

**CORRESPONDENCE  
RELATIVE TO THE BUDGETS  
OF VARIOUS COUNTRIES**

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Correspondence Relative to the Budgets of Various Countries by J. W. Probyn

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**J. W. PROBYN**

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Cobden club

CORRESPONDENCE  
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OF  
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EDITED BY  
J. W. PROBYN.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	3
AUSTRIA . . . . .	7
Correspondent :—Baron Max Von Kübeck . . . . .	8
BELGIUM . . . . .	11
Correspondents :—M. Fisco . . . . .	13
M. Auguste Couvreur . . . . .	17
h. Ad. Le Hardy de Beaulieu . . . . .	20
DENMARK . . . . .	35
Correspondents :—	
M. Fredericksen . . . . .	37
Count Sponneck . . . . .	42
FRANCE . . . . .	44
Correspondents :—	
M. Léon Say . . . . .	47
M. de Franqueville . . . . .	50
M. de Fonpertuis . . . . .	52
M. Maurice Block . . . . .	55
M. Coffinères . . . . .	57
M. Gustave d'Eichtal . . . . .	59
GERMANY . . . . .	61
Correspondent :—Professor Nasse . . . . .	62
HOLLAND . . . . .	67
Correspondents :—	
M. J. L. de Bruyn Kops . . . . .	67
M. Vissering . . . . .	69
ITALY . . . . .	74
Correspondents :—	
Signor Minghetti . . . . .	76
Signor Bodio . . . . .	82
Signor Emilio Broglio . . . . .	84
Signor Boccardo . . . . .	87
PORTUGAL . . . . .	88
Correspondent :—Le Vicomte de Figanière . . . . .	88
RUSSIA . . . . .	91
Correspondents :—	
Lieut.-General S. Greig . . . . .	91
M. Besobrosol . . . . .	97
SWEDEN . . . . .	101
Correspondent :—M. Olof Wijk . . . . .	101
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA . . . . .	105
Correspondents :—	
Hon. Henry L. Dawes . . . . .	106
Mr. L. F. S. Foster and Mr. David A. Wells . . . . .	107
Mr. Clarkson N. Potter . . . . .	109
Mr. J. S. Moore . . . . .	110
Mr. Horace White . . . . .	114
Mr. Charles Nordhoff . . . . .	115
Mr. John T. Hoffman . . . . .	118
Mr. Edwin A. Pratt . . . . .	122
Article of <i>Economist</i> , No. I. . . . .	124
Article of <i>Economist</i> , No. II. . . . .	131

GENERAL.

23



## CORRESPONDENCE

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## BUDGETS OF VARIOUS COUNTRIES.



### INTRODUCTION.

THE public burdens of the United Kingdom have grown, during the last quarter of a century, from about 52,000,000 sterling until they have reached nearly 80,000,000. This fact has led the Committee of the Cobden Club to consider whether any means could be found to insure a more efficient control of Government expenditure. The Committee, therefore, addressed a letter to public men of various countries, in order to ascertain what controlling power was brought to bear upon the fiscal policy of their Governments. The answers which have been received are now laid before the public. They have been given by men conversant with the affairs of their respective countries, versed in economical questions, and desirous of keeping State expenditure within reasonable bounds.

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The questions which the Committee addressed to its foreign correspondents were—

- I. Does the Government at the commencement, or at any other stated period of the session of the Legislature, announce in detail the proposed items of expenditure for the current year? or in what other manner are such proposals of expenditure brought under the review of the Legislature?
- II. Is it the practice of the members of the Legislature to discuss the proposed items of expenditure in full assembly, or are means taken, by the appointment of Committees of the Legislature, or otherwise, to investigate the proposed items of expenditure?
- III. Is it the practice of the Legislature to divide the proposed expenditure into the several heads representing the principal departments of the public service? and are such divisions of expenditure referred for consideration to separate Committees?
- IV. If such examination of the details of the proposed expenditure takes place by Committees appointed for such purpose, are the decisions of such Committees in regard to any reduction of expenditure subject to the revision of the Government or of the Assembly?
- V. If such Committees are appointed by the Legislative body, what arrangements are made to secure their independent action?



- VI. In the absence of the appointment of Committees, are any other special means adopted by the Legislature to check or control the proposals of the Government with respect to the national expenditure?
- VII. Has it been found in experience that the course pursued by the Legislative body in the investigation of proposed items of expenditure, either in the military, naval, or civil services, has had the effect of keeping down the charges recommended by the Government or of limiting abuses in administration?

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

(Signed)            THOMAS BAYLEY POTTER,  
*Hon. Sec. of the Cobden Club.*

The letters received in reply to these questions, from each country, are published in full; the method adopted in their publication being that of the alphabetical order in which the different States follow one another. This has been done with a view to facilitate reference. In almost every case the letters are preceded by a summary of the manner in which the Budget is dealt with by the Government of each country.

The reader, it is hoped, will thus have the facts of the case laid before him in such a manner as will enable him to avail himself of them with ease, and so help him to form his own judgment upon the important questions which relate to the control of public expenditure.

At the conclusion of the foreign correspondence, two articles upon it, from the *London Economist* of the 12th and 19th August, 1876, have been reprinted. They show how useful this work of the Cobden Club was deemed by so competent a judge of such matters as the late lamented Mr. Walter Bagehot.

J. W. PROBYN.

## AUSTRIA.

## SUMMARY.

THE Austrian Minister of Finance has to lay before both Houses of the Reichsrath (Parliament) the proposed Budget of the following year, accompanied by a detailed account of ways and means.

When the Budget is brought forward, the House selects a Finance Committee of thirty-six members out of the 360 who compose the House. This Committee divides the expenditure into several heads, representing the principal branches of the public service, which are carefully examined by members specially appointed to go through the different items of the respective departments. The various proposals are voted by a majority, and the Committee presents its Budget to the House. The House has the power of accepting or rejecting the proposals of the Committee, but usually accepts them. There is no resolving of the whole House into committee as in the English parliament, but the sittings of the finance committee are open to all members of the Reichsrath. The decisions of this committee are not subject to the revision of the Government, but each minister defends and explains the budget proposals of his department before the committee.

A permanent commission for the control of the public debt, elected from members of both Houses, watches over the proposals and management of the national expenditure when the Reichsrath is not in session.

The Government lays each year before the Reichsrath an exact account of the management and disposal of the sums