

News from Switzerland

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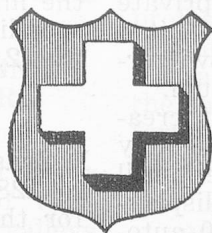
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OCTOBER, 1952.

AUCKLAND.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Swiss Imports of Wheat

Swiss wheat imports in July of 1952 were twice as large as in July of 1950. Three-fourths of this wheat was sent from the United States, and the rest was imported from Canada.

Against a Rise of Postal Rates

A referendum was initiated against the decision of the Federal Chambers to raise Swiss postal rates. The referendum was not of a political nature, but originated in an independent committee of law students. Different branches of trade and industry which are affected by these tariffs are expected to support the referendum.

Switzerland and the EPU

The European Payments Union reports that in July, Switzerland again had a surplus of 24,000,000 francs. Half of this surplus is accounted for by the credit of the Confederation and half through gold transfers to the Payments Union. Swiss advance payments to the Union amount now to almost 500,000,000 francs.

Prospects of the Swiss Silk Industry

Business conditions in the silk and rayon industry were unsatisfactory during the second quarter of this year. Foreign workers had to be released and production was sharply curtailed. Despite these facts, stocks of manufactured goods increased while the factories tried to keep domestic workers at their jobs. Future prospects in this branch of the textile industry are still uncertain, but the situation is considered now more favourable than it was last spring.

The Development of Railway Traffic.

The Swiss National Railways report a surplus of 112,000,000 francs for the first seven months of 1952, compared with 117,000,000 during the same period last year. Traffic during June and July, however, was higher than in 1951, princi-

pally on account of an increased number of passengers. In fact, the National Railways transported 134,000,000 passengers during the first seven months of this year, 7,000,000 more than in 1951. Freight traffic, on the other hand, was slightly below the level of 1951.

Business Conditions in the Swiss Paper Industry

According to the statements issued by the principal paper manufacturing companies, business during the year ending in June, 1952, has been quite as favourable as during the previous year. While demand in other European countries has decreased because of cheapening prices for Scandinavian cellulose, Swiss factories have been able to maintain full production. In fact, output as well as sales have reached the same levels during the first six months of this year as previously. It is true that incoming orders have slightly declined, but this will only contribute to speedier deliveries and reduced imports. In the first six months of 1952 considerable amounts of paper were imported; this state of affairs is expected to change shortly. Generally speaking, prices on the Swiss market have already been adapted to the more favourable cellulose prices existing.

Increased Consumption of Electric Power

The use of electric power in Switzerland has risen by 8½ per cent. or 500,000,000 kwh between October, 1951, and May, 1952. In this increase, all categories of consumers have shared in more or less equal proportion. It is expected that during this summer the export of electricity has exceeded imports. If so, this export surplus will be compensated again next winter by increased use of foreign power.

An Interesting Exhibition in Geneva

An exhibition of watches and jewellery has recently opened at the Geneva Museum of Art and History. This exhibition, which deserves particular attention, includes an extraordinary

show of automatons, among them items of unique importance coming from museums and private collections in Germany, Austria, Spain, the United States, France, Great Britain, Italy and Switzerland—above all from the Neuchatel Museum.

The exhibition also includes the newest creations of the Swiss watch and jewellery industry which will not be placed upon the market until next spring. Forty-seven companies are displaying their newest models. Among the 300 automatons exhibited are not only a number of old pieces constructed by Jacques Vaucanson, Jaquet-Droz, Friedrich von Knaus, and the Mailardots, but also several modern creations such as the electro-magnetic chess player invented by Torres y Quevedo.

The Prospects in Swiss Industry

Figures from the Federal Office of Industry and Trade show that business prospects for 55 per cent. of Swiss industries are considered good, 34 per cent. uncertain, and 10 per cent. bad. It is especially satisfying to notice that in several branches of the textile industry prospects are considered to be more favourable than before.

The Metal and Machine Industries are Very Active

A majority of the metal and machine industries are now extremely active, and working hours in many of them have been lengthened. In a well-known machine factory in German Switzerland, almost 2000 employees work two hours overtime each day with 25 per cent. overtime pay, in order to satisfy the orders which are coming in. In other companies, three shifts are at work seven days a week.

A Fine Anniversary.

Swiss watches have a tradition of elegance and precision. This is an especially praiseworthy tradition when it is kept by the same manufacturer for one hundred years. A Villeret watch company, Lavina, Inc., founded in 1852, is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. At the same time, the Chronometrik observatory in Neuenburg has awarded a prize to the Lavina Company for its new wrist chronometer. It is the first time that wrist chronometer in mass production has received a prize; a fine example of the vitality of the Swiss watchmaking industry.

The Activity of the Basle Rhine Harbours

Three hundred and sixty thousand tons of goods were reshipped from the Basle Rhine harbours in August, 1952. In August, 1951, 440,000 tons of goods were transhipped at the ports, 80,000 tons more than in August this year. Total traf-

fic for the year rose to over 3,000,000 tons in the middle of August last year, while the corresponding figure this year at the end of August was 2,900,000 tons.

NEWS OF THE COLONY

Swiss voters have rejected by 550,712 votes to 128,237 a proposal of the Communist Party for the abolition of purchase tax. This is one of the Government's main sources of revenue. Here are detailed results of the voting:—

	Yes.	No.
Zurich	30,538	112,928
Bern	12,274	72,685
Luzern	4,661	26,142
Uri	503	4,477
Schwyz	1,179	7,909
Obwalden	356	2,549
Nidwalden	353	2,936
Glarus	1,128	5,877
Zug	768	4,075
Fribourg	2,200	13,930
Solothurn	3,716	21,286
Baselstadt	7,130	16,527
Baselland	3,728	11,222
Schaffhausen	3,206	11,045
Appenzell A.Rhr.	1,797	7,595
Appenzell I.Rh.	248	1,623
St. Gallen	9,100	47,504
Graubunden	1,800	19,115
Aargau	9,623	59,282
Thurgau	4,423	26,820
Ticino	3,374	9,450
Vaud	11,686	29,564
Valais	3,455	11,411
Neuchatel	4,213	12,191
Geneve	6,778	12,569
Total	128,237	550,712

The tax is 4 per cent. on all goods sold to consumers. The referendum clearly demonstrates what powers the citizen can exercise with his voting paper.

Compatriot in Fiji

Swiss who contemplate going to the Fiji Islands in order to enjoy the sun under coconut trees and to have a swim in the warm coral sea, will be pleased to learn that they have a charming compatriot in Suva. Mr. Hans Furrer, whose fair skin and blond hair makes a contrast with the Fijians, is an architect with the Department of Works at Suva, and is at present busy with the construction of the new Medical Centre. He is very popular on Viti Levu Island, and takes an active part in the social and cultural life of the island. This "Luzerner" is a good musician and writes musical arrangements for the Suva Orchestra, which he conducts with skill. Painting is also another one of his hobbies. We wish to congratulate Mr. Furrer on his success.