

News from Switzerland

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **16 (1951)**

Heft [1]

PDF erstellt am: **08.08.2024**

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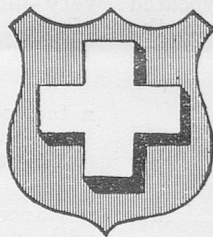
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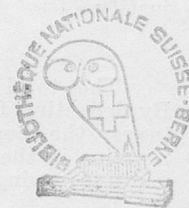
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HELVETIA

MONTHLY
PUBLICATION
OF THE



SWISS BENEVOLENT
SOCIETY IN
NEW ZEALAND (INC.)



GROUP NEW ZEALAND OF THE NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY

n 16. Jahr

VOL. 13, 15th YEAR.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 1951.

AUCKLAND.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

The Swiss watchmaking industry is made up of nearly 2500 concerns employing more than 48,000 workers (by way of comparison, the metallurgical industry employs some 55,000, the machinery industry 116,000). The part played by the watchmaking industry in Switzerland's foreign trade is considerable since it exports 95 per cent. of its output, or 20 per cent. of Switzerland's total exports. From 1920 to 1949 the watchmaking industry exported its products to the value of about 9,000,000,000 francs. Of all Swiss industries it is the one that employs the greatest manpower in relation to the quantity of raw materials used.

At the beginning of the year the Swiss population was estimated at 4,650,000 inhabitants. Five towns have more than 100,000 inhabitants at the moment: they are Zurich (385,000), Basle (182,000), Geneva (148,000), Berne (143,000) and Lausanne (106,000). On an average more than 7000 babies are born alive each month, and deaths amount to an average to between 3000 and 4000 per month. Thus births exceed deaths by about 3000.

The very low death-rate is explained by the fight waged against the diseases of old age and particularly by the scale of the fight against tuberculosis. As a matter of fact, deaths due to this disease have decreased by almost a quarter as compared with last year.

The importance of the port of Basle is shown by the fact, not generally well known, that more than a third of Switzerland's imports pass through the Rhine port of Basle, and that a third of her exports take the same route. During the month of September last, goods handled totalled some 386,000 tons, carried by more than 800 ships. In the first three-quarters of this year, 2½ millions tons of goods passed through this port.

The activity of the Swiss metallurgical and machinery industries was on the decline during the first months of the year. It became steadier during the course of the second quarter, then recovered very definitely during the third quarter. This recovery was made apparent by an increase in the number of workers employed in metallurgical concerns and by the fact that orders are often easier to obtain than the raw materials with which to carry them out. The amount of orders in hand at the moment makes it possible to conclude that this is not merely a temporary improvement. The programme of strengthening national defence has, as a

matter of fact, not yet had time to have any effect on the industrial situation; furthermore, Switzerland's adherence to the European Payments Union, from which we may expect favourable results, has also not yet made its influence felt in this field.

DO YOU KNOW THAT . . .

It takes 2400 distinct operations to manufacture a Swiss watch. Each of the operations is checked and doubled checked by the famed Swiss watchmakers. They are exact by measurement to one tenthousandth of a millimeter!

The balance wheel of a Swiss watch spins 18,000 times an hour, almost half a million times a day, or the equivalent to ten miles. A well-made watch may go a quarter of a century without replacement of a single part—if properly looked after.

During this time, then, the balance wheel alone will have travelled more than 90,000 miles.

A good Swiss watch has 180 parts of which the smallest looks like a speck of dust to the naked eye. This is a tiny screw, threaded and finely polished. It measures four thousandths of an inch in diameter, and 50,000 of them will fit into an ordinary thimble!

The watch factory "Longines" has created a new apparatus for starting competitions; it transmits by wireless the starting signal and registers the finish on a film with a precision of one hundredth of a second.

The Cook Travel Agency has published statistics according to which winter holidays in Switzerland are 4 per cent. cheaper than in France, and 23 per cent. cheaper than in Italy.

Switzerland is to complete Europe's most up-to-date television station with a picture quality 50 per cent. superior to the B.B.C.'s present transmission.

A Swiss firm has compelled an apparatus to sterilize the water through ozone. The results obtained are absolutely satisfactory. The first installation of this kind has received various foreign visitors.

Delegates numbering 250 from Swiss colonies abroad gathered in Lausanne to discuss problems of interest to the "Auslandschweizer." Questions such as Swiss

citizenship and old age insurance were debated, as well as voting rights for the Swiss abroad. The President of the "Auslandschweizer-Werk" once again advocated the complete exemption of the Swiss abroad from the military tax, which causes more harm than the returns justify.

The total income in 1949, reached Sfr.15 billions. By deducting from that sum the amount of direct income taxes, the net individual income, i.e., the sum which remains in the hands of the consumers for their personal use and savings, amounts to Sfr.14 billions.

The Swiss Federal Railways have ordered two railcars to be used specially for excursions. The armchairs will be mobile. There will be a buffet, bar, and dancing floor lit with fluorescent lighting, and a hot-air heating system. The maximum speed will be 125 km. per hour.

Anyone who is not quite familiar with the business done by Switzerland, can to a certain extent form an opinion on

"Switzerland as a business factor"

when he learns that this is a country which in 1949 imported goods in 700,000 truck loads of 10 tons for 3.8 milliard Swiss francs, but exported goods in only 50,000 truck loads, but valued at 3.4 milliard Swiss francs, i.e., for every 14 trucks of imports there is 1 truck exports, or

for 1 franc worth of imports no less than 8 francs worth of exports was made:

Switzerland had to pay Fr. 190.—for each ton of goods imported, whilst foreign countries had to pay about Fr. 1500.—for the same weight of Swiss manufactures.

Switzerland is also a country which in 1949 exported not only chocolate, cheese, cattle and textiles, but, besides 700 million francs for watches and watchparts, over 1 milliard francs for machines, apparatus and instruments; which with an export figure of Fr. 215.—per head of the population was already at the head of all countries, and now with Fr. 745.—is more intensely devoted to export trade than any other country in the world;

which has therefore had to work up to become a great

workshop for specialities,

in connection with products, of which up to 75 and more per cent., indeed up to 95 and 98 per cent. of the production of the particular branch has to be exported.

And all this activity is displayed by the inhabitants of a country which is poor in raw materials, has no colonies of its own, is only connected to the oceans by the 1000-kilometer waterway of the Rhine, and whose 4.5 million inhabitants live and work on one twelve-thousandths of the earth's surface, 23 per cent. of the land being in addition unfruitful.

In this most

over-populated land in the world,

the building of machines, apparatus and instruments forms the centre of industrial activity. Judged from the number of persons engaged in manufacturing enterprises, and also from the equipment with motorised power, the Swiss metal and engineering industries form the most significant group of Swiss industries. Over 20 per cent. of all manufacturing services fall within this group, which employs about 35 per cent. of all factory workers. Its exports form about 30 per cent. of all Swiss exports. We have here consequently a pronounced export industry,

which exports about 70 per cent. of the value of its production. Although the whole industrial group works very highly capitalised, nevertheless some 60 per cent. of the production value is devoted to staff expenses. The high proportion of workers is to be attributed to the

exclusively high-grade performances,

a fact confirmed by statistics, which show that there are four workmen to each salaried employee and about eight workmen to each technician.

In view of the figures, it was of the greatest importance for Switzerland that the metal industry, together with makers of machines and apparatus, should already during the war years make every preparation to diminish difficulties in connection with production and change-over in the post-war period. Up to now they have succeeded not only in maintaining the volume of production but even in increasing it.

The great dependence on home markets during the war years did not prevent manufacturers from making every effort to resume

connections with the world's markets.

This country was from early times compelled to endeavour to produce goods of the highest quality, not only because of its land-locked situation, but still more because of its lack of raw materials. But a constant stimulant to higher quality was especially the necessity of suiting Swiss industrial products as far as possible to the various requirements of purchasers scattered over the whole world.

The Swiss engineering industry has actually been in existence since the beginning of last century. In 1807 the first spinning machine was built at Zurich. One of the next branches of manufacture was the building of waterwheels for driving machine tools. Soon afterwards, marine steam engines were built in this country, whilst the next step was marked by the construction of high- and low-lift pumps, as well as compressors. In 1834 an iron foundry was established at Winterthur, and from this a second centre of the Swiss engineering industry later developed. Then, after having built steam boilers, the building of steam engines was taken up.

Gradually, from modest beginnings, from the small workshop to larger and larger works, an industrial activity developed that is big for Swiss conditions. The steam age brought Switzerland always more and more closely into contact with other countries, and for many a merchant or technician the homeland became too narrow; nowadays no fewer than about 500,000 Swiss live abroad. They emigrated and created pioneer posts in centres of international trade and served the firms of their homeland as correspondents and agents. Those who sought new fields of activity in this manner were by no means mediocre, but on the contrary strong and initiative persons; emigration was particularly great during last century. In every case they were able to establish connections which became of decisive importance for the later industrial successes of Switzerland.

Subsequently the exchange of ideas between Switzerland and other countries was greatly extended by the excellent reputation of the Swiss technical institutions, especially of the Federal Institute of Technology at Zurich. Many a foreign student, having attained honour and influence in his homeland, will recall the excursions of his student days which introduced him to large and small Swiss industrial undertakings.

With but few exceptions, the manufacturing development of the Swiss engineering industry was accomplished by the separate firms endeavouring to extend their production activities more and more, in order to work on a broader and more versatile basis and thus be less dependent on the fluctuations occurring in any particular branch. Strictly limited specialising came into question only for machines with good marketing possibilities,

particularly abroad. Today even the biggest firms manufacture several very different products, although most of them devote special attention to some particular branch. The rest of the work serves more or less as a balance to establish an even rate of employment.

Swiss spinning frames and looms, which formed the starting point of the engineering industry in that country, became in time world famous. Exactly in this field, engineering construction and fine mechanics could supplement each other. Clear proofs of this are the automatic looms, winding machines of the rayon industry, different auxiliary apparatus for rendering looms automatic and for mechanising preparatory work. Worthy of appreciation also is the work done by the Swiss engineering industry in connection with traffic means, e.g., steam, diesel-electric and gas-turbine locomotives, marine diesel engines and motor lorries. The big Swiss machines for utilising water power and generating electric energy have a world-wide reputation, as have also the numerous apparatus for the transmission, conversion and application of electric power. Also worthy of mention are big pumps, as well as special machines for metal and wood-working, for the processing of foodstuffs, for agriculture, etc.

The Swiss engineering industry is distributed all over the country, although there are some more important centres of concentration. First of all comes the Canton of Zurich, then the towns of Baden, Aarau, Basle and Geneva. Important in eastern Switzerland are St. Gallen, Uzwil and Arbon; in the neighbourhood of the Lake of Zurich, Horgen and Ruti; in the Jura, central Switzerland and Schaffhausen, particularly foundries and rolling-mills are to be found. Especially in the machine-tool branch, quite a number of important makers are situated in districts away from the bigger industrial centres; they bring special products on the market, which are also highly esteemed abroad.

NEWS OF THE COLONY

The Swiss Colony of Auckland had the privilege recently to meet the new Consul, Mr. H. Blanchard, and his charming wife. About 25 members greeted the new arrivals, and judging by the animated conversation, everyone enjoyed the evening greatly. We Aucklanders trust we have the pleasure of seeing Mr. and Mrs. Blanchard frequently and we wish to extend our cordial good wishes for their welfare.

In September, 1950, issue of the "Helvetia" it was stated that 28 Swiss people had arrived in New Zealand since the beginning of the year. It will interest readers to know that the total number of Swiss nationals, including wives and children, who immigrated to New Zealand from January 1st, 1950, to December 31st, 1950, reached 54. These compatriots are scattered all over the country, mostly, however, on the North Island. Unfortunately this factor makes it difficult, if not impossible, for some of these people to meet other compatriots. It is hoped that all Swiss nationals, and particularly the ones who are not in contact with other compatriots, will subscribe to the "Helvetia," which will become to a certain extent a link between the Swiss in New Zealand. A warm welcome is extended to all new arrivals, and we trust that through their labour and endeavours they finally will meet with success.

Children's Christmas Celebration in Wellington.

A children's Christmas party, sponsored by the Swiss Ladies' Group of Wellington, was held December 19th at the home of Mrs. Brulisauer. Eight children, accompanied by their mothers, were present.

Fortunately it was a grey day, so that the large Christmas tree with the many-coloured candles could brighten the room and the little hearts with some Christmas spirit. As all the children were gathered, Mrs. Oesch read them the Anderson Tale of the first Christmas tree. Afterwards the huge ice-cream cake had to be eaten before it all melted away, so the children had a jolly time sitting around the table and devouring the many tasty cakes and other savouries, which their kind hostess had prepared. Meanwhile Father Christmas had got ready and just came down the stairs as the children were leaving the table. He called one by one and after a little scolding and praising on their behaviour—as Father Christmas must do—he handed each a nice present. Now it was the children's turn to give something. Starting off by singing some Christmas carols, the programme had begun. Each knew something, be it a piece on the piano or on the flute, or a poem or a song. Because there were wonderful, large balloons decorating the lounge and each was given one for good recital they started to outdo one another, for their were still more balloons hanging from the walls. Ronney Schlatter out-talked them all with the many poems he could so well recite. So the afternoon went over only too quickly and after little Michele Brulisauer in her sweet, cheerful way bade everybody "A very merry Christmas to you all," the party broke up with pleasant memories to take home.

A LIGHTNING VISIT FROM THE U.S. TO SWITZERLAND

Miss Phyllis Battelle belongs to the New York "International News Service" team; her speciality is fashions and New York society. It will be interesting to read her comments on the night life of Zurich. Americans are reputed always to be wanting to be "going places and doing things," and Miss Battelle, true to this principle, went with many of her colleagues to see the American National Ballet, which at the time was giving guest performances in Zurich. This was followed by a brief call at a dance club on the way back to the hotel. In Zurich, places of amusement close at midnight, and this regulation had the advantage of leaving the visitors, who are accustomed to being up and about until two or three o'clock in the morning, time to look through the copious literature placed at their disposal by the Swiss National Tourist Office. The zeal for work and the promptness and punctuality of these newspaper people is altogether amazing. When European journalists find themselves swamped with new impressions they try to collect and incorporate them in general reports; their American colleagues cable their impressions home whilst they are still warm and vivid.

As we stood together admiring the sweeping view from the Pilatus, we were not able to tell the well-known columnist Marquis W. Childs anything he did not already know about the history and constitution of Switzerland. One might have thought that his knowledge of Switzerland would be limited to the usual tourist clichés. Nothing of the sort! His impressions of the country are not less closely concerned with the people and institutions of Switzerland. The other prominent columnist from Washington, Frederic Othman, likewise evinced keen interest in the Swiss as living people. It was altogether striking how receptive these Americans were to all the little courtesies that are part of Swiss everyday life, and, in the aggregate, constitute a large sum of satisfaction and inward harmony. The ticket-collector on the train, for instance, who readily joins in a little private conversation in English without on that account neglecting his duty; the waitress who wishes you a "good appetite"; the Horgen stationmaster's