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HOME NEWS

The 1923 accounts of the Swiss Federal Railways are expected to close with a surplus of 2.3 million francs, provision having been made for the whole of the interest service, special reserves and depreciation to an amount of over seven million francs. The period of deficits, which during the last ten years have constituted a heavy burden on our Federal Treasury, seems, therefore, to have come to an end. The S.F.R. are at present the only State-owned railway system in Europe which is entirely self-supporting.

The accounts for 1923 of the Canton of Vaud close with a deficit of 1½ million francs, against over seven million francs originally budgeted.

Colonel Ulrich Wille, the eldest son of General Wille, has been appointed to the command of the central military schools.

In reply to a protest, presented by the Union of State Employees with reference to the dismissal of a Communist postman at Leysin, the Federal Council states that, whilst ignoring the political views of their employees, it cannot tolerate the propagation of Communist literature or open manifestations contrary to the interest of the State.

France has prohibited the export to Switzerland of fresh vegetables. This measure, which chiefly affects the frontier towns Basle and Geneva, is said to owe its origin to the scarcity in France of greenstuffs, and a consequent rise in prices.

About sixty million francs is being spent in Switzerland in poor-law relief which is drawn by about 3½% of the male population; this does not include the very large number enjoying unemployment benefits. Alcoholic excesses are said to be responsible for about 25 per cent. of the total so distributed.

Professor Max Huber, the Swiss representative at the Court of International Justice at The Hague, has been appointed president of an arbitral tribunal to settle Anglo-Spanish differences with reference to Morocco.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

LA MORT DE M. EUGENE BONHOTE.

Jour de deuil le 29 février 1924 pour notre pays, qui s'apprêtait à fêter joyeusement l'anniversaire du 29 février 1848, date de la proclamation de la République!

Aujourd'hui Neuchâtel pleure un de ses meilleurs citoyens. M. Eugène Bonhôte, avocat, conseiller national, est mort subitement vendredi matin, quelques minutes avant midi, dans son bureau, alors qu'il s'entretenait avec un de ses collaborateurs et cette lugubre nouvelle a jeté la consternation dans notre ville.

Rien ne faisait prévoir cette brusque fin pour cet homme robuste qui, quelques heures auparavant, quittait, plein de vie, son domicile. A le voir on se prenait à douter que le mal pût jamais s'attaquer à cette belle organisation. Tout son être respirait une telle santé physique et morale qu'il répandait autour de lui une impression de sécurité complète et de confiance absolue. Avec Eugène Bonhôte disparaît un des hommes qui ont fait le plus d'honneur au pays neuchâtelois et qui ont le mieux mérité son respect et son affection.

Ces lignes hâtives n'ont pas la prétention d'être une biographie; elles veulent seulement interpréter en quelque mesure le sentiment général et marquer les étapes principales d'une existence qui fut noble et belle.

Né en 1857 à Boudry, où son père était pasteur, Eugène Bonhôte vint de bonne heure habiter Neuchâtel avec sa mère, devenue veuve. Il fréquenta toutes les classes du Gymnase classique puis entra à l'Académie, récemment reconstituée et où il fut un membre très zélé de la Société de Zofingue, à laquelle, plus tard, il devait rendre de grands services comme membre du comité central des V.-Z. Ses études de droit, commencées à Neuchâtel, furent poursuivies à Tubingue, à Berlin, enfin à Leipzig, où il prit son doctorat.

Nous le trouvons ensuite à Paris, où, de 1883 à 1884, il fut attaché à la légation suisse encore dirigée par M. Kern, et où il fonctionna aussi comme secrétaire sous M. Lardy. Revenu à Neuchâtel en 1885, il fut admis comme stagiaire dans le cabinet de MM. Du Pasquier et Courvoisier, avocats; quelque temps associé du premier, il fonda bientôt son propre cabinet; grâce à sa forte culture juridique, aux soins consciencieux apportés aux affaires qui lui étaient confiées, à la droiture qu'il déployait en toutes choses, il ne tarda pas à jouir d'une grande réputation et se vit chargé de nombreux et importants intérêts.

L'activité dont il faisait preuve dans l'exercice du barreau n'empêcha point Eugène Bonhôte de jouer de bonne heure un rôle politique en vue. Dès 1892, les électeurs libéraux de Neuchâtel le chargèrent de les représenter au Grand Conseil, où il siégea sans interruption jusqu'en 1922 et qu'il présida de 1911 à 1912. Lors des dernières élections, il déclina un nouveau mandat malgré les instances de ses amis.

Au reste, en dehors de son mandat de député, Eugène Bonhôte ne remplit aucune fonction publique dans le canton, mais, avec une parfaite bonne grâce, il prêta souvent son nom lorsqu'il s'agissait pour son parti de présenter une candidature toujours repoussée par l'intolérance radicale.

A la mort du regretté Calame-Colin, en 1912, Eugène Bonhôte, alors président de l'Association démocratique libérale, fut appelé à le remplacer comme député au Conseil national. Chacun sait le rôle qu'il y joua, rôle dont le *Journal de Genève* a déjà parlé dans un premier article.

La vie politique d'Eugène Bonhôte a présenté la plus magnifique unité et commandé le respect même de ceux-là qui ne partageaient pas ses opi-

nions. Aussi grandes étaient l'autorité qui émanait de sa personne et la confiance qu'inspirait son caractère. Tous les Neuchâtelois sentent douloureusement la perte qu'ils viennent de faire et avec reconnaissance ils sentent profondément la sympathie que leur témoignent leurs confédérés dans ces jours de deuil.

(Journal de Genève.)

Le concours neuchâtelois de chronomètres.— Le 15 février a eu lieu, au Château de Neuchâtel, sous la présidence de M. Renaud, président du Conseil d'Etat, une séance de la commission de l'Observatoire et des chronométriers qui ont participé au concours cantonal en 1923. Il a été donné connaissance de l'arrêté pris le jour même par le Conseil d'Etat, décernant les prix aux fabricants et régleurs.

On apprend que la fabrique de montres Zénith sort première aux prix de série, pour les six premiers chronomètres de bord et de poche première classe.

La maison Nardin est classée en tête pour les chronomètres de marine; elle obtient cent six prix sur cent douze.

La fabrique Zénith a obtenu le second rang dans les chronomètres de première classe.

Le régleur de la fabrique Zénith est M. Charles-Ferdinand Perret, au Locle, et les régleurs des chronomètres Nardin, de marine, MM. Nardin et Auguste Rossat, tous deux au Locle.

Sur six cent six chronomètres déposés, plus du 50% provient des usines du Locle et plus du 50% des prix sont décernés à des chronométriers du Locle.

(La Suisse.)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KIBURG."

Is Appendicitis Catching?

While nearly everybody is having "flu or some other variety of winter complaint, it is 'encouraging' to find that we may be liable to catch appendicitis at any moment, and travelling in crowded trains, buses, tubes and trams will become more exciting still to those blessed with imagination. Just read on (*Hospital and Health Review*, Feb. 1924):—

Dr. A. Fonio, of Switzerland, has added a new terror to appendicitis by suggesting that it is an infectious disease. Were his suggestion merely an arm-chair after-dinner speculation, unsupported by tangible evidence, he could be dismissed forthwith as a scaremonger. But he has marshalled an impressive array of facts in support of his theory. He has conducted inquiries among the 275 patients on whom he has operated for appendicitis, and has found that in the immediate neighbourhood of 151 of these patients there had been one or more other cases of appendicitis, the disease being diagnosed by some competent physician or surgeon. There were altogether 245 such "contact cases" of appendicitis. Now, had Dr. Fonio checked these investigations by selecting at random 275 healthy persons and found out how many cases of appendicitis had occurred in their immediate neighbourhood, he would have strengthened his case greatly if he could have shown that there were hardly any cases of appendicitis in contact with the healthy controls. But he has not taken this precaution. Therefore those who cling to the view that appendicitis is not infectious may point out that this disease being very common, all Dr. Fonio's "contact cases" were nothing more than coincidences. We do not, for example, argue that fractures are infectious because two or three members of the same family break a bone. Dr. Fonio has, however, followed another line of research, and his examinations of appendices, removed in the early stage of appendicitis, have brought him the conviction or at least the strong suspicion that there are one or two special germs which have a peculiar and sinister affinity for the appendix. If bacteriologists confirm his findings, we may look forward to a time when prophylactic vaccination against appendicitis will be as fashionable as vaccination against smallpox and typhoid fever. If this prophecy comes true, we may live to see a slump in abdominal surgery.

Analysing the Snow.

What a glorious Sunday morning we enjoyed up here on the Surrey Downs! 'Kiburg,' prevented by the stern decree of his medical adviser, was fretting at his inability to take out the car and enjoy a good run down into Ashdown Forest and fill his lungs with the wonderfully crisp air. I envied friends, whose sciatic nerve was a mystery to them and not a source of painful inactivity. But, what a change in the afternoon, when the snow started to come down in enormous quantities, covering our garden with some two inches of white blanket in as many hours! Then I was glad of my enforced inactivity, because it was really quite nice to watch the dance of the snowflakes from the inner side of a nicely-warmed room, and the feeling of warm comfort was, if anything, increased and rendered more pronounced by thinking of poor misguided motorists who had been tempted by the brilliant sunshine in the morning and who now, after luncheon, had to find their way back through the snow. Anyone who has never motored in a snow-storm and without an automatic windshield cleaner will know the feelings I try to describe. That there are other possibilities in mere snow would seem to be evident

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from the following, taken from the *Daily Dispatch* (18th Feb.):—

I hear that scientists are making interesting experiments with the snow in Switzerland. It has been brought to their notice that quite valuable chemicals can be obtained from it in certain districts. As the distribution of the chemicals appears to be confined to well-marked areas, those in charge of the operations think that possibly the snow in some way or other draws them out of the earth. The soil is being tested to see if this theory is correct. Perhaps this is why winter sports are so good for one's health.

The 48-hour Week.

The following will probably interest some of my readers who study economics and their relation to politics (*New Statesman*, 23rd Feb.):—

The result of the Swiss referendum on the 48-hour week is an encouragement for those who hope to see the Washington Convention on the Hours of Labour promptly enforced throughout Europe. A proposal for extending hours beyond forty-eight in many types of factory was submitted to the people by the Swiss Federal Council. It has been rejected by a large majority, on a fairly heavy vote. A severe set-back has thus been given to the movement for extending the hours of labour which had been gaining ground in Europe. There is now hope that the countries which have hitherto failed to ratify the Washington Convention will amend their ways. The British Government is deeply pledged to ratification, and may be relied on to take action. The Italian Government has also now agreed to submit the Convention to Parliament for ratification, and there are similar movements at work in other countries. As we have pointed out before, Great Britain has everything to gain by securing the universal enforcement of this measure of fair treatment to the workers. Most trades here already have the eight-hour day, and its general adoption would be a valuable safeguard against unfair international competition. But, apart from that, a shorter working day is among the greatest of social reforms, because, by adding to the opportunities of leisure, it helps to raise the whole standard of civilised living throughout the community. Intelligent citizenship demands and involves leisure without excessive weariness.

New Building for the International Labour Office at Geneva.

Daily Herald (26th Feb.):—

In the House of Commons (Feb. 25) Miss Margaret Bondfield, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour, replying to Sir William Davison (C. S. Kensington), said that, owing to the expiration in June, 1925, of the lease of the premises of the International Labour Office, Geneva, and the unsuitability of the present accommodation, the 1922 Assembly of the League had authorised the erection of a new building, estimated to cost 3,000,000 Swiss francs, on a more convenient site presented to the League by the Swiss Confederation.

Arrangements have been made to spread the incidence of expenditure over a period of not less than five years, as from 1925, so that the total contribution to be attributable to States members for the new building would not exceed 600,000 francs per annum. Of this sum, the portion borne by Great Britain was approximately one-tenth, or £2,400 per annum.

The Swiss Unemployed Problem.

Money Market Review and Investors' Chronicle, 23rd Feb.:—

According to advices from Berne, the number of completely unemployed in Switzerland at end 1923 was roughly 26,800, being 27 per cent. of the figure for February, 1922, when unemployment had reached its highest point.

Many Swiss industries are confronted with difficulties of all kinds. The textile industry, for instance, as well as the metal and machine industries, still show a large proportionate number of unemployed, and these are the export industries which should have their place in the world markets. They will not, however, it is feared, again find an outlet unless they can reduce the cost of production.

The possibilities of work in the building trade have declined almost everywhere, but as a set-off the unemployment in the hotel industry shows a notable decrease thanks, in great measure, to the large influx of visitors in the Alpine resorts. The watch industry also shows a marked decrease in unemployment.

MOTHER-WIT FROM THE MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS.

The following humorous passages are extracted, solely for their original and characteristic witicism, from the present parliamentary debates, as reported day by day by 'The Times,' and do not necessarily cast any reflection on the parties or individuals concerned:—

I quote Mr. Zinovieff, the most powerful and the most responsible personality in the Government of Russia to-day. He has said recently, "We shall support Mr. MacDonald as the rope supports the hanged man." When first I heard those words, I thought that the remark had been made by Mr. Asquith in the division lobby to Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Zinovieff said, by way of prologue to this conference, "MacDonald will certainly grovel on all fours before the opulent English bourgeoisie." I never like these cacophonous foreign words to be introduced into our tongue, and I do not know what a bourgeoisie is. I suppose it is a term of abuse, because any word beginning with "b" can be brought out with such emphasis and enjoyment as may put into the phrase the greatest amount of contumely. Indeed, I gather that it is looked upon as a very serious term of offence, because I remember my hon. friend the member for Plaistow (Mr. W. Thorne) coming back from Russia three or four years ago, and he told me, as he smote his chest in the smoking-room, that they had called him in Russia a bourgeoisie.

Mr. Baldwin in criticising the Russian policy of the Government (Feb. 13th).

It was curious how differently the same situa-

tion and the same facts presented themselves to different minds. The Prime Minister felt that a new light had dawned on the world, that the waters were receding, and that shortly the dove would alight on the olive branch. Idealism, with a very big "I" (an hon. member on the Ministerial side:—"Two eyes"). He begged pardon—Idealism with only one "I" had already, to the Prime Minister's sanguine view, transformed the situation from one of chaos and disorder to one in which peace and prosperity were beginning to reign. . . . I am not a whip, but I have always been told that a tandem is the most difficult team to drive, and for my part I do not envy the task which is set to the hon. member for West Edinburgh (Mr. Vivian Philipps, Chief Liberal Whip). I cannot help thinking that before he gets the Liberal gig far down the road he will find the leader is pretty often turning round to see what the wheeler is doing.

Mr. A. Chamberlain during the discussion on the Safeguarding of Industries Act (Feb. 14th).

The University of Wales provided extension lectures, charging four guineas for a full course, and the same sum for a single lecture. The secretary received an application from a club for a single lecture, and a professor of history went down to deliver it. On arriving at the club the professor was courteously invited to have a drink. The scene in the lecture hall was such as he had never witnessed before. The hall was full of smoke. During the lecture he could hear the whispered demand: "Another whisky-and-soda for the chairman." (A Labour member; "Perhaps it was better than the lecture.") This went on periodically during the lecture. The lecturer also noticed that a number of the audience left during the lecture. But what was remarkable, they came back. Some time afterwards the secretary of the extension lecture courses told the professor the explanation of the most unusual experience. "The club," said the secretary, "came under the notice of the police, and in order to show that they were doing something intellectual they arranged for that single lecture."

Mr. Morris (Cardigan, L.L.) in supporting a Bill dealing with temperance in Wales (Feb. 15th).

I remember how, in the earliest stages, my friends used to chaff me as to whether in my more nervous moments I had not a vision of my head being delivered to the executioner on the block. The storm has abated somewhat, and I am glad to find that even the anger of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Asquith), who revived it, has somewhat subsided. I think I am justified in assuming that the motion before the House is not the child of his wrath. At any rate, I am to escape from this agitation with my head, whatever may happen to my salary. I have been charged, inside and outside the House, with having surrendered to Poplar, and with having permitted possible surcharges of no less than £100,000 which a gang of guilty guardians had taken from the pockets of helpless ratepayers, and with having thereby encouraged extravagance and illegality among the similar gangs of guardians with which this unfortunate country is infested.

Mr. Wheatley, Minister of Health, on 26th Feb. in defending his Poplar policy.

It had been said that the Bill, if carried, would mean that there would be more women voters than men. Personally, he was not disturbed about that, but he could not think that it would be an advantage. We had got away from patriarchal government; we did not want to get matriarchal government.

Sir S. Russell-Wells (U.) on Feb. 29th in opposing Women's Franchise.

Since 1918 there had been more humane legislation, more consideration for children, women and old people. Thus the rule of petticoat government did not have the terrors that had been anticipated.

Mrs. Wintringham (L.) on Feb. 29th in supporting Women's Franchise.

I do not want the tinker to settle down. I remember that my old friend Mr. Ruskin one day was having some painting work done in one of his rooms, and he proceeded to make some remarks to the painter. The painter looked down on him and said: "Excuse me, sir, but I am no scholar." Said Mr. Ruskin: "What! you cannot read nor write?" With great shame the painter said "No." Whereupon Mr. Ruskin rushed up the ladder and violently shook hands with him, as being a man of great value and great excellence to the community, in that he had not been spoiled by being made to read and write.

Sir M. Conway (U.) on Feb. 29th in referring a reference to the tinker as being unfit to exercise the franchise.

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The report of the Swiss Bank Corporation, which has just become available, emphasises at the outset the difficulties caused to trade and industry in Europe by the continued state of unrest and uneasiness arising out of the war. It is recorded, however, that in spite of the grave crisis which is still being felt in certain industries in Switzerland, there is a gradual improvement of business conditions, illustrated in the better foreign trade figures, customs receipts and bankers' clearings, the increasing railway revenue and the decrease of unemployment.

Dealing with the course of the money market in 1923, the report goes on to say that the large demands made on the capital market by the Confederation, the Cantons and the Municipalities have at times exhausted the supply of available funds, and have gradually brought about a hardening of the rates for long-term investments. During the first half of the year this had no immediate effect on the money market, which remained very liquid, and a very large amount of funds for which there was no adequate means of employment had to remain idle for some time, the banks suffering therefrom a considerable loss of earnings. A change was only noticeable as from the middle of the year, when business became more active and caused a greater demand for funds.

London readers will be interested in the remarks contained in the report with regard to the Corporation's new building for the London Office, at the corner of Gresham Street and Coleman Street, which, it is hoped, will be completed before the end of the current year.

The available net profit, after making provision of £53,905 for bad and doubtful debts, etc., amounts to £430,681, and the Directors propose to pay a dividend of eight per cent. and to allocate £20,000 to the Pension Fund. The carry-forward will be £49,874.

The net profits of the Comptoir d'Escompte de Genève for 1923 amounted to Frs. 4,140,742, as compared with Frs. 3,413,382 last year. A dividend of six per cent. is to be paid, which compares with only five per cent. distributed last year.

STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES.

BONDS.	Feb. 26		Mar. 5
	Fr.	Fr.	
Swiss Confederation 3% 1903	73.75%	73.50%	
Swiss Confed. 9th Mob. Loan 5%	100.40%	100.30%	
Federal Railways A—K 3½%	76.85%	77.80%	
Canton Basle-Stadt 5½% 1921	102.00%	101.60%	
Canton Fribourg 3% 1892	67.00%	67.50%	

SHARES.	Feb. 26		Mar. 5
	Fr.	Fr.	
Swiss Bank Corporation	500	679	679
Crédit Suisse	500	687	676
Union de Banques Suisses	500	566	564
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	3470	3465
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2542	2542
C. P. Bally S.A.	1000	1115	1153
Fabrique de Machines Oerlikon	500	637	637
Entreprises Suizer	500	655	667
S.A. Brown Boveri (new)	500	308	327
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	196	198
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Comp. de Navig'n sur le Lac Léman	500	465	460

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