

Commercial news

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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Swiss index figure for prices.

In comparison with August 1939 (100), the index figure for retail prices was up at 181 at the end of November, 1957. The index figure for wholesale prices was up at 223.5 at the same date. These two index figures rose then in the same proportion, i.e. by 0.3 per cent since the end of the previous month.

Switzerland at the Universal and International Exhibition of Brussels.

The greatest part of the Pavilion which is to house the Swiss exhibits at the Universal and International Exhibition of Brussels, in 1958, is now finished. The pavilion will be composed of a series of hexagonal halls, placed side by side, in the form of a honeycomb, thus making it possible for the various branches of Swiss national economy, e.g. textiles, watches, machinery and metallurgical products, chemical products, agriculture, transport and tourism, to show off their specialities within the framework and the style which suits them best. These groups of exhibits will be preceded by an introductory section, which will give the visitors a general idea about Switzerland. There is also to be a Swiss restaurant, where foreigners will be able to appreciate a gastronomy which possess a savour and richness of its own. Nor will art be forgotten, either. Within the framework of theatrical, musical and folk-lore performances, to be organised at the Exhibition, Switzerland will show, also, that this domain is in no way neglected in her country.

The first automobile silo in Switzerland.

The first automobile silo in Switzerland is to be put into service shortly, at Basle. This building will provide garage room for 400 motor cars, and will help to improve the parking conditions in Basle, especially when the Swiss Industries Fair is being held. The "Autosilo" system, which is a Swiss invention, is the first device of this kind which makes it possible to manipulate, in an entirely automatic manner, cars of every dimension — that is to say, American and European cars — and to place them in a building composed of individual lock-up garages, placed contiguously and superposed. According to this system, it is possible to build silos, possessing as many as forty stories. The whole business of getting the car from the ground into its garage, or of bringing it back from there, takes no longer than one minute.

50th Anniversary of the Swiss Civil Code.

It is just half a century since the Swiss Civil Code, which is the work of Professor Eugène Huber, was adopted unanimously by the Federal Parliament. At that time this legislation, respecting as it does individual liberty, was the most modern in Europe and it aroused the interest and the admiration of foreign jurists. The Swiss Civil Code has stood the test of time very well, owing to the intentional broadness of its character and to the preciseness which was gradually added to it by jurisprudence. It is true that certain points will have to be revised, in particular those appertaining to the juridical position of women, to real estate property and to other domains. Such as

it is, applied loyally right from the beginning in the various parts of the country, with the inevitable slight variations which arise out of the differences in customs and religions, the Swiss Civil Code to-day constitutes a part of Switzerland's spiritual heritage.

A few words more about industrial decentralization in Switzerland.

For a number of years past, the authorities of the Italian-speaking Canton of Ticino, have been striving to put a stop to the movement tending towards the depopulation of the valleys, by the introduction of new industries. Two watch-making factories are to be started very shortly in the Val Verzasca, a region where the population lives from its very meagre farming activities. We would add that previous experiments have proved that the industrial labour furnished by rural districts is of excellent quality.

New Swiss electric power station on the Rhine.

It is more than sixty years, since the first Swiss electric power station was built, on the upper reaches of the Rhine. Since then other plants have been established along the course of the river between Basle and the Lake of Constance. And now, the last remaining possibilities, which have not been exploited as yet, are to be made use of. A Germano-Swiss fluvial power station is to be built, shortly, on the Rhine, in the vicinity of Säckingen. It is thought that work on this scheme will be starting this spring.

New institute of nuclear research in Switzerland.

A project is being elaborated at present in regard to a new institute for nuclear research which is to be attached to the Federal Polytechnical School at Zurich. This new institute will be endowed with a cyclotron, with an accelerator for particles and with equipment for isotopes. The outfit will require an expenditure of some twenty million Swiss francs (U.S. \$4,660,600).



Swiss Chalet Cheese is a real treat for Cheese lovers

Swiss national income.

According to the estimates of the Swiss Federal Statistical Bureau, the Swiss national income for 1956, amounted to 25 thousand 630 millions of Swiss francs (USA \$3,974,350,000), that is to say, to a thousand five hundred million francs more than in 1955 (USA \$350,000,000).

The Swiss watch industry and the next World's Exhibition in Brussels.

The Bureau of the Swiss Watch Chamber has received a report from its Director about the preparations for the Swiss watch pavilion at the Brussels International Fair, 1958. The architect's plans, and those of the decorator and the artist in charge of fresco painting have been completed and the clocks and watches which will be exhibited have already been chosen. The different items will be anonymously presented, bearing only the emblem of the exhibition.

Preparation for the Swiss National Exhibition 1964.

The preparatory phase for the Swiss National Exhibition which is to take place in Lausanne in 1964, is almost completed. The provisional committee, under the auspices of the cantonal Government of Vaud, has worked out the legal status of the different organs of the exhibition. The "high commission" with 264 members will represent the interests of the whole country and the organizing committees will be a limited group whose decisions will be carried out by the "executive council". The various proposals for the site and arrangements of the Swiss National Exhibition, received by the provisional committee, have been

submitted to a group of technical experts which has not yet come to any final decision. However, it is very probable that the definite site will be on the shores of Lake Geneva, west of Lausanne. It is also to be remembered that an experimental nuclear plant is envisaged for 1964 in Lausanne, and will constitute a part of the National Exhibition before it is used for scientific research.

Switzerland's economy facing the problems of the Common Market.

Swiss economical circles are occupied with examining the possible repercussions on Swiss foreign trade arising from the Common Market, which came into effect on January 1st, 1958. The uniformisation of customs duties of the six countries members of the Economic Commission for Europe, based on an arithmetical average, could have some unfortunate effects on Swiss exports. Germany is Switzerland's best customer and its custom duties are not too high and the same can be said of those of the Benelux countries which are also among the important customers of Switzerland. But the entry duties of these countries will be raised suddenly under the influence of the protective tariffs of Italy and France. Accurate calculations have proved that for yarns, for instance, entry duties in Germany will be increased by 4 per cent to 13 or 15 per cent ad valorem. One could quote other examples for the same country as well as for the Benelux countries. This shows that the present European economic developments will not be without influence on Switzerland's trade. That is the reason why the Swiss economic world is following all the more closely the efforts to set up a Free Trade Zone.

American exports to Switzerland.

Since 1936, when the Law of trade relations between Switzerland and the United States came into force, American exports to Switzerland have increased, during these twenty years, from 7 million dollars to 215 million dollars; on the other hand, in 1956, the United States purchased goods from Switzerland to the value of 185 million dollars.

An important Swiss delivery to Spain.

The Spanish State Railways have just taken delivery of an important order, which had been given to an association of Swiss contractors. These consist of fifteen trains, in three parts, each one having a capacity of 2,800 h.p. These trains are intended for suburban service and are built so that they can travel in both directions. They are nearly 240 feet in length and have seats for 248 persons; it is possible to couple two or three of these trains together, for the assembly is operated automatically from a single control panel.

The most powerful rail cars in the world operated in Switzerland.

The most powerful rail cars in the world, operated by single-phase current, are running in Switzerland, on a small line in the Berne region. There are three such machines, of 200 h.p. each, weighing seventy-three and a half tons and capable of a maximum speed of 110 kilometres per hour. They have, of course, been built by two Swiss firms, one in Schaffhausen for the mechanical part and the other in Geneva for the electrical part.

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Award to a Swiss scientist.

Following an invitation from the Swedish Royal Academy of Engineering Sciences, Dr. A. Wettstein, who is the head of the pharmaceutical research department in the firm of CIBA at Basle, recently gave a lecture on "the problems of research and development of new medicaments". As an acknowledgment of his work in this field, this scientist has just received the Prize of Honour of the Royal Academy. On this occasion and for the first time, Mr. Wettstein talked about a new active substance, called "the factor of the sodium diuresis", which is probably of the greatest biological importance.

Capital increase in the Swiss electric economy.

The Swiss joint-stock company of the Grande Dixence, known in connection with the big dam now under construction in the Swiss Alps, has just doubled its share-capital, by raising it from 200 to 400 million Swiss francs. The shareholders of the Grande-Dixence, who are four important Swiss electrical firms, have subscribed to and liberated all the new shares.

Industrial decentralisation in Switzerland.

Decentralization is a means for Swiss industries of finding more stable employment, for it means that people are able to work close to their homes. This is why certain industries such as the textile and clothing industries, where production can be done on a smaller scale, have a number of smaller factories in agricultural areas. This enables these industries to count on a certain number of qualified workers at all times, who perform the same specialized job, as is necessary for quality production. The Bally firm, the oldest and most important shoe factory of Switzerland, has already opened specialized factories in various areas, although there is still none in the French speaking part of Switzerland. However, the firm has recently decided to open a new factory in Sion, the capital of the canton of the Valais, in Southern Switzerland. This step will help keep at home a certain number of workers, for whom the local economy did not offer enough possibilities of earning a decent salary.

Moreover, in a mountainous area in the canton of Fribourg, the village of Treyvaux specialized in the wood industry, and there were unfortunately no possibilities for the women to earn money, and, as a result, many of the women left the country to find work in the industrial centres. Two workshops of the garment industry will be set up in this district and will help to distribute the population again, as increased housing demands indicate. These examples show then, that industry, when it stays on the human scale as it does in Switzerland, helps prevent heavy concentration of population with its many inconveniences.

The next Automobile Show in Geneva.

The next international automobile show will take place in Geneva in two months, from the 13th to the 23rd of March, 1958. The total area for the stands of the 1958 show will be about 74,000 square feet, which means an increase of some 11,000 square feet in comparison with 1957. A third hall will allow considerably more space to exhibit trucks, buses, tow cars, and machines for public works. These machines are

being given more attention in this display and will also be shown in open air stands.

Swiss watch trade marks wronged by a vast fraud.

Swiss watch industry organizations are always recommending foreigners to buy their watches from qualified watch dealers. In New York, certain people, wanting to buy Swiss watches at bargain prices, went to souvenir shops where they got watches sold under trade mark names of good reputation, but whose mechanism was of an inferior quality. This was a profitable manoeuvre because the buyers tend not to complain, since they do not want to admit that they were cheated. The fraud was, nevertheless, discovered, as the "Swiss Watch Industry" magazine announces, and the police looked into the matter. Thirteen swindlers have been arrested and 20,000 watches seized. Moreover, it seems that a great number of watches done up in this way were sold to New York buyers, and there were said to be a large number of cases going to Latin America. All this certainly does not jeopardize the quality and reputation of authentic watches sold by specialized watch dealers.

Inauguration in Switzerland of the highest dam in the world.

The Mauvoisin Dam, in the Valais Canton (Swiss Alps), has just been completed. With its height of 259 yards it is, for the moment, the highest dam in the world; but it will be dethroned from its supreme position as soon as the dam of the Grande Dixence, now under construction, has been completed. The Mauvoisin Dam was started in 1951 and was finished two years in advance of the schedule. The great mass of the dam represents two million cubic metres of concrete; it is an incurved wall, with a thickness of 60 yards at its base and which at its highest point measures 15 yards in width, over a length of 568 yards.

A new electricity plant in the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

An electricity plant has just been inaugurated at the Diablerets, a well-known tourist and skiing resort in French-speaking Switzerland. Everything possible has been done to preserve the beauty of the landscape, which is such an important point where a holiday resort is concerned. The dam, which serves the purpose of forming the waters into a natural lake, has not been built of concrete, but has been made in the shape of an earthen dyke. Another interesting point is that the plant in question does not employ

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any staff on the spot, all the work being carried out by means of a control panel which is operated from a station situated at a distance of ten kilometres from the plant.

Toward the Second Swiss Exhibition of Women's Work.

The first stroke with the pickaxe has been given, in Zürich, in regard to the Second Swiss Exhibition of Women's Work, known as the "SAFFA", which is to open its doors on 17th July, 1958. Work was started, in the presence of representatives of the Authorities and of the Press, on the spot where a residential tower ten stories high is to be erected.

Foreign workers in Switzerland.

August is the month in which the number of foreign workers employed in Switzerland attains its maximum figure. This year this figure amounted to more than 377,000 persons, two-thirds of whom were men and one-third women. The largest quota of foreign manpower comes to Switzerland from Italy, namely about two-thirds of the total. The remainder is supplied chiefly by Germany, then Austria and France. Most of the foreign workers are employed in the building trade, then in the metallurgical and machine industry, and, finally, in the hotel industry.

Swissair places new orders for aircraft.

The Swiss national airline company "Swissair" has decided to purchase a seventh long-distance DC-7c Seven Seas aircraft, which is to be delivered at the beginning of 1959. This new machine will make it possible for the Swiss Aviation Company to meet more easily the demands caused by the increase in traffic on its long-distance network of airlines, until the Douglas DC-8 can be put into service, in 1960. Some time ago the same company also ordered a Douglas DC 6A cargo plane for its air freight services. This new cargo plane will be put into service at the end of next year.

Campaign against noise in Switzerland.

The Swiss Government has appointed a Committee of Experts for the struggle against noise. This Committee, which will be presided over by the Head of the Department of Justice and Police, includes physicians and specialised technicians, and representatives of various Federal, Cantonal and Communal Services as well as of other interested circles. It has been charged with the task of elucidating medical, technical and

juridical questions relating to the struggle against noise, and of suggesting such legal measures as it considers have become necessary.

Partial relaxation of Rent Control in Switzerland.

The Federal Commission for Price Control has decided to recommend to the Swiss Government a relaxation in respect of Rent Control. An authorisation is to be issued for a general increase of 5 per cent in regard to the old rent rates. This increase, however, cannot come into force before 1st April, 1958.

Inauguration of new Swiss hydro-electric plants.

A new hydro-electric plant has just been inaugurated at Sarnen, in central Switzerland, which will supply the entire region with electric current. A dam has been built here, which retains the water of the river which flows from the Lake of Sarnen and enters into the Lake of the Four Cantons. The reservoir thus formed possesses a capacity of 400,000 cubic metres, and the generators have a total power of 3,000 h.p. Construction work has cost some six-and-a-half million Swiss francs (U.S.A. \$1,500,000).

An interesting group of electric stations has also been put into service recently in the Valais, in the vicinity of the well-known health resort of Crans above Sierre, known as the Lienne group, which uses the water of the river Lienne. By shutting off a deep gorge, by means of a dam 155 metres in height, an artificial lake has been created possessing a volume of 50 million cubic metres, corresponding to a capacity of production amounting to 136 million kilowatt-hours. The water is brought to a first plant, which has been excavated entirely in the rock and contains two Pelton turbines of approximately 40,000 h.p. each. The water then passes through a compensating reservoir, prior to being directed towards a second plant, which is built in the open, in the valley of the Rhône. The lower plant is equipped with two Francis turbines, each possessing a capacity of 21,500 h.p.

NEWS FROM THE EMBASSY.

The Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker gave a reception at the Embassy, on Saturday, January 18th, to meet the artist, Edith Fischer, after her recital at Wigmore Hall.

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