

Swiss harvesters assist in the battle for bread

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SWISS HARVESTERS ASSIST IN THE BATTLE FOR BREAD.

There are thousands of our young countrymen at home whose ardent wish is to see the world and to acquaint themselves with foreign languages; in the same way as we used to do.

Already before the last war most countries inflicted severe restrictions on immigration, and permits to accept paid positions were issued very sparingly.

Unfortunately, things have not improved since then, if anything they are worse than ever, whilst highly skilled workers or scientists stand a chance of getting a permit to work with pay, the bulk of our youth who wish to come to these shores have not an earthly chance of finding a paid job. Students get temporary and restricted permits to enter this country for study purposes, but must abstain from seeking work almost under the threat of being hanged.

But as not every Swiss is a capitalist who can afford to live for several months on his or his father's savings, ways and means were studied on the best way to penetrate the forbidden cliffs without contravening any existing regulations, and here is a little story how this has been achieved almost with the authorities' blessings.

For a considerable time a number of Ski teachers as well as mountain guides were most anxious to come to England in order to learn or perfect their English. The increasing flow of Tourist traffic to Switzerland makes it imperative that those who come in touch with our English visitors should know at least the rudiments of that language.

There was no chance of them coming as students; then suddenly someone with a very bright and inventive mind suggested that they might be welcome over here to help to fight the "battle for bread".

The Swiss Legation in London was approached and in turn, acting on this suggestion, contacted the Ministries concerned, who, after exchanging numerous communications (it is a habit in all countries to do so, the more the merrier), gave their consent and blessing, or

in other words allowed seventeen of our compatriots to be temporarily employed in harvester camps.

Bundles were packed, and poste-haste arrived our little contingent, which was split up between three camps at Hershams, Witley and Elstead. There they were allotted light work for which they receive 1/- per hour. Working hours are from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day, whilst at the camp, they are taken by carts to various farms.

It might interest our readers to know the names of our visitors; here they are:

Hans Bernet, Grindelwald;
 Hans Burgener "
 * Fritz Kaufmann "
 Rudolf Jossi "
 Ernst Bohren "
 Fritz Inäbnit "
 Hans Baumer, St. Stephen i. S.
 Arnold Haelen, Lenk i. S.
 Christian Dort, St. Stephen i. S.
 Hans Bösch, Ebnet-Kappel.
 Joh. Götte, Pontresina.
 ** Max Robbi, St. Moritz.
 Josia Cadish, St. Moritz.
 Walter Häusli, Klosters.
 Walter Hauser, Zürich-Grindelwald.
 Paul Gerber, Davos-Platz.
 H. Caduff, Brigels.

* Downhill skiing champion, 1943.

** Several times in Swiss National Team.

We are glad to hear from Monsieur R. Hunziker, of the Swiss Legation in London, whose efforts mainly brought this scheme into being and who is keeping in touch with our compatriots, that they are extremely happy and interested in their work. It is most fortunate that Monsieur Hunziker has been entrusted to act in the capacity of a liaison officer, owing to the fact that he himself is a sportsman of no mean achievements, having been Downhill and Slalom Champion of Berne in 1936, and he was also a member of the Swiss team at the students world championships at Zell am See, Austria, in 1937.

If they are happy so are those in whose employ they are; here are some remarks about them: "efficient and cheerful workers," "keen to learn," "good sports." Many of the farmers expressed the wish to employ them "for life."

In order to mark his appreciation of our compatriots and a number of young Frenchmen who are working at their side in some of the camps, Mr. Hadden, C.B.E., Chairman of the Farmer's Club and Editor of the well-known "*Farmer and Stockbreeder*," gave a reception at the Farmer's Club, Whitehall, on the 29th October, at which Mr. Franklin, Under-Secretary for Agriculture, and other representatives of the Ministry were present. Some very kind words were addressed to the young men on this occasion and the hope was expressed that they would return in larger numbers next year.

As some of the camps are, or are now going to be, closed our countrymen will be dispersed and allotted amongst various farms.

This, then, is the story of an ingenious enterprise which seems to please both sides, and we sincerely hope that their ambition to become expert linguists will be realised and that their accent will not altogether become "too truly rural".

ST.

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