

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 17 (1952)
Heft: [11]

Rubrik: News from Switzerland

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

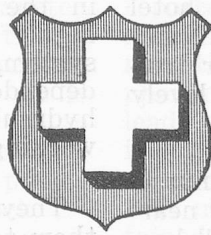
The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 06.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

HELVETIA

MONTHLY
PUBLICATION
OF THE



SWISS BENEVOLENT
SOCIETY IN
NEW ZEALAND (INC.)

GROUP NEW ZEALAND OF THE NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY

17th YEAR.

NOVEMBER, 1952.

AUCKLAND.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Colour Television: Success of a Swiss Invention in the U.S.A.

In New York, the demonstration of the Swiss invention called "Eidophor," which projects television programmes in colour on a regular sized movie screen, was tremendously successful. Experts present at the demonstration were enthusiastic about the new invention and it seems that "Eidophor" has a great future. The pioneer work put into this new development by its inventor, the late Prof. Fischer, of the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, has been vindicated by complete success.

Factors Influencing the Trend of Prices in Switzerland.

The issue of a new regulation of price controls will be voted on by the Swiss people in November. Business interests generally point out that the rise in prices in Switzerland since 1949 has been less than in all other European countries, although price ceilings have been abolished almost completely. On the other hand the highest rise in prices seems to have occurred in countries where price controls are still in existence. The Swiss experience suggests that free competition and a satisfactory supply of goods may be a more efficient means of stabilising the price level than a regime of governmental prescriptions and prohibitions will ever afford.

Swiss Pharmaceutical Products in the U.S.A.

An important Swiss chemical producer, Geigy Inc., in Basel, has been authorised by the American authorities to sell its new pharmaceutical product, "Irgapyrin," in the United States. This drug is especially useful in treating rheumatic pains, and has already proved its value in a series of successful experiments conducted by American experts. In order to make use of the advantages which the American market offers to this and other products, the Swiss concern will create new production centres and enlarge its business activities in the United States.

JUST DIAL 11 IF YOU NEED ANYTHING.

Nation-wide Service Gives News, Recipes, and Movie Programmes.

Housewives in most parts of the world, when at wit's end for a dinner menu, consult the cook-book. But Swiss wives simply dial Number 11, and from any one of the country's 900,000 telephone numbers in Switzerland it can be reached simply by dialling.

The talking menu will give the housewife a list of suggestions of what is available at good prices, where to buy them, and even how to cook them.

And this is just one of the services performed by Number 11. Operating with the precision of a fine Swiss watch, and indeed controlled by Swiss-made timing devices developed in the horological industry, Number 11 has become a precise but kindly universal aunt, helping out of sickroom, kitchen, factory or on the highway. Not even the United States can offer the public such telephone luxury.

Here's what Number 11, and a couple of other special numbers, can do for the subscriber.

At any time of day or night, the subscriber can listen to a recorded newscast. Broadcasts are updated every four hours, and are presented in French, German or Italian.

On the night of a big sports event, Number 11 can give you the result. And during an election, Number 11 is always ready with the latest figures.

If you want to go to a movie, Number 11 tells you what's playing; when the box office opens, what are the times of showing at your neighbourhood theatre. Or if museums are your choice, Number 11 knows when they open and close.

If you need governmental advice, Number 11 can tell you when government bureaux are open as well as the names of government officials concerned with your problem.

Are you an athlete? Ask Number 11 for ice-skating and skiing conditions anywhere in Switzerland. Are you a motorist? Eleven knows the prevalent weather conditions, including incidence of ice and snow, on all major Swiss roads.

Having arrived at your destination, Number 11 is again ready with a list of available hotel rooms. And suppose your car breaks down, Number 11 can furnish you with timetables for trolleys, buses, trains, boats on Switzerland's lovely lakes, and planes to all parts of the world.

But that's just the beginning.

Sick? Number 11 finds you a doctor, a nurse, an ambulance, tells you the address of your nearest pharmacist, knows visiting hours for all hospitals. Feeling worse? Number 11 knows where the nearest undertaker is located, can even give you visiting hours in cemeteries.

If you are inclined to oversleep, Eleven will guarantee to wake you every morning at a given hour. The phone rings indefinitely until you answer it. It will even, on request, ring a second time ten minutes later to make sure you haven't gone back to sleep.

Post Office runs Bus System over High Mountain Passes

For a country with only 4,500,000 inhabitants (about the same number as the State of North Carolina), Switzerland gives its Postal Administration (PTT) an incredible amount of business.

Each year, the PTT's postmen deliver something like 70,000,000 parcels to the homes and offices of Swiss citizens, which makes an average of more than one parcel a month to every man, woman and child in the confederation. As for newspapers and periodicals, some 580,000,000 are delivered annually.

Last year's turnover of postal checks totalled 110,000,000,000 Swiss francs—the equivalent of more than 26,000,000,000 dollars.

All this, like the street-corner telephone booths where you can get immediate automatic connections to any town in Switzerland, is just a fraction of the Federal Post Office's far-flung and prosperous activities.

Post Office Runs Buses.

Probably the one that strikes the visitor's imagination the most is the operation of 4,800 miles of Postal Motor-Coach routes. The familiar yellow buses are equipped to take the sight-seeing tourist comfortably—and safely—over practically all the great scenic roads that twist up and around the Alps. Tickets are sold at the corner post office just like stamps.

The Swiss postal authorities control all scheduled passenger road transportation in the country, and are entitled by law to operate over a total distance equal to the combined lengths of the Federal and private railroad lines. Out of the 200-year-old system of mountain roads through the country, a model modern motor-coach network has been developed.

The watchword of the Alpine Postal Motor-Coach service is Safety—with a capital S. Most of its buses are specially built for travel on high mountain roads. Equipped with six-cylinder, 100 h.p. motors, they have a type of front axle which

enables them to take the narrow hairpin loops in the Alps in a single turn. Another, and highly important feature is the unique brake system, which consists of three power and independent brakes—a Saurer engine brake, a hydraulic oil-pressure brake, and a hand brake working automatically.

Keep Moderate Speed.

They have a reserve of power which permits them to climb the steepest and longest upgrades fully loaded without ever straining the motor. Although capable of great speed, they are always held down to a moderate speed which insures complete control and gives the passengers ample opportunity to enjoy the scenery.

The requirements for a driver of the Alpine motor-coach are so severe that only the fittest men can meet them. Applicants must have a good education and be able to speak at least two national languages. They are obliged to possess both a license to drive heavy motor vehicles for passenger transport and the cantonal certificate for proficiency as an engine-fitter or mechanic. If accepted, they must pass through a year's probation before becoming regular chauffeurs.

Naturally, they are submitted to a thorough physical examination, special attention being paid to normal precision of sight and hearing. They must undergo further examinations every four years to the age of 45, and every two years thereafter. Examination may be made at any time if a driver has been seriously ill or his efficiency seems to be falling off.

Besides having the necessary physical and technical qualifications, a driver must be cheerful and have good manners. He is forbidden to take a drink while on duty, and to exceed the prescribed speed limit. The postal authorities expect their drivers to set a good example for the other motorists on the mountain roads.

Never Had Bad Accident.

This exacting policy has paid off. The yellow postal coaches, which now carry some 25,000,000 passengers a year, have never had a serious accident since the service started more than a quarter-century ago.

Where do these buses run? First of all, in areas where there is no railroad, and the postal coach provides the only contact with the outside world for distant villages in the mountains and valleys. Then in the lowlands, where the bus routes serve districts between two railroad lines. But, most important for the tourist and holiday traffic are the many beautiful routes over the Alpine passes, the greater part of which are only run during the summer season—such impressive and scenic mountain pass roads as the Suten, Furka, Grimsel, Gotthard, Simplon and Klausen.

From the leading resorts, such as St. Moritz, Davos, Lugano and Interlaken, the postal bus services run daily excursions and also make

special trips for groups on any desired itinerary.

Particularly popular is the trip over the Susten Pass road. Completed just after the war, this is the first great Alpine road to be built in Switzerland since the advent of the automobile. It is 20 feet wide, and laid out in such a way as to avoid regions where there is danger from falling stones, landslides or avalanches. It passes through 19 tunnels hewn out of solid rock.

Reduced Rates Available.

Single trips on the postal motor-coaches, as on the Swiss mountain railroads, are fairly expensive—but this is justified by the cost of maintenance and also by the fact that many itineraries are only seasonal. On ordinary routes, the price is 20 centimes a kilometer, which works out to about 8 cents a mile. On the Alpine roads, the basic rate is 30 centimes a kilometer, or 12 cents a mile.

These prices are scaled down as the distance of the ride increases. Moreover, there are combined rail-bus tickets, return tickets, excursion and Sunday tickets, half-fares for children and numerous other advantages.

For anyone travelling extensively in Switzerland, there is an enormous saving in the purchase of the special tickets that entitle the holder to greatly reduced rates over a prescribed period not only on the postal buses, but also on the trains of the Swiss Federal Railways and most private railroad lines, and the lake boats of a number of private steamship lines. The most popular are:

The Holiday Ticket: This is valid for one month, and renewable for three ten-day periods on payment of a small additional sum each time. It costs 16 francs for third class, or 21 francs for second (few people travel first class in Switzerland). The holder gets a greatly reduced rate on all trips, as well as reduced prices on five cheap excursion tickets.

The Holiday General Season Ticket: This is valid for either 15 or 30 days. In the first case the holder is entitled to unlimited free travel on six days, and a 50 per cent. reduction on the remaining nine days. In the second case, the number of free and reduced-price days is double. The price of the 15-day tickets is 80 francs in third class, 105 francs in second. That of the 30-day ticket is 130 francs in third class, and 170 in second.

THE SWISS ECONOMY FACES THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE

Fox more than six months the cost of living index in Switzerland has undergone only very slight variations. This is proof that the country at present is passing through a period of stabilisation and that the danger of inflation has been averted at least for the time being.

If observers of the Swiss economic scene have reported a tendency for prices to fall in certain sections of production and consumption, they are none the less unanimous in emphasising that this phenomenon is not the harbinger of a depression leading to a general crisis, but that it should be interpreted rather as a return to a more normal and healthy form of commercial activity.

It must be born in mind that the figures attained by industrial production in 1951 and 1952 are exceptional and cannot be maintained. That is why the results of Swiss foreign trade during the first six months of this year remain favourable even though they fall short of previous results.

Imports total fcs. 2731.2 million, i.e., 408 million less than during the first six months of the preceding year. Exports are up by 6 million and reach a figure of Fcs. 2250.9 million. In quantity, however, but not in value, they have fallen by 9 per cent. The debit balance stands at Fcs. 480.3 million (894.8 million in the first half of 1951). Germany has become Switzerland's chief supplier, followed by the U.S.A., France and Italy; the principal customer of the country remains as before, the U.S.A. (298 million), followed by Germany, Italy, and France.

Broadly speaking, therefore, the export industry still has grounds for satisfaction. Its order books remain amply filled, particularly in the case of the engineering industry. The building industry continues to enjoy real prosperity. As to the labour market, it continues in a state of full employment, even of over-employment. Switzerland is consequently experiencing an acute shortage of labour, and in order to satisfy the demand, has to employ a total of more than 132,000 foreign work people of both sexes—nearly 40,000 more than last year.

There are, however, two black spots. The first is the situation in the textile industry, which is experiencing a certain trade recession. Several undertakings have been obliged to go on to short time and reduce the number of workers as well as to stockpile part of their output in the absence of a demand. There is justification for the belief, however, that the Swiss textile industry will soon have weathered the present storm, for certain foreign markets are now free from restraints with which they have recently been troubled.

The second cause for disquiet in Swiss economic life is the threat to the watch industry arising from the possible increase of American import duties. It is emphasised in Switzerland in this connection that the prospect of a rise in Customs tariffs betrays a contradiction in the commercial policy of the U.S.A., which on the one hand advocates freedom of trade and on the other takes measures which are protectionist in nature. That is why it is earnestly hoped that the President of the U.S.A. will not adopt the recommendation of the American Customs Commission and will refrain from taking a decision