

News from Switzerland

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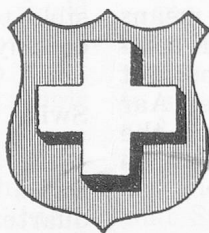
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AUCKLAND.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Switzerland's Literary Output

The Swiss National Library Report for 1950 expressed the hope that Swiss publishers would be able to maintain their yearly lists at about 3500 to 3600 new books. This production was considered as well adapted to the country's literary and scientific production. The level was indeed maintained in the following year, but in 1952 a drop of some 10 per cent. occurred. It is the French, i.e., Western Swiss, output which seems more particularly in jeopardy. Comparing 1952 figures with those for the years 1935-38, it is clear the the publication of books in German remains at a level of 66 per cent. higher than pre-war figures, whereas the number of publications in French does not exceed 23 per cent.

It is evident that books are Switzerland's most effective means of making the outside world aware of its individual art and culture. It appeared necessary, therefore, to considerably increase the distribution of the National Bibliography. The Federal Government has gladly sponsored an action tending to promote knowledge of Swiss culture and subsidised the publication of 6200 copies of "Le Livre Suisse" (a yearly national bibliography) which are to be sent to leading libraries and learned societies and book-sellers throughout the world.

New High-frequency Infra-red Oven

A consortium for purposes of study, in Zurich, has succeeded in bringing out a new high-frequency infra-red oven for the baking of bread and cakes. The Swiss Bakers' School, in Lucerne, which enjoys international renown, has been working for more than a year with one of these ovens and has obtained remarkable results. These ovens are henceforth to be produced in large quantities.

The process of baking is much more rapid in this new oven, and only requires from one-quarter to one-third of the time needed when using an ordinary oven. Contrary to what has hap-

pened up to the present, the baking takes place in a reverse order, starting right inside and then proceeding to the outside of whatever is being baked. The volume of the pastry is greater; the outside formation of the crust and the colouring of the pastry can be regulated at will by means of the irradiation of infra-red rays, independently of the baking by means of high frequency. Thus, there are two means of baking, by high frequency and by infra-red rays, and these can be used to the amount required for every kind of pastry. The quality of the products is greatly improved and it is possible to preserve certain vitamins owing to the reduction in the length of time needed for baking. Moreover, the new oven takes up less place than an ordinary oven and its consumption of electricity is smaller.

It is anticipated that this new process will be adopted on a large scale throughout the world.

The Production of Electric Power in Switzerland.

The snow and the rain which have fallen during the last few weeks have helped to increase the production of electric power in Switzerland. Nevertheless, it remains somewhat feeble in comparison with other years. Thus, during the course of January, Switzerland was obliged to import as much as 19 per cent. of the power consumed in this country, and the volume of water accumulated in the artificial lakes remains considerably below the average. It is only thanks to imports and to the production of the thermic plants, which came to the rescue, that it will be possible to avoid restricting consumption.

A Project of a Navigable Watercourse Connecting the Rhone with the Rhine in Switzerland.

For a long time past, Swiss public opinion has been interested in the project of a navigable watercourse connecting the Rhone with the Rhine. A fresh stage has been accomplished in this domain through the successful termination of the technical studies relating to this question. What

has to be done is to connect Lake Lemman (Lake of Geneva) with the Lake of Neuchatel by means of a navigable watercourse, which would comprise numerous locks and two tunnels, to construct the necessary ports and to make the River Aar navigable between the Lake of Bienne and the Rhine. The cost of all this work would require approximately 350 million francs, to cover it.

Swiss Textile Industry in 1953

During the course of last year, exports of the products of the Swiss textile industry attained a high level which had never been reached before. Indeed, these exports exceeded by 10 per cent. the figures for 1951, in spite of the fact that this was a very prosperous year. With a total of 852 million Swiss francs, they represent one-sixth of the value of all Swiss exports.

The increase since 1952 has been considerable. It is to be observed more especially in regard to exports of fabrics, embroideries, ready-to-wear clothing and knitted wear. On the other hand, exports of yarns have shown an inclination to remain stationary. This is not due to any lack of marketing possibilities, but to the high level of occupation in the Swiss weaving mills, which have absorbed the greater part of yarn production.

Germany is Switzerland's chief customer in most branches of her textile industry. But, this country also sells a large quantity of silk fabrics and synthetic yarns to Sweden, South Africa and Australia.

Nineteen hundred and fifty-three has also proved an excellent year for the Swiss embroidery industry, which has witnessed an increase of 10 per cent. in respect of its exports. This increase is due to a far from negligible extent to sales of silk embroideries, which are enjoying, more especially in Germany, a recrudescence of favour on the part of Dame Fashion.

The two principal customers for Swiss embroideries are the United States of America and Germany, the two of them absorbing more than a quarter of Swiss exports.

Innovation in Textile Technics

A Swiss undertaking has just completed the manufacture of a gadget which marks any defect in weaving, dyeing or the printing of tissues, and thus brings with it a revolution in this domain. It is customary for any defects in weaving, dyeing and even in finishing to be marked by a thread passed through the selvedge of the fabric. Up to the present this work has been done exclusively by hand, and has constituted a complicated operation which took up a great deal of time and absorbed a considerable portion of

manpower. This new apparatus makes it possible to do this work ten to twelve times more quickly.

Swiss Retail Trade at the End of 1953

An increase of 3 per cent. in the volume of Swiss retail trade, as compared with the fourth quarter of 1952, was registered at the end of last year. Practically all branches of trade participated in this improvement, but to a varying degree. Thus, sales of textile goods and of clothing show an increase of 5 per cent. in comparison with the preceding year, whereas sales of foodstuffs have only gone up by 2 per cent. Progress is to be reported, also, in respect of the sale of lasting consumer goods, and this is attributed to the development which has occurred in respect of house building. Nevertheless, competition is making itself felt to an increasing extent and it manifests itself chiefly through the greater number of purchases made on credit or on the instalment plan.

Degree of Occupation in Swiss Industry.

The degree of occupation has gone up still higher in the textile industry and work is assured in these undertakings for several months. In so far as the manufacture of means for production is concerned, a slight increase in the number of orders was observed towards the end of the year, which fact must be attributed to a large extent to the efforts made to rationalise industrial plants. Taken as a whole, however, delays in deliveries have been somewhat shortened, thus making it possible for Swiss factories to put up a better fight against competition on foreign markets.

Activity of Building Industry

Activities in the building industry and in that specialising in the construction of housing units became still more intense during the fourth quarter of 1953. The output of this branch of trade surpasses by 2 per cent. that for the previous year. Nevertheless, the available housing continues to be insufficient and the number of building licences issued during 1953 increased by the astounding amount of 31 per cent.

NEWS OF THE COLONY

Swiss Social Club, Taranaki

The Swiss Social Club's picnic, 1954, was held at Te Ngutu Park, Okiawa, on February 20th, and an attendance of about 300 people marked the great popularity of this annual event.