

News from Switzerland

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **33 (1970)**

Heft [6]

PDF erstellt am: **28.05.2024**

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News from Switzerland

LATER CLOSING HOURS

The City of Zurich has at long last decided on an extension of the "Polizeistunde". As a result of a poll in which the female population participated (93,000 yes against 77,000 no) restaurants will now be closed at 2 a.m. instead of at midnight as previous.

THE SWISS POST OFFICE AND AID TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Switzerland's telecommunications services are taking an active part in aid to the developing countries. During the last ten years, 66 consultants have been sent out in charge of 76 missions in 13 African and South American countries. They acted as consultants for administrative, executive and planning jobs (expansion of the TV network in Bolivia, establishment of an interurban telephone service in Togo . . .).

From 1961 to 1969, 170 students from 33 countries received instruction in various Swiss telecommunications departments; 44 of them were trained, in courses lasting nine months, for the radiotelegraphy and radiotelephony services and as switchboard operators. In this way the Swiss Post Office is making a big contribution to the development of young countries. (osec)

STRUCTURE OF EMPLOYMENT IN SWISS INDUSTRY

In September 1969, the 12,208 Swiss industrial firms registered with the Federal Statistics Bureau totalled 882,414 employees. Compared with the same month of the previous year, the number of firms had fallen off by 461, while that of employees had risen by 5447. The total number comprised 567,592 Swiss and 314,822 foreigners (i.e. a good third). Compared with 1968, in the industrial sector there were some 5000 fewer Swiss and 10,600 more foreigners.

The machinery industry recorded the largest number of employees (265,000), followed by the "Metallurgy and Metal-Workers" group (121,000) and watchmaking (73,000). These three branches thus provided employment for over half the total number of industrial employees. There was also a very large labour force in the clothing industry (66,000), in textiles (63,300) and in chemical factories (61,500). Except for chemicals and watchmaking, these groups make the largest call on foreign workers. Women, numbering some 257,000, accounted for 27% of the whole of the personnel employed in industrial firms. (osec)

TICINO — SITE OF A NEW FILM

The film is called "Butterflies Don't Weep" and is based on the best-selling novel by Willi Heinrich. The film was shot this spring partly in Lugano, partly in Morcote and Gandria. Gaby Fuchs, Lyvia Bauer and Siegfried Wischnewski play the main parts. Klaus Ueberall is the director.

The movie, a production by Peter Schamoni, freely tells the story of a clandestine affair between a successful businessman and a girl high school graduate. It illustrates the carefree ways of the young generation. (snto)

ART IN THE JURA REGION

From July 4 until September 20, 1970, works of the French painter Alfred Manessier will be exhibited at the Abbey of Bellelay. The church, which was restored in 1960 with the aid of the Swiss Federal Government and the Canton of Berne, offers a particularly suitable background for events of this kind.

The artist is known in Switzerland because of the stained glass windows he made for the church of Notre-Dame de la Prevote in Moutier. The contacts made in this town in the Jura region thus enable it to show a cross-section of the work of Manessier who has previously aroused vivid interest in Metz, Trier, Luxemburg and Bremen. The exhibition is organised by the Tourist Office of Freiberge and Pro Jura and the Galerie de France is looking after the paintings on exhibit. (snto)

FIRST PUBLIC ISSUE IN WATCHMAKING INDUSTRY

The biggest Swiss chronograph and sports timer factory, Heuer Leonidas Co. Ltd., at Bienne, has just floated a public issue on the Swiss capital market. During the last five years, this fast-expanding firm has recorded an average annual increase in turnover of 25%. This rate is expected to continue in the years to come. The new funds destined to develop research and production will also enable the firm to set up new sales companies abroad as well as constitute a suitable reserve of land for future expansion. (osec)

IMPORTS OF COFFEE INTO SWITZERLAND

In 1969, imports of coffee into Switzerland increased by some 20% compared with 1968, rising from 43,120 to 52,390 tons. Switzerland absorbed 1.6% of the total world exports. The main countries exporting to Switzerland are as follows: Central America 27%, Brazil 24%, West Africa 14%, Indonesia 12% and East Africa 12%. The total coffee imports (green, roasted, with the caffeine removed, as well as coffee extracts) worked out at about 210 million francs, while the official exports of coffee (green, processed) were valued at about 90 million francs. (osec)

FROM THE HAT TO THE SWORD

"If Mount Pilatus wears a hat — the weather will remain nice". This is a free translation of a local jingle which is based on centuries of observation of meteorological conditions, and it is quite justified. How did Mount Pilatus get its "nice weather hat?"

Due to strong sunrays caressing the southern slopes of Mount Pilatus, warm air currents move upward along pastures, forests and rocky slopes. Glider pilots also avail themselves of these rising winds and are carried by them above the mountain tops. At the same time the northern slope of Mount Pilatus remains in the shadow and the air there is brisk and cool. In the summit area the warm air and the cool air meet and form a water condensation which stays up in the air in tiny drops and thus provides Mount Pilatus with its famous "nice weather hat".

"If Mount Pilatus has a sword — there will be rain". This is a free translation of another local jingle. If there is a cloud formation at Mount Pilatus which reminds the viewer of a sword it is due to strong humidity. Westerly winds blow in such a way that the mountain clouds take the shape of a long stripe, a sword. If a sword-shaped cloud appears rain may be expected. On the other hand, reddish clouds which are particularly lovely on summer evenings on Mount Rigi's rocky slopes forecast steady and beautiful weather. If a northerly wind blows from the mountains toward the lake through the region of Lake Lucerne, also called the Lake of the Four Cantons, and if the hotels' flags turn toward the lake, one can also count on fair weather.

In this region there are even acoustical aids that predict weather. "Weather prophets" who are familiar with the region's peculiarities can forecast the weather from the ringing of church bells, from the stronger sound of the Stans-Engelberg cogwheel railroad's whistle or from the way the Gotthard Railroad roars along the ramp of the Axenstrasse. (snto)

125th ANNIVERSARY: SWISS CHOCOLATE FACTORY

In order to commemorate its 125th anniversary, the Swiss chocolate factory Lindt & Sprüngli Co. Ltd. published a booklet devoted to the history of the firm. A number of engravings and historic quotations take the reader back to the early days of the Swiss chocolate industry. An interesting account is given of the path trod since those heroic times when chocolate was a luxury product made entirely by hand down to the present day when it is a product of mass-consumption manufactured on fully automatic machines. We see the growth of the firm down through the years, the evolution of wrapping and advertising. We see, too, how five generations of Sprüngli's have made this small family concern a big firm known all over the world today, exporting to all continents and with a turnover topping the S.Fr. 200 million mark. (osec)

CONSTRUCTION OF PARKING FACILITIES UNDERNEATH THE RIVER RHONE

In Geneva there is an average of one motor vehicle per 2.68 inhabitants. This is already quite high as averages go. To better envisage the city's traffic problems one has to take into account the thousands of French cars which run around Geneva every day. The country's frontier is just 5 kilometres (about 3½ miles) from the city's centre. The steady growth in the number of vehicles in the street traffic — 7500 more than at the beginning of the year — daily increases parking and stopping problems.

After protracted research a group of merchants on the Rue du Marche — the city's main traffic artery — has decided to finance the construction of a parking garage for 1450 cars. What makes it unusual is that it will be located underneath the River Rhone, totally invisible from the outside.

Work has already been started on this unique construction and the "under-water parking lot" should be put into operation in about three and a half years. Located in the left branch of the river, between the Mont Blanc Bridge and the Des Bergues Bridge, this big four-floor building will cost its originators about 28 million Swiss francs (about 6½ million dollars). (snto)

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SWISS "DO-IT-YOURSELF" BREATHALISER

A Swiss firm recently marketed a breathaliser for measuring the alcohol content in the blood. This simple, rapid and inexpensive device is particularly welcome today now that most countries have introduced legislation concerning the alcohol content in the blood of motorists. The device consists of a small glass tube containing a chemical reagent, a protective tube for long preservation and a plastic bag holding 265 cc of air when inflated. The breath blown into the bag is passed through the tube of reagent simply by pressing on the bag. The operation lasts only three to four minutes.

Two types of tube may be fitted to this device: the first, with sufficient accuracy up to .1%, automatically turns black three minutes after the breath has been squeezed through the reagent; the other is used for alcohol contents between .1 and .2% but it needs to be heated (by match or lighter) once the breath has gone through the reagent.

The same firm has made an instrument for carrying out in three to four minutes the whole cycle of operations required for analysing the alcohol content in the blood thus excluding any error due to faulty handling. This instrument is designed to take a given volume of breath which is passed through an ampoule of bichromate of potassium, which loses its colour in the presence of alcohol. This decoloration proportional to the alcohol contained in the blood is measured very accurately by means of an ultra-sensitive photometer and the result transferred on to a reading instrument. (osec)

RAILWAY COMPANY OPENS UP NEW POSSIBILITIES

The construction of one of the last big Swiss dams calls for the transport of tremendous quantities of cement by train, up a slope of as much as 200%. Safety regulations prohibiting the traction of waggons on a rack-rail here, these have to be pushed and not pulled, which would normally involve the employment of extra personnel, always difficult to recruit. In agreement with the builders, the company's specialists found an original solution: they studied the possibility of placing powerful headlamps and a TV camera on the front of the first waggon. The images are transmitted on to a screen situated in the driver's cabin located at the back of the convoy.

But the conditions of use raised many difficulties. On coming out of the tunnel the contrast in luminosity is very great; consequently the camera has been given a wide-angle lens and an electronically-controlled diaphragm giving a better image than the human eye. By means of this system, the driver can clearly see all signals as well as any obstacles on the line. This ingenious solution has made it possible to solve the problem of driving trains by remote-control from the rear. (osec)

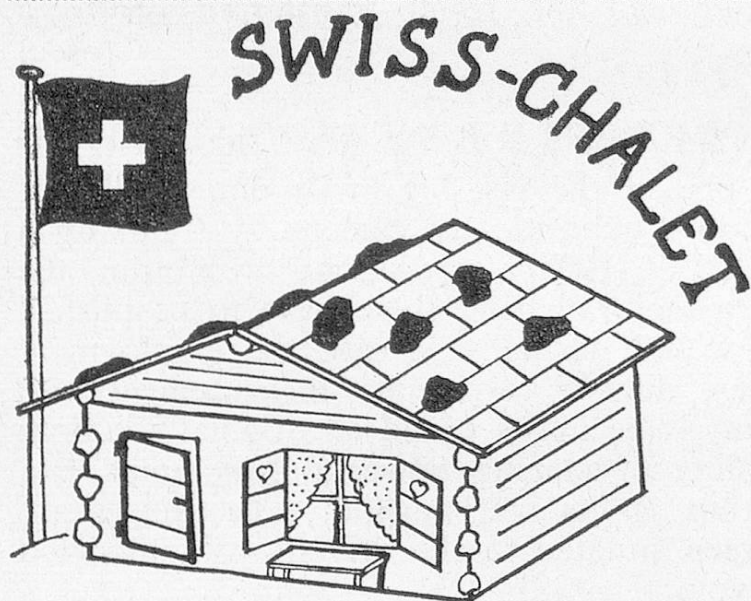
SWISS LAUNCHES PLASTIC HEADLIGHT

In Brussels a Swiss inventor displayed the first plastic headlight in the world capable of satisfying the high standards laid down for European asymmetric headlights. Thanks to the sectors of its rear section and the carefully calculated angle of the ridges, this headlamp gives a better distribution of the light over the road with an angle double that of the traditional models. This headlamp, whose rays are cut off at a height of just under four feet above the ground, is non-dazzle and extremely effective in fog. In addition it has the advantage of standing up to big differences in temperature without any damage. Its cost price is 25% lower than that of an ordinary headlamp. (osec)

INSURANCE IN SWITZERLAND

The Swiss devote over half their expenditure on insurance (57%) to life assurance and the protection of dependents. On an average every Swiss set aside a sum of 1019 francs to it in 1968, which represents a total of 6.2 billion francs. If health insurance (15%) and accident insurance (13%) are added, it can be seen that about five-sixths of the expenditure devoted to insurance in Switzerland concerned the insurance of people.

For 1968 this amounted to a total of 9.2 billion francs, i.e. over 16 francs per head of the population. By way of comparison, it should be pointed out that Switzerland's total military expenditure, including civil defence, is barely a fifth of this amount. (osec)



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