

News from Switzerland

Objekttyp: **Group**

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

Band (Jahr): **17 (1953)**

Heft [5]

PDF erstellt am: **01.05.2024**

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.

Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.

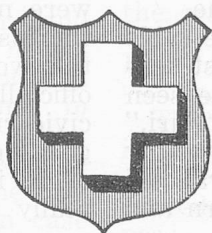
Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

HELVETIA

MONTHLY
PUBLICATION
OF THE



SWISS BENEVOLENT
SOCIETY IN
NEW ZEALAND (INC.)

GROUP NEW ZEALAND OF THE NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY

17th YEAR.

MAY, 1953.

AUCKLAND.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

The Swiss Merchant Marine

The Swiss Merchant Marine now has 37 ships with a total tonnage of 212,000 tons. The ships, 20 of which were constructed after 1948, are modern and fast, and they are equipped with radar and other new technical devices. Most of these vessels have a weight of 6500 tons and above, and thus are large enough to cross any ocean.

The Swiss Wool Industry

In 1952, Switzerland imported 21,560,000 lbs. of raw wool and wool tops, worth 101 million francs. On the other hand, Switzerland is increasingly exporting her wool manufactures; in fact, these exports have doubled within the last year. It is interesting to note that some of these exports go to countries that have important wool industries of their own. This indicates Switzerland's ability to compete in this field. In 1952, total Swiss exports of woollen products were 56 million francs.

Electricity Consumption in Switzerland

Switzerland's population annually uses approximately 2400 kwh. of electricity per head, which puts her in fifth place among the world's electricity consuming countries. During the last ten years, Switzerland's consumption of electricity has risen from 6500 to 12,000 million kwh, a yearly increase of 6 per cent. It is expected that the use of electricity will continue to rise in both industry and households.

Bread Consumption in Switzerland

According to a recent survey the consumption of half white bread as compared with dark bread has steadily increased in Switzerland. Half white bread is preferred by all income brackets, especially the lower income groups. Switzerland cannot produce enough bread for her own use, and the import of grain is exposed to a number of risks. Therefore, the Swiss Government has decided to store enough grain to provide for the country's

needs in times of danger. Switzerland consumes about 40,000 tons of grain per month.

The Swiss Cigarette Industry

Seven and a half billion cigarettes were manufactured in Switzerland in 1952, 418 million more than in 1951. One-sixth of these cigarettes were made from home-grown tobacco. The cigarettes are usually sold 20 to a package, at a price of 95 centimes per package.

Swissair Adopting Tourist Class in Inter-European Air Travel

From April 1st, Switzerland's national airline, Swissair, will supply tourist class travel accommodation on European flights. This will mean a cut in rates of between 12 and 30 per cent., which is compensated for by the fact that the number of seats available is higher, while the types of airplanes used will be the same as those used in first-class trips. Rates for tourist class night flights will be even lower than those for daytime flights. In the future, round trip tickets from Switzerland to London will be valid for a whole year.

Matterhorn Peak Now Safe From Mechanization

The Matterhorn peak is now safe from mechanization. The Swiss Federal Government has granted the commune of Zermatt the desired concession to build a cable railway from Zermatt (5315ft) to Schwarzsee (8495ft), but has made it clear that the cable railway could in no case be regarded as the first stage of a line that might sooner or later be extended either towards the Matterhorn or towards the Furgengrat (the arrival point of a cable railway from Breuil).

The Government's decision endorses an earlier decision by the commune of Zermatt. It also gives satisfaction to 95,000 petitioners in many countries and to more than 40 alpine associations which, under the leadership of the International Union, have for two years been strenuously opposing the Matterhorn cable railway scheme originated by some Italian business men. Furthermore, the Italian Government has recently

made use of existing legislation for the protection of nature to put an end to the scheme.

It is stated that the Zermatt-Schwarzsee cable railway will leave undamaged the forest extending above Zermatt, and will hardly be seen from the village. The middle station, "Furi," will therefore be the starting point of many summer excursions, and in winter several ski runs will diverge from it over the northern and eastern slopes of the Matterhorn group.

A New International Organization

At the end of March, the O.E.C.C. formally recognized as a non-governmental organization the recently established European organization for handicrafts and small business. Because small business had no formal representation before, it could not regularly participate in O.E.E.C. work. The new European office represents five million firms in fourteen European countries. The organization has its headquarters in Berne and maintains a liaison office at the O.E.E.C. in Paris.

The Swiss Mint in 1952

During 1952, the Swiss Mint has put into circulation 43 million new coins with a total value of 12 million francs. The decision reached by the Swiss Government in December, 1950, to retire all bronze and zinc one and two centime coins has been executed without difficulty.

"Women's Suffrage in Switzerland"

Both here, and abroad, it has often been observed that although Switzerland is unquestionably the oldest democracy in the world, and one that has developed to its extreme limits the system of government by the people, she is at the same time one of the last of the civilised States to refuse votes to women.

This brief recapitulation of the situation is perfectly exact. It should be remarked, however, that in all those countries where women's suffrage has been introduced, this has been done by an act of Parliament or by the Government and that, nowhere, have the men been consulted. In our country, however, no reform of any kind whatsoever can be undertaken without the electoral body, that is to say, the entire body of adult males, being under the obligation of expressing their opinion on the matter. And that, no doubt, forms a serious obstacle to an innovation which comes within the logical order of things and of general evolution. This obstacle has not been met with elsewhere. There is nothing to tell us as to whether men, in other countries, if they had been consulted by means of a popular referendum would have shown themselves willing to share with women those rights of which they are the sole possessors, up to the present.

The fact must be faced also that, if men were not consulted in other countries regarding the institution of women's suffrage neither have the women been asked, up to now, to declare officially as to whether they desired to enjoy civic rights. Rights were allocated to them, regarding which it was not known, as the result of an incontrovertible test, whether or not they really wanted them.

Now, however, such a test has just taken place. And, this, in Switzerland, in Geneva, to be more exact. After several negative votes on this subject had been registered during the last few years, in various of the Cantons, the Genevese decided to settle the matter, one way or another. They argued as follows: "It is often said by those who are against women's votes that the women themselves have no wish to enjoy this right. We will consult them regarding this. Before giving them the vote, we want to know what is their opinion on this subject." And that is how it came to pass that recently all the women of Swiss nationality domiciled in Geneva took part in a kind of plebiscite, which proved to be a most interesting consultation.

We are now in the possession of the results of this extremely original consultation. The women who participated in the voting showed in a very definite manner that they were in favour of the extension of civic rights to women who had attained their majority. This opinion was expressed by six to one votes. The result is therefore quite clear and definite, if one considers that it will no longer be possible to pretend that women are not interested in an eventual active participation in public affairs.

There is, however, a shadow cast on this picture by the fact that more than 40 per cent. of the women kept away from this consultation and refrained from expressing any opinion. They just stayed at home; they did not want to be bothered. If they proved anything, it was their thorough lack of interest. And, this aspect of the consultation must also be borne in mind, quite impartially.

Indeed, by reason of these far too numerous abstentions, it is only a little less than half the women who have demanded in a clear and unequivocal manner the granting to them of civic rights. All the others—that is to say, rather more than half—have refused the present which was offered to them, or else have confessed to having no opinion at all, on the matter. If one takes this into account, then the consultation held in Geneva loses some of the precise clearness which it appeared to possess at first glance.

This means that plenty of water will flow under our bridges before feminine suffrage is established in Switzerland. But this is merely a question of time.

Switzerland is Training Shock Troops

Switzerland, resolutely opposed to war, and unscathed through two world conflicts, is nevertheless busy tightening her defences in case of future invasion, Reuter's correspondent in Locarno reports.

Soldiers are encountered in many parts of the country, and there are frequent signs of the preparations going on beneath the surface in case this tourists' paradise one day becomes a battlefield.

The Swiss do not expect to be so lucky again if there was another world war. They expect, in fact, to be invaded—an indirect attack aimed at others, coming in possibly the second phase of the war, in a sudden movement to outflank the Rhine defences.

The Swiss Army—only 500,000 combatants, plus 300,000 auxiliaries and Home Guards—would then play the role for which it is now being re-organized.

Coming from the north, the invaders could pour into Switzerland at many points between Lake Constance and the Basle bridges which lead from France and Germany.

They might then pass along the Aar Valley to Lake Neuchatel and Lake Geneva, occupying the Berne-Lausanne plateau. But they would have to fight every foot of the way. The strategy held in reserve in the last war—to fight the main battle from the elaborate fortifications in the Alps—has been considerably improved today.

Shocks for the invaders would begin at the frontier and continue all along the line. As they fell back across well-planned defences in depth, the Swiss Army could inflict great damage.

The narrowness of the midlands would favour the defence, making it difficult for an invader to use his full strength, especially tanks, in the fluid wide-ranging manner of modern war. The defence could be stubborn, with shock troops fiercely fighting on their own soil, though they might still be without the 550 tanks they want from abroad.

It would, however, be difficult for the enemy to get out of Switzerland. The Western nations against whom the attack might really be directed would man the mountains of the Jura and all the hills and ridges to the west of Lake Geneva. Whatever happened, the progress of the invading army would be slowed down.

"This is the main reason," a staff officer said, "why we are trying to show how strong we are. Our attitude towards a potential enemy is: 'Invading would cost you so much in men and materials—and above all, in time—that it would just not be worth your while.'"

The two great dangers to the Swiss in the event of an invasion would be tanks and para-troops. That is why the Swiss Army is now specialising in commandos with a tank-destroying and liquidating mission. The cream of the coun-

try's youth are being turned into shock-troops at the school for grenadiers.

Final Report about the 37th Swiss Industries Fair in Basle

The success of the 37th Swiss Industries Fair in Basle, which took place from 11th to 21st April, and in which 2228 exhibitors took part, exceeded all expectations in most lines of business. The total number of visitors to the Fair, some 700,000, was about 20,000 more than in the previous year, and in the course of the Fair opinions were expressed indicating that further developments in the economic situation are awaited with confidence.

For this reason the general demand was good and business generally satisfactory, considerable interest being shown in the various novelties exhibited.

The wide range of goods displayed by Swiss export industries, amongst which the watch industry, the textile industry, the machinery industry, the electrotechnical and precision tool industries made a particularly fine show, did not fail to exercise its usual attraction on foreign visitors, of whom some 13,000 from 64 different countries were received at the Foreign Visitors' Office. However, it is known from experience that the total number of foreign visitors was considerably higher, because only about 50 per cent. of all foreign visitors register at the Foreign Visitors' Office.

Large new buildings are now going to be constructed for next year's Fair, and that will mean that the area available for exhibition purposes will be increased from about 1,000,000 square feet to something like 1,250,000 square feet.

In view of the very considerable extensions being made to the Fair premises the 38th Swiss Industries Fair will take place somewhat later than usual, from 8th to 18th May, 1954.

RAIL AND ROAD TRAFFIC IN THE SWISS MOUNTAINS

By H. O. ERNST, Manager, London Office, Swiss National Tourist Office and Swiss Federal Railways.

(Continued from last issue.)

Most of the standard gauge system of the Swiss Federal Railways, except the Gotthard Line, lies at a fairly low altitude, in the foothill of the alps and the central Swiss plain. There, winter weather and other operational difficulties peculiar to the mountains do not call for extraordinary measures. Nevertheless, even at less than 2000 feet above sea level, mist, frost and snow can be very troublesome. Precautions are therefore taken long before the onset of the winter, and plans are made to assure smooth running under all condi-