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AVS/AI

Swiss who are still under 50 are recommended to join the voluntary AVS/AI **as soon as possible**, especially as the number of contribution years is crucial in the calculation of a full or partial pension.

Compatriots who would like to read the New Year's **Message delivered by the President of the Swiss Confederation** may apply to Embassies or Consulates.

The Canton of Appenzell

Biographical notes

The historian, Prof. Dr. phil. Walter Schläpfer, citizen of Herisau, was born on 5th April 1914. Formerly he was active in the Commune and Cantonal Councils. He has published several works on his home Canton of Appenzell. Apart from his job as Deputy Headmaster of the Cantonal School at Trogen, he has the additional occupation as Custodian of the Cantonal Library.

In the colourful mosaic which is the Swiss Cantons, the State of Appenzell represents a particularly characteristic stone, small though it is; its area of 414 square kilometres constitutes but one per cent of the total Swiss territory. But this little country offers so many special aspects which have made its inhabitants (about 60 000 which equals one per cent of the Swiss population) special favourites of its federal compatriots, even of its near neighbours abroad. It boasts attractive scenery, a turbulent history in whose course two Half-Cantons emerged on very confined space, inhabitants known for their wit and quickness of repartee, quaint state structures in many ways different from those of Appenzell's neighbours. And finally, there is the strange fact that the Canton is

completely surrounded by St. Gall. This state of affairs can only be explained by historical evidence. This will show that it is not Appenzell which is an unnatural creation, but that it is the Canton of St. Gall which was formed in 1803 only, an artificial body «out of Napoleon's hands».

It was not by any means obvious that the Appenzell people should form their own State. The land at the foot of the Saentis is not a natural unit. On the contrary, the wanderer will soon realize that this little country with its many hills and gorges shows an extremely complicated structure. The Canton lies far away from the large communications network; it has not one single road which could be called important other than for local traffic. To such communications pioneers as the Romans, this wild land covered in thick forest was utterly unimportant. It is thus not a coincidence that Appenzell is the only Canton on whose territory no Roman finds have ever been made. The same applies to prehistoric times. In the whole of the Canton, there is only one attractive relic from primeval eras, the «Wildkirchli» cave in Inner-

 * Dear Compatriots *
 * Once again a year draws to its close, and we are on the threshold of a new one which, we hope, will be a happy one for you in every respect. *
 * As far as we are concerned, we shall try and contribute to this by letting you have as before news from Switzerland which concern your new rights as well as your duties, and also cultural and general information, and sports news. *
 * It is with pleasure that we should like to thank in your name all those compatriots abroad who help us year after year to realize this review. *
 * With best wishes. *
 * The Executive Commission on Information from *
 * and to «Fifth Switzerland» *
