

The food situation in Switzerland

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THE FOOD SITUATION IN SWITZERLAND.

Extract from a report of Dr. Walter Stampfli,
Federal Councillor, 19th December, 1946.

In autumn 1945, the food situation in Switzerland has depreciated to a minimum. During the winter 1945/46 a much needed, although slight, improvement was shown; but at the end of this year (1946) the position has reverted to that of autumn 1945. Our present rations are reduced to bare necessities and are much lower than those of, for instance, U.S.A., Canada, Australia, Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, France, Belgium, Holland and Norway. There can be no question of a privileged food situation in our country.

The stocks of grain reached the lowest level since 1939. Since the 1st June, 1946, the Swiss people have to be satisfied with the small ration of 225 grammes ($\frac{1}{2}$ lb.) of bread a day, and 500 grammes (1 lb. 2 oz.) of Italian Paste products a month which is considerably below the normal consumption. According to information in our possession all the other countries - except Germany and Austria - are appreciably better off. If a fundamental amelioration of the international allocations does not take place in the immediate future, conditions in our country will be extremely critical.

There is no doubt about the present prevailing deficiency of fats and oil the world over, but it does not justify Switzerland's place at the tail end as is the case under this year's system of international allocations. Switzerland receives to-day about half the quantities she used to get before the war, whereas other countries (and not only those that were actually damaged during the war) received 60 to 100% of their pre-war consumption.

Scarcely two-thirds of the meat consumption of the Swiss population could be supplied by home production in 1946, and this will be the case again in 1947. Here too, despite the fact that heavily producing countries like, for instance, Denmark, would be willing to supply us, we are up against an attitude on the part of the international allocations board which it is difficult to comprehend.

The cuts in milk and cheese show the difficulties that our authorities have to face in regard to milk and milk products. In 1946 the only butter we received was 1,300 tons from Denmark, whereas during the same period England received from that country alone 50,000 tons.

RADIO LISTENERS: Information has been received that in future the broadcasts from Schwarzenburg will be presented on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 7 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. (N.Z. time) on the wave length 25.28 meters with 100 kilowatts and on 25.61 meters with 25 kilowatts.

For sugar we have to use emergency stocks in order to keep up the present small allocation. Our application to the international alimentation authorities for an additional allowance has been rejected, despite the fact that our quota reached only 55% of pre-war consumption, whereas U.S.A. received 83%, Great Britain and Canada 75% each. Even countries supplied in co-operation with UNRRA like Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania received 59% of their pre-war consumption. Countries with lower purchasing rights than Switzerland are only Austria and Finland with 41 and 38% respectively.

After this review Mr. Stampfli declares that:

(1) The allocations of important and even indispensable goods that Switzerland receives are below the limits imposed by the prevailing deficiencies in the world.

(2) For various goods Switzerland received either no purchasing right at all, or an uncertain one; on the other hand allocations often came too late, and the goods were no longer available on the respective markets.

(3) With a few exceptions, which we thankfully recognise, our country was assigned sources of supply which were often expensive, unfavourable in so far as freight is concerned, frequently uncertain, or some times the assignments were not workable. No consideration has been given either to our traditional sources of supply, or to our own valuable deliveries.

(4) In cases where purchasing possibilities have been freed in general, and there should have been a likelihood of obtaining deliveries, it was discovered that large countries had assured for themselves sole purchasing rights for the goods by long term contracts.

Mr. Stampfli comments that as a result of this allocation practice we had to pay higher prices.

The question arises why this harmful distinction should be inflicted on us despite the fact that we are placing willingly our production, as well as capital, in the service of reconstruction (external credits) and of international goodwill organizations (Red Cross, Swiss Donations etc.) instead of using our production and capital for bargaining, move by move, so as to receive the maximum in supplies.

Visitors to our country may have gained a wrong impression from the excellent service in our hotels, forgetting that the hotel industry in Switzerland is a very important part of our economy and has, therefore, to maintain a certain standard. These visitors often indulge in generalizing, and it is the belief of quite a number of Swiss experts that this fact may have prejudiced the case of Switzerland. Furthermore, the absence of long queues of buyers, the well assorted windows, the careful planning of reserves in order to exclude interruptions in supply through strikes, political troubles and others, the absence of a "black market" of any importance, are deceiving since they are indicative of plentiful provisions and of security.

For a long period we also made the mistake of providing visitors with ample coupons which left the impression that there were no supply difficulties in the country. These well intentioned mistakes have now been rectified. We anticipate that finally the competent authorities of other countries will no longer consider us as the "privileged" of the war, whose belt should yet be tightened in the third post war year.

We claim no more than to be treated as an equal when allocations are made.