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PARLIAMENTARY AUTUMN SESSION

On the day after the Federal Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving, the two Federal Chambers assembled for their ordinary autumn session lasting three weeks.

It is two years since the "Mirage" storm, when Federal Councillor Chaudet and his staff from the Federal Military Department received a severe reprimand regarding the grossly overstepped budget for the "Mirage" planes. Who would have thought that two years later, Monsieur Chaudet would receive applause by the same Parliament when he talked about the modern Army defending the national heritage! This was when he presented the report on the conception of the country's defence asked for by Parliament at the time.

Federal Councillor Chaudet also made a statement regarding atomic arms, from which it was seen that the question was not urgent, but that the Federal Council was not willing to have their hands tied. The Head of the EPD also made a short visit to the Council of States where he had to speak on the plans for military training centres and the strengthening of the *Landwehr*.

The reduction of working hours from 46 to 44 hours a week for the Confederation *Betriebspersonal*, which had already been accepted by the National Council, now came to the Council of States who agreed to the proposal of the Federal Council to reduce the hours gradually over three years. Finally, the Council of States also supported the decision of the National Council.

"The People's dearest Child" is the term used in the Council of States for the AHV, the old age and dependents' insurance. The Government's proposal to increase benefits by 10% was accepted, as it was the following week by the National Council (139:0). The latter was also in favour of an improvement in the unemployment insurance, a revision of which was announced by Federal Councillor Schaffner. The National Council also agreed to a re-organisation of the National Fund for Scientific Research.

In 1963, the Social Democrats and the Trade Union Federation had launched an Initiative against land speculation. This was defeated by 99 to 54 votes, as was an amendment put up by the "Landesring" at the last minute. In all quarters, the aims of the Initiative were approved, and the debate showed that new laws are needed and that the Federal Council will have to make relevant proposals in the near future.

As was reported earlier this year, the Government has to find additional revenue. A letter was sent to both Chambers, informing them that proposals for additional taxes would be made to Parliament in the winter. The National Council accepted this tacitly, but the Council of States asked for a debate which showed that such proposals would need most careful study.

The National Council had accepted a Motion regarding votes for women. This time, it was the turn of the other Chamber, and a lively debate took place. The opposition surprisingly argued that votes for women would be the end of the *Landsgemeinden*! And the Motion was accepted with only 20 to 13 votes.

Postage rate revision and an increase in rates was accepted by the Council of States, but not the proposals that no more Commune, Court and Church matter should be sent free of postage. By this, the Government hoped

to save 112m. francs p.a., and only military matter would be forwarded free. The voting showed a very small majority against the Government's proposals, and it now remains to be seen what the National Council will do.

By 73 to 10 votes, the National Council rejected a Postulate asking for a Swiss equivalent of an "Ombudsman". And finally, an inquiry into charges that Swiss newspapers were having their telephones tapped by the authorities was ordered by the Federal Government following questions in Parliament.

(Based on reports by courtesy of "Schweizerisches Kaufmännisches Zentralblatt".)

APPOINTMENTS

The Federal Council has appointed Ambassador R. Stoudmann (Pakistan) as Ambassador to Tunisia and Libya, and Dr. V. Tuason as new President of PTT, in succession to Dipl. Ing. G. A. Wettstein.

The new Chief of the Federal Central Office for Printing Matter and Material is Mr. Claude Wuischpard (Givrins, Vaud), hitherto with Kiosk A. G. Berne.

Dr. Max Blumenstein (Niederbipp), Lawyer in Berne, is the first Secretary-General of the National Fund for the Promotion of Scientific Research.

National Councillor Dr. Edmund Wyss (Basle), *Regierungsrat*, has been appointed Chairman of the "Schweizerische Seeschiffahrtskommission".

Prof. Dr. Ambrosius P. Speiser has started his work as Director of Research with Messrs. Brown Boveri in Baden, a recently created post.

The Editor of "Feuille d'Avis de Lausanne", Mr. Michel Vidoudez, has been appointed Press Attaché of the Swiss Pavilion at the World Exhibition 1967 in Montreal.

The World Wildlife Fund has asked the Genevese biologist Paul Schauenberg to go to Ecuador to study the project of an "Equator National Park", and the Zurich Zoo Director, Prof. Hediger, has been invited by the Government of New South Wales to undertake the re-organisation of Taronga Park Zoo in Sydney.

The new Rabbi of the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde* in Berne is Dr. Roland Gradwohl.

Fernand Martignoni is the new Chief Pilot of Air-Glacier in Sion, successor to the late Hermann Geiger. He holds several awards and is an experienced glacier pilot. Arthur Gander (Chiasso) has been elected President of the International Gymnastic Federation.

Werner Gnaediger has been elected new Chairman of the Board of Management of the "Verband Schweizerischer Konsumvereine".

[A.T.S.]

THEY HAVE BEEN HONOURED

President Saragat of Italy awarded an order to the Zurich policeman *Wachtmeister* Otto Meier for his 15 years of excellent care of the Italians in Switzerland.

The *Welt-Jugendhilfepreis 1966* has gone to a Swiss living abroad, the industrialist Karl Keller in Summit, New Jersey. The prize is awarded annually for special activities in the interest of youth.

The Swiss architect, painter and plastic sculptor Max Bill received the Gold Medal at the International Artists' and Critics' Congress at Verucchio.

The Valais author Maurice Zermatten received the Prize of the Dramatic Authors and Composers of French Essence.

[A.T.S.]