

*NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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Starting in the 1850s, hundreds of thousands of Swiss children were taken from their parents and sent to farms to work. Now, thousands of people in Switzerland, who were forced into child labour, are **demanding compensation** for their stolen childhoods.

When children became **orphans**, when parents were unmarried, or when families were very poor, sometimes the children were taken from their families and placed in **foster families**. The children were often sent to farms, as **agriculture** in Switzerland was not **mechanized**, and so child **labour** was needed. They were called 'contract children'.

"They wanted to take these children out of the poor family and put them somewhere else where they could learn how to work," says historian Loretta Seglias. If the children's parents **objected**, they could be sent to prison too.

The use of contract children **declined** in the 1960s and 70s.

Last year an official apology was made to contract children – and now, **campaigner** Guido Fluri is trying to get them compensation.

He hopes for about 500 million Swiss Francs (£327m) for the 10,000 contract children estimated to be alive today. However, there could still be many more years of discussion in the Swiss **parliament** before this becomes a reality.

But Fluri says it is important to remember these "people who **suffered** for **decades**."

## Vocabulary

### **demand**

to ask for something strongly

### **compensation**

money which is paid to you because you have been hurt in some way

**orphan**

a child whose parents have died

**foster family**

a family which takes care of a child, although they are not the child's biological family

**agriculture**

the science or industry of farming

**mechanized**

using machines to do work

**labour**

work; particularly, physical work

**object**

(here) to oppose something; to say that something is not acceptable

**decline**

(here) to decrease; to become less

**campaigner**

a person who works, together with others, to try to change something in society

**parliament**

the group of elected people who make laws for the country

**suffer**

to experience something painful

**decade**

ten years

This story is based on an original BBC News story:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-29765623>