

Switzerland and the world : looking back to 1967 - the pattern evolving for 1968 [continued]

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SWITZERLAND AND THE WORLD

LOOKING BACK TO 1967 — THE PATTERN EVOLVING FOR 1968

ECONOMY

The past year realised a number of important economic aims and aspirations Switzerland had, whilst some problems have remained unsolved. The year began well with President Johnson's courageous decision which brought important tariffs for watches back to their original level. With that, President Eisenhower's decree of nearly 13 years previously, using the "escape clause" to increase duty on watches by 50% was scrapped. The favourable outcome was the result of years of determined effort by Swiss economic diplomats. They were helped by the bold undertaking of the Kennedy Round, the biggest ever arranged customs and trade conference of Gatt (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), which came to an end on 30th June after nearly five years. Dramatic events and basic compromises had preceded the solemn closing ceremony chaired by Federal Councillor Schaffner.

The Kennedy Round gave Switzerland valuable and essential relief benefiting both industry and agriculture. With its most important partner, the European Economic Community, customs reductions were agreed which in the economic sector reach some 38%. This brings the Common Market tariff for Switzerland down from 11.5 to 7%, though it must be remembered that the Kennedy Round results will be spread over five years, affecting 46 countries. The first reductions came into operation on 1st January.

For agriculture, adequate agreement was reached regarding the few Swiss exports like cheese and cattle. When Federal Councillor Celio opened the 25th OLMA (Eastern Swiss Agricultural and Dairy Exhibition) in St. Gall last October, he called Swiss agriculture a stabilising and levelling factor in Switzerland's economic world position.

A remarkable result deserves mention: during the long and difficult negotiations between Switzerland and the Common Market, a friendly and neighbourly relationship has developed which will stand in good stead in the future. Furthermore, the results of the negotiations have reduced considerably any discrimination against Swiss exports to EEC countries.

Unlike Great Britain, Ireland and the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland did not undertake any new steps to join the Common Market. Federal Councillor Schaffner declared in Parliament in June that Switzerland considered her application to start negotiations, which she made in 1961, as pending, and that she counted on being included in any general collective settlement of the

European integration problem. She had no preconceived idea as to the exact shape and form, except that such achievements as the industrial tariff reductions amongst EFTA countries should not be discarded.

From the Federal Council's report on economic measures vis-a-vis foreign countries, one could learn that a joint commission had prepared a working schedule regarding the remaining tasks (as laid down in the Treaty of Rome) for the rest of the transition period ending 1970. The joint agricultural policy, customs union, freedom of labour and competition policy have been widely developed within the Common Market. Switzerland keeps a vigilant eye on any decisions which would be detrimental, so that possible intervention could be undertaken immediately.

Regarding the "Third World," the developing countries, Switzerland has not remained inactive. The second Conference for Trade and Development, UNCTAD, has been prepared and is taking place in New Delhi in February and March. The Swiss delegation is headed by Ambassador Dr P. R. Jolles, Minister P. Languetin and the Swiss Ambassador in India, Dr R. Faessler.

Early in December, the Ministerial Council of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) met in Paris. Main subjects on the agenda concerned economic policies of member States and their relations to the developing countries. Federal Councillor Schaffner led the Swiss delegation. Integration was the subject at a meeting in December, also in Paris, of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe; Federal Councillor Spuehler represented the Confederation. A few days later, Federal Councillor Gnaegi headed the Swiss delegation at a Council meeting in the French Capital of the Conference of European Ministers of Transport. Main subjects: financial position of the railways, technical road safety needs and hours of driving by professional drivers. Federal Councillor Spuehler gave a message on Human Rights Day on 9th December, although, Switzerland not being a member of the political organisation of United Nations, she was not a signatory to the proclamation in 1948. Nevertheless, she supports the ideals involved. Remains to be mentioned the celebration which Federal Councillor Schaffner and the Geneva authorities organised on 22nd November to mark the 20th anniversary of GATT. Two days afterwards, Monsieur Olivier Long, Swiss Ambassador in London, was chosen as new Director-General of GATT by its member nations, a great honour for the Confederation, as well as for Monsieur Long.

Early in January, the American delegation headed by Under-Secretary of State Katzenbach also visited Switzerland to discuss matters of mutual interest to both countries, amongst them balance of payments questions, etc. A few days later, Federal Councillor Schaffner's famous speech regarding further liberalisation of world trade was officially asked in writing by Senator

Robert Kennedy to be put on record in the minutes of the U.S.A. Senate. This honour was due to what the Senator called "Mr Schaffner's key position in international economic policy".

[To be continued.]

News of the Colony

AUCKLAND SWISS CLUB

NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION

Nearly 200 people came along to celebrate the National Day together with their friends at the beautifully-decorated Edendale Hall.

A delicious dinner, consisting of Rippli, Sauerkraut and potatoes followed by ice cream with hot chocolate, was the beginning of this very successful and enjoyable evening. Our popular band presented thereafter dance music and just about everyone present was up on their feet. This year we could listen to a Swiss folklore show and it was really a pleasure to see how much our Swiss, and especially our guests, enjoyed and appreciated these wonderful items.

Our very best thanks to all concerned.

—U.B.

HAMILTON SWISS CLUB

The final of this year's Card evenings was recently played at the Swiss Chalet. As usual a most homely atmosphere prevailed and we would like to thank Mr & Mrs Fluhler for being most gracious to allow us to use their premises and, as always, provide such a delicious supper.

Prizewinners were as follows: 1st evening, Jakob Von Holzen, Walter Unternahrer, John Villiger; 2nd evening, Herman Odermatt, John Villiger, Jakob Frischknecht; 3rd evening, John Villiger, Herman Odermatt, Fritz Hasli. Combination Prize: John Villiger 1st, 5636 points; Herman Odermatt 2nd, 5568 points; Walter Unternahrer 3rd, 5253 points.

—W.R.

TARANAKI SWISS SOCIAL CLUB

NATIONAL DAY OBSERVED

Kapuni Memorial Hall was packed with about 300 people for the August 1st Celebration. To mark the 677th year of Swiss independence, visitors were present from Taupo, Reparoa and Hamilton. The floral work and decorating was beautifully done by Mrs D. Hiestand.