

Letter from Switzerland

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Milestones in Swiss insurance

- 1848 First cantonal factory law was adopted in the Canton of Glaris. Other cantons that followed suit in the same year were Aargau, Schaffhausen, St. Gallen and Zürich.
- 1877 The factory law was accepted at the Federal level. It represented the first comprehensive social legislation for the protection of industrial workers.
- 1884 Establishment of the first unemployment fund (a result of private initiative) by the Swiss Typographers' Union.
- 1890 Passage of Constitutional Article 34bis concerning sickness and accident insurance.
- 1911 Passage of the Federal Law on Sickness and Accident Insurance, effective 1st April, 1918. Founding of "SUVA", the Swiss Industrial Injury Insurance Company.
- 1924 Passage of the Federal Law on Contributions to Cantonal and Occupational Unemployment Funds.
- 1925 Passage of Constitutional Article 34quarter regulating old-age, survivors and disability insurance.
- 1940 Federal Council Decree regulating loss of earnings compensation for persons on active duty in the army.

Courtesy Union Bank of Switzerland.

LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

By Gottfried Keller

It has for long been an open secret, but now it is official: the Federal Council would favour Swiss Membership in the United Nations, but does not dare to submit an appropriate proposal to a plebiscite. The Federal Council's communiqué, issued at the end of June, speaks of "careful consideration", after which our highest magistrates have come to the conclusion that Uno-membership would, all in all, be desirable.

The Government's consideration has indeed been careful, for it has been going on for 31 years. An appropriate proposal, the official communiqué says, is to be laid before the country's people "in the not too distant future." It is obvious that the timing of the next step is deliberately left vague and the reason for such vagueness is equally obvious: if the Swiss population were asked to vote now on a governmental proposal to join the UN, a refusal would be an absolute certainty. And such a refusal would make an even more disastrous impression abroad than continued abstinence does. However, very often the Swiss people turn proposals from Berne down when

they are first submitted, only to adopt them in a second or third attempt. After all, the proposal to give the women of Switzerland the right to vote had a similar fate.

If the Federal Council wants to wait until such time when there is no crisis inside the United Nations or until such unattractive figures as Idi Amin Dada have lost their membership through death, Swiss membership in the UNO will never become a reality. At any rate, the examples of Sweden and Austria are proof that political neutrality is not necessarily an impediment to participation in the nearly universal world organisation.

In the summer of 1975 Foreign Minister Graber's journey to Helsinki to sign the KSZE documents on behalf of Switzerland raised a storm of protest. But in the spring of 1977 a large majority in the Federal Parliament approved Mr. Graber's decision to take part in the follow-up conference in Belgrade. Perhaps the Swiss hedgehog is, after all, about to shed some of his spines. Neutrality need not of necessity be identical with immobility and with sitting tight.



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