

The question of an old age and survivors insurance

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glorious unison the spectators, lining the spacious main thoroughfare, fall reverently down on their knees. The parish priest, carrying the Blessed Sacrament, now pronounces his benediction.

A rather unusual feature is the fact that while the procession winds its way around the historic abbey at Beromunster, the ascension of Christ is figuratively depicted within the church. By means of an artistic device an image of the Redeemer rises towards the ceiling and disappears in clouds of incense. The erection of such an image is also customary in Fribourg, Lucerne, Zug and Schwyz.

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DIFFICULT TIMES FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY.

The number of unemployed people in Switzerland has remained unchanged during the past years. This has been due to two principal reasons, the carrying out of the plan for agricultural extension on the one hand and the mobilization of large numbers of troops and large scale defense works on the other.

However, the reprovisioning difficulties, particularly in such raw materials as coal, and the partial interruption of exports are today causing much anxiety to many Swiss industrialists. In fact, the plan to meet unemployment problems known in Switzerland as the Zipfel-Plan from the name of its chief author has already found a practical application in many cases.

The plan provides first of all for immediately productive measures, making it possible for factories to keep their employees at the same or a similar occupation as in the past. The military authorities and the Federal Railways have given orders that would have had to be filled some time or the other, but which had been held in reserve to meet an upsurge in unemployment. This farsighted policy is not possible, however, in all branches of the nation's economy. The government could hardly come to the rescue in the same way to the aluminium industry, for in this case it is not orders that are lacking but raw materials. Nor could the same help be extended to the watch making industry, for the state does not need watches as it does railway cars or uniforms for postmen. Thus some enterprises have not been able to avoid laying off workers.

The Swiss labor market will depend in the first place on our commercial relations with the outside world. If Swiss industry is able to get the needed raw materials and if exportation is possible, our workers will again have work. But if the present situation continues, there is no doubt that Switzerland will be confronted very soon with heavy unemployment.

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THE QUESTION OF AN OLD AGE AND SURVIVORS' INSURANCE.

One question which continues to preoccupy the Swiss public opinion, is the problem of a general and obligatory old age and survivors insurance. This is probably the most burning question in our internal policy.

The idea of an old age and survivors insurance dates back twenty years. In 1925, the Swiss people laid the foundation for the insurance by accepting a new article in the Federal Constitution, dealing with the principles of such a social enterprise. In 1931, the first law project for the practical application of these principles was rejected as it was generally considered insufficiently worked out. This first negative decision of the Swiss people in this matter naturally caused a great delay. The present war has again stirred up the problem. A popular initiative was launched to oblige our authorities to concentrate again their efforts on this task. For more than one year now a number of experts have been at work, elaborating a new project which is generally expected to be published before the end of this war. But as in our country parliamentary procedure is particularly slow, and because of the popular vote by which this project will have to be approved, one can hardly expect the full realization of this insurance before the beginning of 1946.

The Swiss people definitely do not like this delay, they already show themselves impatient. It is argued that there are many old people, widows and orphans in our country who have great difficulty in living and who need our help and that it would not be equitable to deprive them for another three years of the indispensable relief this great social institution would offer to them. For this reason the Federal Council has now decided to work out an intermediary solution, which will make it possible to bring help to these needy people in Switzerland until the whole of the Swiss people will benefit by an insurance which is worthy of its name. This decision has been warmly welcomed. The time gained by this step now offers an opportunity to build up this great institution on a really solid and lasting basis.

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SWITZERLAND AND AIR TRAFFIC OF THE FUTURE:

At present, the Confederation is making a big effort along a very special line. The idea is to again resume contact with the outside world. Plans are being put on foot for our future air traffic.

A Swiss delegation took part last Fall in the Air Conference in Chicago. They took part in drawing up plans for the organization of international air service after the war. Our delegates had barely returned home when the Federal Council proposed to the Chambers that a big intercontinental airport be installed at Zurich and that continental airfield be built at Geneva, Basle and Berne. Last week, the National Council voted the necessary credits for these undertakings; the States Council will follow suit next June.

In the field of air traffic, we are working out the necessary legal and technical measures in order to be ready just as soon as circumstances permit. Switzerland which has not been ravaged by the war will be able just as soon as peace is returned to us and at a time when numerous other lands will have to give their best efforts to reconstruction, to place at the disposal of others an equipment not only intact but greatly improved.

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ELECTIONS IN THE CANTON OF VAUD:

These days the Swiss papers remark with satisfaction or regret according to their political position the results of the Grand Council elections in the Canton of Vaud last Saturday and Sunday, elections which marked a definite strengthening of the political left. The open exaltation of the Socialist papers over the fact that the left parties have been able to increase their representatives from 22 to 69 is not hard to understand. On the other hand, the elections were a severe disappointment for the bourgeois parties. The Radicals lost 30 of their former 130 seats, and the Liberals 17 of their former 52.

The effect was sensational in Lausanne where the leftist block has won 40 of the city's 53 seats in the cantonal legislature.

However, victor and vanquished are united in the conviction that all the political parties must get together and work for the common good of the country. Socialist comment stresses the point that the battle was fought with the weapons of democracy.

The "Nationalzeitung" emphasizes the fact that the Radicals of the Canton of Vaud held for a full 100 years an absolute majority and that the elections last Saturday and Sunday therefore introduced a new epoch in the political history of the Canton.

The Lucerne "Vaterland" expresses the opinion that the bourgeois defeat in the Canton of Vaud in no way means a disaster for the parties concerned.

"The Gazette de Lausanne" says: 'We refuse to believe that the 10,000 citizens of Lausanne who voted for the Workers' Party agree in full with the opinions of their leaders. The greater part of these citizens only wanted to give vent to their bad humor and a desire for a change. The first task confronting us now is to study seriously the causes of this discontentment,