took part in Himalaya and other expeditions; he had an accident whilst following his job as *Dach-decker* in Berne.

Mgr. O. Jeannerat (54), Bienne, Municipal Priest of the town since 1950.

Jean-Joseph Comte (58), Geneva, originally from Fribourg, he became chief of department with the International Telecommunications Organisation.

Miss Anna Wydler (102), Zurich, the oldest inhabitant and citizen of the town; *Glätterin* for decades.

Mother Superior Paula Johanna Baur (65), Erlen (Thurgau), founder of the R.C. "Bonitas Dei" Sisterhood seven years ago (Castle Eppishausen).

Jakob Gauer (59), Berne, owner of the Schweizerhof Hotel in Berne since 1939 and founder of the Gauer Hotel concern.

Dr. med. Werner Hofmann (75), Stammheim (Zurich), former *Bezirksarzt*; Chairman of the Oberstammheim *Schulpflege*; Lieut. Colonel of Frontier Brigade 6.

Emil Loetscher (84), Muensterlingen (Thurgau), probably the oldest active journalist in Switzerland; author of novels.

Abbot Joseph Fleury (66), Delémont, non-resident *Domherr* of the Cathedral of Solothurn and Dean of Delémont.

Ernest Periat (83), Porrentruy, well-known Jura personality, member of the Cantonal Parliament and Commune President of Fahy.

Beat Gasser (74), Lungern, well-known sculptor, mainly creator of church and tomb sculptures.

Fritz Saegesser (7), Spiez, former Commune President and *Grossrat*; prominent representative of the workers in the Bernese Oberland; Vice-President of the Berne *Abstinentervereine*.

Dr. iur. Hans Brack (78), Zofingen, for 25 years Editor-in-Chief of Ringier publishing company, especially concerned with the "Schweizer Illustrierten" and "Sie und Er".

[A.T.S.]