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HOME NEWS

According to figures just published, the accounts for 1927 of the Confederation close with a deficit of 1,4 million francs, 14 million having been originally budgetted for.

In the course of replying to an interpellation in the National Council Federal Councillor Scheurer stated that twenty different aeroplanes had recently been purchased in order to give our military pilots an opportunity to discover the type most suitable for Swiss conditions.

The Basle Government is proposing to subscribe shares to the tune of six million francs in the Oberhasli power generating station and to spend another four million francs towards the construction of the cable line bringing the electric current from Innertkirchen to Basle.

Swiss recruits returning to Bellinzona for their repetition course and two Italian Fascists found themselves passengers in the same train. The Italians ventured some insulting remarks which earned them deserved corporal castigation at the hands of the Swiss; the matter ended with the interference of the stationmaster at Lucerne. On the arrival of the train at Art-Goldau the combat was renewed and the Italians had to be locked into their compartment by the guard. The incident is now being inquired into by the military authorities.

The total cost of the damage caused in the cantons Ticino and Grisons by the high water catastrophe last September has now been officially estimated at 30,8 million francs. The Federal Council proposes to allocate an initial credit of two million francs to the two cantons concerned.

About half a million francs have been bequeathed by the recently deceased Dr. Ad. Walder for the creation of a fund the interest from which is to assist necessitous medical students originating from his native commune of Hinwil (Zurich).

The municipal gas works of the town of Berne are to be transformed and enlarged at a cost of nearly four million francs.

The "Parc du Denantou," an estate along the Lac Léman, and the property of the late Mr. Ed. Sandoz-David, is to be acquired by the town of Lausanne at a cost of half a million francs.

The well-known guide, Antoine Bovier, who was the first to climb Mont Blanc from the northern slope in 1896, died at Evolène at the age of 78.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Stockport and After.

The controversy about this order is gradually dying out except in the technical Press, where the biased statements of Mr. Hugh Quigley, of the B.E.A.M.A. are denounced by those who can speak from actual experience. Another trenchant rejoinder appeared in the *Electrician* (March 16th) from the pen of the Dublin City Electrical Engineer. We reproduce it herewith:—

"The technical world will appraise at its proper value Mr. Quigley's letter on the above subject in your last issue. The patronising, sneering, personal tone, and the irrelevancies indulged in will not win any sympathy for Mr. Quigley in his impossible position. My personal character or temperament, and my efficiency or inefficiency, are not the matters under discussion.

The comparison between Dublin and Wallasey is, of course, quite irrelevant and amusing. If Dublin had Wallasey's industrial and tramway load, and Wallasey's consequent high load factor, the works cost comparison would be quite different. In addition to high load factor, Wallasey has cheap coal and labour. If Dublin's *average* selling price were based on the same proportions of lighting, power, etc., as Wallasey's, the "average selling" prices would show comparatively little difference; for the rates of charge are not so substantially different in Wallasey and in Dublin. The Dublin rates of charge are no higher than those in the average British or Continental city.

But even if costs and prices in Dublin were extraordinarily high, why should this be attri-

buted to the £50,000 worth of Swiss equipment rather than to the £250,000 worth of British equipment!

What Mr. Quigley has to show is that the steam consumption of the Swiss turbines is higher than that of the much more expensive British turbines. And this is just what neither Mr. Quigley nor anyone else *can* show, because it is not true. This untruth is exactly what was suggested in the B.E.A.M.A. brochure, which every fair-minded Britisher has already condemned. The contents of that publication are no credit to anyone concerned, and the sooner it passes into the limbo of forgotten things the better for the people who wrote and published it.

The current issue of the *Schweiz. Industrie Zeitung* also deals with the Stockport Tender. We are informed that the labour costs in Switzerland are higher than in England and that the price of the British Syndicated Turbine Builders provided for a good margin, especially in view of the fact that they subsequently offered to reduce it to the extent of £8,000. The *Schweiz. Industrie Zeitung* enlarges on the price policy of English firms in regard to Continental business and says that recently Escher Wyss & Co. "despite very keen Belgian, French and British competition, have been awarded the contract for two 40,000 h.p. steam turbines for a new power station at Sihelle, near Antwerp. The turbines are of a somewhat similar design to that required for Stockport, and the Escher, Wyss Co. worked out its estimate on the same basis as before, only to find that at Antwerp they were underbid by the British makers. Thanks to the extraordinarily favourable results which have lately been obtained with Escher, Wyss turbines at several power stations—results which have not yet been attained by British makers with turbines of this type—the Antwerp contract was awarded to the Swiss firm notwithstanding the lower British offers."

Talking about electricity, we have come across a very candid statement made by the British Minister of Transport when addressing members of the Constitutional Club on this subject. We reproduce part of it as published in the *Times* (March 20th).

“Col. Ashley said that the cause of Britain being behind other countries, until a few years ago, in the use of electricity was of a threefold character. We were a very conservative nation, not disposed easily to new inventions and new forms of manufacture. There was also the existence of a well-organised and efficient gas industry such as was not met with in those countries which passed straight from the oil lamp to electricity. Thereby at the start we were inclined to leave to municipalities the generation of electricity instead of, as was now being done, generating in large central stations. There was now no doubt that we could produce electricity as cheaply as any other country, by reason of our magnificent coal supplies and abundant water supplies for cooling purposes.

The increase in the use of electricity had been steady and very considerable during the last five or six years. There had been an increase of about 12 per cent. a year, except in 1926, when, owing to the general strike and the coal stoppage, the increase was only 3 per cent. This year would be seen a substantial increase of possibly 19 or 20 per cent. The Act of 1926 did not directly deal with distribution, but only with generation, and the main purpose of that Act was to reduce the number of public generating stations from between 5,000 and 6,000 to about 100. Obviously, if that could be accomplished without increased cost, the effect must be a decrease of cost and increase of efficiency. At the present time the average price for all purposes of electricity in this country was 2d.

As compared with some Continental countries the price of electricity in England is as exorbitant as its general distribution and application is deplorable. Switzerland serves 97% of her population with electricity from her water power resources. We are surprised to be informed that the average price for all purposes of electricity in this country is 2d. What we do know is that in the district whose hospitality the writer enjoys, 8d. per unit is the charge for lighting purposes.

The Basle Trading Co.

The claims of the Basle Mission are receiving a large amount of publicity in the English Press, to which the President has contributed his share with a letter to the *Times* (March 19th) refuting the general notion that German influence was at any time in evidence. We doubt whether the case has been materially strengthened by discarding the commonly accepted name and using the appellation

"Société Evangélique des Missions de Bâle" as practically all the English papers are in sympathy with the unqualified restitution of the confiscated property. We reproduce a leader from the "Morning Post" (March 17th) which relates the history of the case and is somewhat isolated in its neutral attitude.

"In such an obscure and complicated controversy as rages over the Commonwealth Trust, it may be useful to relate the history of the case. There are two institutions in question, which must be kept clear in the mind, although they are closely related—the Basle Mission and the Basle Mission "Factory." The Basle Mission, which went to the Gold Coast in 1828 and from 1843 onwards pushed its way into the Interior, was always so much German that it was commonly called the South German Mission, to distinguish it from the North German Mission, with headquarters at Bremen. Warneck's standard History of Protestant Missions describes it thus: Although it has its headquarters in Basle, it has from the beginning, and maintains to the present time, its distinctively German character. Early in its career, as it needed supplies, it established a small trading firm, which grew as time went on and gradually came to work entirely separately from the mission, although supporting Mission policy. This "Factory" adopted articles of association, which made it a limited liability company, with a capital of £60,000, the bulk of which came from Germany. When shareholders had received 5 per cent. dividend, and reserves were provided for, the surplus profits went to the Mission and were used for its work, not only on the Gold Coast, but all over the world.

British policy during the war was to allow all missionaries to remain; but no Germans were allowed to come out. From the Factory the Germans were at once removed, also in accordance with Government policy, so that its *personnel* became entirely Swiss. It incorporated itself anew with headquarters in London, and removed all Germans from its Board at Basle. On that basis it was allowed to remain.

As for the Mission, it was asked to remove its German Directors from its Basle Board ; but refused on the creditable enough ground that it could not desert its chief supporters. This defiance, however, made it difficult for the British Government to tolerate the presence of a fundamentally German institution, in control of large educational work among the natives at such a crisis. In these circumstances, the Government decided to remove all the missionaries, but delayed owing to the anxiety of British missions lest work among the natives should suffer. Towards the end of 1917, however, an event occurred which precipitated matters. The Abosso was sunk by a German submarine, and many Government officials from the Gold Coast were drowned. The authorities ordered all missionaries as well as the staff of the factory to be removed immediately. The properties both of mission and factory were transferred to the Controller of Enemy Property ; the United Free Church of Scotland continued the work of the mission ; but had nothing to do with the Trading Company. It is, we believe, a fact that the order for removal came from Whitehall.

In the peace treaty it was provided that enemy mission property should be maintained for mission purposes ; although, of course, the Basle Mission claims to be not enemy, but neutral. In accordance with the practice in other Colonies an Ordinance was introduced in the Gold Coast vesting the property both of the Basle Mission and the Basle Mission Factory in a body of trustees known as the Basle Mission Trustees ; it was their duty to transfer the trading property to a Corporation approved by the Secretary of State, and the Mission property to an approved Society. This they did, the Society being the United Free Church of Scotland, and the Corporation being the Commonwealth Trust, Ltd. The Commonwealth Trust worked under very great difficulties during a period in which loss was inevitable, and suffered from inexperience at first ; but has gradually brought its affairs into much better order and seems to have been faithful to its trust of supporting missions. It may be added that as a first charge the Basle Company's shareholders were paid off in full. Now, however, it appears that the Secretary of State proposes to give the property back to the original owners. It seems to us, in the circumstances, that the Commonwealth Trust has a very good case for the inquiry it demands."

No unbiased person will blame the directors of the Commonwealth Trust for fighting for the rights