

Sundry news from Switzerland

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The proposal of the "Maritime Suisse" is made under the pre-supposition that the Swiss Mercantile Fleet will continue to exist after this war is over. Experience after the last world-war gives rise to the opinion that the shortage of shipping tonnage immediately after the present conflict will be even more acute than it is now. The proposition also contains details regarding the financing of such a scheme with the help of the Swiss Government, and it is maintained that such a procedure would enable the cost to be reduced to 700 frs. per ton.

This raises the whole question of whether the present Swiss Mercantile Fleet should be regarded as a purely temporary arrangement, or whether, after the war, Switzerland should join the sea-faring nations regardless of the fact that we have no outlet to the sea. The "Maritime Suisse" inclines to the latter view but points out that it will be necessary to build special types of ships for the transport of grain and fuel only.

SWISS-GERMAN TRADE TALKS FAIL.

According to the "Associated Press" the negotiations which have been going on for several months between Switzerland and Germany, for the drawing up of a new Trade Agreement, have come to an end without any result.

SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

In the course of lectures on political science delivered in Solothurn, the President of the Federal Council, spoke on the cultural policy of the Federal Council. He pointed out that the basis of Swiss culture was the free Swiss. Great importance therefore attached to the Council's policy of respecting the rights, the honour and freedom of the individual. The second pillar of Swiss culture was the Swiss family. Equal importance devolved upon local government. In no other country was the autonomy of the community developed to such an extent as in Switzerland. The main task of the Council was not to unify the spiritual life of the country but to defend and foster its cultural riches. Wherever necessary cultural activities led by private initiative or local authorities should be aided by the Federal Council. The quadrilingual Confederation had never yet experienced a divergency over the language question; this was a proof of the unifying quality of the Swiss spirit. The President referred to the peaceful co-operation between Church and State and the cultural importance of the Church. "Peace between Church and State and between the various creeds must under all circumstances be maintained."

When the whole story about the "unchaining" of war prisoners will be told we shall realise that the Swiss diplomatic representatives in the two capitals concerned have scored a notable victory.

The Council of the Association of the Swiss towns (Schweizerischer Staedteverband) dealt with prices and wages at its meeting on 24th November. Professor Boehler of the Swiss Technical Academy in Zurich attended the session. The Council strongly advocated relative stabilisation of prices, maximum co-ordination of the actual income between industry and agriculture, in particular a regulation of the problem of peasants with small holdings, and further development of social welfare and especially of public health services. The following information was given on this year's vegetable crop. According to preliminary estimates, this year's potato harvest amounts to 125,000 wagons of ten tons each, as against 81,000 wagons in 1938. This rich harvest has to be stored in various parts of the country, so as to permit a speedy distribution whenever the need should arise. The production of vegetables before the war amounted to about 23,000 wagons, while approximately 6,000 wagons of vegetables were imported. This year's vegetable harvest is estimated at about 50,000 to 60,000 wagons. The area under vegetable cultivation has been nearly doubled since 1940.

The compulsory notification or registration of empty houses and flats has been introduced in Basle.

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A number of soldiers were seriously injured on November 13th during exercises with flame-throwers in the region of Sotto-Ceneri. Two of them have since died.

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The preparatory work for providing employment during and after the war period is today so well advanced, that one may safely say that never, since the state has undertaken the combating of a crisis, has our country been so well prepared to meet it. The directions of the Federal Council for the great planing contain the principle, that the Confederation, in connection with the cantons and with private enterprise, will undertake measures to combat unemployment if, and when, private enterprise is unable to provide of its own efforts sufficient employment possibilities. Work is now under survey to the amount of 5,100 million francs. In this sum, the cantons are shouldering projects amounting to 1,000 millions, the Federal Railways are interested with 760 millions, the share of private transport institutions is 250 millions, Post, Telegraph and Telephone have projects costing 420 millions, road making will amount to 500 millions, and melioration programs require 800 millions. Further measures are planed for the Export industry, the Hotel industry and agriculture. This gigantic program will of course not be started all at once, but will be translated into action when and as required by the necessity of providing work and thus preventing a crisis, and in the framework of the financial possibilities.

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In order to stretch the continually diminishing stocks of wool and cotton for textile purposes, the Swiss Viscose Society which already holds a leading position on the Continent for the manufacture of artificial silk has, with the assistance of the Federal exchequer taken up the making of artificial wool (Zellwolle) from cellulose. The annual import of 30 million kg. of cotton and 10 million kg. of wool fell in 1941 to 21 million kg. of cotton and 5 million kg. of wool and for more than a year navycerts for the import of cotton could not be obtained. The result was a great restriction of manufacture and the prospect of a total stoppage in the Swiss textile industry with its 150,000 employees. The new factories, which manufacture a high quality fibre are producing annually 10 million kg. of cellulose wool, which is mixed with wool or cotton, but is also used spun or woven by itself. The fabric is distinguished by an even fibre which dyes very evenly and by a special process can be made non-creasing and waterproof. The cellulose fabrics are, with all these advantages, considerably cheaper than woollen or cotton goods and no doubt will be able to hold their own for certain purposes, even when the possibilities of import are again restored.

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The town authorities of Geneva have placed the former Hotel Carlton, free of all charges, at the disposal of the Section for children's aid of the Swiss Red Cross, as a home for those children from the war ravaged countries who are coming to Switzerland for a three months stay. On October 20th, 800 children from the unoccupied part of France stayed as first guests at the big house, which in memory of the founder of the Red Cross, Henry Dunant, is now called Henry Dunant Home. From this home the children are distributed to the respective families who have offered to receive them. In the last seven months already 25,000 children from belligerent countries have come into our country for a long convalescence.

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OBITUARY.

Mr. Hans Freimann - died 1st March, 1943, Hawera.

In a quiet, peaceful corner of the churchyard at Hawera, our old and dear friend Hans Freimann has now found his last resting place, near his two good comrades, Hans K  chler (1937) and Paul Zimmerman (1941) who preceded him thither.

A great many of his friends and acquaintances were present at his funeral and there were few of his fellow-countrymen in the Taranaki district who were unable