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IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTON OF BERNE

CANTON

The Bernese cantonal budget for 1967 is practically balanced at nearly 665 million francs, compared with a deficit of 55m. in 1965 (figures for last year are not yet available). The finance plan submitted at the same time visualises increased deficits up to 112m. for 1972. Savings and increased revenue are being considered to reduce the losses in the coming years.

Large sums have recently been granted for various school buildings (3m.), hospitals and homes (7m.), garbage disposal plant Worblental (2m.), additional credit for roads (10.4m.), cost of living grant of 5% to state personnel (8m.), Teachers' Training College Porrentruy (7m.).

The Cantonal Government proposes taxation at source for all foreign workers, which would enable the authorities to collect at least 20 to 25% more.

The Government submitted a plan to Parliament regarding the atomic power station which is to be constructed at Muehleberg at a cost of 302.4m. francs. It is to become operational in October 1971. The shareholders of the "Bernische Kraftwerke" have agreed.

Regarding an airfield for the capital, a new site has been proposed in the neighbourhood of Rosshaeusern. There has already been some opposition.

The Vingelz Tunnel has been broken through (2,411 metres long); it will take the double track SBB line Bienne-Alfermée. The present track will be used for National Road 5. At a cost of 10m. francs, the Emmental-Burgdorf-Thun railway is to be improved.

In 1966, 2,683 drivers were deprived of their licences on account of dangerous driving. This is 617 more than in the previous year, not counting the confiscation of provisional licences.

In January, the Berne Government proposed to the Cantonal Parliament to consider votes for women in communal matters. Among the recipients of the Theodor Kocher Prize is a woman, Prof. Dr. Emilie Jaeger, for her work in connection with the isotope laboratory and her research into radiometric age definition of minerals and rocks. Another woman, Fr. Maria Lauber, received one of the Bernese Literature Prizes for 1966. Kurt Marti and Peter Duerrenmatt are amongst the other recipients.

There is an acute shortage of Protestant Ministers in the Canton, at the moment at least 25 vacancies for which no replacements are in view.

The following appointments have been made: Me Marcel Girardin (Moutier) as *Jugendanwalt* for the Jura in succession to his father who lost his life in an accident. Fritz Wenger (Hoefen) as new Cantonal Veterinary Surgeon.

JURA PROBLEMS

A year ago, the British weekly, the "Economist", carried a report on "The 26th Voice" in Switzerland. It began "Now the dust has settled, the Swiss are congratulating themselves on having despatched the affair of the Jura Liberation Front to almost everybody's satisfaction". The writer also referred to the three men sent to prison for terrorist activities, and he asked who would be the new Nicolas de Flüe who would start a dialogue between the Jura and Berne. The problem today is still far from being settled. The separatists go on demonstrating, so for instance outside the Houses of Parliament in Berne on the occasion of the traditional reception of the Diplomatic

Corps by the Government early in January. There have again been threats by the Liberation Front recently, and in several villages in the Jura, voluntary citizens' protection groups have been formed. Two separatists have escaped from prison, Jean-Baptiste Hennin last October and Marcel Boillat early this year. But the dialogue goes on. The Jura Deputation submitted 17 proposals to the Berne Government in January 1965, and these points were discussed by Government and legal experts. Some supplementary questions were raised, and a further legal opinion was published at the end of January. The separatists considered this "sabotage tactics" by the Berne Government. Mid-March, the *Regierungsrat* issued a declaration regarding a discussion with the separatists and he announced, if necessary, a plebiscite ultimately amongst the Jura population.

TOWN OF BERNE

The Swiss capital, founded in 1191 by the Dukes of Zaehringen and later a free city of the Holy Roman Empire, today has 166,000 inhabitants, of whom every eighth is a foreigner. The so-called "Agglomeration of Berne" increased its population by 2,693 inhabitants during 1966 and now numbers over a quarter of a million. A decrease was registered in Berne during the past year in the number of road accidents which declined from 1919 to 1905. 965 people were injured (959) of whom 253 (245) were pedestrians. Deaths stood at 20 (20). The "Blue Zone" of limited parking has been introduced in Berne, too. A new radio station has been opened for the security and criminal police.

The new station with all buildings and platforms and tracks and signalling boxes, etc., will cost well over 150m. francs. Emil Ammann, station master of Bienne, is the new station inspector of Berne. All tram and bus fares have gone up in Berne, as well as the price of water (from 15 to 28 cts. per cubic metre). Half a million francs is to be spent on two cyclones to increase the performance of the two electrofilters in fighting air pollution caused by the garbage incinerating plant.

In 1966, 990 new flats were constructed in Berne (1965: 647, 1963: 411). This is an increase of 53% over last year and of 141% over the lowest figure three years ago.

In the autumn, the new Lindenhof Hospital was opened; the removal of forty patients was carried out by recruits of the Medical Transport Unit. The Cantonal Women's Hospital and the Babies' Home Elfenau are to be enlarged.

From a modern terminal on the outskirts of the Swiss capital, travellers can now enjoy a smooth and rapid trip in remote-controlled trains directly to the popular excursion point of Gurten-Kulm. The installation of a new electric drive at the upper station of this 63-year-old funicular has increased its passengers capacity in each direction from 850 to 1,350 people — not through the use of larger cars but simply by means of increased speed along the old tracks. During peak periods, a simple flick of a switch can increase the speed of the funicular from 3.5 to 5.7 metres per second, which makes the Gurten line the fastest facility of its kind in Europe. Up on the Gurten itself there is a "children's paradise", much-visited by adults as well, which features a car racing track, miniature railway and all manner of good things for pleasant hours to play. Nearby woods and pastures provide excel-



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lent walking, and there is a magnificent view of the giant peaks of the Bernese Alps and the Swiss midlands spread at their feet.

The first budget for 1967 was not accepted by the town's electorate on 11th December. The second time (March), the citizens agreed to the estimated deficit of about one million, revenue being expected to bring in 185.5m., slightly less than the first budget which had estimated a deficit of nearly 4m. At the same time, the electorate agreed to the building project of Bethlehemacker, which is to provide 1,000 new flats and houses, and granted a credit of 5.3m. francs for a water reservoir with pump works on the Gurtenmaeteli.

The Students of Berne University have a new international meeting place at their disposal: the Municipality gave them an old apple storage cellar which, with the help of firms and craftsmen, the students have transformed into a pleasant club hall.

Ekkehard Kohlund, actor and Manager of the Berne Municipal Theatre, has been honoured with the Golden Needle of the institution, awarded for the first time. Dr. Max Bangerter, Montreux, has donated several French paintings to the Berne Art Museum. Amongst them are three Utrillo pictures, and the total value is over one million francs.

Fifty tons of old telephone directories were collected by Berne chemists in aid of invalids and the blind. This collection used to be carried out by the PTT organisation, but lack of staff prevents them from doing it nowadays.

The "Metallharmonie" celebrated its 75th and the "Stadtmusik" its 150th anniversary.

COMMUNES

In January, the "Spitteler Haus" holiday home of the Basle *Diakonissenanstalt* Riehen, was inaugurated at **Adelboden**. **Belp's** citizens agreed to a new school project and granted 1.164m. francs.

The new Congress House was opened at **Bienne** in the autumn. The Commune Council plans to build a new German and French *Gymnasium* on the lake shore. An Initiative against the project has been launched successfully by the "Landesring". The eighteen German and nine French kindergardens in the town are not sufficient, and more are being planned. The construction of the new R.C. church at Biel-Mett has been started; it will be ready in two years and its cost is estimated at 3m francs. The new car bridge over the Schuess was opened to traffic just before Christmas. The Cantonal *Verkehrsschule* is 75 years old.

A regional planning group has been formed at **Burgdorf**. A music school is to be founded, and the *Technikum* celebrated its 75th anniversary. The new old-age settlement "Alpenblick" has been completed with the help of Burgdorf firms, banks and social institutions. Contributions by town and Canton mean that the rents can be kept low. In the autumn, the new butter centre was opened to which cream and butter are sent from about 800 dairies and *Milchgenossenschaften*.

Regierungsrat and former Commune President Simon Kohler has been made an Honorary Citizen of **Courgenay**. The former central fund for the poor, the social institutions of **Courtelary** can look back on 150 years of activities.

Delémont has 11,176 inhabitants, 445 more than a year ago, among them 1,240 Italians and 453 other foreigners. In the autumn, the old gas works were re-

placed by a modern propane gas plant. The new music school of the Jura has just been opened, and the old church of Vicques is being demolished. The Castle is to have an oil-fired central heating plant for which half a million francs was granted by the electorate.

The small Commune of **Gals** is to have a Village Hall. Four wild boar were killed near **Huttwil**. All restaurants and hotels at **Interlaken** now have tips included in the bills. Over 100,000 cars were transported through the Loetschberg Tunnel from and to **Kandersteg** in 1966. **Kehrsatz** has introduced the proportional system. **Kirchberg**, with the help of some other Communes, is to have a swimming pool.

At the Thorberg penitentiary at **Krauchthal** a valuable Gothic relief of a figure of Christ was discovered when digging. The **Langenthal** Theatre celebrated its Golden Jubilee. The nursing home Baerou near **Langnau** will be renovated and partly rebuilt during five years at an estimated cost of 17m. francs.

Muensingen, is planning an expensive new primary school (4.5m.). A leisure centre has been opened; it was conceived and carried out by the Commune Council, the Church and welfare institutions, parents and educational groups. The new "Kurdirektor" of **Muerren** is Jost Brunner from Wengen. **Neuenstadt's** citizens have rejected a credit of 6.7m. francs for a waste-water plant. The Commune of **Oberburg** has just had a nasty surprise when the accounts for the new school buildings were published: 4.9m. francs where over a million less had been estimated.

The Commune Treasurer of **Porrentruy**, Miss Marcelle Crevoiserat, was elected a year ago. She has now come of age and was duly sworn in. **Riggisberg's** derelict old-age home is to be demolished and replaced by a new building. **Rohrbach** is to have a gymnasium which will also serve for military billeting.

Both the watchmaking college and the chronometer factory "Excelsior Park" at **St. Imier** have celebrated their centenaries. At **Schwarzenburg**, exactly 50 years ago, Chocolat Tobler (Berne) founded its own *Milch-siederei*. The "Campaign of the Heart" has resulted in over 4 million francs being collected for the **Thun** hospital. The Commune Council of **Tramelan** has intimated its wish to run the future Jura Cultural Centre. Miss Martha Debrunner, **Uttigen's** kindergarden teacher, has been awarded honorary citizenship.

(Compiled from news received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse and Swiss National Tourist Office.)

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