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Swiss industrialists are getting into the habit of submitting the plans of new works to official control offices acting in an advisory capacity.

The Factory Inspection Department not only takes care of the working man's health, but also protects his rights. It supervises the strict application of work contracts ruling the duration of working hours, night work, salaries and vacations. The latter are not recognized by Swiss factory legislation, although most employers respect them.

The duration of working hours is a ticklish problem to solve. Factory workers often prefer to do overtime work which is better paid than ordinary day work. On the other hand, employers try to avoid increasing their payroll for temporary work, even if they have to pay more in overtime. The inspector must therefore protect the workman against himself and safeguard his health, and at the same time help the unemployed who are perhaps waiting at the factory doors. It is only right that there should be a little work for all, rather than too much for some and none for others.

Legislation ruling working hours also rules the work of women and minors. It is forbidden to employ women for night or Sunday work, while the minimum working age for minors was raised from 14 to 15 years in 1940.

Finally, factory inspectors also act as protectors of the working classes by constantly encouraging the foundation of relief funds. The Swiss working classes enjoy far greater advantages today than in the last war. Almost all receive unemployment relief when necessary. Mobilized men receive part of their usual salary through the Salary Compensation Funds. In several branches of industry they also receive family grants, and insurance against accidents has been obligatory for the last fifty years.

Swiss factory legislation is, of course, not yet perfect. It is, however, open to improvement, and that is the aim of all men of good will, trade union leaders and many employers who have kept their sense of social duty alive, while the State itself does everything in its power to intensify the collaboration between capital and labor and to make it durable and sincere.

This is the secret underlying the social peace which today reigns in Switzerland.

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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

Switzerland's wheat supplies. (Berne). Competent authorities have lately declared several times that Switzerland's food situation is - if not disturbing as compared with that of other European countries - at least sufficiently serious to make it imperative that production be encouraged by every possible means and reserve stocks utilized as rationally as possible. Although the production of bread cereals and fodder was fairly satisfactory in 1941, it cannot meet all the requirements of the non-agricultural population. On a total production of 25,000 truck-loads of wheat 9 to 10,000 are required to cover the producers' own bread needs; a further 1,500 to 2,000 truck-loads must be reckoned for waste and wheat which is only good for fodder, and finally 3,000 truck-loads must be reserved for sowing. There therefore remain 12,000 truck-loads available for the non-agricultural population, whereas 50,000 are required. Under normal producing conditions, Swiss agriculture can cover the bread requirements of the population for four months. By intensifying production and mixing a certain proportion of potato flour with ordinary flour, it would be possible to cover the needs of the Swiss population for about six months. For the remainder, Switzerland depends on her cereal imports. Up to now, bread consumption has been diminished without rationing, but it is not certain that the measures now in force will prove sufficient in the long run. All depends on arrivals of wheat from abroad, and these have been far from satisfactory for some time past.

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Customs revenue of the Swiss Confederation. (Berne.) Customs revenue of the Swiss Confederation amounted to 215.4 million Swiss francs in 1941 as compared with 281.4 millions in 1940.

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Cement rationing in Switzerland. (Lausanne). In 1931 Swiss cement factories registered a record production of 845,000 tons. In 1936, when depression in the building trades reached its lowest point, production fell to 507,000 tons. In 1941, it rose again to 700,000 tons. The rationing measures recently introduced are therefore having noticeable effects. The fabrication of cement depends on coal deliveries which Switzerland receives entirely from abroad. For 1942 Swiss cement factories will receive 60 - 70% of their normal coal requirements, which means that they will be able to produce about 500,000 tons of cement. Naturally to this amount must be added reserve stocks still available, but these are very low as they could only meet the country's needs for about five months. Swiss authorities will have to be very circumspect in granting building permits. National defence and public utility works will naturally have the preference. As for private building undertakings, only half the quantities used up to now can be employed. It is hoped however that this situation will not cause too great an increase in unemployment, as workmen can find employment in agriculture which is suffering from a labor shortage.

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Transfer of Government Departments.- (Berne.). In view of the increase in Government departments caused by the war and of the housing shortage in the Swiss capital, a certain number of Government offices have been transferred to other towns, such as St. Gall, Montreux and Geneva.

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The Swiss procelain industry.- (Lausanne). The Swiss procelain factory in Langenthal is very busy, although like other branches of industry it has had to face supply difficulties as regards raw materials. Nevertheless, the quality of its products has been maintained and the factory has been able to deliver to its customers in approximately the same proportion as before the war. A few years ago, the Langenthal porcelain factory was the first to introduce the use of an electric oven. It has now installed a second of these.

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A Swiss Bureau for replacement products and new materials. - (Lausanne). A department for replacement products and new materials has just been created in Switzerland. The chief purpose of this organization is to keep informed as to the wishes and ideas of industrial groups hit by the raw material shortage and to seek the means of remedying the situation by a rational utilization of available materials and other products. The proposals of inventors and producers of new materials will also be examined by this department.

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The Swiss strawbraid industry in 1941. - (Lausanne). The slight improvement noted last summer in the export trade of this Swiss industry to European countries and especially to France, was maintained during the last quarter of 1941, while sales on the home market were also slightly increased. On the other hand, the extension of war has caused a new decrease in consignments to the United States which, under normal conditions, formed one of the most important markets of this industry. At the end of 1941, 1757 workers were employed in the strawbraid industry, as against 1393 a year previously.

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The Swiss labor market in 1941.- (Lausanne). The average number of totally unemployed, which stood at 36,663 in 1939 and at 14,784 in 1940, fell to 9095 in 1941, representing a 38% decrease on the previous year. In 1941 there were only 6 unemployed per 1,000 workers, as against 10 in 1940, 37 during the last pre-war year and 56 in 1936, the peak year of the economic depression. This regression in unemployment is due primarily to satisfactory industrial activity and to the fact that agriculture and national defence have absorbed more labor than formerly.

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The author of the agricultural extension plan awarded the Marcel Benoist Prize.- (Berne.) The Marcel Benoist Prize amounting to Sw. Frs. 25,000 is a kind of Swiss Nobel Prize. It is awarded yearly to the scientist who has accomplished the most useful work for his fellow citizens. The 1941 Marcel Benoist Prize has been attributed to Mr. F. T. Wahlen, who by his research on economic and agricultural problems, initiated the elaboration and execution of the agricultural extension plan, commonly called the Wahlen Plan. This plan aims at ensuring sufficient food supplies for Switzerland throughout the war.

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A Swiss travel museum.- (Zurich). In 1947 the Swiss Federal Railways will be celebrating their centenary. On that occasion the present humble little railway museum at the Zurich Goods Station will be completed and transferred to a building specially erected for this purpose. An important illustrated study of the history of the Swiss Federal Railways will also be published.

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Cost of living and wholesale prices in Switzerland.- (Lausanne). At the end of December 1941, the Swiss cost of living index stood at 184.3; in other words it exceeded the June 1914 index by 84.3 points. Compared with August 1939 the increase is 47 points or 34.3%. A rise of 21 points or 15.3% was registered in 1941.

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The wholesale price index, which includes raw materials, auxiliary materials and non-fabricated food products, stood at 185.1 (August 1939 = 100) at the end of 1941. In one year it rose 30.2 points or 21.3%.

Fish oil.- (Lausanne).

Following the satisfactory results obtained in the course of recent experiments, it is proposed to create a center for salvaging fish waste. From vitals of fish a good industrial oil can be obtained.

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A Swiss Federal Railway ten-year plan.- (Berne). The Swiss authorities are already considering what measures will have to be taken should intense unemployment become manifest in the country, either as a consequence of demobilization, or in the event of the raw material shortage greatly reducing industrial activity. The Swiss Federal Railways are therefore preparing a ten-year plan covering different undertakings, in particular the building of double tracks on all single track lines (there are still about 300 miles of single track lines in the country). This would involve an expenditure of approximately 250 million Swiss francs. Further, the electrification of the few lines still running a steam locomotive service would be undertaken. Three-quarters of the Swiss railways are already electrified and these lines absorb 94% of the traffic.

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Finally, it is proposed to continue the work already begun on the elimination of all level crossings, of which there were still more than 4,000 in 1936.

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Grass drying by artificial process.- (Berne). In view of the good results obtained last year the Swiss Government has opened a new credit of 1 million Swiss francs to subsidize the construction of installations for drying grass by artificial process.

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Swiss coal supplies.- (Lausanne). Before the war, Switzerland had many coal suppliers, among whom were Germany, France, Belgium, England, Poland, the United States and Russia. Germany has always been Switzerland's most important supplier, furnishing half her requirements. At present, Germany is Switzerland's sole supplier, as other countries have one after another suspended deliveries owing to international events. By virtue of the Germano-Swiss economic agreement now in force, Germany supplies Switzerland with 200,000 tons of coal each month, which represents about 75% of normal consumption. The remaining 25% has to be salvaged by rationing, especially the heating of living premises, public places, offices and workshops. As a result, for the present winter, the population has only received 25 - 30% of the coal supply normally required for heating purposes before the war.

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SWISS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS.

It may seem a little out of place just now when Switzerland, lacking sources of food supplies, is obliged to intensify her agricultural production, to recall that it is ten years since the Office for the Propaganda of Swiss Agricultural Products was founded.

In 1931, however, it was the fashion in this country, largely owing to snobbishness, to buy all kinds of fruit and vegetables, whether home or foreign grown. It was therefore necessary to educate the customer's tastes, to teach him to appreciate the best products of the soil which are not necessarily the most expensive. The Office for Propaganda has fulfilled its task with skill and courage and has achieved excellent results. It has, for example, caused Swiss grown apples and other orchard fruits, much appreciated abroad, to be better known at home. It has encouraged consumption of sweet cider and non-alcoholic fruit juices; it has given new impetus to the tinned fruit and vegetable industry; it has also caused Swiss honey, which has particular qualities, to regain the popularity it deserves and, without ceasing to enjoy strawberries from Lyons and Italian asparagus, the Swiss consumer has been made aware that these same delicacies are also produced in the Canton of Valais. This Office has also encouraged the use of the potato, by vulgarizing the processes of drying and ensiling it, the manner in which it may be preserved in cellars and by teaching housewives the thousand and one ways in which it may be prepared.

The Office for Propaganda has also participated in many fairs and expositions, defending the interests of Swiss agriculture which, like Swiss industry, has specialized in the production of quality goods.

It is however in favor of wine that the Office's propaganda has proved most useful. It can be said that Swiss wine possesses the same characteristics as the country which produces it: for it is one and diverse. Each valley, each lakeshore or sunny hillside produces its own particular variety, much appreciated abroad. And yet, all Swiss wines, even the most heady, preserve a particular dry quality which confers upon them special tonic and diuretic properties.

Famous doctors have recommended moderate but regular consumption of Swiss wine. In summer, for instance, wines produced on the shores of the Lake of Zurich are most refreshing. Those of Neuchatel are sparkling and more heady. Other varieties resemble Rhine or Moselle wines and are as delicate.

Those who have tasted the bouquet of Vaudois wines never forget it. In the Rhone Valley, in the upper part of the Canton of Valais, rich, heady table and dessert wines, both white and red, are found; Valais wines are readily recognizable and other countries have tried to imitate them - but in vain - by acclimatizing Swiss vine-stocks to their soil. There are also Ticinese wines, which present some characteristics of Italian varieties, and the wines of the valleys south of the Grisons.

Besides these reputed varieties, there is another which the Office for Propaganda has popularized under the name of Swiss wine; it has an excellent flavor and is obtainable at low prices. It is a good quality wine and much liked.