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ECONOMIC NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

Watchmaking and Jewellery at the Swiss Samples Fair at Basle.

As the new building for the Swiss Samples Fair at Basle is now finished as regards the construction itself, it is now possible to have an idea of the future external aspect of the Fair. Some fundamental modifications are to take place in regard to the sites allotted to the various branches of manufacture. The work of redistribution, which was started upon as soon as the previous Fair closed its doors, is now nearing its end.

The exhibits of the watch-making industry will remain in the place of honour which was theirs in the First Hall, but the space occupied by them will be extended into the Second Hall, and will thus be enlarged by about 1,000 square metres. The number of watch manufacturers taking part in the Fair will also be increased by 25. With its 150 exhibitors, the Basle Watchmakers' Fair may be considered, quite justifiably, to be one of the most important markets of this branch of industry. A special pavilion will be reserved exclusively for jewellery.

The Salon de l'Automobile of Geneva is 30 years old.

It will be thirty years, on the 14th March, since the first Salon de l'automobile was opened in Geneva. At that time it was called "The International Exhibition of Motor Cars". That first Salon grouped together a total of 198 exhibitors on a superficial area extending over 6,500 square metres. To-day, the number of exhibitors exceeds 400, who occupy a superficial area of approximately 18,500 square metres. This shows the distance which has been covered.

It is learnt that this year a large number of motor-car manufacturers have the intention of reserving the first showing of their new models for the Salon de l'automobile, in Geneva.

A Discovery of the Swiss Industry.

A consortium for purposes of study, in Zurich, has succeeded in bringing out a new high-frequency-infrared oven for the baking of bread and cakes. The Swiss Bakers' School, in Lucerne, which enjoys international renown, has been working for more than a year with one of these ovens and has obtained remarkable results. These ovens are henceforth to be produced in large quantities.

The process of baking is much more rapid in this new oven, and only requires from one-quarter to one-third of the time needed when using an ordinary oven. Contrary to what has happened up to the present, the baking takes place in a reverse order, starting right inside and then proceeding to the outside of whatever is being baked. The volume of the pastry is greater; the outside formation of the crust and the colouring of the pastry can be regulated at will by means of the irradiation of infra-red rays, independently of the baking by means of high frequency. Thus, there are two means of baking, by high frequency and by infra-red rays and these can be used to the amount required for every kind of pastry. The quality of the products is greatly improved and it is possible to preserve certain vitamins owing to the reduction in the length of time needed

for baking. Moreover, the new oven takes up less place than an ordinary oven and its consumption of electricity is smaller.

It is anticipated that this new process will be adopted on a large scale throughout the world.

The Production of Electric Power in Switzerland.

The snow and the rain which have fallen during the last few weeks have helped to increase the production of electric power in Switzerland. Nevertheless, it remains somewhat feeble in comparison with other years. Thus, during the course of January, Switzerland was obliged to import as much as 19 per cent of the power consumed in this country, and the volume of water accumulated in the artificial lakes remains considerably below the average. It is only thanks to imports and to the production of the thermic plants, which came to the rescue, that it will be possible to avoid restricting consumption.

A Project of a Navigable Water Course Connecting the Rhone with the Rhine in Switzerland.

For a long time past, Swiss public opinion has been interested in the project of a navigable water course connecting the Rhone with the Rhine. A fresh stage has been accomplished in this domain through the successful termination of the technical studies relating to this question. What has to be done is to connect Lake Leman (Lake of Geneva) with the Lake of Neuchâtel by means of a navigable water-course, which would comprise numerous locks and two tunnels, to construct the necessary ports and to make the river Aar navigable between the Lake of Biel and the Rhine. The cost of all this work would require approximately 350 million francs, to cover it.

Switzerland and the conclusions of the Randall-Commission.

The conclusion arrived at by the Randall Commission, in the United States, have aroused great interest in Switzerland, particularly in the watch-making industry. It is considered to be a matter for congratulation that fourteen out of the seventeen members of this Commission, who belong to the most varied spheres of activity, should have adhered to conclusions which are quite definitely favourable to free trade. This proves — according to what is being said on this subject among those principally concerned — that public opinion in the United States is far less protectionist than one imagines, and, in this connection, the fact is cited that, as a result of

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an enquiry which was carried out recently among five hundred leaders of the business world, 95.2 per cent of them were of the opinion that it was incumbent upon the United States to be active apostles of free trade exchanges.

It is hoped, in these same circles, that the recommendation of the Randall Commission will authorise President Eisenhower to defend with greater assurance, the sensible policy of free trade, which he advocated.

Chronometrical recording of the next skiing championship.

The chronometrical recording of the forthcoming championships events in the domain of skiing, which are to start on the 13th February, 1954, at Falun, in Sweden, has been entrusted to an important Swiss firm, in the watchmaking trade. For this is, in effect, a very delicate operation, which requires a great deal of experience in the matter and an extremely careful technical adjustment. The chronometrical time-recording of competitions is rendered difficult by the atmospheric conditions which prevail at this time of the year. It often happens that snow-storms follow night frosts, and then give place to a burning sun. From this it may be imagined to what influences the chronometrical instruments, which have to possess the greatest possible precision, are exposed.

The Swiss undertaking in question has perfected an instrument, the "Time Recorder", which is extremely practical and easy to use, and which records and prints the times, up to 100th of a second. This firm will delegate, to the world championships of skiing, six experts in chronometry, equipped with four "Time Recorders". Four photoelectrical cells will guarantee, thanks to the luminous ray which cuts across the ski-run at the moment of departure and of arrival, a one hundred per cent automatic detent. The basic hour will be furnished by a marine chronometer, provided with a certificate from the Neuchâtel Observatory, attesting that it had been subjected successfully during sixty-three days to the most severe tests known for watch movement.

(Swiss Office for the Development of Trade).

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