

Pro Juventute

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1956)**

Heft 1274

PDF erstellt am: **26.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689610>

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PRO JUVENTUTE. Child care in Switzerland.

At the last meeting of the London Group of the N.S.H. on May 8th, a prominent representative of the "Stiftung Pro Juventute", Mr. J. Kunz, gave a most interesting account of the tasks of this amazing child care organisation in our Home country. S.O. readers will remember the first appearance of a wonderful series of postal stamps in Switzerland during and since the first world war devoted to the work of Pro Juventute. The annual sale of these stamps with a surcharge for the charity still constitutes even today the main source of revenue for Pro Juventute. No less than 25 millions of them, as well as 1½ millions of postcards, were sold last year, while the post office also issues special congratulatory and condolence telegrams with a surcharge for the benefit of the same charity. Net proceeds of these various means of raising money for Pro Juventute amounted to well over three million francs.

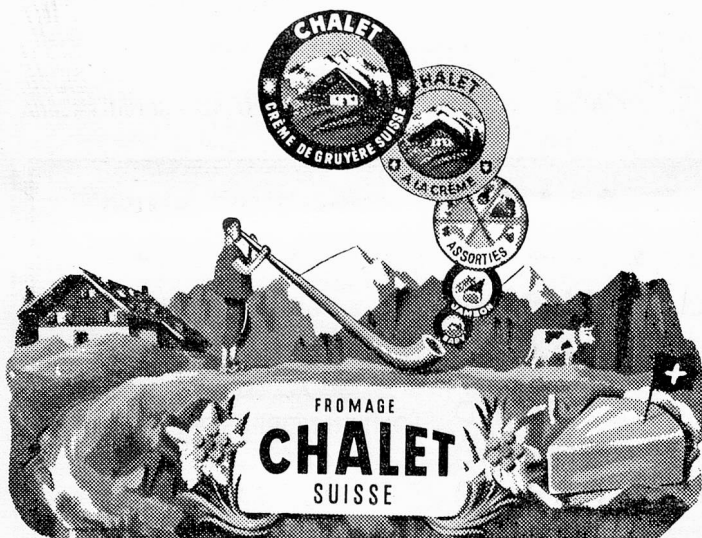
Over 30,000 youngsters are engaged in the sale of these stamps who compete with each other in achieving the biggest turnover. A great deal of the actual task of Pro Juventute is also carried out by voluntary helpers in all walks of life and in every part, town and village of the country.

What are the manifold tasks of Pro Juventute? In the first place the organisation addresses itself to the important duty of enlightening mothers-to-be on the duties of child care. This is done in over 60 instruction courses attended by several thousand young mothers every year. House visits to help in nursing young children are organised by Pro Juventute. Films, lectures, occasional exhibitions, publications, etc. — by all these means the great work of educating mothers and fathers for their responsibilities is carried out. Pro Juventute has assisted in the establishment of child welfare centres. It procures voluntary nurses for babies, it enables harrassed mothers to take much needed holidays.

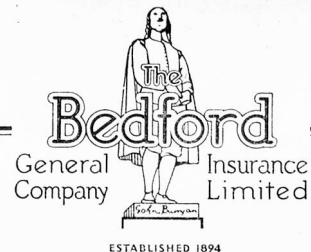
No less varied is Pro Juventute's activity on behalf

of the growing children of school age. Some 1,300 children are given free holidays in families, while Pro Juventute is making itself responsible every year for finding suitable accommodation for over 1,200 children of Swiss living abroad during 4-10 weeks, according to the distance over which they have to travel. Some of these children are provided for entirely free of charge, others at reduced fees and yet others at a very reasonable cost charge. We Swiss in Great Britain have benefited from this institution throughout many years, some 25-30 children of the colony being sent annually under this scheme through the good offices of our Group of the N.S.H. and with the help of the Swiss Benevolent Society, where needed.

Over 900 children have been assisted by Pro Juventute last year to be treated for tuberculosis. Pro Juventute has helped much in getting the necessity of free dental treatment for school children recognised everywhere. Large amounts are devoted annually for this purpose in Switzerland. Pro Juventute has so far helped in providing 55 iron lungs for treatment for infantile paralysis. Every autumn some 400,000 kg. of apples are collected by children for Pro Juventute and through this organisation for the children living in remote alpine valleys where fresh fruit is a rare article of diet. 322 pairs of skis were distributed last year by Pro Juventute among needy children. In cases of difficult children or strained relations between them and their parents, Pro Juventute establishes contact with expert educationalists, psychologists and psychiatrists. Foster parents are found and supervised by Pro Juventute often with the most encouraging results. Pro



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Juventute has initiated in more than one canton suitable changes of legislation or administrative orders for the benefit of foster children. Some 100,000 francs are spent annually under the patronage of Pro Juventute for helping homeless children to be settled and educated.

With the encouragement of Pro Juventute over 10 million copies of various books in all Swiss languages which are considered suitable for young readers have been published by the "Schweizerische Jugendschriftenwerk". The annual turnover reaches nearly 1 million copies with the aid of some 3,500 voluntary workers. 100,000 Pestalozzi Kalenders are sold annually as well as 70,000 "Sparkalender für die Jugend".

Much effort of Pro Juventute is devoted to the care of youngsters who have left school. 10,700 free places to the value of 2 million francs were provided last year for specialised training for various trades. There is a special fund for loans to students and another for scholarships for children abroad. Wherever possible children are encouraged to attend training courses after school leaving. There are several hundred offices for advising parents and youngsters on the choice of professions and occupations as well as on the existing training facilities. 520 girls were helped last year in finding suitable places with families. A great campaign is continually carried out by Pro Juventute and other organisations against joining the French Légion Etrangère, which still attracts about 300 recruits from Switzerland every year.

Special attention is devoted by Pro Juventute to the problem of good use being made by children of their free time. There are courses for youth leaders in singing, dancing, music making, etc. Exhibitions and films show the beholder what can be done by way of thoughtful provision for every kind of handicraft, carpentry, woodcarving, weaving, etc. Robinson playing grounds are provided in more than a dozen localities, giving facilities for independent activities of children of all ages. For 614 youngsters holiday accommodation was found last year in other countries with a view to facilitate language studies. Pro Juventute helps organising exchanges of letters with children of other countries. Swiss Youth hostels are helped and encouraged by Pro Juventute. Another organisation helps in marking footpaths through the countryside.

Finally Pro Juventute publishes a monthly periodical, "Jugendhilfe", and participates in providing libraries with suitable literature for the young. Pro Juventute participated in 1954 at the World Congress for the Care of the Young in Zagreb and was instrumental in achieving that the "Déclaration de Genève" on the rights of children was signed by Marshal Tito.

We can only be proud of such an active and many-sided organisation for the care of children in Switzerland. It deserves the strongest support from all those in a position to help or to buy Pro Juventute stamps and post-cards.

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