

Increased wages or shorter working hours?

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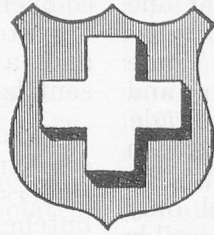
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AUCKLAND.

GREETINGS

*Mr. Blanchard, the Swiss Consul,
wishes to extend to all compatriots his
very best wishes for a Happy Christ-
mas and Bright and Prosperous New
Year.*

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Next Year's Federal Gymnastic Festival in Zurich

The organizing committee of the 64th Federal Gymnastic Festival, which will be held next year in Zurich, elected as its chairman Mr. Emile Landolt, president of the town. The Federal Society at present consists of 25 associations grouping 2603 sections and 229,297 members (226,341 in 1953); out of 134,425 active members there are 32,989 women and 42,372 school children of both sexes. Several sections are particularly active in North and South America.

Seventy-five Years of Football

The St. Gallen Football Club, the oldest in Switzerland, recently celebrated the 75th anniversary of its foundation; although the minutes of the first meeting are missing from the club's records, the club nevertheless possesses a copy of statutes dated April 19th, 1839.

Novelty Launched by Swiss Watchmaking Firm

An important watchmaking factory has just launched a novelty in the shape of a watch having instantaneous seconds. In an ordinary watch the second finger moves five times per second. In the new watch, it only moves once per second. This new watch possesses the advantage of making it possible to obtain a more

exact reading of the time per second; it also makes possible very precise comparisons with all kinds of laboratory and navigation, and it will prove of the greatest service to doctors and nurses when taking a pulse, giving an anaesthetic, etc.

This result has been obtained by providing the watch with a meter which does away with the usual jerkiness of the finger and only allows it to move once per second.

Grock's Farewell to the Circus World

Adrien Wettach of Bienne (canton of Berne), the clown known all over the world by the name of Grock, has made his final exit from the ring. This famous Swiss artist, who is 74 years old, gave his last performance in Germany before an audience of some three thousand enthusiastic spectators, after 61 years of triumphant activity in the ring.

Grock stated that he will spend the winter in Italy and then come to live in Lausanne.

Switzerland's Main Fairs

Here are three dates to note for 1955: April 16th/26th, 39th Swiss Industries Fair at Basle; September 10th/25th, 36th Swiss Comptoir, Lausanne National Fair; October 6th/16th, Olma, the Swiss Agricultural and Dairy Products Fair at St. Gall. No decision has as yet been made concerning the date on which the Lugano Swiss Fair is to be held next year.

The 25th International Motor Show at Geneva, which ranks with the Motor Shows of Paris and London, will be held from March 10th to 20th, 1955. Plans are being made to include a retrospective exhibition of cars.

INCREASED WAGES OR SHORTER WORKING HOURS?

A Swiss political party, the Alliance of Independents, has launched a Popular Initiative, with the aim of obtaining a reduction in the length

of time worked in factories, from 48 to 44 hours per week. This Initiative, contrary to what one might have expected, is meeting with a mitigated approval, even on the part of the Trade Unions. Mr. Steiner, a National Councillor and President of the Federation of Swiss Trade Unions, expresses his opinion on this subject in the journal "La Lutte Syndicale." He considers that a reduction in working hours would only prove to be a social benefit if it were possible to carry it out without any loss in earnings, and if it would not hamper any future improvement in wages. Moreover, the moment for such action would appear to have been badly chosen. It is of primary importance that Switzerland should be in a position to defend her place on the world markets, and in order to be able to do so it is necessary for her to shorten delays in deliveries, which are apt to be prejudicial to her interests. At the present time, there are more than 100,000 foreign workers employed in this country and any reduction in working hours would result in this number being increased.

Mr. Steiner raises another argument. In his article, he writes that in a great many branches of commerce and of trade, and more especially in that of agriculture, the wage-earners are engaged in their work for more than 48 hours; this explains, by the way, why there is such a flight of man-power from the land, towards the urban centres. One must not, therefore, only think of the workers in industry, where the 48-hour week is established by law.

SWISS CHEMIST REVOLUTIONIZES THE IRAK ECONOMY

An idea born in the mind of a Swiss chemist is now proceeding to revolutionise the date-growing economy of Irak. This country, which is the greatest date producer in the world, frequently finds itself faced with the painful problem of over-production. This situation, which has been causing anxiety for some time past, both to the authorities and to the management of the great fruit-growing company, the Date Association, aroused the attention of Mr. Mohrlar, a Swiss professor of chemistry and head of the UNESCO's Mission for Technical Aid, in Irak, who discovered that while, on the one hand, Irak allowed thousands of tons of dates to go to waste each year, this country, on the other hand, was obliged to import 80,000 tons of sugar.

Dates, of course, contain 81 per cent. of sugar. Mr. Mohler, who was formerly the Director of the Municipal Laboratory in Zurich, knew all about the research work that had been done in Switzerland in regard to sugar derived from fruits. He also knew that only Switzerland possessed the necessary refinery installations suit-

able for production on an industrial scale. In co-operation with the fruit-growing company, he despatched three tons of dates to Switzerland and, a few weeks later, the Swiss laboratories sent back one tone of liquid date sugar.

This product immediately proved a great success in Bagdad, especially among the confectioners, who, in the East, are as important as are butchers in the West. The date industry has announced the creation of a first native refinery. Thus, the initiative of this Swiss chemist has not only started a new industry in Irak, but it will also contribute towards the solution of the distressing problem of date over-production, and, at the same time, of that pertaining to the under-nutrition of the Irak population.

OUR FATHERLAND

(By E.M.)

(Conclusion)

TICINO. (Second part.) To Locarno, which you reach from Lugano by first retracing to Bellinzona, a famous church is usually the first sight to visit: the Madonna del Sasso (or "Our Lady of the Rock"), perched on a spur of rock, between two ravines, 500 ft. above the lake. It is easily reached by a funicular and from the station a short pathway leads directly to the buildings. From the sunny terraces is an incomparable view of the town and across the lovely Lake Maggiore.

Locarno is a good deal quieter than Lugano, but it has nevertheless plenty to offer for visitors. It is only a short way to Ascona, the famous and most Bohemian of Swiss resorts, with a good beach and the best golf course in the canton. Originally a small fishing village it has kept its typical Tessin character, in spite of the large numbers of tourists flocking there annually. From Ascona, it is only a further step to Ronco, a charming and very picturesque village perched high up the hill, overlooking lake and the road leading to Brissago, the frontier town, well known to all Swiss for its famous cigar. And the same road leads to Stresa in Italy, where it is easy to visit the two lovely islands of Bella Isola and Isola Madre.

From Locarno one may visit the loveliest valley in the canton, the Maggia. A train runs to Bignasco—one of those small trains that seem to wander absent-mindedly through the streets, like a tram, until the suburbs are reached—and from Bignasco mounts the Val Luavizzara, the line more and more winding, until reaching the terminus of Fusio. If anyone wished to know what kind of village the people of 300 years ago beheld, go to Fusio and you will find an almost untouched specimen there.