

Antivivisectionism in Switzerland

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ANTIVIVISECTIONISM IN SWITZERLAND.

(“*British Medical Journal*,” 27.1.40.)

A leading article in the *British Medical Journal* for December 2nd, 1939, dealt with the threat to medical research in Switzerland created by the activities of an antivivisectionist society in Basle. This society had presented to the Grand Council of the Canton a petition demanding legislation in terms which would have placed disastrous restrictions on experiments made on animals for the purpose of advancing knowledge, while exempting from control all operations performed on animals for the profit or convenience of their owners. Sir Leonard Rogers, the honorary treasurer of the Research Defence Society, has been good enough to transmit to us the information which he has received from a Swiss correspondent as to the further progress and final defeat of this deplorable agitation. The Grand Council of the Basle-City Canton appointed a Government Committee to advise them concerning the petition, and, having considered this committee's report, rejected the petition by a majority of 97 votes to 1. In democratic Switzerland, however, it appears that the petitioners were able to demand the submission of their proposal to a popular vote, even after such a crushing official rebuff. There followed, accordingly, propaganda of a kind with which we are familiar in this country, in newspapers and on public hoardings, and the academic and scientific interests which were threatened found themselves obliged to organize an educative campaign in opposition. When the question was put to the public vote only 7,415 votes were recorded in favour of the petition, though nearly 12,000 had earlier signed it, while 23,623 votes were cast for its rejection. It may be hoped that such a result indicates a measure of success in enlightening even some of those whom misrepresentation had earlier misled into giving their signatures too readily. For the time being the attack has, in any case, been routed and the threat to research averted. It is only sad to think that our Swiss colleagues have had to divert so much of their time and energy from their proper and important activities. In this country also, as Sir Leonard Rogers has often pointed out, such a waste of time which can ill be spared from the humane duties of research has been the only achievement of the antivivisectionists, for which, over a relatively short period, they have expended money that in the aggregate would amount to a very large fortune.

ANGLO-SWISS WAR-TIME TRADE.

(“*Manchester Guardian*,” 24.1.40.)

An agreement between Great Britain and Switzerland on commercial questions arising out of the war is expected to be signed in about a fortnight's time.

It is emphasised that the Anglo-Swiss agreement is intended only to deal with matters affecting the two countries' trade relations in war-time, but its conclusion is directly dependent on the success of negotiations on questions of contraband and enemy exports now proceeding in Paris between the Allied and Swiss Governments.

It is understood that one clause of the agreement will provide for a large reduction in Swiss exports to this country for the time being. The gradual return of Swiss exports to Great Britain to their normal level would then be possible only if a corresponding increase in British exports to Switzerland took place. The British authorities are anxious that the adverse British balance in respect of trade relations with Switzerland should be substantially reduced.

It is regarded as relatively certain that British coal exports to Switzerland will benefit considerably under the terms of the new agreement, while our exports of machinery, textiles, rubber and oils will, it is hoped, continue at their normal level. On the other hand the decrease in Swiss exports to this country envisaged under the new plan will apply proportionately to all of them.

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