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SPECIAL COINS FOR THE 700 YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Instead of producing an expected revenue of 95 million SFR as the Swiss Government had hoped for, these special coins are giving the Government a real headache since they only produced 27 million SFR up to now.

The federal Finance Department is now making a last ditch effort to try to get rid of the huge number of unsold coins. The Government had trouble with these coins right from the beginning. The first offer had to be cancelled by the Federal Council in 1988 because the Banks, hoping for a good speculative profit, had ordered several times over the amount of coins to be made available. In November 1989, the designs of the coins were finalised but, because of their plain designs, they found very little appeal with the numismatists and the Banks. Still hoping for a good profit, the Banks at first discouraged people from buying the coins, claiming that they had already been sold out. Then, when the Banks realised the sales were not forthcoming, they returned tens of thousands of coins to the Finance Department. To top it all off, an ominous "silverdust" produced brown spots on the gold coins, forcing the Government to take the coins back and mint them again. The result is that the Finance Department is now sitting on 450.000 of its 800.000 gold coins and on 1.3 million of its 2.4 million silver coins. The Government had agreed to pay for the 700 year celebrations, hoping to recoup the costs through the sale of its coins. The shortfall in revenue will now have to be borne by the taxpayers.

FIRST OF AUGUST TO BECOME A HOLIDAY

The Federal Council is now at long last agreeable to the First of August becoming a proper holiday and supports the people's initiative launched by the Swiss Democratic Party to that effect. It is only the fourth time (and the first time in 65 years) that the Federal Council says Yes without reservations to a people's initiative.

Until now it was left to the counties to elevate the First of August to a full holiday if they wanted to, but only Zurich, Schaffhausen, Thurgau and Tessin have done so up to now. So far the Federal Council always felt that a simple ceremony with bell ringing and lighting of fires would be the proper way for the work-loving Swiss population to celebrate their National Day.

Even in 1977, according to a survey, most counties were then still against the

introduction of the First of August as a proper holiday.

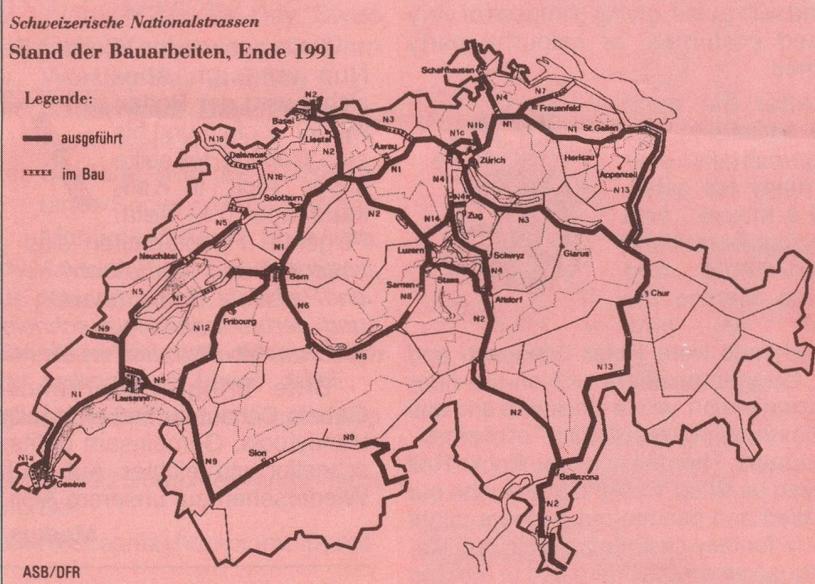
Switzerland must surely be the only country in the world where the National Day is celebrated as a normal working day.

TB VERY RARE IN SWITZERLAND

TB has almost disappeared in Switzerland. After having stopped years ago the systematic TB immunization programme, it has now been decided to stop also the TB test programme for school children.

In 1990, tests have only discovered 12 TB cases for every 100.000 inhabitants of whom half were people over 65 years of age who were still carrying the remnants of old TB infections.

In view of these results, the systematic TB testing of all school children has been abandoned.



The map shows the present state of the motorway network in Switzerland. In 1992, the Government will have spent 1.3 billion SFR for additional motorways. The main construction areas are the by-passes of Geneva, Schaffhausen, Arbon and Neuenburg, the Bötzberg tunnel, the stretch along the Brienzersee and the Trans-Jura road between Pruntrut and Delsberg. At the end of 1992, 1514 km of motorways or 81.6% of the total network will be in operation.

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FONDUE WORLD RECORD

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the motorway restaurant at Greyerz (Fribourg), the festivities organisers served up the world's largest fondue. Six people had to be employed to constantly stir the huge fondue in a vast pan of 2m in diameter. The fondue required 2.5 kg of garlic, 170 litres of white wine, 330 kg of cheese and 2 litres of kirsch. Apparently, despite its size, the fondue was perfect.

NEW SWISS TANKER

Eat your hearts out all those people who always make jokes about the Swiss Navy. A new tanker, the "Genève" has just joined the Swiss merchant navy fleet. The ship, belonging to a Geneva firm, is 107m long, has a crew of 14 and operates at a speed of 14 knots. The "Genève" was built in Rotterdam. The Swiss fleet consists at present of 22 ships with a total personnel of 391 of whom 77 are of Swiss nationality.

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