

# News from Switzerland

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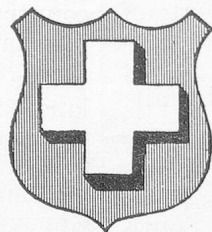
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# HELVETIA

MONTHLY  
PUBLICATION  
OF THE



SWISS BENEVOLENT  
SOCIETY IN  
NEW ZEALAND (INC.)

GROUP NEW ZEALAND OF THE NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY

19th YEAR.

APRIL, 1956

AUCKLAND.

## SWISS SOCIAL CLUB, TARANAKI (Inc.)

### President's Report for the Year Ended, March 31st., 1956

The year just ended again reflects the strong social spirit prevailing amongst our community.

Financially your Club is in a strong position, the total funds on hand being very close to the total number of members, 281. This means that the large number of functions arranged for your enjoyment have all near enough paid their way or at the very least, shown a small surplus. Our main sources of income have been the major raffle, and subscriptions from this year's 57 new members. With these monies we have been able to meet all overhead expenses, purchase a complete sets of Swiss National Flags, purchase a bulk supply of Badges and still show a surplus of £27/6/11 over the amount carried forward from the previous year.

The year has been one of activity for your Committee. A series of six Card Evenings proved to be very popular and were well attended. To help this series, each member of your Committee put in 10/- to enable a £1 raffle to be drawn at each game.

The Major raffle was well supported and helped to swell our funds.

An open dance was held on June 21st which was well attended and considered a great success.

The First of August celebrations were again the highlight of the year. When it is realised that up to £214 was spent on this function, it will be appreciated that a great deal of work is entailed in organising and preparation. Your Committee is grateful to all those who directly or indirectly contributed to the success of this function.

Our final gathering for the year, the Annual Picnic, was well attended and enjoyed by all. Several members appeared in National costume, and this, together with our ever-willing musicians, gave the day a real Swiss atmosphere. It was an excellent opportunity for us to greet new

Swiss arrivals in our district, and also to welcome visiting Swiss.

We were pleased to have with us, on this day, Mr. Walter Risi, Founder and Patron of your Club.

Deceased Swiss Club Members were suitably remembered on your behalf by the presence of Committee members and wreaths at their funerals.

In conclusion may I express my thanks to my Secretary, whose energy and enthusiasm has been outstanding, to my Committee whose help has lessened the burden of the many duties which fall to my lot, and to all of you who have contributed by your support to make the year's activities so worthwhile and enjoyable.

JOHN STEINER,

3rd April, 1956.

There was a large attendance of members at the Annual Meeting of the Club. The President gave a summary of the year's work, especially the large increase in membership.

The following members were elected to the Executive:—

President, Mr. J. Steiner; Vice-President, Mr. J. Kaiser; Secretary, Mr. B. Frank.

Committee: Mesdames Steiner, J. Fohn, E. Schuler, Messrs. J. Fohn, A. Kalin, F. Luond, M. Steiner, J. Settling, W. Fluhler, L. Chamberlain, G. Wyss.

## NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND SWITZERLAND—THE CROSSROADS OF THE AIR

(By John Elliott, Press Officer—SWISSAIR.)

For many years now the great international express trains have stopped in Switzerland, setting down and taking aboard tourists and business men bound for every country in Europe. Twenty or thirty years ago their most distant starting points were London or Stockholm, Istan-

bul or Budapest. Today travellers arriving in Switzerland after about the same time spent on their journey come from Sydney, Tokio, Bombay, Johannesburg, New York, Buenos Aires, or Rio de Janeiro. But today they come by air,

Just as the train passenger from London can, on arrival in Basle or Lausanne, pick up a connection for Vienna, Rome or Belgrade, so a passenger from Australia en route for South America or another from South Africa bound for the United States will find a direct air connection in Zurich or Geneva.

Switzerland owes this role of international crossroads to three main factors, its geographical position, its economic importance and its natural beauty. Geographically, the country is situated not only in the heart of Europe, but also in the centre of the more densely populated hemisphere. If, on a map of the world, one draws a circle whose centre is Switzerland and whose radius is exactly half the distance from Switzerland to its antipodes, the hemisphere so obtained includes the whole of Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, Central America and a part of South America—i.e., about 94 per cent. of the entire world population.

Three of the regions in this hemisphere—Asia, Europe and North America—have an extremely high density of population. It is, therefore, natural that the bulk of the world's trading activities should take place between them, and more particularly between Europe and the United States, which together account for about 60 per cent. of world trade and about 70 per cent. of the world's industrial production.

Switzerland's importance as commercial and financial centre has long been established. The reputation of the products of its watchmaking, engineering and textile industries has spread throughout the world. Its stable currency is freely convertible and thus a very popular medium of international exchange. Geneva is not only the European headquarters of the United Nations, but houses also the head offices of many other international organisations. As a venue of the world's statesmen for international conferences the city's name has become part of the political vocabulary of our times.

The country's natural beauty and its unique opportunities for summer recreation and winter sports have for decades attracted tourists in their millions. Many people from all over the world come to Switzerland's health resorts to become well again in the pure mountain air. Every year many children from Royal Houses and good families of every nation enter Swiss finishing schools and other educational establishments to receive a first-class education.

All this has also attracted to Switzerland the international airlines, for they too follow the

trade routes. In the space of a few years, the country has become a bustling crossroads of commercial aviation.

The first international air services to Switzerland started in 1922 and their number, despite the interruption of the Second World War, has grown phenomenally since. Three large international airports have been built at Zurich, Geneva and Basle. Today they are regularly used by 18 foreign airlines as well as by Swissair, the national airline of Switzerland. During the summer of 1955, 330 flights a week were flown to Zurich, 200 to Geneva and 50 to Basle. Together with Swissair's, the number of these airlines' passengers arriving at or departing from Swiss airports in 1954 totalled 666,598 (not counting passengers in transit). The figure for 1953 was 512,948. For this year it is expected to reach three-quarters of a million.

If we include in our figures passengers in transit, Zurich airport handled nearly 600,000 passengers last year alone and thus advanced to the position of sixth largest airport of Europe. Its share of commercial air traffic on Swiss airports was 55.6 per cent., with Geneva accounting for 37.5 and Basle for 5.9 per cent.

The great number of foreign airlines operating into and out of Switzerland is evidence not only of the country's importance from the commercial and tourist point of view, but also of the Swiss Government's liberal policy in the field of air traffic. Switzerland has always opened her doors and her airports to any carrier wanting to fly there. In this, the Government's policy has been guided by the desire to establish as good and as many connections as possible in every direction. It is also in keeping with Switzerland's tradition as the oldest democracy in Europe. Nor are the Swiss authorities likely to forget that air transport has freed the country from its dependence on its neighbours in the sphere of communications, thus bringing untold advantages to its relations with the outside world.

These are the considerations on which Swissair bases its network and its time-tables. Its aims are to benefit the Swiss economy and tourist industry and to offer visitors an efficient and fast means of travel. Therefore, the company has tried to establish the greatest possible number of direct services with few or no intermediate stops. Situated in the heart of Europe, Switzerland forms the centre from which all of Swissair's lines radiate outwards to cover the Continent with a dense network serving almost every important city. Here the overseas visitor will find a convenient air connection to anywhere else in Europe and to all the other Continents as well.

Switzerland is especially proud of her transatlantic air services to the United States. They started in 1946 when Trans-World Airlines in-



augurated flights from the United States to Geneva, which already then had a concrete runway capable of taking the largest commercial aircraft. In the following year Swissair added its regular services to New York via Shannon. The ever-increasing passenger and cargo traffic across the Atlantic is convincing proof of the friendly relations between the two countries. While only about 39,000 North Americans visited Switzerland in 1938, their number had risen to over 125,000 in 1954. Air transport, its speed and convenience, played no doubt a large part in this development.

And yet air transport is still in its infancy; soon larger and faster aircraft will fly the Atlantic from Switzerland non-stop and provide many more and speedier connections to all parts of the globe. Traffic on this crossroads of the air is likely to go on increasing steeply, to the mutual benefit of Switzerland and her friends all over the world.

### DC-8 Jet Stratoliners

Zurich, Switzerland.—Swissair, in order to maintain its position in modern air traffic, has decided to purchase two DC-8 jet-propelled passenger planes. This type of airliner is equipped with four Pratt and Whitney jet engines developing a 600 m.p.h. cruising speed. Its carrying capacity is close to 15 tons, which means a considerable increase in performing efficiency. Non-stop DC-8 flights from Geneva or Zurich to New York, 3600 miles to the west, would cut down the travelling time to less than nine hours, or half the present amount of time. Mixed first-class and tourist-class planes seat some 110 passengers, while 140 could be carried if planes were equipped with tourist-class chairs only. The delivery of the first two DC-8 passenger planes is scheduled for the spring or summer of 1960. The jet stratoliners are to operate on Swissair's main long-distance routes. The prime cost, including the most important spare parts, will total approximately 70,000,000 Swiss francs. One single DC-8, fully prepared for service but without spare parts, is priced at 24,000,000 Swiss francs.

### 700th Anniversary of the City of Sursee

Sursee, Switzerland.—Sursee, the quaint little town in the Canton of Lucerne, commemorates its 700th anniversary this year. A document dated 1256 and treasured in the cantonal archives of the city of Lucerne reveals that Count Hartmann the Younger of Kyburg donated a home-stead to the district and convent of St. Urban, "so that they may build a house in that very place," and on the same occasion admitted the monastery of St. Urban under his protectorate. Authentic relics at Sursee today are evidential of an urban community established under the sovereignty of the Kyburgs which lasted till 1278.

The commemorative day, July 8th, will be marked by several popular festivities as well as a historic pageant. An exhibition of paintings, armour and other vestiges of Sursee's colourful history will be an added attraction.

### The Simplon Saw the First Trans-Alpine Flight in 1910

Brigue, Switzerland:—The 50th jubilee of the Simplon Tunnel this coming May will honour the memory of the men who with great courage and sacrifice accomplished this venture. Another memorable event of the year is the 150th anniversary of the Simplon road, which was built at Napoleon's orders, and which at times provided work for 30,000 men in one day. These daring feats of pioneering were followed by a third no-less imposing venture, the first Alpine flight 46 years ago over the Simplon pass. For the opening of an Aviation Week at Milan, Italy, a flight from Brigue over the Alps was made a challenge in the summer of 1910. The winner was to be awarded 70,000 Swiss francs. Ten pilots applied, four of whom, however, failed to appear in Brigue, while four others shirked, and of the two actual contestants only one successfully conquered the Alps. He was Geo. Chavez, a young Peruvian, brought up in Paris. He paid for his victory with his death. He started his venture-some trip in Brigue, overcame the descending winds from the Fletschhorn mountain and flew over the Simplon massive in forty minutes. When he approached the landing field at Domodossola at nose-diving speed, wings of his fragile aircraft folded up like those of a butterfly. The flimsy frame of his monoplane was unable to withstand the tremendous headwind pressure. Chavez died as a result of his serious injuries five days later.

### Film Celebrities Met at Klosters

Klosters, Switzerland.—It all started with "Cinerama Holiday", Louis de Rochemont's spectacular travelogue, and the happy ending is not yet in sight. Klosters, the quaint mountain village in the Canton of the Grisons, after successfully "starring" as a favourite film background has now become the meeting place of the international motion picture world. A sample taken at random at the peak of the Klosters spring season, which offers to high-alpine skiing enthusiasts just as much as to the average sun-seeking skier, revealed that two famous American film producers, Darryl F. Zanuck and David O. Selznik, the latter accompanied by his wife, the screen star Jennifer Jones, were spending their holidays at the Silvretta Hotel. The Selzniks on that very day were holding important talks with the young American author and film writer, Truman Capote, who also stayed at the "Silvretta". The only news leaking out of their conversation was that a forthcoming motion picture will partly be filmed on location in scenic Switzerland.

### Fiftieth Anniversary of Simplon Tunnel

It was on the 1st of June, 1906, that the Swiss and the Italian railways opened up for traffic the Simplon Tunnel and Simplon Line, which were rapidly called upon to play a big role in communications between the West and the Near East.

The piercing of the Simplon Tunnel, the work on which lasted for more than seven years and had often to be carried out under very difficult conditions, owing to the hardness of the rock, to the high temperature and to the numerous incursions of both hot and cold water, caused a great sensation, not only in Switzerland, but also in Europe, and, in fact, in the whole world. Italy and Switzerland have decided to celebrate together, the fiftieth anniversary of this tunnel, which still remains the longest in the world. The Italian Government and Provincial Authorities, the Swiss Federal Authorities and those of the Cantons concerned, and the various economic and tourist associations will join with the railways of the two countries in celebrating this anniversary. A Swiss Official Day will take place in Lausanne, on the 17th of May next, and on the following day, there will be an Italian Official Day, in Milan. Finally, the President of the Swiss Confederation and the President of the Italian Republic will meet at Brigue, on the 19th of May.

### Europe's Longest Aerial Cableway

After five years of preparatory work, the tourist resort of Zweisimmen, in the Bernese Oberland, has been authorised by the Federal Authorities to build an aerial cableway which will probably be the longest in the world. What is being planned is to overcome a difference in level of about 3000 feet by means of two cableways, the total length of which will be 3 miles. It is intended to operate them in summer as well as in winter. The authors of the project stress the fact that their aim is in no way to transform the character of the resort to which the tourists are accustomed, but, on the contrary, to preserve its own particular quality.

### The Next Swiss National Exhibition: Lausanne, 1964

Lausanne, Switzerland.—In accordance with tradition, a Swiss National Exhibition is held once every twenty-five years. The last three events of this kind were: Geneva in 1896, Berne in 1914 and Zurich in 1939. For the next exposition, scheduled for 1964, Lausanne headed the list of Swiss cities applying for the honour of playing host to this national show of efficiency, and its candidature has just been approved by Switzerland's Federal Council. The authorities of the Canton of Vaud and the City of Lausanne, a few hours after this announcement was made by the Federal Government, invited the press to

the Villa Mon-Repos, headquarters of the International Olympic Committee, for a first briefing on the large-scale preparations which are already in progress in view of the 1964 exhibition. State Councillor G. Despland, who is the Vice-President of the Swiss National Tourist Office, was appointed chairman of the provisional committee. His duties will be those of his predecessor, Dr. h. c. Armin Meili, the President of the Swiss National Tourist Office and noted architect, who was the principal organiser and creator of the successful 1939 Swiss National Exhibition in Zurich.

### NOTICE

The Consulate wishes to inform compatriots that a new Fr.20.-banknote of the following description has been issued by the Swiss National Bank:—

Size: 155 x 85 mm.

Prevailing colour: Blue

Front: The portrait of General Dufour (1787-1875), furthermore printed in large characters the figure 20 framed by multi-coloured ornaments, as well as by a blue guilloche with the Swiss National Emblem (white cross). In addition, the figure 20 appears in a smaller size in every one of the four corners.

Back: Silvery bluish thistle, furthermore the figure 20 surrounded by a twin-coloured guilloche.

The Fr.20.-banknotes bearing a portrait of the head of Pestalozzi which have been in use till now, can be exchanged for new ones up to March 31st, 1976, at the Swiss National Bank.

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