

Economic news

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1971)**

Heft 1621

PDF erstellt am: **15.08.2024**

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ECONOMIC NEWS

THE OSEC REPORT

The *Office Suisse d'Expansion Commerciale*, whose news sheets are regularly used in these columns, is the main information office for Swiss exporters. Its annual report shows the importance of its role in promoting exports and in carrying out propaganda for Swiss industry across the world. In the field of information, OSEC has continued to collect the commercial, industrial and technical information which is required by Swiss exporting firms and has enlarged its systematic files on every export market.

The office has carried out numerous researches at the request of Swiss companies. Its prospection in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and the Far East has been highly successful and this service will probably be extended in the future. OSEC has taken an active part in organising Swiss participation in trade exhibitions abroad. In particular, it was responsible for the Swiss Pavilion at the World Expo in Osaka. This pavilion was awarded a first prize together with the Canadian and Czech pavilions by the Japanese Architectural Institute and was visited by 64 million people.

(ATS)

In one year, wages in Switzerland have risen 9.5%

According to a survey recently published by the Federal Office for Industry, Arts, Crafts and Labour, (OFIAMT), in October 1970 the level of wages for all employees (workers and office staff) was on the average

9.5% higher than that of the previous year: the rise amounted to 9.2% for men and 10.4% for women. Wage increases were considerably bigger than in 1969 in almost all the occupations covered by the census. In 13 economic groups, wage increases amounted to 10.1 and 12.7%, in 12 groups to between 7 and 9.8% and in 4 groups to between 5.7 and 6.6%. If the increases are compared by sex, it would seem that in most economic groups, women received higher wage increases than men.

Switzerland's 25 leading firms

According to a survey carried out by the Union Bank of Switzerland, the consolidated turnover of Switzerland's 25 leading concerns increased by 12% in 1970 to total 48.5 billion francs. This figure represents approximately two-thirds of the Swiss national revenue. Business concluded by these firms had risen by 12.2% in 1969 to settle at 43.3 billion francs. From one year to the next, the order of the country's leading industrial firms made out according to the groups' world sales sometimes shows considerable differences. The most remarkable growth was that of George Fischer Co. Ltd., Foundry and Machinery Works at Schaffhausen, which rose from 15th to 11th place. On the other hand, no change occurred in the order of the first 10 firms. With a turnover of 10.2 billion francs, the Nestlé group is by far the biggest industrial concern in Switzerland. Behind it comes the Ciba-Geigy group, whose sales totalled ap-

proximately 7 billion francs. Third comes Hoffmann-La Roche, fourth Brown Boveri and fifth Sandoz. The Union Bank of Switzerland points out that the order is quite different if based not on world turnover, but only on sales within Switzerland. With a turnover of 1.2 billion francs, Sulzer then comes first of the 25 firms in question, followed by Brown Boveri—1.1 billion, Ciba-Geigy—1 billion, Hoffmann-La Roche—1 billion and ASUAG/SGHS—0.6 billion.

Machinery Industry:

The fruits of rationalisation

In spite of stabilisation, if not a decrease in the number of workers, the Swiss machinery industry has succeeded during the last five years in continually increasing its output, thanks to technical progress and rationalisation. There are very many examples to confirm this. Among them may be mentioned the Saurer works at Arbon, whose turnover between 1966 and 1970 rose from S.Fr. 192 million to nearly 309 million francs, while the number of workers dropped from 4,222 to 3,837 (-385). Similarly, Sulzer at Winterthur has succeeded in increasing its turnover by Fr. 245 million from Fr. 685 million in 1966 to Fr. 930 million in 1970—at the same time increasing its personnel by only 307 (from 14,443 to 14,750). It is interesting to note that the benefits of rationalisation have mainly been passed on to the wage-earners. For example, whereas during this period the turnover per employee increased by 20% at Saurer's and by 37% at Sulzer's, expenditure on personnel (wages and social benefits) rose respectively by 35% and 36%. The increase in dividends on the other hand amounted to only 11% and 17% respectively.

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THE LIFE OF AN 18th CENTURY SWISS VICAR IN STAFFORDSHIRE

A reader has sent us the January issue of the magazine *Country Quest* which contains the unusual story of a Swiss who became vicar at Madeley in the 18th century, who was a great friend of John Wesley and who remained known to posterity as "Madeley's Saintry Fletcher".

His name was Jean Guillaume de la Flachère. He was born in Nyon in 1729 and studied literature at Geneva University (we note here that the author of the article makes the precision that he had previously gone to school at the Nyon Grammar School).

His parents wanted him to enter the church, but his wish was to follow the family tradition and become an officer in a foreign army. Thus he escaped to Lisbon and obtained a commission in the Portuguese army. He was about to set sail for Brazil on a man-of-war when he was the victim of an accident and the commission had to be cancelled. He then moved on to Holland, where he hoped to get a commission in the Dutch army. He was counting on the influence of his uncle, who was an officer in the Dutch army, to obtain an officer's commission. The uncle died and after these two frustrated attempts at a military career, Jean Guillaume de la Flachère turned up in England and took a post as tutor to the two sons of a Mr. Hill, of Tern Hall, Shropshire.

He began to show a leaning towards the church and helped the vicar of Madeley, a large rural parish not far from Tern Hall. For convenience he changed his name from Flachère to Fletcher. He took a keen interest in the spread of Methodism throughout the country and was often in London, where he helped the brothers John and Charles Wesley by preaching in French to the French refugees. He formed a lasting friendship with Charles Wesley and made a deep impression on John. Fletcher was an outstanding preacher and often preached in George Whitfield's fashionable tabernacle in Moorfields.

His parents were pleased when he decided to seek ordination in the Church of England (he never became a Methodist) and he was ordained deacon and then priest in 1757.

When the vicar of Madeley died in 1760, his protector and friend Mr. Hill offered him a living and Fletcher accepted to stay. John Wesley described Madeley in 1764 as "... an exceedingly pleasant village encompassed by trees". To Fletcher, it was an extremely poor village, where people drank, brawled, beat their wives and had no time for parsons. But Fletcher knew what he was taking on and looked

upon Madeley as a challenge.

Not inhibited by timidity and with an element of irony and mischief in his make up, Fletcher clanged a bell round the parish at five o'clock on Sunday mornings for four months because the people made the excuse that they could not get up in time for morning service. He talked to the men, joined them in the inn and did his utmost to bring decency into his parish. He denied himself all but the barest necessities of life and gave to the poor. He was greatly impressed by Wesley's methods of spiritual form-keeping and created "societies" in the neighbouring villages.

Fletcher had great intellectual powers but his health was weak. He had not been at Madeley for long when his health broke down and a wealthy friend invited him for a long holiday in Switzerland and Italy. On the Appian Way he could not bring himself to ride because Saint Paul had been forced to walk on that same path, chained to a soldier.

Back in England he became a substitute brother, a confidant and an adviser to John Wesley by the time Charles had more or less retired. When Wesley was about 70 years of age he had a slight stroke at a meeting. This urged him to nominate a successor to direct the affairs of the Methodist movement after his death. He chose Fletcher. This nomination was accepted unanimously by the Methodist preachers. Unfortunately Fletcher died before Wesley, but this however resulted in a more lasting and democratic arrangement for the future of Methodist affairs.

Fletcher was intensely attached to his parish of Madeley. He refused to become the Resident Principal of the College for the Training of Ministers which the Countess of Huntingdon had just founded in Trefecca, but remained its non-resident organiser and superintendent after much persuasion. His organising ability and hard work helped to make this institution a great success. On the first anniversary of its opening John Wesley wrote in his journal: "Fletcher preached an exceedingly lively sermon..." Of Fletcher's books and tracts, written in English, Wesley said that they had "a literary style of very high standard". The Dictionary of National Biography mentions that after one of Fletcher's tracts had passed through many hands and reached those of the Lord Chancellor, they were shown to the King. Shortly afterwards the Chancellor approached Fletcher and asked him if he wished an advancement.

Fletcher kept up his work at Madeley and Trefecca. The numerous journeys on horseback between the two distant villages, his conferences with Wesley, his parish work and his religious writings began to take a toll on

his health. He had to pay a second visit to Switzerland for health reasons in 1781. The air of the mountain appeared to bring about a big improvement and when he came back he felt so well that he married. Unfortunately, this improvement in his health proved to be temporary. He had to abandon most of his activities, keeping only his work at Madeley, and died there of tuberculosis in 1785, at the age of 56.

He was sadly mourned by his parish. In a long and eloquent address at his funeral Wesley said that he was never likely to meet a more godly man on this side of eternity.

"Fletcher of Madeley" rests in what is known as the "Iron Tomb" near to the entrance of Madeley Church. A chancel was added to the church in memory of him and his wife in 1909.

ART TREASURES FROM DRESDEN IN ZURICH

The exhibition "Art Treasures from Dresden" may well be regarded as one of the most important events in Switzerland's cultural life this summer. It is being held at the "Kunsthaus" Gallery in Zurich until 31st August. Visitors from near and far will be given an opportunity of admiring magnificent collections from one of Europe's most famous art cities. The destruction of Dresden towards the end of World War II was one of the greatest disasters of that world catastrophe of a quarter of a century ago. Next to the collections of paintings in Paris and Florence, their gallery of paintings is among the most valuable and important ones anywhere. To house it, the great architect Gottfried Semper (who also created the Federal Institute of Technology, in Zurich) built the "New Museum" around the middle of the 19th century. The golden age of Italian, Dutch and Flemish painting of the 16th and 17th centuries are excellently represented. Also the other Dresden art collections abound in valuable works of art. One should not forget that the European art of porcelain making originated in Meissen, within immediate reach of the Electors of Saxony. It glorified the luxury in the city of Dresden during the reigns of Frederick August I and Frederick August II, both of whom were also Kings of Poland. The collections at the "Grünen Gewölbe" (Green Building) in Dresden are also world famous. Since the early part of the 18th century, that part of the castle which grew out of the old treasury building has housed magnificent collections of gems, works of art, jewellery, enamels and mosaics, gold and silver hollowware, as well as ivory carvings and bronze sculptures.

(SNT/O)



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