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concrete steps towards U.N. membership, an issue which has been in the air for many years. The idea of naming a committee on whose recommendations the Government will act is typical of Berne's caution on any decision relating to permanent neutrality. The reason why Switzerland has abstained from joining the U.N. is that she might be compelled to take sides in either condemning a fellow-country in a resolution or taking part in sanctions. This would not be a neutral attitude. Most recent statements by Swiss leaders claim that the time is not ripe for U.N.-membership and that the idea has to mature. At all matter via a referendum. There has been a strong vindication of neutrality of late. Mr Pierre Graber, Head of the Political Department, has repeatedly said that neutrality constitutes a capital for peace and positive influence in the world which should not be tampered with.

#### **MIDDLE-EAST CRISIS HIGHLIGHTS DEPENDENCE ON OIL:**

The Middle East crisis has not triggered off a new Swiss diplomatic initiative. The Federal Council held a special meeting but went no further than to confirm its support to the International Red Cross and its humanitarian role in the conflict. But the past troubled weeks have highlighted Switzerland's vulnerability to any turning-off of the oil taps. It is commonly believed that Switzerland, with its many hydraulic dams, can rely on ample supplies of electrical energy. However, electricity accounts for only 16 per cent of the country's energy requirements. 78 per cent comes from petrol and oil and only 6 per cent from coal. Due to the absence of coal, Switzerland is one of the only countries of Western Europe depending on petrol for over 50 per cent of its energy requirements. Any interruption of Arab oil exports would therefore have dramatic consequences for Switzerland.

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## **Stabilisation of Employment in Switzerland**

The official statistics for overall employment show a comparative standstill in the number of employees in the Swiss economy in 1973. At the time when employment reached its seasonal maximum, an increase of only 0.1% was recorded over the same period of the previous year. Employees in industry also decreased by 0.8% after a drop of 1.8% in 1972. On the other hand, growth continued in the services sector, where the number of employees progressed by 2.1% from one year to the next. Banks no longer come first with regard to the increase in numbers, the rate of which fell from 9.8% in 1971 and 8.0% in 1972 to 5.1% last year. It is in the health sector as well as in the co-operative societies in the retail trade that the number of employees has increased the most (+ 6.2% in each of these sectors). On the other hand, employment fell off by 2.1% in the building trade. The public sector, comprising the civil service, the Swiss Federal Railways, the electricity, gas and water services, as well as the Swiss Post Office, recorded increases in personnel ranging from 0.4 to 1.6%. — (SODT).

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#### **Swiss Time for Madrid:**

A timekeeping system, offered by the Swiss Watch Federation and controlled by a Patek-Philippe master clock (Geneva, Switzerland) was recently installed in the Town Hall of the Spanish capital.