

Initiative and progress in S.F.R. management

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INITIATIVE AND PROGRESS IN S.F.R. MANAGEMENT.

(*Railway Gazette*, September 22, 1944.)

Twice in a quarter of a century the Swiss have found themselves surrounded by countries at war, each one of them more powerful than they, and have seen the course of their economic life disturbed and their railway and other transport systems called on to adapt themselves to abnormal conditions. In these twenty-five years, too, the character of war has altered, and today the descent of foreign aircraft on Swiss soil has to be reckoned with, and even, as the *Swiss Federal Railways Magazine* has borne witness, the discharge, in error, of bombs, which have caused the loss of Swiss lives. Damage has been done to the Swiss Railway system in this way. The experiences gained in the war of 1914-18 made a lasting impression, by which the Swiss, with their traditional good sense and initiative, were not slow to profit. Their high skill as engineers was used to advantage, and the work of electrifying the railways, decided on before 1914, pushed forward with energy. A reading of the reports which were drawn up by leading electrical engineers to form a basis for the Government's decision cannot fail to produce a realisation of the ability and care bestowed on the problem; and it is common knowledge in electric railway circles that the development of the single-phase traction system, which Switzerland selected as the most suitable for general adoption, owes a great deal to the work of Swiss engineers and industrial concerns.

Of several considerations which caused the decision to electrify, the chief was the wish to be independent of foreign coal supplies, a substitute for which was available in water power. The elimination of smoke and steam on routes abounding in heavy gradients and tunnels was almost equally attractive, particularly in view of the large amount of international and holiday traffic conveyed throughout the year. Much progress has been made in the design and equipment of the electrified routes. The single-phase system has been improved constantly: highly efficient locomotives have been built; and multiple-unit coaching stock, little in evidence originally, has found increasing application (the latest vehicles are of modern type in every detail). Improvements have not been confined to the Federal lines. The private railways have adopted the same progressive course, and during the last few years rolling stock of the highest class has been placed in service. In some cases, for example, where combined rack and adhesion working is required, the engineering details of the control and braking systems are of exceptional interest, as are the methods employed to reduce weight. In various instances the system of traction, which is not uniform throughout the private lines, has been changed, where it would give through running and wider use of rolling stock; although possibly not called for normally, this might prove valuable in a national emergency. Electrification has been extended to some sections of line where traffic is relatively light, but has been welcomed by the local populations in the hope that it may herald a brighter economic future. Shortage of materials has obliged the railways to simplify some details of equipment, for instance, to employ wooden poles as

contact-wire supports, and to use concrete more than hitherto.

The rebuilding of stations has proceeded as rapidly as possible and has involved many heavy works. The renewal of bridges, doubling of single-line sections and construction of connecting lines has been pushed forward commendably. Signalling, too, has made notable progress, although there is not the scope for such large works as exists in most other countries. The colour-light signal, including the mechanically-operated type, is being installed progressively as new work is undertaken, and there are some excellent examples of power signal boxes which incorporate the best features of modern practice. Remote control is being applied, and has considerable opportunities before it. The signal aspects, although apparently complicated to outsiders, have been adapted specially to local conditions and enable full advantage to be taken of the improved designs of points and the use of electric traction. Automatic train control has been applied to almost all the ordinary distant signals, and probably will be added to the inner distants, used to announce at home signals the indications given by starting signals. Where mechanical signalling remains there have been improvements in the detail. Finally, much ingenuity has been expended on finding a substitute for track circuit on steel-sleepered way, of which there is a large mileage.

CIVIL AVIATION CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO.

(A Fairy-tale).

There was a little Fairy,
Gentle and fair was she.

There, too, was a Bear,
Great, big and austere.

Both were invited to a Party,
To be held in "God's own Country".

When all was ready for the fun,
The great big Bear would not come.

Because, said he in a flurry,
The little Fairy might bite me!

—C. J. B.

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