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Berne, the biggest of the cantons and half-cantons, has 730,000 inhabitants, Appenzell Inner Rhodes, the smallest, has only 13,400. In other ways too, the cantons, even apart from language and religion, are very different from each other, for instance as regards geography and situation (mountain cantons, lowland cantons, frontier cantons) or economic make-up (industrial, agricultural, urban, rural). On that account, of course, not all carry the same weight in the Confederation. Again, their financial circumstances vary very widely. The first national defence "sacrifice," a single capital levy in 1940, brought in four times as much per head in the canton of Zurich as in the canton of Appenzell, and the same canton of Zurich drew only about half as much in Federal grants per head as was drawn by Valais. The Federal constitution itself compensates for cantonal inequalities by giving each the same number of seats in the Council of States and prescribes that, for the adoption of an amendment of the constitution, there must be not only a majority of voters but also a majority of cantons, each cantonal vote carrying the same weight. The differences in the power and influence of the cantons, however, are not so great that a canton could exercise a hegemony such as was exercised by Prussia, for instance, in Bismarck's German constitution.

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SUNDRY NEWS.

Minister Zehnder, the head of the division of External Affairs of the Federal Political Department, summoned the Charge d'Affaires of the Hungarian Legation in Bern, to hand over to him a protest against an article that appeared in an Hungarian newspaper. In this article reference was made to a protest in Zurich against the Swiss communist Woog, who was found guilty of absconding with funds intended for charitable purposes which he misused, however, for political purposes. Although the Swiss authorities do not intervene in respect of articles that appear in foreign newspapers, in this particular case it became necessary because it emanated from the Hungarian Secretary of State and constitutes, therefore, an intolerable interference of a foreign country in the internal affairs of Switzerland.

The Federal Council has approved the financial result of the fiscal year 1948. There was a surplus of 176 million Frs., whereas a deficit had been expected. This surplus will be used for the reduction of the internal debt which still amounts to 7,900 million Sfrs.

D'Steichohhle.

Wenn mer doch kei Chohle hettet, das wär geradezue fatal,
do chönnt mer kei Iise schmelze, denn hettet mer kei Stahl,
ond könni au kei Werchzüüg mache, wäred öbel draa i dene Sache,
kei Iisebahne, kei Schiene, kei Auto ond kei Maschine,
kei Ziitige, kei Büecher, kei Deckene, kei Tüecher,
hetted mer kei Maschine, so chönnted mer nöd webe,
hetted ä keis Hempli me, was wär das för es Lebe,
kei Blech för's Dach ond au kei Ziegel,
kei Fensterglas, ond nöd ämol en Spiegel,
me chönnt au nöd glasiere,
ond chönnt sich nöd rasiere,
me het nöd ämol en Lompe,
kei G'schier, wo d'chönntest stompe,
kei rechte Noodle meh zom näihe,
kei Segess me zom mäihe,
im ganze Land kei Schäär,
wie wär doch's Lebe schwär,
so getts ho tuusig Sache,
me chönnt kei Elektrisch mache,
kei Liecht ond au kei Chraft,
kein Motor, wo för üüs schaffet,
kei rechte Gartehaue, zom diis Land bebaue,
Instrumente, Uhre, Sache ohni Zahl,
die chönnt mer gär nöd mache, ohni guete Stahl,
för das bruucht mer Chohle, z'honderte vo Tonne,
ond die werd ebe tüüf i de Erde g'wonne,
me hettet au kei Flinte, das mer chönnt go jage,
ond kei scharfi Messer, was gäb das för ä gnage,
do müesst mer zo de Steilax griiffe, met ä me grobe Stiel,
ond ii müesst das Gedichtli schriibe, met ä me Federkiel,
me müesst choche ohni Pfanne,
drom denk a die ruessige Manne,
wo tüüf i d'Erde dringet,
ond üüs d'Steichohhle ufe bringet,
wo im Chohlestaub schaffet, biim Lampeliecht,
i schlechter Loft ond no so füecht,
die schaffet dort met Lebesg'föhr,
söst wäret mer zrock för tuusig Jahr,
de Bergmaa i dem Bergwerk, der ist ä wichtigs Glied,
ond wenn du ä chlii wiiter denkst, vergeast du Hass ond Nied,
wenn du en Bergmaa g'siehst, met ä me ruessige G'sicht,
so tues nöd öppe d'Nase römpfe, denk a das Gedicht.

A. Moosberger.

DISTINCTION.

The Swiss Minister in Paris (Dr. Carl Burckhardt) who recently resigned, has been elected a foreign member of the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences. He replaces the former President of the Czechoslovakian Republic, Eduard Benesch.

MEETING OF THE SWISS RADICAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN LAUSANNE.

This meeting was held on the 3rd of April at which were present, among others, the Federal Councillors Petitpierre, Kubelt and Rubattel, as well as a former Federal Councillor, Stampfli. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Petitpierre, delivered an important speech in which he explained the present situation of Switzerland. In connection with the traditional political neutrality of Switzerland he emphasized that as hitherto the perpetual and uppermost task was to uphold the independence of our country. He also made reference to the fate of many Swiss abroad who suffered as a consequence of the recent war; many of them have not only suffered war damages but also lost their fortunes due to the so-called nationalization which was pursued by the Governments of the countries in which they resided.

In accordance with international law such nationalization of foreign interests can only be carried out against adequate indemnification. In some countries, however, nationalization has been practised without any compensation whatsoever. Negotiations with such countries have been started but only in two cases have they been successful, namely, with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The war damage suffered by the Swiss abroad reached the sum of 2500 million Sfrs. The prospects of a satisfactory result in favour of those who suffered these damages are not bright. Mr. Petitpierre further declared that our adhesion to the United Nations is not compatible with our policy of neutrality. However, Switzerland has joined many of the sub-organizations of the United Nations. He mentioned in this connection particularly the economic re-organization of Europe, the International Labour Office, the International Court of Justice in the Hague, and many other organizations, such as the UNESCO. He closed his speech with a reaffirmation of our traditional policy of neutrality and our democratic form of Government.

Likewise, Federal Councillor Kobelt made a speech in which he touched on problems of a military nature. "There is no doubt," said Federal Councillor Kobelt, "that the supreme and most noble task of our army is to maintain peace for our country by means of our armed neutrality. If, however, our liberty, honour, and independence should be attacked or violated, the fight for the defence of our rights would be taken up and any aggressor would be unremittedly resisted. This fact is common knowledge to every Swiss and every foreign country may, and must, know of it. Switzerland constitutes no threat to anybody. When foreign armies are opposing each other across our frontiers, the Swiss Army represents protection to both flanks. The Swiss people would never submit to foreign rule not even to that of so-called quislings. The fighting strength and the efficiency of our army will be maintained and the necessary sacrifices in this respect will be made."

THE SWISS OLD AGE PENSION AND SURVIVORS' INSURANCE.

(By Dr. Hermann Böschenstein....) (Service suisse des ondes courtes).

The Swiss Old Age Pension and Survivors' Insurance Law came into force in Switzerland, on the 1st of January, 1948. This Law provides that before being able to benefit from its effects, it is necessary for everyone to have contributed the relevant taxes during a full twelve months. In consequence, it is only since the beginning of the New Year that the first payments have been made, and it is only now that we have before us the first results of Switzerland's greatest social achievement. The scheme is based on a general obligation on the part of the population; every Swiss and every foreigner who exercises a trade or profession in this country is subject to an obligatory insurance. Premiums have to be paid in by two million persons. It is estimated that during the current year Old Age pensions will have to be paid to approximately 20,000 persons who have attained 65 years of age. To this must be added pensions to some 6,000 survivors, or, in other words, to widows and orphans. Approximately 1500 persons will be required for the gigantic administrative work entailed by this scheme. The premiums - or taxes, as we should call them - have been fixed at 4% of each person's income; in the case of wage-earners half this amount will be paid by their employers. Most of the insured persons will be dealt with through the intermediary of one of the Professional Associations' pay-offices, of which there are 82 in Switzerland. Administrative costs amount to approximately 5% of the contributions, which, in 1948 attained the sum of 395 million francs. This high total mirrors the economic prosperity which the country is now enjoying, and will decline concurrently with any slowing down in trade activities.

Although no regular pensions were paid during the first year, transitory pensions amounting in value to 122 million francs were issued to indigent persons. It proved rather difficult to know where to draw the line, for anyone who was born prior to the 1st July, 1883, only gets one payment if he is able to prove that his economic circumstances warrant such aid, whereas those who were born later and have paid their premiums in full during a whole year, have the unconditional right to the regular pensions. These are naturally in accordance with the amount of the premiums paid. More than half of the old people who are over 65 years of age and have already received a pension because they were in needy circumstances, have not made any contributions towards it. Moreover, various Cantons have added

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supplementary old age grants.

Swiss citizens residing abroad may also participate in this national insurance. They have been fully informed regarding it by the Swiss Diplomatic and Consulate Representatives, even if living in a far-off corner of the world. Up to the present, 13,000 Swiss from abroad have declared their readiness to pay their premiums, in order to be able to draw the pension, when they reach the age of sixty-five, or, if they should die before then, in order that their family may benefit from the Survivors' Insurance. In an obligatory insurance of this kind, which embraces the entire population, it is not surprising if some thousands of persons who have no established domicile, as for instance, theatrical folk, concert artists and, more especially workers who hire out for temporary jobs, have not yet been registered for insurance. As time goes on, these persons will be included in the insurance, which should prove of particular benefit to them as they mostly belong to the economically weak stratum of the population and will be able to make good use of the Old Age Pension one day.

Where this insurance should prove an inestimable blessing is in the poor mountain districts, where families are large and earnings small and it is impossible for these people to take out private insurance or to count on any pecuniary assistance in their old age. This National Insurance brings the whole of the Swiss people close together in a vast communal bond, it forces the young people to save, to a certain extent, and to bear the burdens of the older generations, and to develop a keener perception for economic matters, above all the connection which exists between stable wages, prices and currency, and their deep importance.

The Law, which was adopted by an overwhelming majority in July 1947, by the Swiss people, may lack certain things which had not been foreseen when this venture was made into this uncharted land. However, before any revision can take place, it will be necessary to wait for several years' experience with the present form. The experience already gained shows that the system chosen is proving its worth. Great interest in the Swiss Insurance Scheme is being shown by neighbouring countries, which are already anxious to conclude a mutual agreement with Switzerland, in order that those of their citizens who are in Switzerland should be able to benefit from its advantages.

Extension of Application Period. On the request of the Consulate in Wellington, the period for applications for joining the Old Age and Survivors Insurance has been extended to the 30th of June, 1949. This, however, applies only to residents living within the Consular district of the Swiss Consulate in Wellington, namely, New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa.

We remind readers that the "AUSLANDSCHWEIZERTRAGE OF THE N.H.G. 1949" will be held from June 30th to July 3rd in Interlaken. Any compatriot from New Zealand who will be in Switzerland at that time is entitled to attend the meetings. Swiss societies who are desirous of proposing subjects for discussion are invited to present their requests to the "Auslandschweizerwerk der N.H.G." in Bern; the closing date for such applications is April 30th, 1949.

NOTICE TO FARMERS.

The Consulate sometimes receives requests from intending emigrants from Switzerland to supply addresses of farmers who are desirous of engaging farm hands, and at the same time, providing accommodation. The Consulate would like to know who is desirous of engaging new labour and interested farmers are asked to give their names to the Consulate of Switzerland, P.O. Box 386, WELLINGTON. C.I.

When in AUCKLAND, patronise MR. T. KOMMINOTH'S "CHALET TEAROOM" 12 Victoria St., West, (near Queen Street).

When thinking of INSURANCE, remember that MR. FRANK IMHOFF, 42 Vogel Street, Hawera, is now an Agent of The Southern Cross Assurance Co. Ltd.

Our Secretary, Mr. E. Merz, has returned to New Zealand from his trip to Switzerland. He has taken up his duties again as Secretary and correspondence etc., should now be addressed to him at P.O. Box 85, AUCKLAND. C.I.