

Swiss social aspects

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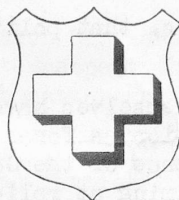
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SWISS SOCIAL ASPECTS.

By Theo Chopard.

(Service suisse des ondes courtes.)

One after the other - Switzerland's larger economic organizations of producers, businessmen and employees, have joined the agreement on the stabilization of prices and wages. True, the value of this agreement is relative since it covers only two sides of the problem; first wages, one of the factors determining prices, and second, the formation of prices for inland products. On the prices of import goods, the stabilization agreement has no influence whatsoever. But even if the agreement's importance is limited from the economic point of view, it is still decisive from the social angle. And this, for various reasons. First of all, Switzerland's economic organizations have realised that a brutal clashing of their interests is as harmful to the country as the brutal clashing of political passions. These organizations, in fact, have admitted that the means of mediation at the disposal of the Swiss Confederation, must not only regulate labor conditions, but must be extended to national economy. The adjustment and organization of economy determine labor conditions, social peace or social conflicts. One has recognised that inflation hurts both labor and capital, and drawn the consequences. For the first time, both labor and capital, on equal footing, have resolved to fight inflation.

The commission on stabilization will be of strict parity. It is obvious that if this experiment is successful, parity of consultation can be extended to other domains. Perhaps the commission on stabilization will even become the embryo of an economic council, adjusting peacefully economic and social interests, a kind of council highly advocated by the International Labor Organization. The stabilization agreement may have far reaching effects and compel Switzerland to draw at last all of the consequences which employers and workers contracts imply.

The stabilization agreement may induce Switzerland to create institutions which would keep in touch permanently labor and capital, not only as concerns the general problem of prices and wages, but also their specific aspects as for instance, industrial management, investments, amortisation, rationalization and the policy of fusions. All these questions are of interest to the worker, the businessman and the producer, just as soon as their solution influences prices and wages.

This alone would justify the application of the principles of parity. But there is another interesting angle; a parity commission has powers of arbitration. And arbitration has always been the last word in peaceful agreements.

And it is in the same measure that arbitration will be admitted in social,

political and economic matters, that political, economic and social peace will be achieved.

Another point - both sides themselves have willingly started the fight against inflation. Arbitration as foreseen by the agreement will be handled without direct influence of the Government. One can thus state that the agreement is also aiming at relieving the State. If the experiment is successful, if the various associations show themselves worthy of the confidence placed in them, other tasks can successively be handed over to them, which would allow a progressive demobilization of Government interference.

But above all, do we not prove the idea of a unanimous fight of all classes by entrusting employers and workers organisations with common tasks, by engaging them together in the striving for public welfare.

THE WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF
"THE RED CROSS,"
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

... TO VISIT ...

The organization of a Central Information Agency was the only definite task which the Conventions expressly entrusted to the International Committee. They supplied, however, welcome opportunities for other humanitarian work.

The first was Article 15 of the 1907 Hague Regulations, which was repeated almost word for word in Article 78 of the Prisoners of War Convention, stipulating that societies for the relief of prisoners of war should be permitted, within certain limits, to distribute relief in the camps. There was nothing to prevent the International Committee from being one of these relief societies, as will be seen later.

The second was Article 79 of the Prisoners of War Convention, which, after providing for the organization of the Central Agency, added: "These provisions shall not be interpreted as restricting the humanitarian work of the International Red Cross Committee."

How can the International Committee extend its work beyond the Agency proper? This can not be known beforehand; circumstances must decide. The nature of the schemes initiated by the International Committee are determined by the need that may arise; their proportions by the means put at its disposal. The carrying-out of the schemes depends on the permission and the practical facilities granted by the Powers concerned, and further on the obstacles created by hostilities.

There is, however, one piece of work which the International Committee can undertake at once, and which enables it to judge of the necessity for any other particular measure. It can visit the camps and see how the prisoners of war are treated there. For this purpose it invokes tradition and resorts to the third opportunity; Article 88 of the Prisoners of War Convention.

It has often been stated verbally and in writing that the International Committee of the Red Cross is the guardian of the Geneva Conventions. This is incorrect. Diplomatic treaties are the concern of Governments, so-called "Red Cross" Conventions like the rest. The International Committee is the guardian of the principles of the Red Cross, which is not the same thing.

Of the two Conventions of 1929, the first, concerning the wounded and sick,