

Hedy's corner

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N.Z. SWISS ABROAD REP. TO VISIT SWITZERLAND

Mr Arnold Biland, Editor-in-chief, and Mrs Biland, of Hedy's Corner fame, are departing for a four-month sojourn to Switzerland on May 23rd. We all wish them a most happy vacation and look forward to the time of their return home with the glowing stories of what has happened at the conference of the Swiss abroad and other stories of their well-deserved sojourn.

HEDY'S CORNER

NATIONAL SERVICE FOR SWISS WOMEN ?

(conclusion)

For what non-military tasks would those liable for service be trained and employed? We must be aware that the growing generation must take part in — and be involved in — the continuance of sound social and economic conditions in Switzerland. The aim is to strengthen the individual's commitment and responsibility for one another.

During the last war it was quite obvious that loyalty to the state was the prime requisite for survival. All efforts are to be made in this direction of instilling the feeling of caring for those in need: the sick, the invalids, the children, the aged. There is of course no lack of compassion and the means for relief are largely available. But at present there is a pathetic lack of helpers. This condition has deteriorated to such an extent that essential services cannot be offered any more. The civil air-raid precaution, help in natural disasters, agricultural work and help for peasants in alpine districts — all these would receive help from the conscripted work force.

Giving a hand and other small actions, executed conscientiously, can easily be given by Youth, even after short training and this all the more when there is a sense of dedication. The tasks can be widened in scope so that this service may in good time be welded to our state system.

As far as recruiting is concerned, it is advisable to conscript the girls at school leaving age and if possible before training for a profession or trade. The duration of such service would preferably be the same as that for military service of recruits. During the first few weeks all those conscripted would be living together as a community and during that time would be instructed in State Science, the study of social questions, an introduction to sick and child care. Next comes practical experience, if possible in groups. A difficulty will be to find tutors. These should not only be experts in their profession but should also possess a large measure of understanding and insight.

The national service is in no way conceived as a stop-gap where labour is scarce. To instil loyalty into the new generation toward

their country would be of paramount importance in this national service scheme.

Will Swiss women co-operate? We have faith in them. A well-known minister from Zürich, Mr P. Vogelsanger, made the following quotation: "There are still rich untapped sources of intellect, of efficiency, of insight, of ethos and of sensitivity to accomplish deeds of great credit in our world. We only have to look everywhere for these attributes and try to awaken them with encouragement". [Basel, March 1972]

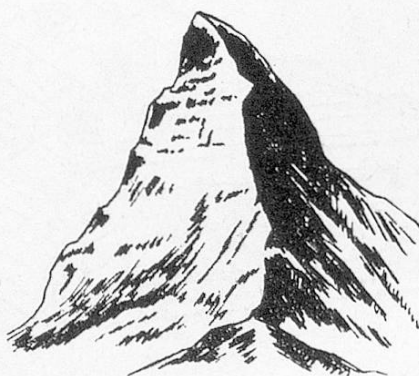
"Women's Lib" being the catchword today, it seems fitting to end this article on "National Service for Swiss Women" with a few words about its author, Dr Ruth Speiser. She accomplished about 50 years ago, the unheard of deed of "women's lib", a one-man victory against the then strictly male territory of jurisprudence, by being the first woman at Basel University to gain a doctor's degree as lawyer and barrister. She dared opening her own legal office but after five years had to close it again — doomed to be shattered by the rigid prejudice still reigning in the early twenties. She then became Counsellor and Clerk of Court at Basel, in the sector dealing with domestic affairs. She comes from a very large family where the males rose to high professional positions and the single girls also were university students. At seventy-nine years of age Dr. Speiser is still very active in the women's rights movement without however pushing herself into the front line of the political limelight. —H.B.

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