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THE SWISS YOUTH PARLIAMENTS.

The participation of the citizen in the affairs of state is by no means to be taken for granted. Besides the egotistical form of indifference, there is also that which springs directly from the sociological division of the nation into classes. It is quite natural that those sections which are to a great extent economically dependent and must struggle hard for their very existence think it meaningless and purposeless to bother about the prosperity of the state which fails to offer them other than their hard life. And it is just these sections of the nation which are most easily accessible to revolutionary currents of all shades, because they want something "different" without always thinking how the "different" would turn out in practice or whether it would be really better.

The interest of the citizen can also slacken because parliaments and governments autocratically disregard the will of the people, or falsify its meaning. This induces many citizens in impotent revolt to abstain from voting altogether. Then in a democracy the problem of the generations is of great importance. It is a fact that parliaments and governments are composed mainly of men of the older generations. The younger ones therefore feel themselves disregarded and allow themselves to be persuaded into indifference without considering that in this way they still further aggravate the problem.

The Swiss Youth Parliaments have made it their task to bridge the gulf between the generations by acquainting young people with the political problems which are being mastered at the moment by the elder generation. They do this in an active and practical manner, not only by giving young men of 18 to 35 years of age parliamentary instruction and skill in oratory but also by endeavouring so to work out suggestions, texts of laws, etc. that they may serve at least as a useful basis for discussion for the real parliaments elected by the nation. It has been proved clearly in the past years that many young men — and girls — show immediately great interest when it is a question not merely of empty debates, but of active collaboration in the affairs of state. The Youth Parliaments have thus proved to be a valid instrument of organised collaboration with the real parliaments.

The idea of acquainting the youth with political problems is by no means new. In the 17th and 18th centuries the citizens of Berne possessed their so called "outer estate", in which under the protection of the authorities the youth of all classes could learn the art of political leadership and administration. The Boys' Corporations in the Grisons valleys had a similar goal, and in the cantons with Popular Diets boys had the right to the best places in the men's ring, right at the foot of the Landaman. Although the Swiss Youth Parliaments of to-day did not spring from these old customs, they found in them a very fertile soil.

The first Swiss Youth Parliament was founded in Zurich in 1942 and was inspired by the English Debating Clubs for young people. A Swiss living in England brought the idea to Zurich, and after initial disappointments obtained the enthusiastic support of a National Councillor of that time. Today after four years, there are over twenty Youth Parliaments in Switzerland, which accomplish essential and fruitful work within the frame of non-party and completely voluntary organisation.

Democracy is government by mutual understanding, as Mr. Kobelt, President of the Confederation, said in his address to the delegates of the Youth Parliaments assembled in Berne. His words called not only their attention but also that of wider circles to a fact which today deserves more than ever to be taken to heart.

FROM THE SWISS LEGATION.

We have received the following communication from the Swiss Legation:

"The Swiss Legation (Commercial Division) beg to draw the attention of U.K. importers of Swiss goods to the Import Licensing Department's Notice No. 199, dated August 29th, 1946, according to which the 'Token Import Scheme' has now been extended to Switzerland, following the conclusion of the necessary administrative arrangements with the Swiss Authorities concerned. This scheme, which was originally introduced in April last for certain goods from Canada and subsequently extended to the same range of goods from the United States and Belgium, is intended to enable the established overseas exporters to resume a minimum of their traditional trade to this country of such goods for which no import licences have so far been granted. The list of the Swiss imports concerned is thus, for the time being, identical with the so-called Canadian List, and includes amongst others the following articles:

Ladies' felt hats
Artificial silk clothing
Printed artificial silk woven fabric of a width exceeding 12 inches
Zip fasteners
Imitation jewellery
Toilet preparations
Fountain pens and parts
Propelling pencils and parts
etc., etc.

The Swiss Authorities are examining the possibility of arriving at an extension of this list to other traditional Swiss exports to the U.K.

Imports for the goods involved are allowed at the rate of 20% per annum by value of the Swiss manufacturer or exporter's pre-war trade with the U.K.; for the remainder of 1946, the quota will be 13½%.

Applications for import licences, within the above scheme, have to be accompanied by a certificate issued by the Swiss 'Service des importations et des exportations' in Berne. The Swiss manufacturer or exporter should thus apply to the Swiss Export Licensing authority and send the certificate to the importer in the United Kingdom.

The Commercial Division remains at the full disposal for any further information."

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