

# Notes and gleanings

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what they have found peculiarly beneficial for their workers would as certainly be beneficial for our workers. Switzerland levies on British linen imported into her territory a duty of from 4s. 9d. to 10s. a hundredweight in the case of yarn and from 12s. to £4 in the case of linen fabrics, according to quality. We at present levy no duty at all.

Exposed to the full force of foreign competition, with no home market reserved to it and paying taxes three to four times as heavy as those abroad, our British industry is in peril of dying. Our linen plant is now working at only 15 per cent. of its capacity. Our export of linen cloth has fallen from 244,000,000 square yards in 1912 to 66,000,000 last year. Failing safeguarding (and that quickly), the outlook is hopeless; and a new multitude of unemployed will be added here to the miners and cotton spinners and weavers who are on the dole or starving.

We are going to be masters in our own house. We are going to settle these vast issues on which the whole future of our workers depends ourselves.

The letter, dated January 19 and written on Legation notepaper, reads:

'I understand that you represent in Great Britain the firm of Jacob Gut, jr., . . . of Zurich, manufacturers of handkerchiefs and household linen.

As you are no doubt aware, the Handkerchiefs and Embroidery Association have lodged with the Board of Trade a request tending to the appointment of an inquiry committee under the Safeguarding of Industries procedure for the imposition of a duty upon handkerchiefs, household goods of linen, cotton, jute, or hemp.

I think it therefore opportune to bring to your knowledge that a committee is likely to be organised in order to procure counter evidence in favour of the maintenance of free imports.

Should the matter interest you I would suggest your getting into touch with Mr. Frank Challis, London Chamber of Commerce, 97, Cannon-street, E.C.4.'

This queer piece of diplomacy was followed by another letter from the Legation which confirmed the previous information, but added that a letter to Mr. Challis would have to be marked 'private.'

Any similar action by British diplomatic representatives abroad would be repudiated and draw the censure of the Foreign Office upon the official concerned.

A number of M.P.'s are considering whether they shall raise the matter in the House of Commons."

The matter referred to takes us back to what happened about a year ago, and it would be interesting to learn why it has taken our contemporary twelve months to secure such an "important piece of news" and how it reached its editorial offices. To the unbiased reader the matter is as simple and unadorned as A B C. There can be no two opinions about the duties of a commercial attaché: they consist in fostering and developing the commercial relations between the two countries concerned. In this instance there was a possibility of a certain branch of our export trade suffering a set-back, and our commercial attaché would have failed in his duty had he not drawn the attention of the interested parties to this development; he left it to them to do whatever they thought fit. Whether any opposition offered by foreign manufacturers to the imposition of an import duty would have the slightest influence on the decisions of the respective safeguarding committees we need not dwell upon—we should say it would (and should) have the reverse effect. It is most unfortunate that in this particular instance the interests of England and Switzerland have clashed and that the perfectly proper and legitimate steps undertaken by our commercial attaché should thereby be exposed to unfavourable criticism. We do not know whether the writing of letters is part of the routine observed in such cases, but the reference in the "follow-up" must strike anybody as queer. Dr. Rezzonico is greatly respected and extremely popular in the Swiss colony; he mixes freely with all, and delicate information of this nature could be imparted without giving an opportunity for uncomplimentary interpretation and thus offending our English friends.

Another article in the *Daily Mail* of February 14th further exaggerates the incident and refers to "Aliens Meddling in English Affairs." It states that the matter will be raised in the House of Commons, but we should think that wiser counsels will prevail and that the incident has by now been reduced to its proper proportions.

In the meantime M. J. Borsinger, our Chargé d'Affaires, called at the Foreign Office, and his visit is referred to as follows in *The Times* (Feb. 15th):—

"His visit is understood to have been made in connexion with the attention that has recently been drawn to the action of the Commercial Counsellor of the Legation in having written, over a year ago, to the London repre-

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sentatives of a Swiss exporting firm, suggesting that they should get into touch with a committee that was then being formed to present evidence against the imposition by the British Government of a duty upon handkerchiefs and household linen under the Safeguarding of Industries Act. The letter is understood to have been written in response to an appeal for support against the proposed new duties by the Swiss firms concerned. It was dated January, 1928.

It will be remembered that the inquiry was held in the early part of last year, and resulted in the rejection of the appeal that had been made for the safeguarding of handkerchiefs and household linen goods. The report on the subject was issued in May, 1928."

It is also interesting to read a reference made by Sir Hamar Greenwood, M.P. at a recent function as reported by *The Times* in the same issue. The italics are ours.

"Sir Hamar Greenwood, M.P., speaking at the annual dinner of the Electrical Wholesalers' Federation at the Savoy Hotel last night, referred to the incident in which, he said, the Commercial Attaché of the Swiss Legation in London wrote a letter to a Swiss importer telling him to write privately to the secretary of the London Chamber of Commerce, stating that it was up to him (the Swiss importer) to help the Chamber of Commerce to defeat the intention of His Majesty's Government to have an inquiry whether or not imported linen should be safeguarded.

'I say not a word against the Swiss Legation,' Sir Hamar Greenwood said. 'That zealous gentleman was acting in the interest of his country; but what about the London Chamber of Commerce? You know as well as I do we are in agreement with other countries in the world, but how much stronger would our position be if, like other countries, we had more home markets. I have always found that they treat England as part of their home market, and we are by that amount the weaker in making terms for all of us. Therefore I am one of those who believe first that it is not the duty of the Swiss Legation to interfere with what is done in inquiries in His Majesty's Realm, and secondly, that the London Chamber of Commerce might be more profitably employed in seeking to find more employment in England instead of less.'"

## QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES

BONDS.	Feb. 12		Feb. 18	
	Fr.	S.	Fr.	S.
Confederation 3% 1903	82.75	82.75	82.75	82.75
5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln.	103.00	102.70	102.70	102.70
Federal Railways 3 1/2% A—K	88.40	88.15	88.15	88.15
" " 1924 IV Elect. Ln.	102.25	102.50	102.50	102.50
SHARES.	Nom.	Feb. 12	Feb. 18	Feb. 18
Swiss Bank Corporation	500	894	891	891
Crédit Suisse	500	997	967	967
Union de Banques Suisses	500	753	750	750
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	3490	3425	3425
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	4650	4650	4650
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe	1000	4410	4395	4395
S.A. Brown Boveri	350	614	607	607
C. P. Bally	1000	1510	1505	1505
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	916	913	913
Entreprises Suizer S.A.	1000	1290	1287	1287
Comp. de Navig. n sur le Lac Léman	500	515	518	518
Linoleum A.G. Giubiasco	100	336	334	334
Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon	500	840	853	853

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