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HOME NEWS

The Federal Tribunal in Lausanne has upheld the contention of the Bernese treasury to assess the building of the International Postal Union for municipal rates.

According to statistics compiled by the Swiss National Bank, the amounts standing to the credit of depositors in Savings Banks have increased during 1927 by about 220 million francs, and are computed to total at the end of last year 3,870 million francs.

A new (Kornhaus) bridge is to be built in Zurich over the Limmat at a cost of about three million francs.

Dr. Raimondo Rossi, a former Ticinese states councillor, has been offered the post of Financial Administrator to Persia; he has declined the offer for reasons of health, but has recommended as a substitute a personal friend of his.

The number of factories in operation in Switzerland at the end of 1927 was the highest since 1912 and reached 8,163. With the exception of the abnormal year 1918, the number of workmen employed constituted a record and amounted to 366,350; of this total 65,000 were employed in the machinery and 42,500 in the watch and jewellery industry.

The estate known as "Säntisblick" on the Zurichberg, is to be acquired at a cost of Frs. 195,000 for the purpose of a zoological garden; it is stated that the financial support for this scheme offered by the Zurich citizens has been most encouraging.

A ski party descending into the Bagnes valley (Valais) was surprised by an avalanche, causing the death of one of its members, the well-known Genevese lawyer, Marcel Brunet, the president of the Municipal Council.

The trial of Oskar Kessler, a former cashier of the Swiss National Bank in Zurich who absconded and was subsequently arrested in London, came to an end last Monday. Kessler was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and his chief accomplice, Karl Bühler, received a similar term. Of the original amount of Frs. 540,000 abstracted the major part has been recovered and judgment has been entered against the two prisoners for the actual loss of Frs. 165,000.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

The Stockport Tender.

All the English papers without exception have joined in the chorus chanted by Mr. D. N. Dunlop, the director of the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association, who cannot conceal his chagrin that the Swiss firm, Messrs. Escher, Wyss & Co., have beaten their English rivals in tendering for the power-generating plant at Stockport; their price of about £51,000 was 33 per cent. below the lowest English tender. We suppose that Mr. Dunlop cannot dispute the fact that our electrical engineers in Switzerland command an experience second to none, and that there is nothing very remarkable in their being able to hold their own against competitors who are, so to say, newcomers in the field of modern power-generating plant. There is no justification for the attempt to throw dust into the eyes of the non- or badly-informed by such fantastic allegations as that "on an efficiency basis British plant justifies itself at a price 80 per cent. above that of foreign plant." Mr. Dunlop also hints at lower wages being partly responsible for the discrepancy, but he wisely omits to give chapter and verse; he makes, however, a very grave charge when, in referring to the three stations at Edinburgh, York and Newport equipped with Swiss generating plant, he asserts that "in those three stations inefficiency in operation has necessitated, in four years, excess expenditure of over £140,000

and brought the ratepayers a corresponding loss in revenue." A pertinent reply from the Borough Electrical Engineer at Newport (Mon.) has been published in the *Financial Times* (Feb. 10th) from which we give the following extract:—

"Twelve British firms and four Continental firms submitted tenders, and the most favourable all-Swiss tender was £14,000 below the most favourable all-British tender.

Notwithstanding this, the steam consumption guarantee of the Swiss plant was materially better than the best British guarantee, and, moreover, the Swiss firm was prepared to accept as high a financial penalty for failure to comply with their guarantees as any British firm was prepared to accept.

After the tenders had been received and the amazing difference in price disclosed, and before placing an order, they had considerable negotiations with the British tenderers through the official channel—namely, the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association—but without result.

Ultimately it was reluctantly decided to place the contract with a Swiss firm, but only on the condition that the alternator and the condensing plant were both manufactured in this country, with the result that 71 per cent. of the work and financial payments remained in this country, although this decision meant an increased expenditure of approximately £8,000.

With a complete knowledge of these facts, Mr. Dunlop deliberately accuses the Newport Corporation of boycotting British production and British labour, and describes it as an attempt on the part of municipalities to force British firms below starvation level.

Mr. Dunlop suggests there ought to be some form of public inquiry into the circumstances under which such contracts are placed abroad, but it would be very much more to the point if there were a public enquiry into the circumstances under which British tenders for municipal plants are prepared and regulated, and as to why it is that British firms in the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association are able to quote the colonial and foreign markets, such as Japan, China and South America, prices for turbo-alternator plants not only lower than they quote in the home municipal markets, but at such a low level that Continental firms are frequently unable to compete.

So far as Swiss manufacturers are concerned, no one knows better than Mr. Dunlop that the old slogan of low wages and inferior conditions of employment has been exploded. If the Swiss franc is translated into sterling, it will be found that the wage rates to-day in the Swiss shops are on the same level with the British...

Reading Mr. Dunlop's statement, the man in the street could reasonably conclude that it is only municipalities who are adopting what he chooses to regard as a policy of boycotting British production and British labour. Let Mr. Dunlop publish a list of private power supply companies and industrial manufacturing combines who have placed orders for Continental plants during the last two years, presumably because they regarded it as the only economical proposition in the interests of cheap production of their manufacturers. I venture to suggest it would throw an entirely new light on this thorny question.

I submit that it is to be very much regretted that Mr. Dunlop should use his official position as director of the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association—a position which he fills with so much honour—to give to the public Press a series of statements which can be easily refuted by those in a position to do so, but which the layman can only accept at their face value, perhaps believing that, coming as they do from one of the highest officials of the Association, they must be official facts, and such as would not be made by a person holding such a position, and with a due sense of his responsibility, unless such statements were accurate.

The League Capital.

The *Daily Telegraph* still harps upon the transfer of the League seat by giving publicity to irresponsible gossip; this is what their diplomatic correspondent communicates on Feb. 14th:—

"Despite repeated official denials, I am able to state that the talk in diplomatic and political circles in Vienna about the possible transfer to that city from Geneva of the League capital is still unabated. The Austrian Chancellor, Monsignor Seipel, has taken personal charge of the

matter, and claims to have the secret support for his scheme not only of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Serbia, but also of Italy. Indeed, it is suggested that, next to the French Minister, Comte de Chambrun, and the Polish Minister, M. Barder, the Italian diplomats are the most active.

It is admitted, however, that the Quai d'Orsay is, on the whole, a good deal less enthusiastic about the idea of a transfer of the League's seat than is the French Minister to Austria. Great Britain is admitted to be clearly opposed to the whole plan, and France to be still hesitant.

An entirely unfounded attempt is being made to persuade the Austrian public that Germany would view the change without disfavour, and would not begrudge Vienna the honour of becoming the League capital, even though this would probably mean a deathblow to the prospects of Austro-German reunion because of the vast business advantages which, it is contended by the advocates of the change, it would entail for both Austria and Germany. The truth about Germany's supposed friendliness to Chancellor Seipel's ambitions is that the German Minister in Vienna, Herr von Lerchenfeld, may be personally favourable, because his prestige as a fully-fledged Ambassador would, no doubt, be heightened by the establishment of the League at Vienna, where he aspires to play, and, as a matter of fact, succeeds in playing, an ever-increasing personal rôle.

What is stranger still is that Chancellor Seipel should apparently have succeeded in persuading the leader of the Pan-German party, Herr Wotawa, that, in the long run, the transfer of the League capital to Vienna, would not hinder, but rather facilitate, Anglo-German reunion, provided not a whisper be heard about this until the seasonable moment, which is still remote. If Herr Wotawa, who has a reputation for ingenuousness, has been brought to believe this, the Little Entente representatives have been brought to believe the contrary. Chancellor Seipel, however, has not as yet secured a definite reply from the Austrian Democrats, among whom he has latterly been taking soundings on the point. He has refrained, moreover, from broaching the subject to the Agrarian Party, who, he seems to think, would be strongly opposed to his project.

All this Viennese tittle-tattle, though interesting, is very much in the air because of the impracticability at this date of altering the venue of the League. Chancellor Seipel and the Austrian advocates of the transfer profess the opinion that, by making Vienna the League capital, they would avert possible invasions in the future from both the South and the South-East. On this point I can only repeat what I wrote the other day—that the League is bound to feel safer behind the Alpine frontiers of Switzerland and the sturdiness of the Swiss militia than within the exposed and militarily undefended frontiers of the present Austrian Republic."

Flying Above the Alps.

The following interesting description is published in the February number of *Aerways*:—

"To the enthusiastic climber, the mere suggestion of flying above the Alps may be something akin to sacrilege, like advocating to a huntsman the shooting of foxes. The true mountaineer may look with scorn on the proposal to enjoy almost with ease, the transcendent beauty of the upper world, hitherto the rich reward of long-sustained and dangerous effort afoot. Rather would he force his weary way, foot by foot, hand-grip by hand-grip, up the unrelenting ice slopes to gaze at his journey's end on a vision of unsurpassed grandeur.

But—*autre temps, autres modes*—and, though in the past I have scaled various peaks in Switzerland from below, I determined to view their glories from above, with the added intention of increasing my knowledge and experience of flying in high altitudes under geographical conditions which are unobtainable in England.

Zurich seemed to offer the greatest facilities towards this end, and the Imperial Airways' route offered in part an obvious way of reaching my destination. Incidentally, I should like to express my gratitude to the agents and pilots of that company with whom I came in contact in Paris and Zurich for their unfailing courtesy and help.

Before leaving Paris their manager telephoned at my request to Zurich for an intelligent anticipation of the weather that might be expected in the near future, for, obviously, fine weather and good visibility were essentials.

The report was generally favourable, and soon after leaving Le Bourget we climbed through light, drifting clouds that at times obscured the landscape.

Clearing the summit of the Vosges Mountains—that gloomy barrier of hills that divides France from Switzerland—at a height of 3,000 feet and passing over Belfort, we dropped down to Basle Aerodrome for lunch. Here the weather changed and the last stage of the journey, from Basle to Zurich, was made through driving rain, soon to be followed by a prolonged thunderstorm.

But in the comfortable *bonhomie* of the Elite Hotel I was content to await the arrival of suitable weather conditions, fortunately to prove only five days distant. An experienced Swiss pilot told me that, on an average, only on 15-20 days in the year was it possible to enjoy perfect atmospheric conditions above the Alpine Range.

Meanwhile, through the friendly help of Imperial Airways' resident manager, Mr. Bachrach, I had got into touch with the well-known Swiss aviator, Lieut. Mittelholzer, who in the summer of 1923 led an aerial expedition into the Polar Regions to co-operate with Amundsen's first attempt to fly across the North Pole. Lieut. Mittelholzer is a specialist in Alpine aviation, and I consider myself fortunate in having enjoyed his arrangements and personal pilotage.

Our machine was a single-engined Dornier with accommodation for 3 to 4 passengers, and we took off from Dubendorf Aerodrome in the early evening about 4 p.m.

Climbing steadily, within half-an-hour we had approached the foothills of the Alpine Range—if one may so disrespectfully describe heights of over 7,000ft. Still rising, we slipped past rocky peaks and over cavernous depths up which the wind rushed in gusts, momentarily tossing the machine like a leaf in an autumn storm. Round- ing, in frequent succession, precipitous shoulders of rock, new and still more majestic vistas of beauty leapt into a view, which grew more extensive with increasing height.

After nearly two hours' flying we reached the Matterhorn (14,800 ft.)—goal of many a persevering and courageous mountaineer—and the climax of our flight. Having passed at 16,000ft. over the snow-clad, flat topped summit of Monte Rosa (5,800 ft.), we soared above the rocky pinnacle of the Matterhorn before descending in easy spirals to circle several times the needle-pointed rock, our wing-tip but a few feet distant from its scarped face.

If the rocks of the Grépion Peak be considered, by the comparatively few adventurous spirits who have conquered it, probably the most difficult feat in the Alps, so the Matterhorn may be regarded as the most distinctive landmark standing, as it does, separate and apart, in solitary and dignified aloofness.

My observations confirmed what I believe is widely conceded by climbers, that the general line of ascent from the Swiss side is much easier than the Italian approach across the Zmutt Ridge. The same observation applies, more or less, to Mont Blanc (15,780 ft.), where the ascent from the Swiss side offers an exceedingly difficult climbing enterprise, while the French approach from the Chamonix Valley presents no great deterrent to a man in good physical condition.

An aerial examination, however, even from a "close up," does not altogether reveal the actual, practical difficulties of the rocks as faced by the climber, but one felt a sense of smug satisfaction at this effortless enjoyment of the climber's preserve from the comfortable outlook of a modern magic carpet. But the easy attainment of a purpose is not everything. It may well be that in his sporting spirit a climber may find his greatest satisfaction in the exhilarating joy of actual physical achievement, rather than in the ample reward of a wonderful vision of nature.

One fact of interest to the flyer—not commonly known or realised, is that the frontier line between Switzerland and Italy in the High Alps runs across the summits of several well-known peaks besides the Matterhorn, notably the Breit- horn and Monte Rosa.

Here then is a frontier unguarded, across which the adventurous traveller can fly to and fro at will at any hour of the day or night without fear of challenge from outraged law in hiding. Some day, perhaps, an efficient customs Mussolini may hitch a Schneider Trophy winner to a star to prevent ubiquitous *Moths* escaping across this stretch of frontier with too many lira—but to-day nobody demands a passport, and on this spot who wants a landing ticket?

Recovering our height, the vision was that of a vast snowfield glittering in the sunshine, pierced by innumerable peaks of every size and shape—the travail of primeval ages, an orderly

confusion of beauty in a silent world—where silence seemed the only fitting spirit wherewith "to absorb this majesty of nature."

There may be some whose mental outlook leaves them unaffected by such earthly grandeur, but I confess myself incorrigibly susceptible to the glamour of Nature on so stupendous a scale.

Owing to the rapidity with which impressions succeeded one another, one lacked the time to locate and identify in passing some of the lesser-known peaks and glaciers. But I hope to return next year and enjoy anew at greater leisure this feast of natural beauty—the first taste of which has but whetted an appetite.

Turning homeward, and still keeping our height, flitting almost from peak to peak, we passed in quick succession the Breithorn and Dent d'Herens, the Trinity of Peaks, Monck, Eiger and Jungfrau (13,660 ft.), with glaciers at their feet, while at one point through a cleft in the mountains on the far horizon, the railway running down through the Simplon Tunnel and along the pleasant shores of Lake Maggiore to Milan lay stretched beneath us into the unseen distance.

Gradually descending, with the engine throttled well back, we passed over the borders of Lake Lucerne, and reaching the summit of the Rigi—banked sharply upwards circling the hotel.

Then, still losing height, we crossed the Lake of Zurich to land at Dubendorf Aerodrome at 7.30 p.m.—a little over three hours after our departure. The distance covered by the flight was approximately 300 miles, and from the point of view of natural beauty there surely can be but few flights comparable to it elsewhere in the world.

As the Irish See Us.

From the *Irish Times* (Feb. 9th):—

"Switzerland, which to many people is more famous for its goat's milk and watches than for the Geneva Convention—what of this comparatively small State in the heart of Europe! Every year brings it into prominence with the Red Cross, which is the protecting sign of each hospital ship and ambulance. This famous little State is, indeed, one of mystery for the man in the street. It supplies Swiss Guards for the Pope at the Vatican, and it has been affording hospitality for years to all the diplomats who have wrangled for that peace which the war could not give.

Geneva is one of the three principalities of a country which also makes money out of the sport-seekers of the world. Park Lane's millions are scattered in St. Moritz, and the almighty dollar is spent lavishly in Davos. The little land of William Tell goes on yodelling among the mountains until the gladsome notes are heard—the Austrian Tyrol. But, except for the hotels, the people keep aloof and to themselves, like the Prince of Monaco. "Do not interfere," they say, "the skis and the bob-sleighs will come and the 20 franc pieces will make themselves!"

To show how ignorant some of the rich ones of the earth are about Switzerland, it may be pointed out that, on the eve of war, a Congress Committee of the United States was inquiring into European armaments. The Swiss military system was regarded as a model. Britain had sent a Commission, including Labour M.P.'s, to study it; but one relentless seeker after knowledge in America demanded to know the strength of the Swiss Navy!

When Shakespeare thought that Bohemia (now Czechoslovakia) had a seaboard, he made a similar mistake; but he lived over 300 years ago and had not travelled. Nor had he, like the Congress man in God's own country, the opportunity to study blue books in the Smithsonian Library at Washington. The Swiss Navy to us had long been a joke, but it was not one for that serious-minded Congress man, who was a typical Mr. Babbitt of Main Street. Nevertheless, Switzerland has a national militia of 45,000, which can be raised to a war strength of 250,000; and it has 200 aeroplanes. Yet the President who is elected annually is one of the least known of the world's rulers. He might be the chairman of some urban district council for all the world outside Berne is concerned. Last year Mr. M. G. Motta, who was the Foreign Secretary as well as President, was never heard of while the League of Nations was framing protocols by the dozen at Geneva."

DIE MITTEL DER DEMOKRATIE.

Zurzeit steht, wie man weiss, im Kanton Uri eine Initiative zur Abschaffung der Landsgemeinde zur Diskussion. Die Initiative ist von 1800 Mann, d. h. von zwei Fünfteln sämtlicher Stimmberechtigten, unterzeichnet worden. In vielen Schulbüchern, in schwungvollen Monographien, Feuilletons und Reiseschilderungen war es immer wieder zu lesen, dass die Landsgemeinde das ideale Instrument der Demokratie sei, "ihre lebendigste und schönste Verkörperung." Demgegenüber machen nun die Verteidiger die Initiative geltend, dass so nur reden könne, wer die wirklichen Verhältnisse nicht kenne. In Wahrheit gebe es kein schlimmeres Zerrbild der

Demokratie, als zum Beispiel eine umeriserte Landsgemeinde. Den Bewohnern abgelegener Talschaften, wie Urserental, Isental, Seelisberg bedeute der Besuch einer Landsgemeinde in Altdorf einen anstrengten Tagesmarsch und eine Ausgabe von 8, 10 bis 20 Franken, für die Bewohner des Urnerbodens aber bedinge der Besuch der Landsgemeinde einen Marsch über den möglicherweise verschneiten 1941 Meter hohen Klausenpass oder aber einen Abstieg nach Linthal und von da eine Eisenbahnfahrt über Ziegelbrücke, Bieberbrücke, Goldau. Auch das Idealbild der "friedlichen Tagung" stimme keineswegs. Just die letzte Landsgemeinde hätte da sehr unerfreuliche Streitszenen aufzuweisen gehabt; von der "Käuflichkeit gewisser Wähler," die auf anderer Leute Kosten herbeitransportiert wurden, wolle man lieber schweigen.

Wenn man diese Begründung der Initiative hört, ist es einem, als werde man ins alte Rom versetzt, und wenn man modernen Geschichtsschreibern glauben darf, ist die römische Republik zugrunde gegangen, an ungenügenden technischen Mitteln zur Ausübung der Demokratie. Als sich der römische Staat immer mehr vergrösserte, als er bald ganz Italien umfasste, durfte nur in Rom das Wahlrecht ausgeübt werden. Eine Presse in unserem Sinne bestand nicht. Die Information des Volkes war durch und durch mangelhaft. Die Abstimmung in den Pflöchen geschah oft in einer Weise, dass man im Zweifel sein konnte, ob die Abstimmenden auch wussten, über was sie abstimmten. Die Käuflichkeit der Wähler spielte sehr bald eine grosse Rolle. Jeder Abstimmung gingen religiöse Opfer voraus, und aus den Eingeweihten der Opfertiere konnten die Priester "weissagen," ob man die Wahl nicht besser verschiebe.—So war der Wähler in verschiedenster Weise dem Mächtigen ausgeliefert, und so entspricht es wohl der Wahrheit, dass die römische Demokratie am Mangel an tauglichen Mitteln zugrunde ging. Die Mittel der Demokratie haben nicht mit der Entwicklung des Staates Schritt gehalten.

Dieser Lehre der Geschichte sollte man sich nicht entziehen. Im Kanton Uri kommt man heute zur Ueberzeugung, dass die Landsgemeinde

QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES.

BONDS.		Feb. 13		Feb. 21	
		Fr.	S.	Fr.	S.
Confederation 3% 1903	...	83.00		83.00	
5% 1917. VIII Moh. Ln	...	101.25		101.60	
Federal Railways 3½% A-K	...	86.40		86.20	
" " 1924 IV Elect. Ln.	...	102.25		102.30	
SHARES.		Nom.		Feb. 13	
		Fr.	S.	Fr.	S.
Swiss Bank Corporation	...	500	826	834	
Crédit Suisse	...	500	927	879	
Union de Banques Suisses	...	500	760	761	
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2905		2902	
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	5025		4975	
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe	...	1000	3315	3325	
S.A. Brown Boveri	...	350	606	600	
C. F. Bally	...	1000	1424	1492	
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	...	200	959	950	
Entreprises Suisses S.A.	...	1000	1217	1222	
Comp. de Navig. sur le Lac Léman	500	550		550	
Linolium A.G. Giubiasco	...	100	250	250	
Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon	...	500	790	787	

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