

Swiss study new labor possibilities for postwar period

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **10 (1944-1945)**

Heft 6

PDF erstellt am: **29.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942759>

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Napoleon Bonaparte developed the primitive Simplon trail into a modern highway from 1800-1805. While he had also planned to build a large Hospice on the summit, fate prevented him from completing the project.

Various plans for the piercing of the Alps under the Monte Leone mountain group in the realm of the Simplon, were under consideration for several decades before a definite project could be worked out. Finally, after a satisfactory agreement had been concluded with Italy, construction of the Simplon tunnel was started in the Fall of 1898. On February 24, 1905 the workers from both ends met on May 19, 1906 the inauguration took place. The total cost of construction amounted to 100 million S. Frs.

The Simplon tunnel between Brig, in the Swiss Rhone valley, and Isello, in Italy, is the world's longest tunnel. It is 12 miles and 537 yards long.

The Simplon is the lowest great Alpine tunnel, its highest elevation being only 2,313 feet. Unlike the St. Gotthard, which is a wider bore with double tracks throughout, the Simplon was built with two galleries, 56 feet apart, connected by cross shafts every 220 yards. At first just one gallery was finished and one single track laid. The second gallery was completed in 1922. Electric traction was used in the Simplon tunnel from the start.

During the boring of the Simplon tunnel only 42 lives were lost, while 177 workmen died during the St. Gotthard tunnel construction. The course of the Simplon line from Vallorbe to Lausanne, along the lake of Geneva and up the Rhone valley, spells scenic enchantment throughout.

Connecting Goppenstein in the Valais, with Kandersteg in the Bernese Oberland, the Loetschberg tunnel, piercing the Bernese Alps, is the third longest in Switzerland, measuring 9 miles, 140 yards. Construction of this tunnel was started on October 15, 1906, with the actual piercing taking place on March 31, 1911. On July 15, 1913 the Loetschberg railway was formally inaugurated. It starts at Spiez, on the lake of Thun, has immediate connections with Bern and Interlaken and has been operated electrically from the start.

The Loetschberg railway is noted for the glorious scenery it traverses. Interesting in the Valaisan section are the impressive avalanche galleries and other protective measures against avalanches, a feature which may also be observed in certain parts of the St. Gotthard railway.

The great Swiss Alpine tunnels were built in an era of peace. They were intended to promote international trade and travel, bringing the nations of Europe into swifter contact with each other.

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SWISS STUDY NEW LABOR POSSIBILITIES FOR POSTWAR PERIOD.

The Swiss government, in the framework of a vast programme destined for the creation of new labor possibilities for the postwar period, has carefully examined the problems of the future of our export trade which is one of the essential parts in the development of our country's economy. The government is studying a better functioning and the facilitation of the financing of our exports although it admits that the present system of clearing will still remain in force for the time being. It is well known how liberal the Swiss authorities are in all questions concerning advances in clearing. If this policy has secured our factories a normal activity during this war, it has also made our country a creditor to states whose financial situation at the moment is distinctly precarious. Therefore, the government will have to stimulate the activity of our foreign trade through an extension of its guarantees against the risk of exportation. State intervention in the financing of exports is essential for the development of this branch. The various export enterprises could cede the Federal guarantees to their banks as securities for advances they receive. The Swiss exporter will thus avoid long immobilization of capital due to the slow functioning of clearing, and the accelerated circulation of money on the other hand will again help to stimulate purchases abroad. Thus, practically everything will have been done in Switzerland to further our export trade. The quality of our products, the qualification of our workers and the far-sightedness of our industrial circles are naturally also favorable factors.

Despite a certain slackening of the actual activity of the Swiss industry, as compared to that of 1939, the stock exchange index for shares is still well above its level at the beginning of the war. This proves the confidence of the public in the future of our industry during the coming year. The war years have generally been favorable to enterprises of the machine industry and the factories of electrical equipment, industrial tools and precision instruments and made it possible for them to distribute reasonable dividends and to consolidate their returns. Through this, our industry will be better prepared to face an eventual series of difficult years. (Commercial Bulletin.)

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

In the course of a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce in Zurich, information was given concerning a project for the construction of a big airdrome at Kloten, a project which has been approved by the Zurich Grand Council. The Canton is said to be ready to build at its own expense a Continental Airport. On the other hand, the Canton would ask for the Confederation's help for the construction of an airfield designed to take care of Inter-Continental traffic.

One thousand four hundred and fifty applications have already been submitted for the Swiss Trade Fair in 1945. Unfortunately it has been impossible to accept all. Furthermore, the system of admission to the Fair has been reorganized. Last year's account of the Trade Fair closed with a benefit of half a million francs.

Last year's Swiss National Day collection yielded a net revenue of 1,234,000 francs, i.e. 213,000 francs more than in the previous year. According to the statutes of this action, the money will be transmitted to the Swiss Red Cross.

In a manifestation on women societies in Berne, an extension of the political rights of women and increased collaboration of women in communal questions was demanded.

In the City of Zurich, the electors ratified a number of projects including one relative to the equipment of a Laboratory for Radioscopic Work and another providing for the construction of an electric power plant at the Julier.

The Government of Geneva, in a special session last Tuesday, January 23rd, welcomed the new French Consul General, Mr. Xavier de Gaulle. Cantonal President, Mr. Francois Perreard addressed hearty words to the new French Consul to which Mr. de Gaulle replied.

The Political Department has given our Minister in Berlin the necessary instructions regarding the protection of Swiss citizens on the Reich's territory and territories of the Reich occupied by the Russians. All Switzerland's diplomatic personnel including that of the Consulates will remain at their posts. Swiss citizens residing in Germany have received from our Legation the counsel not to leave their present residence and no general repatriation plan is under consideration for the moment.

Five years ago on February 1st, the compensation funds set up to cover loss of income, due to active military service was introduced in Switzerland. This has become the greatest social work our country has known so far. It makes it possible for the soldiers to receive in addition to their army pay, a compensation for the loss sustained in their normal salary enabling them to support their families without undue difficulties.

The head of the Commercial Section of the Federal Department of Public Economy, Dr. Hotz, announced that at present 300,000 tons of foodstuffs and 100,000 tons of technical raw material are waiting in ports of the Iberian Peninsula to be shipped to Switzerland and that the ports on which our country is absolutely depending are still blocked. Dr. Hotz declared, 'the actual prosperity of our industry has only been an illusion and our production is at present beginning to slacken considerably. Therefore, all economic forces of our country must join their efforts to pull through and to overcome future difficulties. In the field of international collaboration,