

# Comment

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d'hotel" in the vast dining hall but in the lounge. He had forty heavy baking bricks warmed up in the kitchen so that when his forty American guests came in from the freezing cold outside for dinner, they enjoyed the feet-warming comfort of these stones while they relished a simple meal in which hors d'oeuvre had been replaced by bouillon and ice-cream by blazed pancakes. They found this improvisation both delightful and exciting.

Colonel Pfyffer heard of this story and before long Ritz was asked to be director of the "National". During the winter seasons he left for the Italian Riviera and Menton, where he met his future wife, an Alsatian woman from a small hotel-keeping family. He became the manager of the "Grand Hotel" in Monte Carlo and discovered during a trip to Paris an expert chef, Auguste Escoffier, who was to follow him during the rest of his starring career.

Ritz left the "Grand Hotel" at Monte Carlo in 1887. There had been an earthquake and its owners had decided to sell it. His next lap was at the "Savoy" in London. This opulent hotel had been founded by the Irishman d'Oyle Carte in 1889 but had soon emerged as an outstanding failure. Even a hotel like the "Savoy" could not succeed unless it was properly managed and, as the hotel's shares were taking a plunge, d'Oyle Carte was besieged by cries to call on the services of Cesar Ritz. Ritz very soon took the "Savoy" under his care, bringing the situation under his control and lending a reputation to the "Savoy" which it has never lost.

In 1889 Ritz sold his hotel in Cannes and his interests in Baden-Baden. He had become Chairman of the "Ritz Hotel Development Company", a growth company in which the diamond millionaire Sydney Goldmann had important stakes and which controlled an expanding chain of hotels and restaurants in England, France, Germany and Italy. In London the group founded and controlled "Claridges", the "Savoy", the "Hyde Park" and the "Carlton". Ritz was troubled at the "Savoy" by various intrigues and left for Wiesbaden with Escoffier and a few faithfuls to manage the "Kaiserhof" and the "Auguste-Viktoria-Bader". He later came back to London, and managed the "Carlton" and finally the "Ritz" in Paris.

Ritz had the ambition that all "his" hotels should bear the mark of his perfectionism. But he eventually had to pay a terrible price for the energy and incredible enthusiasm expended in keeping a firm hold on such a decentralised empire. In 1902, as his friend the 60-year-old Prince of Wales was crowned Edward VIII, Ritz broke down mentally and physically. He lost his memory for long periods, he be-

came melancholic and was plagued by prolonged fits of depression which were a burden for his wife and his surroundings. He received psychiatric treatment in Switzerland, but he had to abandon all his managerial responsibilities and never recovered. He died

sixteen years later at the age of 68, when the Great War was nearing to an end, and with it his own epoch.

(Adapted by the Editor from "Das Heimliche Imperium", a history of Swiss prosperity, by Lorenz Stucki, published by Scherz Verlag, Berne)

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# COMMENT

## THE "THREE PILLARS"

The "Three Pillars" is a new term often articulated in the Swiss Press describing the three ways in which people can sustain themselves in their old age. The first and most universal "pillar" is Old Age Pension. The second is private pension schemes and the third is personal savings. No less than three popular initiatives have been started off in the last eighteen months to introduce legislation securing the welfare of old people. These initiatives are rather technical and are in the course of debate in Parliament. We shall wait for the outcome of these debates and the ensuing referenda to examine them, but it can be said that they aim at making the livelihood of old people less dependant on the first pillar, and benefit more from private pension schemes.

So far, the main source of income for retired working people has been Old Age Pension. Ever since its creation it has been periodically revised. The most recent revision set the annual income of a bachelor at around £500 a year. To this must be added cantonal and sometimes communal subsidies, which vary slightly from town to town. Old Age Pension has usually been considered dismally insufficient in Switzerland. Although it can withstand most comparisons with the Old Age Pension schemes of other industrial countries, it seems small when the exceptionally high standard of living of the Swiss is taken into account, and when one considers that every employed person must give away a not insignificant part of his or her income to secure it. If the money given away to Old Age Pension in a lifetime were invested say, in an endowment policy with profit, there could be no question

that its beneficiary would be far better off during his old days. However, Old Age Pension has the advantage of security, and, like every thing which offers security, it cannot bring in silver-plated dividends. One can't have it both ways.

There is an inherent injustice in the present state of the "Second Pillar", in that private pension schemes enjoyed by working people vary with their employers. Furthermore, they are not transferable. This means that an employee is tied to his firm and may not leave it when he is past a certain age, less he loses the benefit of its pension scheme. There is therefore, considerable scope in Switzerland and elsewhere for improving the system of private pensions and for instituting a greater responsibility in the field of welfare on the part of employers.

The "third pillar" would be the ideal solution. Personal savings, this pillar of Swiss wisdom, cannot however guarantee a decent living to the majority of wage earners. Even in our days of affluence it is only the businessmen and those employed in the liberal professions who can rest safely on a snug capital during the ten to twenty years of professional inactivity which usually terminate human existence. Who can really afford to dispense with a pension thanks to personal savings? Even the well-to-do, the successful engineer or the rising lawyer will find it hard to save. Their salaries will increase fast during the first fifteen years of their professional life. These will, however, be the years when they will be the most taxed financially with such burdens as a mortgage, high material demands, children and education. They can start saving by the time all this is behind them!

By campaigning for sturdier first and second "pillars" the various social

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