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to replace it by a building housing all the Swiss activities of London were being devised by the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom. It was realised by those directly concerned that the new scheme had to overcome considerable problems. The "Swiss Observer", which had been facing serious financial difficulties at the end of 1970, received a welcome promise of support from a Swiss industrialist in London.

There were a series of marking cultural events, the most prominent of which were a Hodler-Böcklin exhibition at the Hayward Gallery on the South Bank and a remarkable concert at the Royal Festival Hall in which Heinrich Sutermeister's "Requiem" was performed by the Berne Choir. Heal's, one of London's largest shops for household wares, organised an important exhibition of Swiss goods. Among the many Swiss works edited this year in English, we should mention the publication of "Switzerland and Europe", by J. R. de Salis.

To a new Embassy must be added a new Ambassador. Dr. Albert Weitnauer succeeded Dr. and Mrs. Rene Keller after their untimely call back to Berne. Dr. Keller took up his new post as Head of the Division for International Organisations on 1st February and Dr. Weitnauer presented his letters of credence to the Queen on 26th February. The Institute of Swiss Trade Promotion had to close down after several years of effort to keep it going. This failure was partly brought about by the non-realisation of the Forum.

As reported in this issue, we also had to record the disappearance of the Société de Secours Mutuels, the oldest Swiss Society in the U.K., which voted itself out of existence on 1st December.

The Swiss community in Great Britain deplored the deaths of many compatriots and among the many who have gone we should name Mr. Edmond Paul Banderet, Mr. Charles Schorno and Mr. Fred Streit.

On a more rejoicing note, the Ger-

man-Swiss church and the Catholic Mission have solved their accommodation problems and are thriving in a spirit of fellowship and ecumenism. Father Bossard's Sunday evening youth

sessions at the John Southworth Centre continue to be a great success and are a vital part of the work of the Swiss Churches among the Swiss youth of London. (PMB)

SWISS EVENTS

FEDERAL

Mr. Rudolf Gnaegi against a presidential regime

Mr. Rudolf Gnaegi, President of the Confederation, announced that the Federal Council had approved the conclusions of a commission of experts charged with examining possible ways of reorganising the federal administration.

The Federal Government has been composed of seven members since the creation of modern Switzerland in 1848. To lift part of the growing burden resting upon them, many circles had advocated that the Executive should be enlarged by three or four new Federal Departments. Mr. Gnaegi rejected these proposals yet more categorically than the commission had done, considering that they would endanger the cohesion and smoothness of the collegial operation of the Federal Council. Mr. Gnaegi was equally opposed to the creation of a presidential regime, which he described as "a form of government entirely alien to our traditions".

The experts had also stressed in their report that a presidential system would go against the spirit of Swiss federalism.

Opening of a new legislature

Twelve women took their seats for the first time in Swiss history under the cupola of the Federal Palace on November 29th. The usually austere

National Council was in exuberant spirits to welcome these ladies with flowers and loud applause. The Doyen of the Assembly, Bernese Professor von Waldkirch, 81 years old, made the opening speech. He said that "the charm of these ladies will strengthen the ties between our Council and the Swiss people". As Professor von Waldkirch represents the right-wing, anti-foreign National Action party which had just made its entry at the Federal Palace, there were fears that this first sitting would be troubled by protests from members. However, Dr. Waldkirch's speech was tempered and harmless. Mr. William Vontobel from Zurich (Independent) and Mr. Ferruccio Bolla from Ticino were respectively appointed Presidents of the National Council and the States Council.

New Evangelical Group in Parliament

When a party has more than five elected at the National Council, it has the right to form a "group" entitled to hold seats at the various parliamentary commissions. The Evangelical Party with only three delegates, have thus formed a group with the Liberal Democrats, who have six members at the National Council. It will be called the "Liberal and Evangelical Group". The "and" stresses its confessional character. The object of the new alliance is to give both these minority parties a chance to be represented at the commissions.

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Candidate to the Federal Council

Mr. Kurt Furgler, 47-year-old Christian Democrat National Councillor from St. Gall, has been designated as the official candidate of his party to take succession of the retiring federal councillor Ludwig Von Moos. Mr. Furgler is known for his chairmanship of the Commission that enquired into the Mirage scandal and his stand in the field of arms exports. Mr. Roger Bonvin, who is also a Christian Democrat, was re-elected to the Federal Council by acclamation.

MODERN LIFE

Zurich may allow concubinage

Zurich is one of the few Swiss cantons which outlaws concubinage. In other words, a girl and a boy are not legally allowed to cohabit before they have passed before the Mayor. This does not mean that they don't, because permissiveness has invaded Zurich for a long time, but they were always exposed to a risk of denunciation by over-virtuous or cantankerous neighbours and submitted to surprise police visits as a result. Thus many unmarried couples had to leave Zurich to live in neighbouring Aargau, to the extent that the phenomenal growth of Spreitenbach was attributed to the outdated practise of Protestant Zurich.

The City Council, which is eager to raise more fiscal revenue by increasing the town's now diminishing population, would support the abolishment of anti-concubinage legislation. Its 1972 budget will be 237 million francs in deficit. But the legally married couples might complain because the fact that man and wife are not taxed separately constituted a serious fiscal discrimination against them. It has in fact prompted innumerable people *not* to marry. The City Council will therefore have a delicate choice.

TRANSPORTS

The N12 wins over the N1

The Hurlimann Commission responsible for drawing the map of Switzerland's future motorways has granted priority to the N12, which will link Lausanne to Berne via Vevey and Fribourg, over the N1, which will go through Yverdon and Morat. There had been considerable controversy over which of the two highways should be built first. Fribourg wanted the N12, and Vaud the N1. Work on the N1 will be postponed to 1979.

Conflicting opinions of speed limits

Since the Federal Council has made known its intentions of introducing a general speed limit of 100 km/h (62 mph) on all Swiss roads except

motorways, the Swiss Touring Club has been flooded by letters of complaints, which show that three out of four motorists are opposed to a general speed limit. The great majority acknowledged the necessity of differentiated limits adapted to differing circumstances, and 15 per cent do not want any changes at all. On the other hand, the intercantonal commission on road traffic has backed the governmental decision. The Office for the Prevention of Accidents has noted that speed limits have reduced the number of accidents in Europe in 80 per cent of cases—which in its view warranted their enforcement in Switzerland.

BEHAVIOUR

IOS Chiefs arrested in Geneva

The President of the whole IOS Group, Mr. Robert Vesco, and the President of the mother company, IOS Ltd., Mr. Milton Meissner, have been arrested and jailed in Geneva. The two directors of this troubled investment trust have been transferred directly to the St. Antoine prison from the office of the enquiring magistrate following a complaint lodged in July by an IOS customer, Mr. David Tucker, over the misappropriation of his holdings.

Mr. Vesco, who succeeded Bernard Cornfeld as head of IOS, had arrived from New York in reply to summonses from the Geneva judicature. A "defence committee" composed of 68 IOS employees and shareholders has furthermore lodged a complaint for fraud to the Geneva penal court. Their complaint is aimed at the whole former team of directors, which included James Roosevelt, Erich Mende (former West German Minister) and Eric Wyndham White (former director of GATT).

MUSIC

Ballet for Children

Falling within a plan to "democratise" culture, Geneva's Grand Theatre will include two ballets for children in its coming season. The two works will be "Le Carnaval des Animaux" by Camille Saint-Saëns, and "Peter and the Wolf" by Serge Prokofiev. The most original feature of the show will be the projection of pictures painted by school-children upon the back of the stage. The pictures were chosen in a contest organised in the Canton's schools.

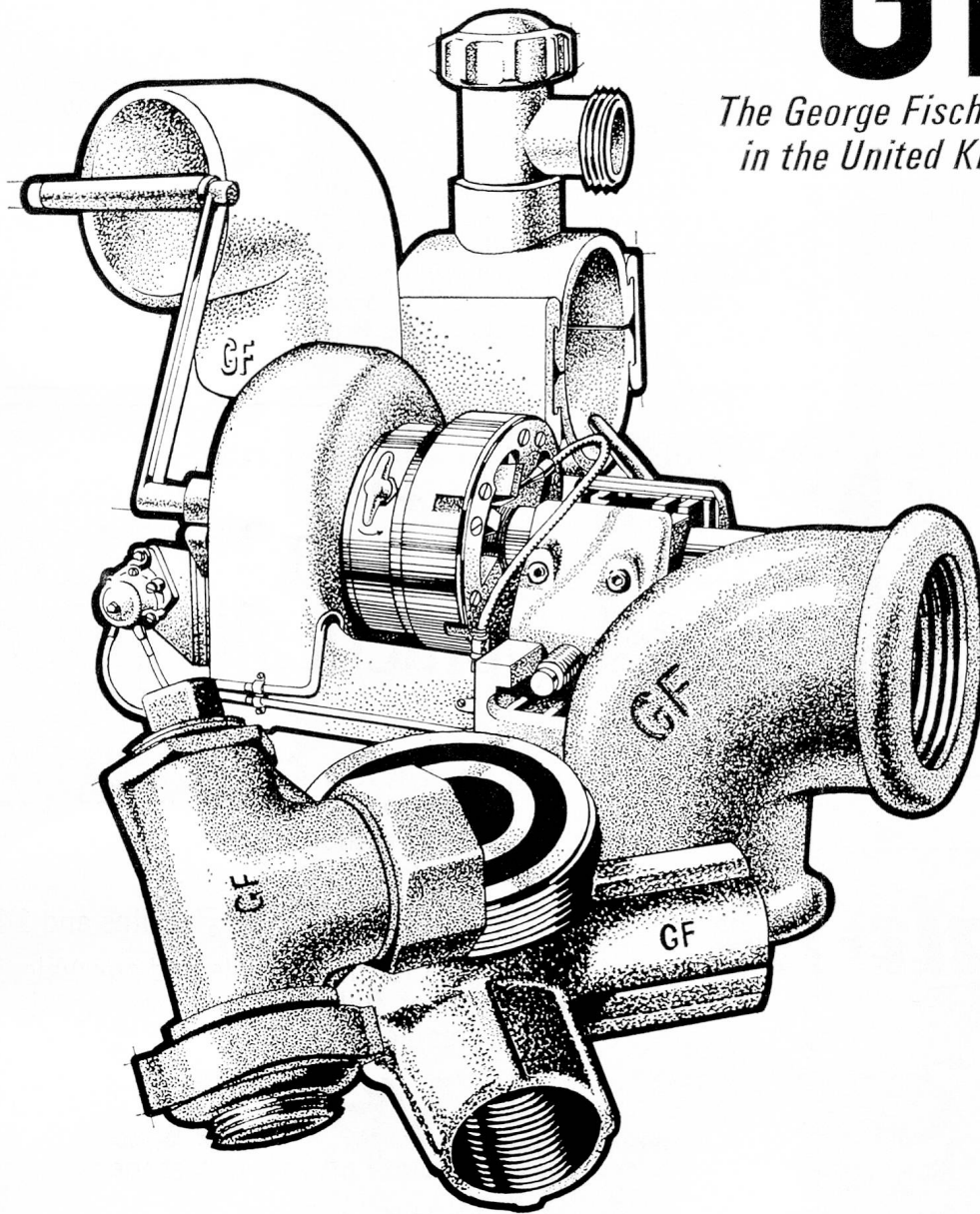
CANTONAL

Censorship decision

Voters in the canton of Lucerne have voted in favour of abolishing censorship of films for adults. In a poll of 32 per cent, there were 27,869 for and 24,804 against.

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Hungarian wave of naturalisations

In the last 12 months, 154 Hungarians have been granted the freedom of the city of Zurich and hence Swiss nationality. Speaking at a meeting organised in honour of the new Swiss, the president of the City of Zurich, Dr. Sigmund Widmer, said: "We are in the midst of a Hungarian wave of naturalisations".

Cautionary tale

A 12-year-old boy, Roberto Steigmeier, killed himself during an "experiment" with a rope. He wanted to see whether he could get out of a hanging position. To test this, he attached a rope to the garage door, made

a running knot which he put round his neck, and jumped from a height of a few centimetres. He was immediately strangled.

CLOSING NEWS

Mr. Nelio Celio, new President of the Confederation

The Federal Council was re-elected by the Federal Assembly. With the exception of Mr. Kurt Furgler, the Christian Democrat National Councillor who succeeds Mr. Ludwig Von Moos, the "Swiss Cabinet" and the attributions of its seven heads of Department remain unaltered. The six non-retiring Federal Councillors were re-elected in accordance with normal parliamentary practice. Mr. Hans Peter

Tschudi, 1971 President of the Confederation and head of the Military Department, was re-elected with the highest suffrage (220 votes out of 235) and Mr. Pierre Graber, recently-elected Federal Councillor, got the lowest level of support, with 125 votes and 40 abstentions. The coalition of the four principal "governmental" parties, which have been represented at the Federal Council for the past 12 years, naturally remains in power.

The Assembly has appointed Mr. Nelio Celio, Finance Minister, as President of the Confederation for 1972. The title is, of course, largely honorary. He was interviewed shortly after his election on Swiss Television and promised that there would be no more revaluation of the Swiss franc in the foreseeable future.

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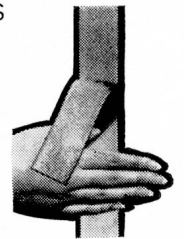
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