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Monthly Publication of the
SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY in New Zealand

Groupe New Zealand of the N.H.G.

WELLINGTON,
MARCH, 1942.

Vol. 6, 7th Year.

MR. PHILIP ETTER, STATESMEN, EDUCATOR, JOURNALIST AND NOTED FAMILY-MAN,
PRESIDENT OF SWITZERLAND FOR 1942.

Mr. Philip Etter, member of the Swiss Federal Council since 1934, and head of the Department of the Interior, has been elected President of Switzerland for the year 1942. Mr. Etter already held this high office in the year 1939.

The President-elect was born on December 21, 1891, in the small village of Menzingen, in the canton of Zug. He is the youngest of the seven Swiss Federal Councilors and the first representative in the Federal Council from one of the small forest cantons.

After attending the Cantonal Secondary School at Zug and the splendid College for Men at Einsiedeln, Mr. Etter studied law at the University of Zurich, later practicing this profession in Zug. After acting for five years as head of the Zug department of education, he was in 1922 nominated member of that canton's government. Already from 1918 on Mr. Etter was member of the Zug assembly. In 1927 and again in 1928 he was elected Landammann or President of his canton. Finally, since 1930, Mr. Philip Etter belonged to the Zug state Senate and since March 1934 to the Federal Council.

Upon his entry into the cantonal government Mr. Etter became head of the department of education. He is the author of a law on the re-organization of the Cantonal Secondary School and is consequently not only an eminent lawyer, but also a prominent educator. The course in law and economics which he taught for a number of years in the School of Agriculture at Zug attracted public attention, and several school manuals of which he is the author are used in the Catholic Swiss Cantons.

So versatile is Mr. Etter that in addition to being a lawyer, statesman and educator, he is a newspaper man as well, having been editor of the Zuger Nachrichten and President of the Catholic Press Association. He is a real old-fashioned Swiss, yet a man with distinctly progressive ideas which he set forth in a widely read brochure entitled "The Swiss Democracy", wherein he reveals his modern tendencies. This work was published by the Association of Swiss Students. In his home canton Etter has presided over the Catholic-Conservative party and he also was adviser to the Young Catholics.

Lover for his native land and its traditions, coupled with deeply religious convictions, made of Mr. Etter a statesman who has contributed much to religious accord which he deems one of the foremost necessities for the happiness of the Swiss people.

Mr. Etter, who has a sparkling temperament and is an eloquent speaker, is an ardent sponsor of simple and quiet family life. He himself is the father of five sons and five daughters and takes pride in his responsibilities as such. A typical illustration of his endearing qualities as a husband and father may be

gleaned from the fact that when vacation time came in pre-war summers, he hired nothing less than a Federal Postal Motor Coach to take his attractive wife and ten children all together to their holiday abode near Unterägeri in his native canton of Zug.

As an able citizen Mr. Etter, who incidentally does not consume any alcohol, belongs to the Swiss Army, holding in the same the rank of Major of Infantry.

Since his election into the Federal Council, Mr. Etter has done a great deal for the intellectual and artistic development of Switzerland and the preservation of the nation's political and cultural heritage. As head of the Swiss nation in the fateful year of 1939 he gave eloquent proof of his many fine qualities, his fervent patriotism and his great skill in steering the ship of state. The hard-pressed Swiss people feel therefore confident that Mr. Etter will again be a distinguished President during the year 1942.

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SWISS NEWS SUMMARY.

Federal Councillor Dr. Stampfli spoke on the 23rd November, 1941, on Switzerland's position in the third winter of war. He maintained that while the Swiss citizen was not expected to give up his personal rights and to submit to dictatorship, yet certain restrictions, particularly with regard to freedom of speech and the press, had become necessary in order not to upset relations with the belligerent parties. Today Switzerland's trade position was more difficult than it had been in 1914-1918; the fall of France had exposed all Swiss frontiers to the German counter-blockade. Nevertheless, continued Dr. Stampfli, Switzerland was trying to maintain trade relations with the whole world and to be fair to both sides. Switzerland had made serious efforts to obtain certain relaxations of the counter-blockade in England's favour. If the agreement had caused disappointment in London, that was not Switzerland's fault, she had done everything in her power. The speaker concluded with an appeal to the Swiss to put all their energy into their work, to save and not to lose faith in the future.

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The fourth Federal loan to cover the cost of mobilisation and the future requirements of finance had an unexpected good result, although the interest conditions are extraordinarily low. For the 100 millions 2½% Treasury bonds asked for, 250 millions were offered and instead of the 250 millions 3¼% stock required, 325 millions were subscribed. In view of this readiness to invest, the Federal Council has increased the Treasury bond issue to 270 millions and the stock to 320 millions.

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Almost as a completion of the turnover tax which came into force a few weeks ago, now an increase of the war profits tax has just been announced. The tax free limit has been lowered and the tax increased. The tax which up to now was 30 and 40% on the increased profits has now been put up to 50 and 70%. This increase will come into force already in the present tax period.

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After many years of deliberations which have been retarded by the war, the Federal Assembly has recently completed a law which will liquidate the indebtedness of farms which are vitally sound, but overburdened by debts. This is to be done with the assistance of the Confederation and especially drawn-up legislation. The share of the Confederation to which are to be added contributions by the cantons and certain debt remissions by the creditors, has been fixed at 100 millions Swiss francs. This amount will be paid into a debt remission fund in yearly instalments of 5 millions for 20 years and although the date for the coming into force of the law has not yet been fixed, the first instalment of the share of the Confederation is to be taken into the budget for 1942.

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The inhabitants of the Hinter Rheintal in the Grisons like those in the Urserental in the canton of Uri, are fighting against the project of a power works which would submerge completely the villages of Splügen Medels and Nufenen. At an extra-ordinary "Landsgemeinde" at which 79% of those entitled to vote took part, it was decided to oppose with all means possible the building of this work and they have called for the assistance of the cantonal Government. Even the promises of ample compensation and new settlements under the most advantageous conditions can persuade neither the people of the Grisons, nor of Uri to let their old homes be drowned in the reservoirs of the power works.