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News from Switzerland

A SWISS REVOLUTION IN THE MARKETING OF MILK

The problems of packaging and preserving milk for private consumption have only just been solved, the disposable packaging so far available being unsatisfactory for one reason or another (inconvenient shape, not sufficiently strong, etc.). Consequently, a few years ago, a big dairy company in Geneva commissioned an engineering firm in the same town to devise a mechanical packaging meeting very severe requirements of manufacture, hygiene, handling, transport and use. They succeeded in solving the problem with the "Mecapack" bottle recently tried out on the Geneva market.

The automatic machine of entirely Swiss design and construction consists mainly of a turntable on which, in a single revolution, the bottle is manufactured by injection of polyethylene at 200°C and immediate blowing, then filled with pasteurised milk without stopping the turntable, next sealed and fed on to a conveyor belt where it is finally dated and conveyed directly into special stainless steel baskets and from there on to loading trays and into trucks for distribution.

The whole operation is carried out under the strictest aseptic conditions, since the bottles are moulded at 200°C and immediately filled and sealed. In addition, the bottles are strong enough to be stacked one on top of the other to a certain height without damage and their shape has been designed with a view to rational handling, packaging and transport; they can be held in one hand without losing their shape, and emptied without a drop being spilt; the bottle is easy to open and the opening is closed by a cap protecting the contents from pollution. It is no longer necessary to keep a stock of empty bottles and the raw material takes up forty times less space than the bottles when full.

The entirely automatic "Mecapack" machine provided with electronic controls is very simple to clean and requires only one person to supervise its operation. It is capable of filling 2500 one-litre bottles of milk per hour. The "Mecapack" system produced after several years of intensive research, taking into consideration the suggestions of consumer organisations, provides the perfect answer to the problem of packaging milk for consumption.

AUSTRALIAN ACQUISITION

The Swiss group Ursina (dairy products) recently acquired the Girgarre Cheese Company Pty Ltd. in Australia through its branch on that continent, the Tongola Milk Product Pty Ltd.

TELEVISION IN SWITZERLAND

The Swiss Post Office recently issued its millionth television licence. An important landmark in the development of Swiss television has been reached. The first licence was issued in Zurich at the beginning of 1952. On January 1st, 1958, i.e. at the beginning of the regular official Swiss TV broadcasts, there were 31,374 licence holders. From then on the growth became more and more rapid: the figure of 100,000 was reached during 1960, and the 500,000 mark at the beginning of 1965.

It has taken less than four years to chalk up the second half million. 1968 also showed the biggest increase with some 140,000 new licences. Switzerland now numbers some 16.3 televisions per 100 inhabitants.

EVER BIGGER SWISS MARINE DIESEL ENGINES!

The Swiss engineering firm of Sulzer Bros. Co. Ltd. at Winterthur recently presented to the press (beginning of October 1968) their new 8-cylinder marine diesel engine, developing a total output of 32,000 HP, with a bore of 1050 mm compared with 900 mm for the earlier models. Built with 8 or 12 cylinders, engines of this type are able to transmit a power of 32,000 to 48,000 HP to the propeller shaft, which is sufficient to drive the biggest oil tankers in the world.

SWISS CHEESE CHANGES SHAPE

With the growing success of cheese in pre-packaged portions, it was realised that the preparation of portions from rounds of cheese involved losses of 20 to 25%, owing to wastage. The Americans were the first to think of manufacturing their cheese in squares instead of the traditional rounds. In order to follow this trend, the Swiss Association of the Cheese Trade asked a number of Swiss manufacturers to make square blocks of Gruyere cheese by way of a test. The manufacturing process remaining the same, the quality of Switzerland's renowned cheeses will not be affected in any way by this change of shape which provides a tasty solution to the problem of squaring the circle!

SWISS CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE ANTARCTIC

In October 1968, Professor Hans Oeschger, Head of the Physics Institute at the University of Berne went to the Antarctic, accompanied by two of his assistants and two American scientists. At Byrd Station, where a team of American scientists and research workers has pierced the polar cap to a depth of 6500 feet, the probe invented and made by the Physics Laboratory at the University of Berne will enable the age of the ice to be dated by the radio-active carbon method. (osec)

NEWSPAPERS IN SWITZERLAND

It is often said that Switzerland is the country with the largest number of newspapers per head of the population. According to a recent survey however, it would seem that a number of papers not satisfying certain criteria of format, rate of publication, type of news, etc., should be deducted. When this has been done, there are still 334 different newspapers for a population of 5.9 million people (spring 1967), which represents one copy per 2.27 inhabitants and one different newspaper for approximately every 18,700 inhabitants. These figures are taken from the excellent report entitled "The Swiss Press — Today — Yesterday — Tomorrow" by J. Jaeger, director of the Swiss Political Correspondence Service (CPS), published in German in 1967 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of this organisation.

This report, now available in French, contains a large number of statistics and gives much interesting information concerning the number of newspapers published in Switzerland, their circulation and their division into various categories, all helping the reader to understand the phenomenon of Switzerland's extremely diversified press, serving a direct democracy, which is widely ramified and strongly federalist in this country.

After a number of pages devoted to the structure of the Swiss press considered from the point of view of political parties and the press considered as the nervous system of federalism, a section analyses the technical and organisational means of rationalising the press, so as to enable it to survive in the face of competition in the field of mass media.

SCHILTHORN AND JAMES BOND

The operation of a film studio on top of a 10,000ft mountain is an experiment presenting many new problems. Peter Hunt started filming scenes for the new film entitled "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" a month ago. The entire five-storey building, including the unique rotating restaurant on the Schilthorn (Bernese Oberland) peak, has been placed at the disposal of the filming unit. The ice rink on the helicopter landing pad and the ice tunnel are completed.

Expert skiers and of course James Bond himself, are training for the shooting programme which will require their skilled performance. The large Augusta Bell 204-B helicopters are in daily use. They will carry out a rocket attack on the Schilthorn, the eagle lair of the villain planning a bacteriological war of annihilation.

Murren is as busy as during the peak season as a result of the large film company living there for many weeks. All the hotels are open and tourists have many opportunities to see the famous film stars at close range.

FINE ACHIEVEMENT BY EMPLOYERS

Recently the Federation of Geneva Employers' Associations brilliantly celebrated its foundation by making this anniversary coincide with the inauguration of a large new building of its own, the Geneva Interprofessional Centre. The Federation comprises 80 professional associations and some 7000 heads of firms; it manages and administers the secretarial work of 18 local, regional, national or international employers' organisations as well as 33 professional welfare funds.

In addition to its administrative building, housing the secretariats of the various associations and provided with all facilities such as restaurant, lecture rooms, carpark, etc., the Federation of Geneva Employers' Associations has shown its social awareness by building two big blocks of flats, one of them containing 675 medium rent flats, with nurseries, recreation rooms, shopping centre, etc.

SWISS CITIZENS DOMICILED ABOARD IN 1967

According to the statistics of the Swiss Federal Foreign Residents Police Department, there was a total in 1967, in all foreign countries, of 297,500 Swiss citizens registered with Swiss consulates and embassies, including those possessing dual nationality. The total for Europe was 192,421; for Asia 5355; Africa 14,021; North and south America 77,370; and Australia and New Zealand 8333.

France is the country with the largest number of Swiss residents, with a total of 92,658, followed by West Germany with 33,811, the United States 30,080, Italy 18,873, Canada 17,323, Great Britain 14,023 and Argentina 10,561. Out of the total of 297,500 Swiss living abroad, 34.0% of whom are men, 45.8% women and 20.2% children under 16; 136,531 had dual nationality.

SWITZERLAND AND THE CONQUEST OF THE MOON

With everyone's thoughts turning to the coming conquest of the moon, it is interesting to note that of the three instruments scheduled to be landed on the surface of our satellite during the first voyage of American spacemen, which should be taking place in the fairly near future, one is of Swiss origin. Roughly speaking it consists of a sheet of aluminium designed to capture the rare gas components of a sheet called the "solar wind". This sheet will be brought back to earth and analysed by the Physics Institute of Berne University which has devised this experiment thanks to the subsidies of the Swiss National Fund for Scientific Research. It should be added that the adhesive textile ribbon "Velcro", another Swiss invention, is widely used in American spacecraft to prevent people and objects from floating while in a state of weightlessness.