

Swiss Youth Club

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Telephone and telegraph services, as well as the postal system, were nationalised long ago. The main railway lines are also government-owned. Publicly owned light and power is consumed by three-fourths of the entire population. Even in banking, 51 per cent. of the funds are controlled by the State or the communes. Co-operatives are very extensive and powerful.

Two new laws were recently put through by popular vote: one of these belatedly inaugurated old age pensions, and the other, far more significant, provided for State control of economic life in case of any emergency need. As a matter of fact, there had been a great deal of federal regulation, both of agriculture and industry, which the new law primarily endorsed.

Swiss prosperity does not come from the soil; far from it. As someone said long ago, "Europe's richest peoples live on Europe's poorest soil." Most of the land area is not arable at all, and much that is can produce only by the hardest labour.

Raw materials and foodstuffs have always had to be imported. The very genuine prosperity of the nation has come about from hard and skilful work, the investment of capital abroad with returns to the home country and, especially, the export of expertly-manufactured finished products, such as clocks and watches.

Swiss-owned plants abroad have been taken over wholesale. Even when certain countries, such as Czechoslovakia and Poland, are willing to give compensation, the rate is usually low, and the difficulties of transferring currencies into the high-value Swiss francs are well-nigh insuperable. Some Swiss capital has been to seek less worrisome areas, such as Ireland.

Military Training in Switzerland, compulsory from the age of 20 up to 48, has always been presented to the outside world as democratic, and it unquestionably is fairly administered. But it is also very rigid. Unlike Britain, America and many other countries, Switzerland provides no alternative service for conscientious objectors.

They are given milder sentences than in some countries, but are taken to court time after time. If they are exempt for physical reasons, they must pay a military tax, and failure to meet the tax for conscientious reasons, just as refusal to serve, results in repeated imprisonments, and often in expulsion from the objector's home canton.

The importance of neutrality cannot be exaggerated. It is no negative idea or policy. Switzerland is deliberately neutral, not for narrow reasons alone, but for its service to the world. But behind

neutrality in foreign policy there is an overlooked internal aspect of this central policy; the most prized thing to all the Swiss is the cantonal freedom, but once neutrality is abandoned, centralised authority is inevitable, and the whole character of the national life must undergo a drastic and unhappy change.

The people are overwhelmingly opposed to Communism, but the great relief organisations are strongly emphasising help to eastern Europe, which needs it sorely, and from which the Swiss do not want to be separated by the political splitting up of the Continent. If anyone imagines that the Swiss are selfish in their neutrality point of view, let him ponder the fact that more than fifty million dollars has been donated or appropriated by this land of four million people for the aid of war sufferers outside its borders.

SWISS YOUTH CLUB.

For some time past the Council of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique had studied the question of giving the large number of Swiss boys and girls, who are arriving in London, an opportunity to meet on certain days, during the week on a social basis.

An Appeal was published in the last issue of this paper asking for furniture and for members of the Colony to come forward to make the necessary arrangements. The result concerning the Appeal for furniture has so far not met with much success, and we herewith repeat that the following articles would be gratefully received: chairs, club-chairs and settees, tables, book case, piano, wireless set, floor rugs, chandeliers.

The request for members to take an active interest in this undertaking has, however, been most successful and a committee consisting of the following has been formed: Mme Isacco, Mme Weibel, Mme Egli, Mme Bolla and M. Spagnapani, all names which guarantee, that with the necessary support of the entire Colony this new and very necessary venture can be carried on in a dignified manner.

With the collaboration of the Swiss Legation, who very kindly offered to put one large room in the Legation building at Grosvenor Square (entrance 28, Duke Street), at the disposal of the Committee the plans for such a social centre could be taken a step further, and on Saturday, January 10th, the Swiss Youth Club was formally opened by the Swiss Chargé d'Affaires, Dr. A. Escher, in the presence of a representative gathering.

Dr. Escher in his address thanked all those who had taken the initiative in this undertaking, and wished them success, stressing the point how important it was for our young countrymen and country-women to find a little *pied à terre* where they can spend a few hours amongst each other, in a happy atmosphere.

It might be said here, that it is a modest beginning in, as far as we know, only temporary quarters, but the main thing is, that the scheme has actually started, and we feel sure, that by getting the full support of all those who have the welfare of our young compatriots at heart, a permanent meeting place should ultimately be found.

Let it not be said in our own homeland that the London Colony as such takes no interest in their young and often inexperienced countrymen, it is a noble and we repeat, necessary work which deserves all the support it can get.

