

Civil servants cash in on coin boom

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ANGRY TENANTS TO THE CAPITAL IN PROTEST

Demands for an effective policy to provide enough apartments at reasonable rents were made by 4,000 tenants who took part in a demonstration outside Bern's Parliament building.

In a resolution they asked for present tenant protection measures — due to expire at the end of this year — to be extended until replaced by adequate legislation.

The resolution also called for the national plebiscite on the "right to accommodation" initiative to be held next year. This initiative has received the support of more than 83,000 signatures, but the Government has recommended its rejection.

The demonstrators also said effective support should be given to non-profit making organizations erecting apartments, and that the Government and local authorities should push the provision of housing for low and middle income groups.

Protests were made against "massive rent increases", which were claimed to be the main reason for rises in the cost of living, and the Government was accused of giving way to "landowners and financial circles".

A large proportion of the demonstrators came in special trains and buses from West Switzerland, where the "right to accommodation" movement has received a large degree of support.

But speakers from Basel and Zurich also addressed the demonstrators. All speakers issued an appeal to voters to support the "right to accommodation" initiative.

Two days before the tenant's demonstration in front of the Federal Palace, the Government made a policy statement on the question of living accommodations.

It announced that present measures to stimulate the building of apartments will be extended for a three-year period. An important addition will be made to these measures: a 150 million franc fund will be set up to grant interest-free loans to local authorities for developing housing areas.

During the three-year period major changes in the present legislation will be worked out.

But the Federal Government advised rejection of the "right to accommodation" initiative which attracted 86,526 signatures, mostly from Western Switzerland, and on which a plebiscite will have to be held.

The Government said the establishment of such a right in the Constitution would lead to state-directed provisions of accommodation.

It would only be possible with the aid of considerable inroads into the Swiss social and economic order and the autonomy of cantons and local authorities.

In its statement the Government continued to insist that the best way to satisfy the wishes of the greatest number of people seeking suitable

accommodation is the free operation of the accommodation market — according to the laws of supply and demand.

The State wished to avoid direct intervention in the economy and the market, preferring indirect action and attempts to support personal effort.

The Government also maintained that only 13% of Swiss households spend more than one-fifth of their income on accommodation, and only 4% spend more than a quarter of their income on their apartment.

Cases in which accommodation costs were abnormally high were rare and could not be remedied by general measures.

CIVIL SERVANTS CASH IN ON COIN BOOM

Inquiries are being made into suspicions that a number of employees of the Federal *Caisse* have been cashing in on the current boom in coin collecting and speculation.

The *Caisse* is a key department in the process of getting money into circulation. All coins struck by the Federal Mint go to it, and the *Caisse* then passes them on to agencies of the National Bank, post offices and so on.

Similarly, coins being withdrawn from circulation go to the *Caisse* before being sent on for melting down.

A Federal Justice and Police Ministry statement says the Federal Attorney-General's Office has opened the inquiry in cooperation with the Bern city and cantonal police.

It goes on to state that there are indications to support suspicions that some employees have, during their official duties, acquired at face value large quantities of coins of interest to collectors and commercially valuable, and salted them away or sold them at collectors' prices.

The statement promises that the public will be given the results of the inquiries when they are completed.

It is not suggested that the employees concerned have stolen any coins from the authorities.

If the allegations mentioned in the statement turn out to be correct, the officials would be guilty of abusing their positions for personal gain.

Since the withdrawal of the 50-centime, one-franc and two-franc Swiss coins with silver content, interest in coin collecting and speculation in coins has grown to boom proportions in Switzerland, and has been further sustained by the recent surprise withdrawal of the silver five-franc pieces.

By purchasing older coins — some of them minted in "rare" years — and reselling or forming collections of them, officials could make a great deal of money. Some hard to get five-franc pieces are selling for several hundred francs. The 1928 one — unlikely to figure in the present case as it was withdrawn long ago — is priced at between Sfr. 10,000 and 13,000.

(*Weekly Tribune, Geneva*)

THE McCABE AFFAIR: THE SWISS VERSION

The judiciary authorities of Zurich have categorically rejected Miss McCabe's accusations against the legal proceedings and prisons of Zurich, as reported in the "*Sunday Times*" on September 13th.

The young telephonist had been detained in a jail in Zurich together with three compatriots, from May 29th to June 27th, charged with circulating forged notes. She had been treated in accordance with prison regulation, as all persons held under preventive detention are. The allegations of the London paper were not only false, but malicious.

Valery McCabe had never been transferred to Zug prison and had stayed throughout her detention in the prison of Zurich. She had not been subjected to daily eight-hour interrogations for a whole week but had been heard all in all three times and the longest hearing might have lasted three or four hours. Furthermore, she had been questioned only during mornings and afternoons, she had never been threatened of an indetermined detention if she failed to admit her guilt and had been set free without any avowal on her part.

Miss McCabe's detention had been of the Federal Public Ministry's, and not the Zurich Police's competence. No appeal to the Zurich police was therefore possible. An appeal to the Cantonal Public Ministry, and hence to the Supreme Court could have been envisaged had she been detained more than 14 days under cantonal competence.

Police authorities have energetically refuted Miss McCabe's description of her prison cell. Her two accomplices are still in prison in Zurich and consider they are being well treated. One of them has even written in a letter that his cell resembled a hospital room.

Miss McCabe had spent the night following her arrest in a cell of the central commissariat in Zurich. These cells, designed for brief detentions, have an iron bed and woollen blankets, but no sheets. They have a toilet and running water. The next day, she was brought to the district prison where the cells have beds with sheets, toilets which are partitioned from the cell and properly installed.

Zurich police authorities have therefore risen against the alleged "terrible treatment" of Miss McCabe and insist that Zurich prisons can be shown to anyone. They conform to modern conceptions in detention and can withstand comparisons with any other Swiss or foreign prison.

(A.T.S.)

All this does not efface the fact that an innocent person has been locked up in a jail, luxurious or not. In England Miss McCabe would have been discharged on bail. — Editor