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PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In Geneva "public transport" has taken on a totally different meaning. A few years ago, a trial run was made by providing the public with a certain number of bicycles, distinctly painted in shocking pink for easy identification. Placed all around the inner city, these bicycles were available free of charge to anyone who needed to travel anywhere within the city.

The idea was that you just use the bike to get from point A to point B, then leave it there for someone else to use it to get to point C and so forth so that each bike could be used by dozens and dozens of different people during the day.

Unfortunately, lack of funds prevented sufficient bikes to be put into

circulation so that most of the time there never was a pink bike in sight when you needed one. Then the promoters of the scheme also had to cope with the nasty side of humanity: the bike hoppers who tried to hide their bike so that nobody could take it away while they were attending to their business, the kleptomaniacs who simply stole the bikes, repainted them and then used them as their own and the vandals who wilfully damaged or dismantled them.

After this bad experience it is surprising to learn that a new idea has come up on similar lines but far more sophisticated: the public electric cars. These cars would be available in strategically placed parking areas such as by hospitals, airports, shopping malls and commercial centres. Access to the car would be by a personalised card. The whole system would be electronically controlled, giving information about the whereabouts of each car at any given time, how long it had been used for and by whom. The users would then be billed according to the time they used the car.

According to a survey made in Geneva, many people indicated that they would certainly use this formula of inner city transport if it became available at a reasonable price. Well, the future will tell.

ELNA BACK IN PRODUCTION

Last year the Geneva based firm of Tavano, manufacturers of the world famous Elna sewing and ironing machines went into receivership. However, the name ELNA was such a draw-card that the big American broker, Meier, Johnson and Kuehn, decided to stage a rescue bid by creating a new international company called Elna International Corporation which took over the worldwide rights to all Elna products.

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And so, work has re-started at Tavano. Not only has the firm resumed the production of ironing machines, but it can now also guarantee for the next 10 years the production of spare parts for the huge number of Elna sewing machines still in use throughout the world.

CLEAN LAKE

At long last, the lake of Lugano has received a clean bill of health again and for the first time in 25 years, all swimming bans could be lifted.

It was in 1971 that, due to heavy water pollution, a total swimming ban had to be imposed around the lake. Since then a huge amount of work had been undertaken to build water purification plants to stop polluted water from entering the ailing lake.

Today the lake is in good health again for people to enjoy it as they did in the past. Although the lake is not very big, it still boasts over 50 recognised "beaches" from which swimming is possible and now officially allowed again.

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