

Swiss measure Mt Everest

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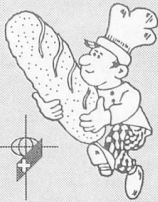
SNOW TROTTING

Last month we showed you how cricket is being played on ice in St Moritz. Now comes the Snow Trotting from Arosa. The usual sulky has been replaced by a sort of mono-ski which requires quite a bit of balancing on the part of the rider.

One of the main problems is to get the horses used to the high altitude (Arosa lies above 1800 m). So the participants go up to Arosa well in advance of the races so that the horses (and the riders to a lesser degree) can get used to the local snow conditions and train in the thin and dry air of Arosa.

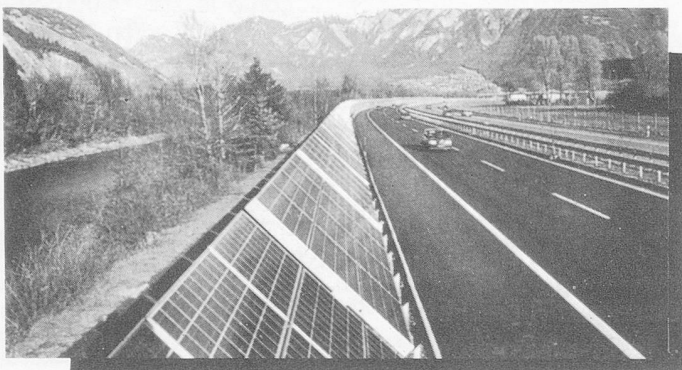
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SOLAR POWER

One of the most amazing ways of producing electricity is in operation along one of Switzerland's motorways between Domat and Ems near Chur (Graubünden). An anti-noise wall built along this stretch of motorway was covered with solar panels over a distance of 800 meters. These panels produce around 120,000 kilowatt/hours per year, enough power to cover the requirements of 30 households. The designer's next plan is to convert the whole Corviglia cable car installation in St Moritz to solar power.



METRO VERSUS PAYE

Geneva has a big problem. The Canton would like to build an underground railway network, a Metro as they call it, but the Canton has no money. The Authorities need 658 million SFR but they no longer dare to borrow this kind of money or increase taxes. So they hit on the idea of PAYE. (How the Authorities can claim that PAYE is not simply another form of taxation is a mystery). Nevertheless, the Geneva Authorities feel that through PAYE they would at long last be able to get at all the thousands of workers and employees from the Canton of Waadt and from France who daily come to Geneva to earn their living but do not pay any taxes there since their domicile is outside the jurisdiction of the Canton of Geneva.

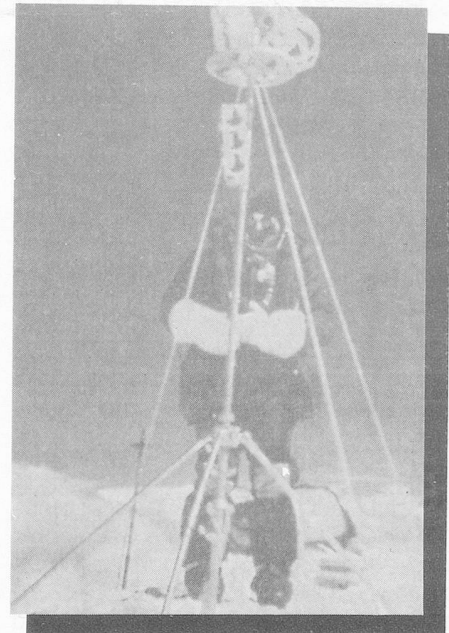
A tougher nut to crack for the Geneva Authorities would be to impose PAYE also on the thousands of people who work for the hundreds of international institutions in Geneva who, up to now, under international agreements, are totally exempt from income tax. Surely some big fireworks in prospect here...

SWISS MEASURE MT EVEREST

How high is Mt Everest anyway? The Swiss are helping to establish its exact height. A huge tripod, built by the Leica firm in St Gallen was taken up Mt Everest by the French alpinist Benoît Chamoux and his Italian colleague Agostino Da Polenza and firmly fixed at the very top of the mountain, evidently the highest fixed measuring instrument in the world.

According to the present measurements, the top of the 3 meter tripod is exactly 8851 m above sea level, therefore the mountain is 8848 m high.

However, in 1993, the scientists believe they may have to alter those figures once all measurements have been completed. Any alterations to the previous measurements may not only be due to more precise instruments but also due to the ever "growing" Himalayas.



SHAKY TOURISM

The present recession has had a sobering effect on tourism in Switzerland. Between May and October last year the Swiss hotels only registered 19.5 million overnight stays. This represents a reduction of over 1.4 million overnight stays compared to the previous year, a drop of 5%.

But Swiss hotels are still more fortunate than those in other European countries where the drop was even greater: Spain -17%, Austria -12%, France -8.2%. Only Germany did better than Switzerland with a drop of only 4.2%. On the other hand, amazingly, the USA had an increase of 14% and Japan, one of the most expensive tourist destinations, registered a 2% improvement.

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