

Federal finances

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FEDERAL FINANCES

VARIOUS VOTING RESULTS

The federal accounts for 1967 show a deficit for the first time since 1952. Revenue stood at 5,718 million francs and expenditure at 5,874m., a shortage of 156 million francs. This is, however, less than anticipated. The comprehensive accounts which include changes in property values and a new advance of 185m. for national road construction, show a surplus of 205 million francs.

It may be remembered that the Stocker Commission looked at federal subsidies and suggested considerable cuts. Some of these were already adopted in last year's budget. A number of the retrenchments are subject to parliamentary approval. Some of them were accepted by Parliament, others amended. With the proposals to cut subsidies, only about one quarter of total federal expenditure was dealt with. The remaining three quarters are at present being studied by representatives of science and economy in the commission of experts, called the Keller Commission. At the same time, another body chaired by Councillor of States Dr. W. Rohner, deals with new sources of revenue and the new *Finanzordnung* which should become operational by 1975; the present one came into force in 1964 for the duration of ten years. In view of the federal finances having entered the "red" for the first time, a close examination of the present order should be made and some kind of temporary programme worked out to bridge the gap until the new order is ready. Other proposals are that the present programme should be terminated two or three years earlier, and a new definite programme take its place.

The report by the Keller Commission is not to be expected before 1969. In the meantime, the Federal Council has decided to call a meeting for 29th April, at which the leaders of the Parties represented in the Government, will have a chance of discussing the future finance order. In February, the Federal Council accepted the draft of a new federal law regarding the *Eidgenössischer Finanzhaushalt*. It contains the various decrees and certain principles already put into practice both in financial management and credit system. Federal finance, it states explicitly, should be handled according to the principles of legality, urgency, economy and thrift, and that finance policy should take into account all aspects of the country's development.

(Compiled from information received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

The last week-ends in March saw thousands of Swiss citizens go to the poll in various parts of the country. In the town of Aarau, the voters, with a 68.5% participation, decided to introduce an Inhabitants' Council. This means that the Commune Assembly will cease to function as from 1970.

The Bienne architect Gianpeter Gaudy conceived a plan for opening up the Hueb-Birlig district outside Bienne. This plan has now been accepted by the two Communes of Ipsach and Bellmund, each roughly with a 2:1 majority. Now, a satellite town for 27,000 inhabitants will be built by the Bienne-Seeland Regional Planning Group. It will have a magnificent view over the lake, the Jura, Nidau and Bienne.

In Zurich, the citizens had to vote in no fewer than seven matters. They accepted all the projects and with this, they granted a total of over 27m. francs: Wiedikon centre and Schaffhauserplatz road improvements, a new cemetery on the Uetliberg slopes, *Schülerheim* Valbella-Lenzerheide, contribution to the Zurich Zoo, a loan to the home for old people at Wollishofen. A basic decision had to be taken with regard to the Papierwerd site on the Limmat opposite the main station. Several projects are in hand, but for the moment, all the voters had to agree to, was to keep the site for a possible *Ueberbauung*, "considering public interest."

The Basle electorate had to choose 130 members of the Cantonal Parliament, 168 women and 657 men candidates had been put up. The Cantonal Government had to be elected, too. Among the new members of the Council are fourteen women. The "Landesring der Unabhängigen", like in other towns, has gained eight seats, a great success. The Radical Democrats and the Socialists have lost six seats each. The latter remain the largest Party with 36 seats, followed by the Catholics with 20 (19), Liberal Democrats and "Landesring" with 19 each (18 and 11). The PdA (Labour Party) have 8 (8) and the Evangelical Voters 5 (5) seats. The Village of Bettingen has one seat, and so has Riehen. The "Aktion gegen die Ueberfremdung" is in for the first time with two seats.

The first poll for the Cantonal Government elections was not decisive for the seventh member, and a second election had to be arranged a fortnight later. It brought no change, and there are as before three Socialists, one Liberal Democrat, two Radical Democrats and one Catholic Conservative.

[A.T.S.]

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