

News from home

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NEWS FROM HOME.

By MAX NEF.

There are not very many occasions on which the members of the Swiss Cabinet have the opportunity of speaking, from a suitable platform, on the problems affecting the country, and getting into direct contact with a wide public. When this does happen, however, what they say is important and deserves to be kept in mind.

During the past weeks no fewer than three of our Federal Ministers—and this is a rare coincidence—addressed themselves to the public. Thus, Mr. Max Petitpierre, the Head of the Political Department, spoke at the Annual Congress of the Liberal-Democratic Party, on questions which are of present interest to Switzerland. The reserve which Switzerland maintains in regard to those international political problems, which still remain unsolved, continues to be justified. Whenever it is possible, our country offers its good services, wherever there are tasks to be fulfilled for the furtherance of the peaceful co-existence of nations and the promotion of humanitarian aims. New problems are continually arising as a result of rich and poor countries living side by side, as also as a result of the rapid development of science and technique, and, finally, also because of the political and economic development in Europe itself.

On the occasion of the celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the University of Geneva, Mr. Chaudet, the President of the Swiss Confederation, brought greetings from the Federal Government and the Swiss people. He praised the freedom of spirit and the search for knowledge which were sponsors to this foundation, and to which, since that time, not only the Geneva University, but the city of Geneva itself, have remained true and have continued to cherish, so that they have become a spiritual and cultural metropolis in French-speaking Switzerland.

At the Annual Meeting of the Swiss Hotel-keepers, Minister Lepori stressed the position and the importance of Switzerland in international tourist traffic, and thus, also, in the living exchange and contact of many nations. Tourist traffic, with the numerous foreign visitors it brings to our country, plays a very important role in our economy. Indeed, it constitutes one of the pillars of Swiss prosperity.

The beginning of June brought with it the first part of the Summer Session of the Federal Parliament. In addition to the ordinary business which recurs each year, such as discussions relating to the Government's Annual Report and the approval of the State Account and the Accounts of the big State undertakings, such as the Federal Railways, there are also important legislative matters to be dealt with. Thus, in the debates on the future Federal Law on Disablement Insurance, it has proved possible to settle the divergences which occurred in the final texts of the resolutions passed by both Chambers. With this Law it will now be possible to fill in the deficiency which has existed up to the present in the State Social Insurance, and this at the beginning of next year.

Furthermore, a Draft Bill was passed, regarding an adjustment of the tariffs of the private railways to that of the Federal Railways. Moreover, facilities were created for the Regional and the Mountain Railways, as well as some financial help granted for the

regions served by these railways, and their inhabitants.

Difficulties which have arisen in the Dairy Industry, partly as a result of excessive offers, on the one hand, and of greater difficulties experienced in the marketing and disposal of dairy produce, on the other, have had to be bridged by means of State Aid. A participation on the part of the milk producers themselves in raising the financial means required for this aid is expected to have the effect of restricting production. Although the principle of this action was uncontested, some very lively discussions took place in Parliament regarding the extent of the repartition of costs. The fact that aid to the mountain farmers is connected with this action does not make the solution of the difficulties on the milk market any easier. It was repeatedly stressed during the discussions that similar situations existed in all the neighbouring countries in Europe, in regard to their agricultural production, and that nowhere had it proved possible to find an effective, lasting solution to this problem.

The Council of States, which is the Swiss Senate, took cognizance of a Constitutional Initiative which has taken place: it originates from Communist circles and aims at the prohibition of atomic armament. First of all, the Federal Government will now have to draw up a material report on this problem, after which—and this within the space of three years as prescribed by the Law—Parliament will have to express its opinion, with a view to a future Public Referendum. The question has been put and the answer must be considered very calmly and examined from all the various points of view.

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