

# Facts and figures

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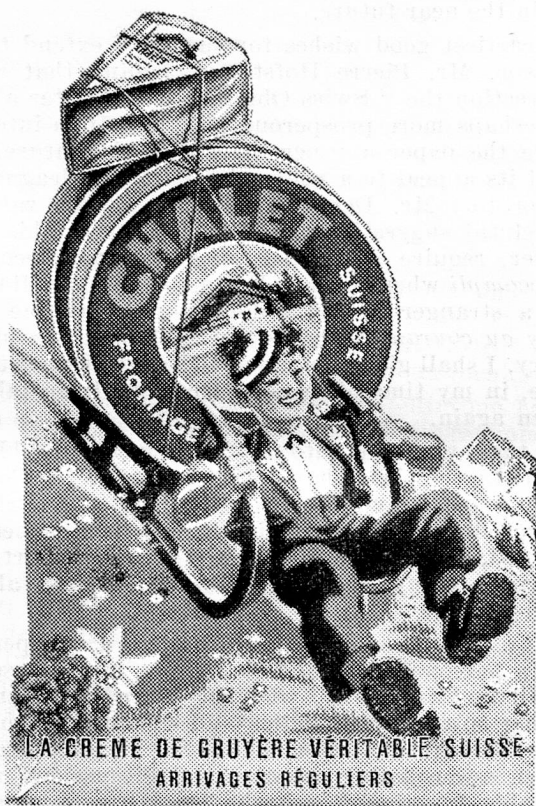
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## FACTS AND FIGURES

By W. PIELKEN

The idea of the standard of living is interpreted differently from country to country. For this reason an attempt is being made, in the present economic survey, to give a general view of the standard of living in *Switzerland*, based on the most recent investigations.

As in most other countries of the world, in Switzerland the prices of the most important food-stuffs and raw materials are registered, in order that their development may be observed over a number of years. The figures which have just appeared, in respect of November last, show that there was a slight rise in regard to the Swiss retail prices. Whereas they had remained practically unchanged when compared with those for October, of last year, they had risen by almost two per cent in comparison with November 1959. When compared with the last pre-war year, *i.e.* 1939, they have gone up by approximately 85 per cent. As, however, rents and the cost of lighting and heating and other services rendered have increased still more, in Switzerland, than has the cost of foodstuffs, it is a comparison of the cost-of-living figures that provides the best indication — because in the index for the cost of living are included the prices for rents, services rendered, and even visits to the theatre and the cinema. Such cost-of-living figures have gone up in all countries. In Switzerland this increase in costs rose by only 6 per cent between 1953 and 1959, as compared with 9 per cent in the United States, 18 per cent in Australia, 20 per cent in Sweden, and as much as 50 per cent in Spain, where life used to be so cheap.

However, these figures regarding Swiss price levels do not give a proper picture of the situation unless one also provides some information in regard to Swiss wages. A short time ago an enquiry on wages and salaries was carried out in Switzerland among half-a-million non-self-employed persons, from which it appears that the adult skilled worker earns about 380 centimes per hour, while the adult male employee gets approximately 495 centimes per hour. In comparison with 1939 the hourly earnings of the skilled worker have gone up by about 145 per cent. In order to ascertain the purchasing power of these hourly wages, it is necessary to calculate the average time which has to be worked by a worker or an employee to enable him to buy a specified amount of goods. For example, in order to buy one pint of milk a worker has to work almost 7 minutes, while a clerical worker has to put in 6 minutes of work to buy the same quantity. The worker must labour for 4 minutes in order to buy himself a fresh egg, while the employee needs only 3½ minutes for this purpose. For the purchase of 2 pounds of bread a worker requires 11½ minutes of work, and the employee only about 8 minutes. For a good, pure wool suit an employee will have to work for some 30 hours, and for a pair of good shoes, he will need about 10 hours. The worker will have to work for 38 hours in order to get his suit, and 13 hours for his shoes.