

More nuclear power stations?

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Morgestraich and the Protestants, roaming the streets in bands, used to beat their drums outside the Catholic churches to disrupt the services inside. These naughty traditions have given way to one of the most authentic manifestations of collective enjoyment in Europe.

The Carnival is of course not an improvised affair but prepared months

in advance. A writer said that it was impossible for the outsider to understand the event by being present only for the first time. The Carnival, he wrote, is above all an expression of the Basler sense of humour. But to understand this sense of humour and the particular flavour of the Baslers and their Carnival songs, one should speak their dialect.

planned in their first year of operation. Beznau 1 and Muehleberg have been built with Swiss technology. The two main sub-contractors were Brown-Bovery and Sulzer's who have thus gained the technological experience to compete abroad successfully in the field of nuclear energy.

The building of these power stations gave rise to a controversy over the necessary cooling of their installations by pumping water from the Aar. This raised the temperature of the river by one degree (or thereabouts). It was feared the river's ecology would be upset and as a result, the Federal Council decided to ban this cooling-method. The decision delayed the nuclear-energy programme of the electricity companies. The programme was further upset by strong opposition to the construction of a large air-cooled power-station at Kaiseraugst, near Basle. Conservationists claimed that the two 300 ft. high cooling-towers required would upset the area's weather. The Commune of Kaiseraugst refused to authorize the project. Building a nuclear power station in Switzerland requires a great many federal, cantonal and commune authorisations relating to the field of water protection, environment, energy and labour security. These obstacles have so far prevented a comprehensive programme from coming into operation.

The six Swiss regional electricity boards and the urban power companies of Zurich, Basle and Berne have warned in a recent report that unless work on a fourth nuclear power-station were started this

MORE NUCLEAR POWER-STATIONS?

Mr. Roger Bongin, Head of the Federal Department of Transport and Communications, recently called a Press Conference in Berne to tell the public that nuclear power stations were safe and that Switzerland should prepare to build them at a faster pace. Mr. Bonvin was surrounded by a team of federal experts, each of whom made an exposé tending to show that the dangers of nuclear power stations had been considerably exaggerated. Professor G. Wagner, Chairman of the federal commission on the protection of waterways from radiation, said that the present level of artificial radioactivity in Switzerland was less than 1/150th of natural radioactivity. Another specialist said that the dangers of nuclear radiation could be averted by adequate legislation. Such a legislation was already in force in Swiss nuclear power stations, he stressed.

Mr. Bonvin's conference was intended as a reassurance to those circles

violently opposed to the extension of Switzerland's nuclear power infrastructure. It was also meant to reassure the electricity industry, which has warned that the country would suffer from a severe power shortage within three years.

The question of nuclear-reactor safety still remains a scientific enigma opposing various schools of thought. First warnings have come from America, where several scientists point out that no serious studies have ever been made on assessing these dangers and securing against them. As a result, Swiss conservationists have campaigned against the erection of further nuclear power stations.

Switzerland has two of them at present: One at Muehleberg and another at Beznau. A third is in construction at Beznau. These power stations each generate a power of about 0.6 million kilowatts. They are believed to have suffered from teething troubles and produced considerably less energy than

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year, the country would face an acute shortage before the end of the seventies. Already by 1975, it claimed, consumption will outstrip production by several billion kilowatt-hours.

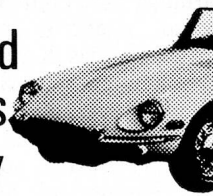
On the basis of 4.5 per cent a year increase in consumption, the Report forecasts a rise from about 29 billion kwh in 1971 to over 46 billion kwh by 1980. Production should rise to about 43 billion kwh but could remain as low as 38 billion if hydrological conditions are unfavourable. The overwhelming part of Switzerland's electricity comes from hydraulic power, which itself only accounts for about 15 per cent of all the energy demand (including domestic heating). The Swiss thus depend far more on petrol and diesel oil than on their massive dams, many of which are marvels of civil engineering. The hydraulic energy of the Alps is pretty well exploited and there is no scope for keeping up with

demand by erecting more of them. The Report recognises, however, that storage-dams kept level for daytime consumption by means of pumps have a future. These pumps would have to be driven by nuclear power.

Faced with the technological disappointment and potential dangers of nuclear power-stations, Swiss energy planners could be tempted to resort to well-proven oil-fired electricity plants. This solution is not considered because of a need to find sources of non-polluting energy. Another reason is that Switzerland should not remain entirely dependant on energy imports. In view of the present political context, it can be expected that the price of petroleum products will continue to rise in the future. Natural gas, another clean fuel, is also a solution actively envisaged and Switzerland will soon be linked (if not already so) to the gas fields of the North Sea.

43rd GENEVA MOTORSHOW

Continued emphasis on safety



Geneva opened its 43rd Annual Motorshow in the middle of March. Owing to the period of the year and the importance of the Swiss market (265,000 imported cars last year), the *Salon de l'Automobile* is a recognised highlight of the Motorcar Year, as testified by the presence of 78 makers from 14 countries.

This year's edition of the Salon saw a great many novelties, but few which had not been announced or presented at earlier motorshows.

Following a universal trend, the accent was laid on security. New models or improved versions were equipped with padded doors to protect against lateral shocks; shock-absorbing bumpers and steering wheels; non-splintering wind-screens; less polluting engines with generally increased power. Grand Tourism versions of standard models continue to be highly successful. Radial-ply tyres maintain or strengthen their position, and so do rotary Wankel engines, which equip the Mazda range of small cars. These engines seem however to enjoy more success in Japan than they do in Europe, where they are only used by NSU, the firm which developed them.

Another outstanding feature of the Geneva Motorshow is the stiff competition for "Mini" cars. Austin and Morris, whose famed 850cc Mini first appeared in Geneva twelve years ago, have now to contend with the Renault 5, the Peugeot 104 and the Honda "Civic", not counting the Fiat 126 and 127. British cars are thus faced with tough competition but the recent fall of the exchange rate of Sterling should give them a valuable boost. The Mini 850 is presently sold for 6,350 francs. On top of the British Leyland Range: The

Daimler Double-Six, which made its first Geneva appearance at about 48,700 francs.

Britain's main new presentation is the Austin 2200, a new Maxi with a transversal 112 bhp engine. The other British firms bring minor modifications to their models. Morris introduces a new station-wagon version of the Marina; Triumph has fitted the Spitfire's four-wheel independent suspension on its GT6; Rover has perfected its highly successful "Range-Rover"; Ford have improved the comfort of its Cortina range and introduced an "Escort S", while Daimler's and Jaguar's V12 range of saloons are presented for the first time in Switzerland. Sunbeam offers a fairly large number of improvements in respect of power, and presents Estate and Coupé versions of its standard "Avenger" series.

One should not forget Switzerland's car "industry". A new firm recently saw the day near Grandson (Vd). Called "Sbarro", it specialises in custom-made cars for fast drivers. It produces a sports model with three independent front seats equipped with a Chevrolet 7.6 litre, 550 (SAE) hp engine. The firm also mounts Ferrari V-12 engines developing 350 (DIN) hp.

The other Swiss car-maker, *Monteverdi*, was also represented. Its cars reach the absolute summit of comfort, performance and security. Its latest models have an automatic transmission harnessing the fury of a 450 (DIN) hp Chrysler V-8 powerplant propelling the Coupés at a smooth 300 kmh. The Monteverdi is believed to be the most expensive non "taylor-made" car in the world. Before the recent money crisis, it was selling in Britain for £15,000.

REFERENDUM UN EDUCATION

The people were invited to the polls on 4th March to approve by Referendum a renewed draft of the Article in the Federal Constitution relating to Education. The new formulation, which was accepted by a vast majority of the electorate, does little more than ratify principles which have been in application for a long time. Thus the first paragraph of Article 27 states that the "right of acquiring a formation is guaranteed". The same article says that "public schools are to be attended by the children of every religious denomination who are not be subjected to any interference with their beliefs".

There had been some argument in Parliament on the meaning of "Formation". The German wording speaks of "*Ausbildung*", which has a more extensive meaning that the French "*formation*" — this usually refers only to the practical and professional aspects of education. Nevertheless, the first "social right" has been inscribed in the Constitution. Over the past two years, the people had refused similar "social rights" regarding housing and work.

The first two paragraphs of Article 27 also define the various responsibilities of the cantons and the Confederation regarding education. Briefly, the Constitution now states clearly that cantons should strive towards coordinating their individual primary and secondary school systems; that the Confederation sets the guidelines of secondary and higher education; that it fixed the duration of obligatory schooling in the event of the cantons not achieving coordination; that it binds possible subsidies to the progress of inter-cantonal coordination in schooling. Finally it is to be in charge of new higher educational establishments.

This part of the Article met with considerable opposition in the French-speaking Cantons which have already achieved a certain degree of coordination by creating *l'Ecole Romande*. They were apprehensive of an eventual German-speaking domination. Education is a hot political issue in Switzerland as it is the main sphere in which the ideal of federalism is preserved in practice.

The same re-drafted Article gives a constitutional basis to the financial help which the Federal State is already allocating to Research. The Confederation not only has the right, but the duty of encouraging research and, if need be, creating new establishments to this end. This naturally enough carried the overwhelming support of the people and the cantons;