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HOME NEWS

In the elections for members of the Grosse Rat of the canton Grisons the Liberals retained their majority though losing three seats to the Democrats; out of 92 seats their party controls 49 mandates.

In the elections for the Grosse Rat of the canton Lucerne the Liberals slightly increased their strength, gaining two seats from the Conservatives and three from the Socialists. The majority of the Council are still on the side of the Conservatives, the different parties being represented as follows: Catholic Conservatives 91 (93), Liberals 63 (58) and Socialists 14 (17). Of the seven members of the Regierungsrat only the five Conservative candidates obtained the necessary majority. A fierce political controversy preceded the polls, which attracted over 90 per cent. of the registered voters.

In order to ensure adequate protection for the members of the Russian delegation at the International Economic Conference now sitting at Geneva, the local police are being reinforced by gendarmes from other cantons.

The States Council of the canton Fribourg has addressed a letter to the Federal Council vigorously protesting against the expression of official regrets contained in the memorandum leading to the Russian understanding. Feeling in the canton on this matter runs very high, and with reference to the rumoured appointment of M. Litvinoff as head of the Russian delegation at Geneva *La Liberté* points out that he was the commissaire who originally ordered the sack of the Swiss Legation at Petrograd with the result that one of the officials was killed and 120 Swiss thrown into prison. In its reply the Federal Council states that the Russian delegates are bound to limit their activities to the accomplishment of the diplomatic mission entrusted to them and that any direct or indirect participation in Swiss internal affairs would not be tolerated.

In the Zurich Stadtrat a Communist member proposed the dispatch of a petition to the Federal Council congratulating the latter on the understanding with Russia and recommending the *de jure* recognition of the Soviet Republic.

The Federal Tribunal has absolved an insurance company of any liability in the case of a car which, whilst admittedly worth but 6,000 Frs., was covered for Frs. 14,000; the car, soon after completion of policy, met with an accident and was burnt out.

A monument to the memory of the poet Carl Spitteler is to be erected at Liestal (Basel-Land); the cost is expected to be in the neighbourhood of Frs. 100,000.

The international jury examining the 377 plans which have been submitted in connection with the proposed new League of Nations building has not been able to make a definite selection; the matter will now be referred to a small League committee which, it is hoped, will be able to recommend one of the plans for adoption. In the meantime the prize-money of Frs. 165,000 is being distributed among the 27 best projects.

The demand for better pay and decreased working hours is the cause of a conflict which has broken out in the building trade at Solothurn: at present 59 hours are being worked and the workers are insisting on a standard week of 52 hours.

A trial run of a car with the prospective buyer ended in the death of the latter, the driver and agent of the particular make, Mr. Charles Maurer, from Basle, suffering serious injuries. The accident happened on the road between Berne and Thun in the middle of the night near Allmendingen, whilst the car was negotiating a corner at an excessive speed. The victim is the Bernese lawyer L. Wylter.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Bringing Swords to Parliament.

Under this title the *Leicester Daily Mercury* (May 2nd) publishes an excellent description of the Appenzeller Landsgemeinde:—

On the last day of April there takes place in the little Swiss town of Appenzell, the capital of the canton of the same name, the first of the annual Landsgemeinden, or People's Parliaments.

These peasant gatherings, direct survivals from five hundred years ago, when the people of a free race met in the open amid their native mountains to ratify their constitution, amend their laws and elect their officers for the ensuing year, have strangely escaped the attention of visitors to Switzerland. Historically, they are the most interesting examples of a true democracy to be met with in the world to-day, and as events in themselves they are full of colour, pageantry, and a peculiarly naive charm.

Landsgemeinden survive in five of the Eastern cantons of Switzerland. All of them are held between the last days of April and the middle of May.

The franchise age for a vote at the Landsgemeinde is 20, but "flappers" are not included in it. From dawn onwards on the day of the gathering little bands of electors come tramping down mountainsides from remote chalets to assemble in their local capital. Some are bent old men who have seen seventy snows melt and return to the Alpine peaks; and some, slender, callow youths, who not long ago, bare-footed, were herding goats on the summer pastures. But in the eyes of the youngest elector there is a depth and seriousness on this day. For the Landsgemeinde is no mere picturesque, empty ceremony, but something alive and actual. Local laws and finances are thoroughly discussed, and all issues voted upon by a show of hands.

The dress of an elector is his best Sunday black broadcloth and a sword. The sword is an insignia of the Landsgemeinde dating back to the year 1400, when the wicked Abbot Cuno, of St. Gall, tyrannied over the peasantry of Appenzell. Five years later the peasants revolted, and overthrew the Abbot and his army of Austrian mercenaries. Since when, as a reminder to any intending tyrants, the free-men of the canton have brought their swords to the Parliament.

And such swords they are! Many of the older men carry rapiers that are heirlooms from the 16th century, others carry broad-bladed cutlasses or the short, straight swords of the Napoleonic period. The young men, as a rule have to be content with a modern army bayonet.

Before the Assembly Mass is sung in the church. Then, headed by a band, the free-men march to the meeting place in the square. At one end a rostrum has been erected, and within a roped enclosure the electors stand. Outside of it the unfranchised enviously look on.

All the business of the meeting is conducted under the leadership of a President, and it is, as a rule, late in the afternoon before the last item on the agenda has been decided. Only then is there any relaxation of the curious atmosphere of stolid tension, and the electors separate to assuage their thirst.

No law-giving body quite like the Swiss Landsgemeinde exists in the world to-day. It is unique in its undimmed echo from the past.

Milk Production in Switzerland.

The anomaly of our large butter imports in spite of the comparatively huge milk production is dwelt upon in the following article from the *Times* (May 2nd):—

It is curious to note that Switzerland—an important milk-producing country—does not produce enough butter to meet the needs of the population, and is compelled to import large quantities of Danish, Italian, Argentine and Dutch butter. In 1911 Switzerland produced 14,000 tons of butter and imported 5,200 tons; in 1921 home production reached 12,200 tons and importation 7,240 tons; in 1923 the figures were respectively 13,000 and 6,659; and in 1925 12,500 and 8,050. Home production slightly increased in 1926, while imports consequently decreased.

This abnormal situation is due, in the first place, to the fact that cheese-making is much more profitable to Swiss agriculturists than butter-making. The cheese-making industry has very considerably developed during recent years

ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

May 16th, 1318.—The citizens of Solothurn save their enemies from being drowned. Frederick (called 'the Beautiful') whom Solothurn would not recognise as German King, sent his brother Leopold to inflict punishment on the citizens. Leopold surrounded the town and tried to starve it to submission. The bridge across the river Aare (which had risen on account of floods) was weighted, and the number of men who acted in its defence caused the bridge to collapse, many of the soldiers falling into the river. The citizens of Solothurn, forgetting their own trouble and seeing their enemies in danger of drowning, went out in boats, and some jumped into the raging waters to save the lives of the soldiers. After nursing and attending to them they were sent back to the Austrian camp. This act of generosity caused Leopold to at once raise the siege, and to the citizens of Solothurn he sent a banner in commemoration of this deed.

May 17th, 1800.—Napoleon Bonaparte crosses the St. Bernhard.

May 18th, 1884.—Unveiling of the memorial on the Rütli.

May 19th, 1815.—Neuenburg and Geneva join the Confederation.

May 21st, 1526.—Religious controversy at Baden. Luzern and Freiburg resisted the Reformed Religion which Zurich had adopted. The failure of Zwingli to go to Baden has been unfavourably compared with Luther's braving of death in his visit to Worms, but unjustly, for the conditions of Baden for Zwingli were very different from those at Worms for Luther. Moreover, Zwingli's request for the meeting to take place at some neutral place was not considered. Thus in the eyes of the Catholics at Baden, Zwingli was triply conquered and condemned.

May 22nd, 1882.—Opening of the St. Gotthard Railway.

and its products—mainly Gruyère and Emmenthal cheese—are exported to all countries, where they fetch high prices owing to their special flavour and good quality. The greater part of Swiss milk is used in cheese-making. In 1926 the gross income of Swiss agriculture was nearly £57,456,000, 38.5% of which, or £22,132,000, was derived from milk and its by-products. Switzerland has nearly 875,000 milk cows, producing some 2,500,000 tons of milk a year, about 45 per cent. of which are transformed into cheese, condensed milk and chocolate, and nearly 10 per cent. into butter. Cheese exports were lower during the last two years, while cheese production increased, and great quantities remained unsold. It was decided, therefore, to reduce the cheese production and to make more butter, which explains the higher butter production in 1926.

Important quantities of milk are used for making condensed milk and chocolate, the export of which is more profitable than butter-making. Finally, the making of butter has not been improved very much in Switzerland. Swiss butter is not as good and does not keep as long as the Danish article, with which it cannot compete. For this reason Swiss agriculturists are now taking a great interest in the Danish methods of preparing butter, which methods are being progressively introduced into all the more important butter-making factories. It is, therefore, probable that in the near future Switzerland will produce more butter and will depend on a smaller quantity of the imported article.

Communism in Switzerland.

As the large Russian delegation (19 members) now attending the International Economic Conference at Geneva is likely to make contact with the Communist Party in Switzerland and live up their activities, the following long survey from the *Times* (May 4th) may be of interest:—

The Swiss Communist Party, though small in numbers, is very active. It recently held its fourth congress at Basle, where 88 delegates met to examine the present position of the Party. They found that Communism had lost many members at Zurich, one of the great industrial

centres, and gained a few in the Vaud and Ticino cantons. The congress thereupon discussed the greater centralization of Communist forces and the more efficient organisation of the system of "cells."

The President, M. Welty, a member of the Swiss Parliament, reviewed the economic situation in Switzerland, and pointed out that the dividends of the big industrial undertakings had increased; that the borrowings both of industry and of the Federal and Cantonal Governments had been very much reduced; that Switzerland was now exporting large sums of capital, and that this flow of money was tending to associate the Swiss bourgeoisie more closely with the Great Powers. But the agricultural industry was going through a bad time, and the Communist Party should seize the opportunity to gain adherents among the peasants. Communist propaganda is therefore likely to be intensified in the country districts during the coming months.

Since the expulsion of the Soviet Economic Mission because of its connection with the Swiss general strike in 1918, the Swiss Communists have kept comparatively quiet. They have maintained their covert activities, however; they are well organised, and it may be said that the Communist menace still exists. The Soviet Government has not been recognised by Switzerland, and has no diplomatic representative in the country, but there is at Berne a Soviet Red Cross Mission under M. Bagotzky, which forms a link between Moscow and the Swiss Communist leaders. Secret Communist agencies exist at Zurich and Geneva. The latter is organised with a view to eventual Soviet representation on the League Secretariat.

The Swiss Communist Party publishes two newspapers, one in German, at Basle, and the other, in French, at Geneva. One of the principal Communist leaders is M. Welty, a Basle advocate, who represented the daughter of M. Vorovsky, the Soviet representative at the Lausanne Conference, at the trial of his murderer, Conradi. The other leader is a M. Budemann, and there is a permanent representative of the Swiss Communist Party at Moscow, M. Humbert-Droz, who is a member of the praesidium of the Comintern (Communist International). The Party has its centre at Basle, where the majority of its members live. It is not in itself a serious danger, but many of its secret agents are at work among the non-Communist organisations and especially in the Swiss Socialist Party. Swiss Socialists are, as a whole, opposed to Communism, and the Swiss Trade Unions refused to send a representative to the Basle congress, but they are sometimes influenced by their unavowed Communist members. This is the case at Geneva, where the extremists have almost complete control of the local Socialist Party.

The Swiss Government and police are watching Communist activities very closely. The best weapon against Communism, however, is the Swiss Civic Union, which, since its formation in November, 1918, has improved its organisation so that it is now in a position to collaborate in resisting any revolutionary attempt. The Swiss Civic Union—which was set up by the Swiss Alpine Club—has thousands of members, all Swiss citizens, who do not belong to the army. Its branches spread all over the country; its members are not in any way Fascists and bind themselves not to intervene in any purely economic strike. The object of the Swiss Civic Union is to keep the public services running in case of a general strike, and its members may be called upon, according to their qualifications, to drive railway engines, trams or motor lorries, to carry on the postal, telegraph and telephone services, and to undertake the delivery of foodstuffs and coal. In case of emergency, they are also available to assist the army and police.

The value of this organisation was proved at Basle about eight years ago, when the Communists twice attempted to bring about a general strike. Both attempts collapsed, one within two days and the other within 24 hours after the members of the Swiss Civic Union had begun their service. The members of the Swiss Civic Union are always ready for any emergency. They are trained and picked men, and it appears that the Communists fear their intervention even more than that of the military and police.

A Defender of Jazz.

It is refreshing, in view of the amount of criticism levelled at modern dance tunes, to read the opinion of a recognised musical authority on the merits of 'jazz.' The saxophone, until recently regarded by most people with pretensions to a musical education as a freak instrument, is predicted by Mr. Ernest Ansermet, the well-known Swiss conductor, to be given a place in the classical orchestra of the future. The cutting is from the *Musical Mirror* (May):—

Mr. Ernest Ansermet, the distinguished Swiss conductor, who directed one of the B.B.C. concerts at the Albert Hall, confided to an interviewer that he has a liking for jazz.

"It's all nonsense," he said, "to think that people who love music disdain jazz completely.

The best lovers of classical music like jazz, and it is only a snob who would say otherwise, for no one can fail to appreciate that in jazz there can be many merits. Personally I find it rather exhilarating at the end of a big orchestral concert to amuse myself with a little jazz.

"I find tunes like 'Tea for Two' or 'Who?' are delightful. The saxophone, I think, will prove to be a new element in the classical orchestra. But there are many indications that the great craze for jazz music is nearing its end, and the fact that so many jazz composers appear to get their tunes by purloining from the classics is proof that they cannot create."

I wonder how many more "serious" musicians of eminence have a sneaking fondness for jazz, but are afraid to say so!

The definition of 'jazz' itself appears recently to have undergone a change. Whereas it was originally used solely as a label for the weird and frenzied cacophonies produced by certain coloured dance bands with freak instruments, it now seems to be a comprehensive term for all light modern music which has a predominance of saxophone and a touch of syncopation.

DAS FAHRVERKEHRSGESETZ.

"Automobilgesetz" heisst im Volksmunde wohl das "Bundesgesetz über den Automobil- und Fahrradverkehr," das am 14./15. Mai vor das Volk kommt auf Grund eines Referendums, das von 92,000 Stimmberechtigten—eine ausnehmend hohe Zahl—unterschrieben wurde; es will, wie der offizielle Name sagt, den ganzen Verkehr mit Automobilen, Motorrädern und Fahrrädern regeln.

Um das Gesetz tobt ein lebhafter Kampf; wir fürchten, es werde dabei zu Falle kommen. Die Automobilisten—die Radfahrer—die Fussgänger—heissen die Parolen; was auf unseren Strassen krabbelt, strampelt, Staub aufwirbelt, Motoren knattern lässt, hat sich gegeneinander verschworen und bewirft sich mit Argumenten. Die Politik schweigt fein still; heute geht es nicht um soziale oder wirtschaftliche Probleme, wohl aber um Staub oder Nicht-Staub, Haftpflicht und Benzinoll, Prämienhöhung und Fahrgeschwindigkeit.

Das Gesetz will in den Wirrwarr der bisherigen mannigfaltigen kantonalen Vorschriften Ordnung bringen; der Versuch ist an sich jedenfalls durchaus löblich und der Unterstützung wert. Ob es freilich dem Gesetzgeber gelungen ist, alle Interessen zu vereinigen, scheint fraglich; fällt das Gesetz und müssen sich unsere Behörden der Mühe unterziehen, die Kodifizierung des Landstrassenverkehrs erneut in Angriff zu nehmen, so war jedenfalls bereits tüchtige Vorarbeit geleistet worden.

Das Fahrverkehrsgesetz erstrebt die Vereinheitlichung der bisherigen sog. Konkordatsbestimmungen, die jedem Kanton eigene Fahrverordnungen, Geschwindigkeitsvorschriften, Erheben von Gebühren usw. gestattet. Unsere grossen Durchgangsstrassen werden für den Verkehr frei; man wird ungehindert und gebührenfrei über den Klausen, den Gotthard, nach dem Graubünden, über den Brünig fahren dürfen. Auch die Geschwindigkeitsvorschriften sind einheitlich geregelt; die Maximalgeschwindigkeit ist für Automobile und Motorräder 50 Kilometer, für Lastautomobile 20 bis 25 auf der offenen Strecke, 30 resp. 15 Kilometer in Ortschaften. (Hier setzt besonders die Kritik der Fussgänger an, welche diese Konzeption an die Fahrzeuge zu weitgehend finden.) Die Errungenschaften der freien Durchgangsstrassen und der einheitlichen Geschwindigkeitsvorschriften dürfen nicht zu niedrig eingeschätzt werden; dieser oder jener Automobilist wird es vielleicht bedauern, dass sich im Gesetz kein Passus befindet, welcher die unwürdige Einrichtung kantonaler Autofallen verbietet.

Das Gesetz wird durch eine ganze Reihe von Bestimmungen eingeleitet, welche sich auf die Befähigung des Fahrers, auf Fahrweise usw. beziehen. Dass hier strenge Normen aufgestellt werden, ist unseres Erachtens nichts wie recht und billig. Die Verkehrsvorschriften ordnen die Geschwindigkeit und Art des Fahrens und bestimmen das Verhalten bei Kreuzungen, bei Unglücksfällen (der unverletzte Autofahrer hat z. B. sofort seinen Beistand anzubieten und für Hilfe zu sorgen), Dinge, die eigentlich selbstverständlich sein sollten und deren gesetzliche Normierung sicher nichts schadet.

Die Haftpflicht des Automobilisten bei Unfällen, die im dritten Abschnitt geregelt ist, ist verschärft. Der Automobilist haftet immer und in jedem Falle für den angerichteten Schaden, ausser er beweise, dass der Unfall durch höhere Gewalt, durch grobes Verschulden des Geschädigten oder durch Verschulden eines Dritten herbeigeführt worden ist. Diese strengen Grundsätze haben die Automobilisten auf den Plan gerufen und zum Referendum geführt, in Verbindung mit den Bestimmungen über die Versicherung, gemäss welchen die Versicherungssumme für jedes Automobil mindestens 30,000 Franken für eine verunfallte Person betragen muss, für das Unfallereignis mindestens 100,000 Franken. Diese Ansätze haben höhere Versicherungsprämien im Gefolge, welche

die Automobilisten belasten. Für die ausländischen Automobilisten ist der Bundesrat befugt, die Bedingungen der Einreise bezüglich der Haftpflicht festzulegen.

Ein besonderer Abschnitt ist dem Fahrradverkehr gewidmet. In der Schweiz zirkulieren insgesamt etwas 700,000 Fahrräder; diese gewaltige Zahl ist mithin am Gesetze interessiert und wohl imstande, es zu Fall zu bringen. Die Velozipeden sind sehr arg verschruft wegen der Bestimmung, die für jedes Fahrrad ein Kontrollschild (wie wir es in Basel seit jeher haben) obligatorisch macht; die Radfahrerreise erklären, diese drakonische Vorschrift sei einzig und bestehe sonst nirgends. Tatsächlich verlangt das Gesetz—eine merkwürdige Ungleichheit—vom ausländischen Velofahrer den Kontrollschild erst dann, wenn er sich mit seinem Fahrrad mehr als drei Monate in der Schweiz aufhält; nur der "Eidgenosse" wird numeriert," erklären die Gegner.

Dies ist in grossen Zügen der Inhalt des Gesetzes; wir haben dabei besonders die Punkte hervorgehoben, die unstritten sind. Nicht unwichtig für Annahme oder Verwerfung ist die allgemein schlechte Stimmung der automobilistischen Kreise gegenüber dem Bunde. Man hält dem Bund hauptsächlich die Erhöhung des Benzinolls von 30 Rappen (vor dem Krieg) auf 23 Franken (heute) vor; die dadurch bedingte Erhöhung des Benzinpreises trage den Charakter einer indirekten Steuer, die wiederum die gesamte Volkswirtschaft treffe. Ein Viertel dieses Benzinolls gibt der Bund den Kantonen ab, ihnen den Unterhalt der Strassen damit selbst überlassend. Die Verkehrsinitiative der Schweizerischen Verkehrsliga verlangt die Abgabe des ganzen Benzinoll (16 bis 20 Millionen jährlich) an die Kantone zu Strassenbauzwecken.

Man sieht, dass die Gegner des Gesetzes seine Schwächen geschickt ausnutzen; berücksichtigt man ausserdem, dass für ein "Neinsagen" gegen alles, was aus Bern kommt, sehr Viele zu haben sind, so scheinen die Aussichten für eine Annahme nicht gerade günstig. *Nat. Ztg.*

QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES.

BONDS.	May 3		
	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.
Confederation 3% 1903 ...	82.50		82.67
5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln	101.67		101.50
Federal Railways 3½% A—K ...	84.10		84.00
" " 1924 IV Elect. Ln.	102.25		102.50

SHARES.	Nom		
	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.
Swiss Bank Corporation ...	500	782	778
Crédit Suisse ...	500	832	839
Union de Banques Suisses ...	500	702	710
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2432	2465
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	3965	3970
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe ...	1000	3245	2968
S.A. Brown Boveri ...	350	625	599
C. F. Bally ...	1000	1325	1327
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	777	770
Entreprises Sulzer S.A. ...	1000	1130	1152
Comp. de Navig'n sur le Lac Léman	500	575	582
Linoleum A.G. Giubiasco ...	100	106	125
Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon ...	500	731	737

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