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HOME AFFAIRS.

by MAX NEF.

A project has just been made public which provides for the introduction of an obligatory Disablement Insurance in our country. It originates from one elaborated by the Committees of Experts set up some time ago by the Federal Council, and will now have to be submitted first of all to the Cantons, the Unions and the Public for their opinion before the Federal Council can lay the relevant Draft Bill before Parliament.

In 1925 the Federal Council was empowered to introduce a Federal Old Age Pension and Survivors and Disablement Insurance. Since then, however, only the Old Age Pension and Survivors Insurance has been implemented. Thus, it is now a question of applying the planned Disablement Insurance for which the competency has already existed in the Constitution for some thirty years.

In Switzerland the gradual evolution of a social welfare State has been proceeding since the turn of the century. A special legislation in the domain of social insurance began to develop relatively late; this does not mean, however, that nothing was achieved from the social aspect prior to the promulgation of a Federal Social Law in respect of a certain specified domain. Certain measures were taken frequently by the Cantons. Moreover, private enterprise and private organisations established a number of social welfare schemes. Thus, Federal legislation need only fill in the existing gaps, and must render assistance there where what has been established on the basis of private initiative is insufficient. This applies to a high degree also to the measures in favour of disabled persons.

This Disablement Insurance which is now to be established will comprise all those persons who, in consequence of a permanent physical or mental injury to health, are either partially or totally incapable of earning their living, irrespective of whether their physical incapacity is congenital or has been caused by sickness or accident.

The measures that have been planned are not limited to a financial compensation, for the inability to earn a livelihood, by means of the payment of allowances. Special value is laid on efforts to be made in order to integrate such disabled persons into some kind of business or trade by which a livelihood is gained. They should be put in a position which would render it possible for them to make good use of the capacities which they still possess, such a rehabilitation being not merely of a purely economic character, but being also motivated by ethical reasons. In order to achieve this purpose all suitable measures, whether of a general or of an individual nature, will, in principle, be taken into consideration. It is intended,

among other things, to provide medical treatment for individual cases of disablement, to grant technical means of assistance, to create special educational facilities — this more particularly in regard to disabled children — to provide technical training and rehabilitation, as well as the financial help necessary for the building up of a new life. In all these cases, all costs are to be taken over, entirely or to a considerable extent, by the insurance scheme. In so far as the more general measures of rehabilitation are concerned provision is made for the financing of plants, institutions and homes, as well as the acquisition of special equipment for workshops, etc. In cases where efforts of this kind do not come into question, an allowance adapted to the needs of each individual case will be paid out.

In the same way as the already existing Old Age Pension and Survivors Insurance is obligatory for the entire Swiss people, so also will the new Disablement Insurance be obligatory. The distribution of the costs over the entire community will make the burden very slight for the individual. The premiums to be paid will be established in accordance with the wage or income of the individual wage-earner and will be levied at the same time as the contributions towards the Old Age Pension. In this way it will be possible to do without any large new administrative machinery. As regards the sum which will be paid out in benefits by the Swiss Disablement Insurance, it is estimated, provisionally, that this will amount to more than 140 million francs per year.

Five steps to Tokyo...

by SWISSAIR



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HOME AFFAIRS.

by PIERRE BÉGUIN.

All through their history a large proportion of Swiss have lived abroad, the main reason being that a mountainous country does not make for a living for all of its citizens. At the moment about 200,000 Swiss are living abroad, so the old saying about "the Fifth Switzerland" still holds good. The other four Switzerlands, incidentally, are made up of the four language-groups: the German-speaking, French-speaking and Italian-speaking Swiss, together with the several thousands who speak Romansch. The Swiss who live abroad, with very few exceptions, remain closely linked with their homeland and act as voluntary ambassadors, you might say, bringing goodwill to their adopted countries and helping our export industries to find markets, as well as setting up industries and providing work for local people.

But twice in the last fifty years large numbers of these Swiss living abroad have found themselves in a very unenviable situation. Living in countries overwhelmed by war they have suffered serious losses. In common with the peoples of those countries they have lost property and savings. In many cases they have lost their jobs and their means of existence. Often, after getting back to Switzerland, they found they no longer had any contacts, and frequently they were too old or worn out physically to be able to start life afresh. It has been felt for a long time that these people ought to be able to claim some kind of com-

pensation in the same way as the people in the countries where they lived. After the first world war the Swiss government attempted by diplomatic means to have Swiss residents put on the same footing in this matter as the citizens of the countries in which they lived. The Federal government even brought this claim to the notice of the League of Nations. Almost no results were obtained. The same problem cropped up again after the Second World War, and once again attempts were made to achieve equality of treatment for the Swiss who lived abroad as for the citizens of these countries. But this was to no purpose, except in very few cases.

Switzerland had no legal responsibility to the Swiss who had suffered from the war while living abroad. But on the other hand it is obvious that their situation could not be ignored. Large sums were spent in aid for these people by the cantons and their own communes. The Federal Government itself paid out the large sum of 160 million francs, and also set aside further sums, totalling about 130 million Swiss francs for this work. This money came from Western Germany as part of a trade debt entered into by Nazi Germany. The possibility of getting this money had been thought very distant, but when the return was guaranteed it was decided to turn the money over to the Swiss who had suffered through the war. It may seem strange that today, twelve years after the end of the second world war, distribution of this money has not yet been made. This can be explained by the large number of differing claims lodged and by the difficulty encountered when trying to put a completely fair system into practice. In 1954 the first plan for distribution suggested by the Federal Authorities was turned down by the people in a referendum. Now the federal Cabinet is putting forward a new plan providing help for the Swiss who, through the war, had lost their jobs and who, for age or health reasons, could not start life afresh. If this scheme is finally adopted, some claimants who lost a lot of property will find that they receive nothing, if they now have other property or if they are able to lead a normal life. Others, who lost little because they had little, but who are now reduced to poverty, will receive a sum of money and, in some cases, a pension. The accent is put on present needs rather than past losses, which is a good thing.

**PROFESSOR DR. ROBERT DURRER
HONOURED.**

At a special ceremony on the occasion of the Annual General Meeting of the Iron & Steel Institute, 4 Grosvenor Gardens, S.W.1, which took place on May 22nd, the Bessemer Gold Medal for 1957 has been awarded to our compatriot, Professor Dr. Robert Durrer, President of the "Gesellschaft der Ludwig von Roll'schen Eisenwerke", Gerlafingen, in recognition of his distinguished contribution to the development of iron and steelmaking, and especially his pioneer work in the field of electric steelmaking and the use of oxygen.

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