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THE SWISS BIRTHRATE IS TOO LOW

A RECENT full-page report in the "Weltwoche", Switzerland's top quality weekly, expressed concern at the country's diminishing birthrate, which has fallen by 8 percent since 1963. 86,067 babies were born that year, and only 67,384 in 1971. The figures for 1972 are expected to fall by another 5 percent.

The consequences of this trend will make themselves felt in about thirty years time, when a minority of active persons will be supporting a mass of old age pensioners and retired people. There are several other aspects to the situation. The Army, for example, will find it difficult to fill its ranks in a few years time.

While the indigenous Swiss population is actually declining (there are more deaths than births), the alien population is booming; Switzerland's million foreigners have given birth to 30,000 babies in 1971, or nearly half of the number of **Swiss** babies! Sociologists fortunately expect foreign families to follow the Swiss birth-control pattern. In a few years time, the birth rate should be equivalent in both communities as resident-foreigners become more and more integrated both culturally and economically.

According to the "Weltwoche" report, the present fall of the birthrate witnessed in Switzerland (and elsewhere) can't be directly put down to the pill. It seems that the pill has allowed families to have complete control over their new offsprings, something they had wanted to do for a long time but had not been able to achieve owing to the insufficient preventive methods available before the advent of the pill. Switzerland's growing prosperity has also had a direct effect on reducing the birthrate. Prosperity has meant more job opportunities and driven women away from house-keeping. Secondly, the taste of comfort and the easy life has pushed more and more people in to placing priority on a high standard of living, and not on children.

Laugh a little . . .

To reach the mountain Athos one is asked to take a seat in a basket, and one is pulled up the mountain side in this fashion. A tourist is a bit uneasy and asks: "Do you frequently change your rope?"

"Yes, always when it is worn out."

"And how do you know when it is worn out?"

"When it tears."

"And does this happen often?"

"Every two years."

"And when did you change the rope?"

"Three years ago."