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The Swiss Observer

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The New Scheme for Ensuring the Continuance of Corn Growing in Switzerland.

FREE TRADE IN LIEU OF STATE MONOPOLY.

The great decision has been taken—the most important, perhaps, since the rejection of the Capital Levy in 1922. With a two-thirds majority the Swiss people have accepted the new proposals for the permanent solution of the corn problem on a free trade basis. This solution was worked out by the Federal Parliament with the support of all bourgeois parties and the more directly interested agricultural, commercial and industrial elements. And its whole-hearted acceptance by the electorate must be hailed as a most gratifying victory of common-sense, constructive good-will and the truly democratic spirit still dominant in our beloved home country. We can claim without any exaggeration that the sound and ripe political judgment of a vast majority of our countrymen at home has ingeniously solved a most important patriotic and social-economic problem, an exact parallel of which is still baffling the English parties and politicians.

The solution of the corn problem in Switzerland has not been found overnight, neither has it been achieved without prolonged and bitter struggles. As is well known, at the beginning of the World War the Federal Government had to take over the responsibility for all grain supplies. The trading-monopoly was established and it has had to be maintained to this very day, or at any rate it was so maintained, in spite of the protests of the free trade Liberals. In 1926 an Initiative was launched for the abolition of the State Monopoly and for its substitution by a free trade scheme with subsidies for the home-growers. But the Government feared that in this way a sufficient annual supply of home-grown wheat and rye could not be ensured except at too high a cost, and it submitted a proposal to permanently anchor the State Grain Monopoly in our Constitution. The Peasants and the Socialists were delighted; the rest of our people not all. If, in peace time, the State were to be granted a permanent monopoly, why not also for any other trade? Clearly, it could not be, and clearly another solution of the corn problem had to be and could be found. With a narrow majority the Monopoly proposal was turned down in December, 1926, by the popular vote.

The still surviving monopoly, based on, or vaguely justified by, the "exceptional powers" (granted the Government by the Constitution for exceptionally disturbed times) must go as soon as possible. June, 1929 was, after several postponements, fixed as the last date of the irrevocable end of the monopoly. By now it was commonly admitted that the "Initiative" of 1926 did not provide the ideal solution. But the Liberals as well as the Conservatives, the merchants as well as the Industrialists, were determined to find a free-trade solution not less in the interests of agriculture than the Monopoly-Proposal. It was all along agreed by the bourgeois parties that the cultivation of the bread fruit must be maintained at the present level, which provides about one-fourth of the Swiss consumption; that therefore the farmers must be guaranteed sufficiently attractive prices, and that provision must be made for the maintenance of certain minimum stores of cereals. New proposals cropped up which were ultimately condensed by Parliament and Government into the most admirable scheme, fulfilling all the essential demands of the problem.

Free trade is to be restored in the cereal branch next summer. Both the Government and the millers will be bound to maintain certain grain reserves. Furthermore the millers will be obliged to buy all home-grown grain at certain prices above the world market level. For this the Government pays due compensation according to

The Voting on the Corn Monopoly.

During the last week-end three proposals in connection with the corn problem at home were placed before the Swiss electorate; the official proposal of the Government was endorsed with the overwhelming majority of two to one, the only rejecting canton being Neuchâtel. The initiative demand—a counter proposal—found favour with barely three per cent. of the electors. The following are the figures so far published:

CANTON	Initiative Demand		Government Proposal		Statistical Levy	
	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against
Zurich	2,984	103,124	61,476	45,049	60,090	45,420
Berne	3,164	104,314	69,000	38,635	68,016	38,023
Lucerne	852	30,108	23,508	7,356	23,386	7,253
Uri	77	3,323	2,604	793	6,389	810
Schwyz	320	8,435	6,491	2,206	6,389	2,128
Obwalden	166	2,729	2,555	640	2,223	653
Nidwalden	65	2,056	1,634	490	1,615	506
Glarus	677	5,672	4,035	2,356	4,003	2,326
Zug	181	4,581	3,409	1,318	3,393	1,324
Freiburg	282	28,527	22,972	3,721	23,028	3,787
Solothurn	296	24,362	17,311	7,589	18,298	7,638
Basel-Stadt	359	16,594	8,509	8,338	8,461	8,395
Baselland	516	13,836	8,767	5,151	8,716	4,175
Schaffhausen	283	9,490	6,490	3,246	6,426	3,372
Appenzell A.-Rh.	311	8,992	6,295	3,010	6,200	3,097
Appenzell I.-Rh.	75	2,137	1,831	379	1,804	433
St. Gall	1,842	52,501	36,555	17,679	36,223	17,984
Graubünden	319	10,633	8,660	2,219	8,686	2,138
Aargau	1,155	51,891	32,868	20,491	32,745	20,633
Thurgau	807	25,619	19,054	7,295	18,728	7,683
Tessin	248	16,829	12,514	4,544	12,509	4,653
Vaud	3,427	71,548	49,601	24,443	49,370	24,702
Valais	300	25,200	21,800	3,500	21,800	3,500
Neuchâtel	485	16,440	8,102	8,711	7,852	8,664
Geneva	64	18,930	11,902	7,096	11,863	7,158
	19,255	657,683	447,963	226,255	443,231	227,244

agreed scales and our millers remain, as heretofore, practically protected against foreign competition. The farmers are assured of a certain remunerative market, special provision being made by a differentiation in rates and freights for the benefit of the farmers and consumers in the higher regions of the country. But the crowning effort of the scheme is the provision for financing it. The 10 million francs needed will be found simply by raising the statistical levy on all imports and exports from 2 to 10 centimes per hundred kilos. It is a direct imposition on our general trade and our export industries. But the statistical levy will still remain much lower than in most other countries, and the charge is so small that the industries and the merchant interests have voluntarily agreed to support the scheme, conscious of its importance to the whole country and to agriculture in particular. These ten millions have hitherto, under the State Monopoly, been directly charged on the grain price, and in effect it has been borne by the bread consumer. Under the new scheme the whole community, but especially trade and industries, will bear the costs of subsidising the home-cultivation of the bread fruit, and bread will become cheaper by about 2 centimes per kilo.

In spite of this indisputable advantage of cheapening the people's staple food, the new scheme has been bitterly opposed by the Socialists and Communists, who still have not accepted as final the popular verdict on the State Monopoly of December, 1926. But their parole of rejection has only been followed by one third of the voters last Sunday. The abuse of the statistical levy for revenue purposes can hardly be recommended as an ideal device of fiscal policy. But in this case it is a thousand times justified by the high and imperative purpose it helps to achieve. We congratulate our people on their decision.

QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES

BONDS.	Feb. 25		Mar. 4	
	£	Fr.	£	Fr.
Confederation 3% 1903	82.50	82.50		
" 5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln	102.00	101.75		
Federal Railways 3½% A-K	88.25	88.10		
" 1924 IV Elect. Ln.	102.67	102.50		
SHARES.	Nom.	Feb. 25	Nom.	Mar. 4
Swiss Bank Corporation	500	858	818	
Crédit Suisse	500	961	961	
Union de Banques Suisses	500	755	707	
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	3380	3349	
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	4650	4575	
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe	1000	4390	4390	
S.A. Brown Boveri	350	587	586	
C. P. Bally	1000	1505	1500	
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	900	906	
Entreprises Suisses S.A.	1000	1283	1270	
Comp. de Navig. sur le Lac Léman	500	515	515	
Linoleum A.G. Giubiasco	100	227	322	
Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon	500	880	870	

HOME NEWS

BERN.—In der kantonalen Volksabstimmung wurde das Gesetz, durch das der Salzpreis für die nächsten zehn Jahre auf 30 Rappen das Kilo angesetzt wird, mit 78,468 gegen 26,475 Stimmen angenommen. Z.

FRAUENFELD.—In der kantonalen Volksabstimmung vom Sonntag wurde das neue Kantonalbankgesetz mit 17,091 gegen 6616 Stimmen angenommen. Ferner wurden die fünf bisherigen Regierungsräte, die in Wiederwahl kamen, mit je etwa 17,000 Stimmen bestätigt. Die Sozialdemokraten und die Demokraten hatten beschlossen, sowohl bei den Wahlen als bei der Abstimmung leer einzulegen; die übrigen Parteien hatten dem neuen Gesetz zugestimmt. Z.

LUZERN.—Der Stadtrat beantragt dem Grossen Stadtrat den Erwerb von 15,136 Quadratmeter Land am Rotsee zum Preise von 75,000 Fr., teils zur Anlage eines Standweges, teils zur Verhinderung einer das Landschaftsbild störenden Ueberbauung. Auf dem linken Seeufer beim sogenannten Weinbergli soll ein 8257 Quadratmeter umfassender, bewaldeter Höhenrücken zum Preis von 16,540 Fr. angekauft werden, um das Landschaftsbild vor Verschandelung zu bewahren. In beiden Gegenden sind weitere Erwerbungen in Aussicht genommen. Z.

LIESTAL.—Der Landrat wählte unter sechs Bewerbern Dr. iur. Hugo Stöcklin aus Bottingen zum zweiten Obergerichtsschreiber und setzte darauf die Beratung des Staatsbudgets für 1929 fort. Nach heftiger Debatte wurde dem Arbeiter-Turn- und Sportverband trotz der ablehnenden Haltung der Regierung mit 34 gegen 32 Stimmen ein Staatsbeitrag zugestimmt, wie er dem kantonalen Turnverein seit langem bewilligt wird. Degegen unterlag in der Abstimmung ein Antrag auf Schaffung eines kantonalen Fabrik- und Gewerbeinspektors. Z.

EINSIEDELN.—Am Donnerstag (28. Feb.) nachmittags um zwei Uhr brach in der Schmalzgrube in Unter-Iberg in dem grossen Wohnhaus der Familie Balthasar Marty-Siegfried Feuer aus. Ein Vorübergehender bemerkte als erster das Feuer und rettete durch das Fenster ein zweijähriges Kind. Der Grossvater, der sich im Hause befand, konnte sich ebenfalls in Sicherheit bringen, dagegen blieben zwei Kinder, ein vierjähriges Mädchen und ein fünfjähriger Knabe, in den Flammen. Der Vater der Kinder war zurzeit des Brandausbruchs bei der Arbeit im Walde und die Mutter war in einem Nachbarhause, wo sie Wasser holen