

Open-Air "Ladgemeinden"

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i.e. to the record figure of 1963. The yearly increase was 100,000 in 1961, 65,000 in 1962, and this increase should in future disappear. The latest figures available show that in January this year the number of first new working permits was 30,407. This is a decrease of 19% over January last year. The most marked reduction was in metalworkers and building workers.

As can well be imagined, the government's proposals had a **mixed reception**. In principle, most Cantons and most organisations approved them and agreed that inflation must be arrested. But there were a great many vested interests which had to be defended; the poorer Cantons felt they could not be considered the same way as the wealthier ones; the Swiss Chamber of Commerce agreed on condition that all demands for a further cut in working hours should be stopped at last, and that all restrictions applied equally to public institutions; there was opposition regarding building and road construction restrictions; agricultural circles would agree only after some concessions, which they felt were overdue, had been granted to them.

There were critical voices regarding the new proposals of an increase in pay for the federal employees — how were these compatible with exhortations to reduce spending? Milk, bread, beer had become more expensive, rents had gone up and would rise further on complete relaxation of rent control. Excellent reasons were put forward for the fear that the restrictive measures would result in a damaging reduction of Switzerland's vital exports. Even the Swiss National Exhibition was considered incompatible with the efforts at reducing the number of foreign workers.

On 17th February, an **extraordinary parliamentary session** opened, the first in six years. Over forty speakers took part in the marathon debate which showed clearly that there was no single effective remedy to cure the evil. The hope expressed by the Chairman of the special Commission, Prof. Max Weber, that a sound middle path should be found was not realised as a proposal with regard to mortgage interests in agriculture was accepted and thus opened the door to special wishes. The first proposal referring to financial measures was accepted with 124 against 17 votes, with several abstentions. The second proposal concerning building restrictions was accepted more easily; the credit for this went to Federal Councillor Schaffner for resolutely leading the debate.

The **ordinary parliamentary spring session** opened on 2nd March. The Council of States proposed to call the new Bills "measures to fight the increased cost of living", which was later accepted by Parliament. The Council of States accepted the government's first proposal with 36 : 0 and the second with 33 : 1 votes.

On 13th March the two Bills to check inflation were accepted by the National Council by 160 : 18 and 143 : 35 respectively. They became law upon publication in the official Gazette. In a year's time the electorate will have to vote. By then it will show whether the measures are successful.

It is not a question of strangling, but of **helping Swiss economy**, to a steadier development. Victor Snell, in an article in the "Schweizerisches Kaufmännisches Zentralblatt" reminds us of how much the individual owes to the "Hochkonjunktur", and that it would be wrong to denounce it completely, however necessary some restrictive measures may be. And to quote once more one of Peter Duerrenmatt's descriptive pictures: "Free enterprise has not failed. If a farmer has cultivated apple trees which produce an excess of fruit so that some branches threaten to break and have to be supported, nobody could main-

tain that the fertility of the tree has failed. All that is needed is suitable help". He suggests that with objectivity and common sense and under the sword of Damocles of an acceptance of the measures by the electorate it should be possible to help to success the efforts at restraining the economic boom.

(All sources on which this article is based are already mentioned except the news received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

SWISS TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION WITH MADAGASCAR

Madagascar is at present up against very serious problems with regard to her exports, which are of course an essential factor in the achievement of the government's plan for the economic development of the island.

Consequently, at the request of the government of Madagascar, the Technical Co-operation Section of the Swiss Federal Political Department appointed a Swiss expert last summer to help organize Madagascar's foreign trade; the expert chosen was Mr. Albert Masnata, Head of the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade (O.S.E.C.) and Reader at Lausanne University.

At the end of his three months' stay, Mr. Masnata at the government's request submitted a report on the problem of foreign trade as a whole and at the same time presented concrete proposals for the creation of a Madagascan Export Office, its statutes, organization and scope. Thus, as pointed out by Mr. Tsiranana, President of the Madagascan Republic and President of the government, in a recent speech to Parliament, it was on the basis of the preparatory work carried out by the Swiss expert that the Madagascan Cabinet was able, on 21st November last year, to adopt the decree founding and organizing a Madagascan Export Office.

In pursuance of this decree, a manager has just been appointed and the Export office has started to function; the manager is assisted by a number of civil servants whom the Swiss expert helped to train for their new job. As the starting up of this organization and the tasks awaiting it raise a considerable number of problems, the government of Madagascar has asked the Swiss Department of Technical Co-operation to continue to collaborate. This request has been accepted in principle, but the actual form this co-operation is to take is still being studied.

[O.S.E.C.]

OPEN-AIR "LANDSGEMEINDEN"

In several mountain Cantons of Switzerland the male citizens still muster, as their forefathers did for centuries, in an open-air assembly to elect officials and vote on public matters. On Sunday, 26th April, this impressive demonstration of democracy will take place in the towns of Trogen and Appenzell, the capitals of the two Half-Cantons of Appenzell, Ausserrhoden and Innerrhoden and in the Half-Cantons of Obwalden and Nidwalden, Central Switzerland, in the towns of Sarnen and Stans. The Canton of Glarus, which commemorates a historic event on 9th April with its "Näfelsefahrt", has set aside 3rd May for the "Landsgemeinde".

[S.N.T.O.]