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HELVETIA

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Group New Zealand of the N.H.G.

WELLINGTON.
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EXTRACTS FROM AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BY FEDERAL COUNCILLOR MAX PETITPIERRE AT THE THIRD SWISS WOMEN'S CONVENTION IN ZURICH ON SEPTEMBER 22, 1946.

Despite these disquieting times, it would be dangerous to drift into the trend of thought that a new war will of necessity occur. If one is yet unable to see how and according to what principles a durable or even a precarious peace could be organized, one must nevertheless cling to the hope that no nation, whatever its present power may be, would assume the responsibility of driving the world to a new conflict which, with the use of atomic weapons, would mean once more the death of millions of human beings and the destruction of what remains of Europe. Thus, even if the present situation is not yet peace, but an intermediary stage between war and peace, one must not despair. It is possible that we have entered a troubled period which may be prolonged for some time, and dominated by a more or less open hostility between the nations which conceive differently the reorganization of the world as it was left by the war. And perhaps in the long run the questions which today seem insoluble will be settled.

Our country must remain vigilant but it ought not, because of the suspicion which poisons international relations today, to be indifferent or too reserved with regard to the efforts toward creating and later maintaining a durable peace. Despite all the reasons for being pessimistic, we ought to pursue a policy of optimism and ought not to let ourselves be dominated by fear of the worst. This optimism, which I admit requires will power, must, however, not be blind and induce us to abandon needlessly, in the hope that things will finally be arranged, an international position which has accounted for the strength of our country. It is beyond doubt that the policy of neutrality adopted by Switzerland for many centuries, which has kept us for almost a century and a half from involvement in conflicts between the countries of Europe, has proved its value. This policy has allowed us also, and this must not be overlooked, to demonstrate that when we are bound by obligations such as those which our status of neutrality imposes upon us, we keep them scrupulously and without hesitation. Neutrality, which is not an

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RADIO LISTENERS.

Broadcasts from Schwarzenburg are presented now on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 7.15 p.m. to 8.45 p.m. (N.Z. time) on the usual wave lengths 25.28 meters and 25.61 meters.

A speech by the Swiss explorer, Lucas E. Staehelin, who has been visiting New Zealand, will be broadcast from Station 2YA Wellington, at 3 p.m. on Sunday, March 23rd, 1947.

end in itself but one of the fundamental conditions of our national existence, shall remain for us what it has been in the past - the most efficacious means to assure our independence in the future. I am surprised to hear voices raised in our country for the abandonment of our policy of neutrality in a spirit of solidarity. I think, indeed, that in purposely deciding to remain aloof from international conflicts and to renounce for that any pretensions against any countries, we have endeavoured to contribute unilaterally to the maintenance of peace. We have adopted this attitude long before attempts were made to organize the world peacefully. We do not lag behind in this field of international solidarity.

It is impossible to know today at what time the adherence of Switzerland to the United Nations can be envisaged. It would be premature to submit our candidacy or our application today on the condition that our status of neutrality be recognized. This condition would not be accepted in the present circumstances. And if we squarely put before the Swiss people and the cantons which would ultimately have to decide, the dilemma: neutrality or adherence to the United Nations, there can be no doubt that they would instinctively declare their fidelity to the traditional status of Switzerland. It is because the Federal Council, despite today's difficulties, is confident of the future and hopes that one day our country can be accepted by the United Nations and still preserve its international status, that it does not deem it urgent to take direct steps which would be doomed to failure. This does not mean that the Federal Council must remain inactive.

Our country has two possibilities to prove not only that it is not indifferent to the United Nations and their activity, but also that it wishes to collaborate with them wherever collaboration is possible.

The first of these possibilities is our adherence to the different technical, humanitarian, and other organizations which exist or will be created under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Federal Council believes that no effort must be spared to bring Switzerland to participate in the activities of these organizations. This is in line with the attitude that has constantly been taken by our country in the past. At the last General Assembly of the League of Nations which was held in Geneva last Spring, a Swiss Delegation obtained an affirmative vote on a resolution by which the Assembly expressed its wish that no interruption should occur in the assumption by the United Nations of the non-political activities exercised by the League of Nations. Our country has recently been accepted as a member of the International Food and Agricultural Organization. We foresee that in the coming months it will be possible for us to submit our application for membership to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)[x], the World Health Organization and the International Organization for Refugees[x] which will assume the task formerly exercised by other institutions. We have already obtained the assurance of almost all the member states of the United Nations to support our intended candidacy for the International Court of Justice at The Hague. We are endeavouring to be ready to seize at the moment when they present themselves the opportunities for active collaboration with the other countries on all pacific projects.

The other possibility to come in closer contact with the United Nations is offered to us by their taking over the Palace of the League of Nations in Geneva[xx], and by the desire of the Secretary General to establish in Geneva what has been called the "European Headquarters" of the United Nations, where they will hold meetings, organize services, and establish the permanent seat of certain organizations. The question of the transfer of the site of the United Nations to Geneva does not present itself. There is no reason to reverse a decision made after long discussion.

On the other hand, we can accept with satisfaction the idea that Geneva and our country, provided the intentions of the United Nations are realized, will have an opportunity to facilitate their task in Europe. Our status of neutrality is not opposed to the presence of the United Nations in Geneva. Neither does the fact that we are not a member state constitute an obstacle.

For these reasons the Federal Council will spare no effort to bring the negotiations with the Secretary General, which will be continued in New York, to a favorable conclusion. The final decision will lie with the General Assembly of the United Nations.

x Switzerland has been accepted as a member in the meantime.

xx The UNO have decided to take over the building to house therein certain European branches of the organization.

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PICTURES OF DEMOCRACY.

1. "Coalition of Consumers".

A consumers' co-operative society, based on the principles of the pioneers of Rochdale is shown as large and small enterprise. Its organization may resemble that met with abroad. Remarkable for Switzerland, however, is their large number. Every fourth family is a member of a co-operative society. An association in which the 546 local co-operative societies are gathered and which supplies these with goods, is (in peace-time) Switzerland's greatest importer and at the same time the most important customer of Swiss industry and agriculture.

True, magnitude results in economic power, but it saps or even destroys community life. Real community can grow more lively in a small parish than in some large town, where the co-operative society becomes a great enterprise, whose members no longer attend the general meeting, where intermediate functions, co-operative parliaments, interpose themselves, backed by a few active members and consumers, often only interested in the bonus.

In a study made by the V S K (Federation of Swiss Consumers' Co-operative Societies) it is stated, that the interest of the members in the co-operative society's activity diminishes as the society grows larger. Thus the question arose, how the democratic system of representation - general meeting, meeting of delegates, plebiscite, initiative, referendum etc. - could best be maintained, within great co-operative societies with many thousands of members (Basle 62,179, Zurich 27,389, Geneva 23,093 and so on), so that the contact between the co-operative society and its members would remain as lively as possible. Noteworthy in this connection is the new tendency to decentralize the co-operative organizations in towns and large parishes with numerous stores, e.g. Basle with 252, Zurich with 156, Berne with 46 etc., through creation of a store communalty in each quarter.

2. "Democracy in the Making", deals with the Swiss machine and metal industries' labour peace agreement which was reached in 1937 and is still in operation, and with the possibilities and expectations derived therefrom.

"This treaty was signed by the associations concerned as a purely private contract, without the help of the state. Thereby, i.e. by means of a voluntary contract, labour peace has been secured for the most important of the Swiss industries, which employs more than 100,000 hands, which is more than a quarter of the whole number of Switzerland's factory workers. Instead of employers locking their workers out, or workers going on strike, labour peace has been agreed upon. The contracting parties relinquish compulsory measures and have agreed amicably to settle every contention, especially wage disputes, either by discussion at the enterprise concerned or, if satisfaction cannot be obtained, by arbitration, the leaders of the respective associations acting as arbiters, or, should these not be able to agree, by a neutral court of arbitration empowered eventually to make its decision binding.

The same treaty also encourages the constitution of workers' committees, competent to act in the sense of the labour peace agreement.

The contract, after having been in operation for several years and renewed recently, has stood its test. Considering that in bygone times of dearth, wage disputes were the order of the day and that as late as 1930