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HOME AFFAIRS.

by Dr. Max Nef.

In accordance with one of the Regulations in the Constitution, the Federal Chambers have the duty of exercising control over the activities of the Government and Administration of the country. For this purpose, the Federal Council submits a report on its activities during the year which has expired, at the Summer Session of Parliament.

In the section devoted to the Political Department, which deals with foreign relations within the scope of its duties, it becomes apparent how manifold these relations are even for a country which does not go in for any so-called active foreign policy, such as is practiced by the great powers. A considerable portion of the activity of the Political Department arises out of its obligation to safeguard the interests of Swiss citizens who have settled abroad. And there are very few countries, indeed, in which there are no Swiss to be found.

As is the case in regard to the internal political activities of the authorities, so also in regard to foreign relations, a large part of the difficulties encountered are due to the war. And although conditions are becoming normal by degrees, there still remain a number of territories where there are still considerable arrears to be made up as a result of the war years. For instance, if we glance through the Report of the Federal Council we find that although diplomatic relations with Western Germany have become still more normal, prospects for the resumption of direct relations with the Government of Eastern Germany show no improvement whatsoever. In view of the fact that in East German territory State measures in regard to foreign property have been extended, there are further tasks to be accomplished in the sphere of safeguarding Swiss interests. As you are doubtless aware, special agreements have been concluded with a number of countries, such as Yugoslavia, Rumania, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, whereby arrangements have been made for compensation to be paid in respect of Swiss claims regarding nationalisation of their property in these countries. Their coming into effect, however, would appear to be progressing very slowly. One also learns from this Report that it has proved possible to find satisfactory solutions for individual cases, with other countries too, as for instance in respect to damages incurred by Swiss business undertakings in South Germany, through the Occupation Forces having removed real values for reparation purposes. The Greek Government—just to mention another example—expressed its willingness to give suitable compensation to the owners of Swiss transit goods which were seized during the war. The Italian Government has declared its readiness to pay out a lump sum as compensation for Swiss goods which were lost or commandeered during the war, as it is no longer possible to be able to estimate the losses in each individual case. It proved more difficult to achieve satisfactory results in those cases where the relevant countries considered—in accordance with their Laws—that the assets which had been seized were enemy property, either because the Swiss owner in question was living in enemy country, or, because a national of an enemy country was also a part-owner of this property, as for instance in the case of some business undertaking.

Furthermore, the Political Department occupies

itself with looking after those Swiss citizens who, for political reasons, were deprived of their liberty during the war years. Thus, there are still several Swiss nationals who are imprisoned in France, whilst others have been released owing to the efforts made by our authorities. During the year under review, five persons possessing dual nationality—in this case Swiss-German—were liberated from a Russian prison camp owing to the intervention of the Political Department. It is known that a further twenty Swiss citizens are still prisoners in Russia. Regarding the fate of some 220 more Swiss who have disappeared in Russia, the Swiss authorities have been unable, up to the present, to obtain any information.

It has proved possible, through the efforts of the Swiss Legation in Washington, to liberate Swiss citizens from the American regulations, whereby foreigners of a certain age residing in the United States are also subject to being drafted into the armed forces, as a result of general conscription. On the other hand, all endeavours have proved vain, now as in former years, to obtain the release from the French Foreign Legion of all such Swiss, who were more than eighteen years of age, at the time of their joining up. During the year under review, the Political Department had to deal with some hundred such cases.

It is with intention that we have picked out some of those problems which show the way in which the Political Department has to look after its fellow-countrymen abroad. This, however, is only a small sample of the comprehensive and wide-spread activities of our authorities in the sphere of foreign relations.

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We will take the opportunity, on another occasion, to speak of further problems connected with other matters.

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The Federal Statistical Office has just published its most recent estimates of the Swiss national income. These figures relate to the year 1951. The steady annual increase to be noted since the beginning of the war which was only interrupted in 1948 by an insignificant decline, continued its course also during the year under review. This time, the increase was especially important, amounting as it did to one and a half thousand million francs. The total nett national income rose to the unprecedented figure of nineteen and a half thousand million figures. This is about double what it was in 1938, but one must, of course take into consideration the devaluation of the currency.

The main portion, namely three-fifths, is in respect of the so-called Labour Income. This comprises, in addition to wages and salaries, the contributions to social welfare on the part of the employers and also, in accordance with the Wages Compensation Order, the sums paid out to servicemen, for any losses incurred whilst on military service. From the absolute standpoint, it is this labour income which registers the greatest increase. This is due to the higher level of occupation in Swiss industry, and the employment of more workers also than in previous years. This remark is applicable above all to those branches of our economy which are particularly favoured by the present boom, as for instance the metallurgical and machine industries, the watch-making industry, the textile industry and the chemical industry. Moreover, the allocation of special allowance in respect of increased cost of living as well as the increase which has taken place in regard to wages and salaries have all contributed to the rise in the total labour income.

As regard the second item, the so-called business income of self-employed persons in agriculture, industry, trade, the hotel industry and liberal professions, this comprises the so-called employers' earnings, the employers' profit, after the losses, and the interest from the capital sunk in the business. Here also, an increase is to be observed, to which certain individual groups of self-employed persons in industry and in the building trade have contributed chiefly.

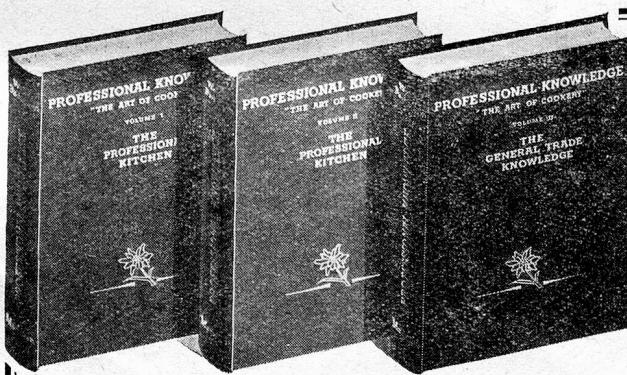
The third group, which also constitutes a fifth of the total income, comprises net income from capital.

This is divided into the profits realised by the undertaking, interest, and the profits obtained from foreign trade. The larger profits realised by undertakings come, as in the case of business profits, from those branches of industry which are particularly favoured by the present wave of prosperity and in which a larger turnover in respect of imports and exports, has increased the yield from trade. The banking business has also contributed to the increase in revenue. Increased building activities and higher rents have had a similar effect on real estate. The increase in capital also made itself felt in regard to the rest of the income deriving from interest, although the rate of interest remained so to speak unchanged. As a result of the normalisation now taking place in regard to economic conditions abroad and, pari passu, to economic relations with Switzerland, a slight improvement could also be registered in respect of the yield from foreign trade.

It is not only the nominal national income given in absolute figures that has increased, but also the real income, in the establishment of which the higher cost of living was taken into account. From this it may be deduced that the increase in the nominal income has more than compensated for the general rise in prices.

These statements are further proved by the most recent official enquiry, which has just been made public, on the development which has taken place in regard to wages and salaries. During the period which has elapsed since the outbreak of war until the autumn of 1951, the wage level of the workers has increased by no less than 114 per cent. Thus, it has doubled, whereas the cost of living is only 70 per cent higher. This increase, however, has not been equally great in respect of all categories of workers. It was more marked in regard to juvenile workers and women workers, in view of the fact that their situation was considerably worse at the time when war broke out, than was that of skilled, and even of unskilled male workers.

As regards employees, their salaries have not increased to the same extent as have those of the workers, having, in general, only risen by 89 per cent, but even so, they are in advance of the increase in the cost of living. Thus, the real income of the white collar worker has benefited from the economic prosperity now prevailing in the country and shows a definite improvement over the increase in cost of living expenses.



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