

A panoramic display of Switzerland hard at work

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **15 (1950)**

Heft 1

PDF erstellt am: **01.05.2024**

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A PANORAMIC DISPLAY OF SWITZERLAND HARD AT WORK.

Within the family of the nations, Switzerland occupies a unique position based - as proclaimed by the Council of the League of Nations in 1920 - on a tradition of several centuries.

This country which, since the defeat it experienced at Marignano in the 16th century, renounced of its own free will any expansionist intentions, found itself obliged to develop its industry and, consequently, its trade, if it was to enable its steadily growing population to secure an existence. Switzerland, for which the idea of neutrality is a state maxim, has always consistently manifested a major interest in the liberty of the exchange of goods between the various nations.

On the occasion of a recent investigation made by the UNESCO Switzerland was able to show that, of all the countries consulted, it was perhaps the most liberal, seeing that hardly 7% of its imports are still subjected to quantitative restrictions. Its Customs Tariff, of which the average ad valorem rate of duty is 8% is one of the lowest in Europe. This policy is dictated by the requirements of Switzerland's population which are necessary to its existence. Recent calculations have shown that Switzerland's population would be 131% too numerous to be able, under a self-sufficing system, to meet all its own requirements. In the same line of thought, it is easy to understand that Swiss products have been able to obtain a secure footing on foreign markets by the excellent quality of the work, which makes up for the unfavourable production conditions, seeing that this country is almost totally devoid of raw materials. It is from the sale of almost 1/3 of its industrial production that Switzerland derives the purchasing power necessary to obtain in return all those goods in the distribution of which nature has been so niggardly towards this country.

The foregoing remarks reveal what an attractive market Switzerland is for world trade in spite of the smallness of its territory, and why it has become in the first instance an industrial country. It has been estimated that, before the war, out of a population of 4 million inhabitants, round about 45% of those who exercise a trade are engaged in industry or as craftsmen, a proportion which is only exceeded in Belgium and Great Britain.

Switzerland provides proof of this astonishing productive activity at the Annual Swiss Industries Fair in Basle where, on an exhibition area of roughly 1 million square feet, there are almost 2,300 exhibitors. This means that the Basle Fair provides the foreign buyer with a panoramic display of the resources of this little country which maintains extremely active commercial relations with the whole world. We can quote as a demonstration of this fact that Switzerland is bound at present by 56 commercial treaties with foreign countries.

The next Swiss Industries Fair in Basle, which will take place from the 15th to the 25th April, 1950 is already assured of the participation of a satisfactorily large number of exhibitors.

WINTER SESSION OF FEDERAL PARLIAMENT

On December 5th the two Chambers of the Swiss Parliament started their ordinary Winter Session. In the National Council the Socialist Schmid from Solothurn was elected President, and Pini, Liberal Tessin, vice President.

In the State Council the Representative of the Canton of Solothurn, Dr. P. Haefflin, Liberal, was elected President and Egli from Lucerne, Vice President. For the first time Federal Councillor Petitpierre the Swiss Foreign Minister was elected President to the Swiss Confederation.

As Vice-President, Federal Councillor von Steiger once again takes over office.