

Spring conference of the Manchester Textile Institute in Bale

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violence pour détruire ce petit Etat. Ce n'est pas cet exemple, semble-t-il, que nous avons, nous République Française, à retenir de l'histoire de la Révolution.

L'indépendance des Genevois, à laquelle ils tenaient si fermement, leur a fait perdre à la fois les débouchés qui s'ouvrent aux énergies des citoyens d'un grand pays, soit dans l'administration dans la politique, dans le grand commerce ou dans l'industrie, et elle les a obligés à concentrer sur les travaux de l'intelligence toutes leurs facultés. C'est pourquoi Genève a toujours brillé d'un si vif éclat dans les lettres, la philosophie, les sciences et a été, depuis plusieurs siècles, le foyer des plus grandes idées.

Cette histoire si digne d'un petit peuple qui nous est attaché par tant de liens, devrait nous interdire de traiter légèrement les revendications qui concernent son indépendance nationale. Mais, me dira-t-on (les lecteurs du "Temps" et de "l'Echo de Paris" connaissant cet argument), notre souveraineté nationale exige que nous placions notre frontière douanière à la frontière politique. Ainsi donc, c'est pour obéir à un grand mot que nous commettrions un acte qui n'a pour excuse aucun intérêt national, et qui nous causera un tort incalculable.

La souveraineté nationale: mais c'est un principe absolument vague. Les Etats modernes n'ont plus de véritable souveraineté nationale. Les rapports qu'ils entretiennent entre eux et qui sont toujours plus nombreux, les obligent constamment à abandonner des portions importantes de leur souveraineté. Tout traité est un abandon partiel de la puissance totale d'un pays, et ce n'est pas lorsque nous venons d'accepter si récemment le pacte, d'ailleurs chimérique, de la Société des Nations, que nous pouvons parler du dogme de notre souveraineté nationale.

Au nom du même argument, notre service des douanes s'opposera toujours à la création des ports francs, au mépris de nos plus clairs intérêts nationaux. Lorsque l'on passe à Marseille, comme je le faisais dernièrement, et que l'on voit cet admirable port et sa merveilleuse annexe, l'étang de Berre, dont nous aurions, du faire depuis longtemps une grande région franche, telle qu'elle existait, d'ailleurs, jusqu'à la Révolution, on est écrasé en constatant le tort incalculable que peut faire à la politique économique et à la politique extérieure d'un grand pays, la soumission du pouvoir central à toutes les injonctions et aux intérêts minuscules des administrations publiques, dont la tyrannie, de plus en plus impérative, amènera la ruine irrémédiable de notre pays.

S'il n'est pas admissible que les citoyens français de la région des zones, petite ou grande, bénéficient d'un soi-disant privilège qui leur permet de recevoir des produits de l'étranger et de France sans payer de droits de douane, ce privilège n'est pas acceptable non plus pour les Français qui occuperaient un port franc ou sa région. Eux aussi recevraient par mer les produits du monde entier sans payer de droits de douane, pourraient les consommer ou les manipuler pour les réexporter ensuite. Bien plus, les étrangers, dans un port franc, s'établissent comme ils veulent, n'ont aucun droit de douane à payer, et peuvent y exercer toutes les industries qui leur conviennent.

En établissant donc le port franc de Marseille, par exemple, nous touchons au dogme sacré de la souveraineté nationale, ainsi qu'à celui non moins sacré de l'égalité. L'Allemagne impériale qui s'est empressée, après 70, de créer le merveilleux port franc de Hambourg avait aussi fait bon marché, sur ce point, de la souveraineté nationale appliquée au cordon douanier et à ses chers gabelous. Nous savons tous, en France, ce que cette décision lui a rapporté; le développement vraiment prodigieux de son commerce et de son industrie, et toutes ses transactions avec le monde entier l'ont suffisamment prouvé.

Donc, en résumé, aucun intérêt national n'est touché par l'affaire des zones. Tout ce que l'on peut demander aux Suisses, et, sur ce point, nous avons le droit d'exiger d'eux une parfaite réciprocité, c'est qu'en maintenant la petite et la grande zones tous les produits élaborés sur cette portion du territoire français n'aient à payer aucun droit de douane à leur entrée en Suisse, comme les produits suisses ou ceux transités par la Suisse ne paient actuellement aucun droit à leur entrée dans nos zones.

Cette réciprocité doit nous être accordée par les Suisses, et il est à peu près certain que, sur ce point, nous ne pouvons pas rencontrer de grandes difficultés.

Quant à agir par la force, sans l'accord de la Suisse à toute modification de régime des zones, c'est donner à la propagande perfide des Allemands dans le monde entier un des arguments les plus forts que l'on puisse citer contre les Français. On nous accusera d'avoir violenté un petit peuple qui ne peut se défendre, et d'avoir même, par un détestable impérialisme,

publié que nos propres compatriotes, les zoniers, ont le droit le plus absolu d'être consultés lorsqu'il s'agit de modifier un régime économique qui a été établi solennellement par le plébiscite de 1860.

Ce n'est pas au moment où notre gouvernement fait de si louables efforts, couronnés de succès, d'ailleurs, pour s'attirer la confiance de l'Amérique et de l'Angleterre dans son action extérieure, qu'il convient de faire subir aux Genevois un acte de force et de perdre ainsi un foyer d'ardente sympathie, qui nous est plus indispensable que jamais pour lutter contre les tendances allemandes de la majorité du peuple suisse.

L'influence de la Suisse romande sur l'opinion internationale est beaucoup plus considérable que ne se le figurent certains théoriciens de politique extérieure qui poussent notre gouvernement dans une voie néfaste.

JEAN REV.

SPRING CONFERENCE OF THE MANCHESTER TEXTILE INSTITUTE IN BALE.

THE SWISS MINISTER'S SPEECH.

Mr. Paravicini said that he appreciated greatly the honour allotted to him by the President of the Chamber of Commerce to propose the health of the Textile Institute. He being a citizen of Basle, it gave him pleasure to greet British guests in his native town and to see how everybody was happy to welcome them. He was all the more delighted to follow up the kind wish of the President, as it gave him an opportunity to express his own feelings of gratitude towards the British authorities and his British friends, who had given him from the first a much more cordial reception than he ever thought he might expect.

As to the compliments just paid to him by his distinguished colleague, H.M. Minister at Berne, he was afraid that they were far above his merits. He congratulated himself that Mr. Russell found due satisfaction with his activity in our country, so that the Swiss may hope to see him for some years to come, where he kept up in such a splendid way the high tradition of his ancestors, whose names had come down to us as those of great statesmen and diplomats of the highest distinction.

The visit to Switzerland of the Textile Institute could only be to the advantage of both Swiss and British. As the President of the Confederation had remarked, the Swiss looked upon the English as old and faithful friends. During the war they had proven it once more, as, of all belligerents, the British had understood and appreciated to its just value the position of Switzerland as a neutral country, and had understood also that neutrality is by no means an easy thing, but that it is a very grave and even dangerous matter, which in many cases makes things more difficult and more responsible than a state of war. The British had been fair to us and had not grudged us the material advantages of remaining outside the range of the cannons; they knew that the real mission of Switzerland was to remain neutral and to alleviate, in her small way, but with all her means, the misfortunes of the world around her. This fair spirit of the British people in hard times his countrymen were not likely to forget.

In proposing the health of the President and Members of the Textile Institute, M. Paravicini said that the exchange of ideas and opinions during the welcome presence of the British guests would no doubt contribute to the preparedness of both Basle and Manchester, to be on the spot at the moment when the industrial forward movement would again set in.

THE DYE INDUSTRY AND ITS FUTURE.

One of the most interesting of the papers read before the Conference of the Textile Institute held in Basle was that delivered by Mr. Werner Stauffacher, managing director of the Sandoz Chemical Works. Mr. Stauffacher is one of the recognised authorities on aniline dyes in Europe, and his remarks on the dye industry and its future as seen from the Swiss point of view could not fail to open up many new vistas of thought to his audience, the English members of which were nearly all in one way or another connected with the use of dye stuffs.

At the outset he considered the question of the manufacture of colours as a key industry. In his own opinion it was the heavy chemicals and intermediate products which were the key to the manufacture both of explosives and other chemicals used in warfare and of colours. To leave them in the hands of rivals is fatal, but it was a popular fallacy to say that the colour

industry was itself the key industry. During the war Basle dye manufacturers were constantly advised to start the manufacture of their own intermediate products, such as benzol toluol oleum, sulphuric acid, etc. They had, however, to start cautiously in order to protect their financial resources and in view of their uncertainty during the war as to the amount of raw materials obtainable and as to the possible duration of hostilities.

The great difficulties which faced the dye industry both in England and Switzerland were overcome by a policy of mutual assistance. The manufacture on the English side was only in its infancy, and in Switzerland a very serious situation was brought about owing to the shortage of raw materials and intermediates. Mr. Stauffacher cited it as an example of absolute fair dealing that these arrangements, which involved millions of pounds, were only made verbally, without any written engagement on either side, and were kept in the most straightforward and businesslike way by both parties throughout. The deliveries of raw material and coal from England went on till 1919 under the same agreement, and it was only in 1918 that the British Government considered it necessary to give this contract some kind of written form.

Mr. Stauffacher went on to speak about market conditions of the present time. There is practically no country in the world where colours are not used, and even where there is actually no industry, household dyeing is usual, and colours are sold in tins. Queer methods of testing are customary in many of the latter cases, differing widely from the exact analytical tests which are often made by the industrial dyer. It may be said in these native markets generally the colours must be presented always in the same way as they were first offered. Thus, if once a colour has been appreciated you cannot easily replace it by one which you would consider to be an improvement. Even a drawback may become a quality; if the first product was badly soluble it must remain badly soluble, and you must not try to supplant it with one which is better in this respect. It is only by dint of perseverance that you can get people to use your new brand and to prefer its better quality. The effect of war-time conditions was often demoralizing. During the scarceness of colours everything could be sold, and it mattered little what the quality was, and nothing how it was packed, as long as you could get a shade with it at anything approaching a reasonable price. Now, however, delivery and quality will again be the test of fitness, both with the industrial and native consumer.

Regarding the question of how far consumers had now become emancipated from the control of the German industry, Mr. Stauffacher pointed out that certain colours can without question be made equally well in almost any country, viz., some sulphur colours, black and brown. The reason that the colour industry, which originated in England, did not remain there was that although it could certainly have prospered, English people found, at the time, that other things were more profitable, and progress in other directions caused the lack of this industry to be easily overlooked. Now, however, that the lack had been felt, he was convinced that it was "never too late to mend," and that England would be able, herself, to find out which was the best way for the future.

As to France, there were before the war a few independent factories, but the bulk belonged to the German works. The reason for this was to be found in the protective tariff, and the firms were working for the home market only. The textile industry, which had to carry the burden of this system, would never have taken it on its shoulders if it had been an all-round export industry like that of Great Britain. The present development in France, the co-operation of the German and French works and the terms of this co-operation show exactly the same trend of things as before the war.

Italy also made an attempt to create its own colour industry. The new establishments suffered much, however, from the flooding of the market with colours delivered under the reparation clauses of the Peace Treaty, while in other ways they are also working under very adverse conditions. The future development of the Italian colour industry is likely to be similar to that of France.

In the case of Switzerland there was one principal thing to be learnt from the development of the industry, and this was that a progressive colour industry must be next door to a progressive textile industry and in constant touch with it. Now, if Switzerland is not herself a textile centre of great importance, she is most centrally situated for supplying the chief textile industries of Europe. Referring to the establishment of Swiss colour makers in the United States, Mr. Stauffacher pointed out that they were there working for the home market nearly to

the exclusion of European imports. America was not, in this connection, the land of the future.

The future of the dye industry was in fact the future of European civilisation. Progress is being made on all hands. Whatever great achievements made be obtained with regard to new colours, and whatever surprises may be in store, it certainly seems that the art of using what we have already is nearly as important, and wants careful watching. This latter fact had been specially appreciated in England, and whatever might be said about the progress she had made in developing the manufacture of colours, she certainly ranked first in the knowledge of how to use them.

On the question of the effects of State intervention and import restrictions, Mr. Stauffacher confined his remarks to the expression of his firm conviction that no protection whatsoever and in whatever form it might be presented by the State could ever replace the initiative given by the business man to his own trade.

In conclusion, and in inviting the English delegates to visit the various chemical works in Basle, Mr. Stauffacher drew attention to the extent to which the English textile trade had assisted in building the works as they now are, and he believed that in return Swiss dye makers had rendered many valuable services to the English textile trade, and would be able to do so again in the future. It was this policy of give and take in business life which formed one of the strongest links in the friendship between the two nations.

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

PRICE MOVEMENTS IN SWITZERLAND.

1) INDEX NUMBERS FOR WHOLESALE PRICES OF COMMODITIES.

According to statistics compiled by Dr. J. Lorenz and published in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung," the downward movement of wholesale prices of commodities between the beginning of January of last year and the beginning of March last has been more rapid in the case of Switzerland than of the United Kingdom, though less pronounced than the recession in the United States. The average decline in the prices of seventy-one selected commodities was 36.5 per cent. between the dates mentioned, as compared with 41.7 per cent. for the United States, according to Bradstreet's index-numbers, and 22.2 per cent. for the United Kingdom, according to the Statist's index-numbers. The details can be seen from the following table:—

| Date | Foodstuffs 33 Com- modities | Agricultural | Industrial | Total 71 Com- modities |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | Products 12 Com- modities | Materials 26 Com- modities | |
| June 1, 1914 ... | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Jan. 1, 1920 ... | 302.9 | 408.4 | 356.8 | 342.7 |
| Jan. 1, 1921 ... | 371.5 | 172.3 | 222.0 | 234.3 |
| Feb. 1, 1921 ... | 265.0 | 165.1 | 216.7 | 227.9 |
| Mar. 1, 1921 ... | 259.0 | 154.8 | 179.1 | 217.5 |

2) INDEX-NUMBERS FOR RETAIL PRICES.

As far as the movement of the retail prices finds its expression in the index-numbers for the cost of living, a considerable reduction is to be noted. These figures compiled and published by the Union of Swiss Co-operative Societies refer to the annual expenses of an average family of five persons. At the end of March they are reported to have amounted to Frs. 2,460, whilst at the end of April they were only Frs. 2,264, that means a gain of Frs. 196 within the comparatively short time of one month.

RAILWAY LOAN.

The applications for the new 6 per cent. loan for the electrification of the Federal Railways, guaranteed by the Swiss Confederation, and which was originally fixed at frs. 100,000,000, has been considerably over-subscribed. In view of the prospective large financial requirements of the railways and in accordance with the terms of the prospectus, the Federal Council has decided to raise the amount of the issue to frs. 200,000,000 and to allot in full.

This result is very favourable and the more satisfactory as it enables the Government to finance the electrification of the very part of our railway system which absorbed by far the

(Continued on page 130).