

News of the colony

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has to be done is to connect Lake Lemman (Lake of Geneva) with the Lake of Neuchatel by means of a navigable watercourse, which would comprise numerous locks and two tunnels, to construct the necessary ports and to make the River Aar navigable between the Lake of Biemme and the Rhine. The cost of all this work would require approximately 350 million francs, to cover it.

Swiss Textile Industry in 1953

During the course of last year, exports of the products of the Swiss textile industry attained a high level which had never been reached before. Indeed, these exports exceeded by 10 per cent. the figures for 1951, in spite of the fact that this was a very prosperous year. With a total of 852 million Swiss francs, they represent one-sixth of the value of all Swiss exports.

The increase since 1952 has been considerable. It is to be observed more especially in regard to exports of fabrics, embroideries, ready-to-wear clothing and knitted wear. On the other hand, exports of yarns have shown an inclination to remain stationary. This is not due to any lack of marketing possibilities, but to the high level of occupation in the Swiss weaving mills, which have absorbed the greater part of yarn production.

Germany is Switzerland's chief customer in most branches of her textile industry. But, this country also sells a large quantity of silk fabrics and synthetic yarns to Sweden, South Africa and Australia.

Nineteen hundred and fifty-three has also proved an excellent year for the Swiss embroidery industry, which has witnessed an increase of 10 per cent. in respect of its exports. This increase is due to a far from negligible extent to sales of silk embroideries, which are enjoying, more especially in Germany, a recrudescence of favour on the part of Dame Fashion.

The two principal customers for Swiss embroideries are the United States of America and Germany, the two of them absorbing more than a quarter of Swiss exports.

Innovation in Textile Technics

A Swiss undertaking has just completed the manufacture of a gadget which marks any defect in weaving, dyeing or the printing of tissues, and thus brings with it a revolution in this domain. It is customary for any defects in weaving, dyeing and even in finishing to be marked by a thread passed through the selvedge of the fabric. Up to the present this work has been done exclusively by hand, and has constituted a complicated operation which took up a great deal of time and absorbed a considerable portion of

manpower. This new apparatus makes it possible to do this work ten to twelve times more quickly.

Swiss Retail Trade at the End of 1953

An increase of 3 per cent. in the volume of Swiss retail trade, as compared with the fourth quarter of 1952, was registered at the end of last year. Practically all branches of trade participated in this improvement, but to a varying degree. Thus, sales of textile goods and of clothing show an increase of 5 per cent. in comparison with the preceding year, whereas sales of foodstuffs have only gone up by 2 per cent. Progress is to be reported, also, in respect of the sale of lasting consumer goods, and this is attributed to the development which has occurred in respect of house building. Nevertheless, competition is making itself felt to an increasing extent and it manifests itself chiefly through the greater number of purchases made on credit or on the instalment plan.

Degree of Occupation in Swiss Industry.

The degree of occupation has gone up still higher in the textile industry and work is assured in these undertakings for several months. In so far as the manufacture of means for production is concerned, a slight increase in the number of orders was observed towards the end of the year, which fact must be attributed to a large extent to the efforts made to rationalise industrial plants. Taken as a whole, however, delays in deliveries have been somewhat shortened, thus making it possible for Swiss factories to put up a better fight against competition on foreign markets.

Activity of Building Industry

Activities in the building industry and in that specialising in the construction of housing units became still more intense during the fourth quarter of 1953. The output of this branch of trade surpasses by 2 per cent. that for the previous year. Nevertheless, the available housing continues to be insufficient and the number of building licences issued during 1953 increased by the astounding amount of 31 per cent.

NEWS OF THE COLONY

Swiss Social Club, Taranaki

The Swiss Social Club's picnic, 1954, was held at Te Ngutu Park, Okiawa, on February 20th, and an attendance of about 300 people marked the great popularity of this annual event.

We had the honour of having with us Miss B. Blunk, Heiden, Switzerland, who is on a world tour, and has been visiting New Zealand. It was an excellent opportunity for her to meet the maximum number of Swiss people on a single occasion.

Quite a number of different sports were practised in a picnic-like fashion; races for children and young people, nail-driving, etc. The highlight of the sports, however, was the competition for the Swiss Social Club Challenge Cup for the old Swiss fashion "Steistossen." An ordinary stone of about 30 lbs. weight was used and some excellent feats were recorded. Quite a bit of practice must have been done all over the country, because the improvement from last year was considerable. I am sure that next year will hold some more surprises in store for us; with plenty of practice it does not need a big man to put up a record. This year's winners were:—

John Kuriger, Oaonui, winner of the Cup.

A. Muller, Eltham, second prize, £1.

Fr. Gwerder, Opunake, third prize, 10/-.

A very pleasing sight also was the numerous youngsters of all ages who enjoyed the free ice creams, lolly scrambles and so forth; and last, but not least, the music for all. "Alphornblasen," accordion and "Fahnenschwingen" de luxe, as you could not see it any better in dear old Switzerland on an "Aelplerkilbi." "Auf Wiedersehen" and "Wiederhoren" in 1955.

J.W.R.

"SWITZERLAND AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION"

Since the end of the war, and at an increasingly accelerated rhythm, the countries of Western Europe have been striving, during these last few years, to become organised, to pool certain of their preoccupations, and to solve certain problems not solely on the European plan but on that of the Continent. These tendencies are becoming all the more affirmative, because our Old World fears the Soviet imperialism and because its obligated ally, the United States, expects from its partner, in exchange for the material and military aid which it grants, that measures should be taken for its organisation and, even, integration.

Face to face with these new events, Switzerland's position is not an easy one. Speaking objectively, it may be said that the citizens of this country find themselves divided between contradictory sentiments or convictions. On the one hand, their attachment to the traditional neutrality of the Swiss Confederation is very real and profound, knowing the truth of the fact that fidelity to this principle has constituted during a

century and a half—and over a still longer period—one of the essential safeguards of our independence. On the other hand, there are a great number of our citizens who have a great desire to see Europe surmount its traditional divisions and once more recover its strength, autonomy and independence in a close union of those elements of which it is composed. Nor, can it be disguised that Switzerland can only live and subsist within a world which resembles her and which demands for itself identical values. One may even go so far as to say that Swiss neutrality will become so much the more of a reality if it can find support in a strong and healthy world, and not in a weakened Continent, whose part in the direction of world affairs declines with each day.

All this will show that the European situation and its evolution raises a number of questions in our country. And, as you are aware, foreign countries are also interested in our attitude which they do not always understand and ask themselves whether, sooner or later, we will not perhaps have to attenuate it in a number of respects. Others even go so far as to wish that we will make a definite change in our attitude.

Thus, it was not without serious reasons that our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Federal Councillor Petitpierre, Head of the Federal Political Department, took the opportunity at a recent Parliamentary debate to make a clear statement on Switzerland's position in regard to European integration. And, we would hasten to add that his declaration—which was of particular interest in that it came after a long silence—obtained the practically unanimous approval of Parliament, only a few Communist deputies opposing the Government's point of view. However, their remarks are listened to less than ever.

In his statement, Monsieur Petitpierre remained faithful to the formula which he has never ceased to repeat and which he has made into the major principle of his foreign policy. He no longer says, as did certain of his predecessors: "Neutrality" and nothing more, but he speaks of "neutrality and solidarity." This signifies quite clearly that Switzerland is determined to remain attached to her international statute, that she is just as neutral as she was before, but that she is also conscious of those duties of solidarity which bind her to other countries and that it is with all her heart that she is willing to collaborate in all international organisations having a technical character. This also means that she has no intention of belonging to any organisations, when such adherence might compromise or lessen her independence, from the political or military standpoint. Moreover, on this occasion, Monsieur Petitpierre pronounced a new formula which will doubtless achieve great success. What he said was: by remaining neutral we do not com-