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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Increase in wages since 1939.

Viewed as a whole, the wages of men and women workers in Swiss industry have increased by 123 per cent since 1939. This increase varies from one branch to another, but it differs especially in accordance with the categories of workers. The increase has proved of greatest benefit to the less favoured workers; thus the rise in the wages of young women workers exceeds by 80 per cent that of skilled workers.

This evolution has most certainly contributed to not only the maintenance, but also to the consolidation of social peace in Switzerland; during the course of last year, the Cantonal Conciliation Offices only had to deal with 86 collective labour disputes, as against 128 in 1952, and this for the entire territory of the Confederation; there were only two cases in which these institutions intervened themselves. Most frequently they were asked to settle the dispute at the request of the workers or at a request, in common, on the part of the employers and the workers. Most of these disputes were settled by means of a direct agreement between the two parties, or else through the acceptance of a proposal put forward by the Office. Only three cases entailed strikes.

Industrial activity.

In spite of the strengthening of competition, industrial activity in Switzerland is tending to become intensified. The level of employment has become still higher. The only exception is in respect of the watch-making industry.

The activity which reigns in the building industry is not a stranger to this situation. During the first four months of this year, the number of houses built has surpassed by about 13 per cent the figure for last year. As regards exports these are maintaining a very high level.

Swiss Hotel business satisfactory.

Business in the hotel industry during the last Winter Season was satisfactory. The number of

visitors to the sports resorts exceeded by 5 to 8 per cent, according to the various regions, the figures for last year, but, on the other hand, a perceptible decline has been registered in most of the towns and, especially, in Tessin, so that for the whole of the country, the gain in nights spent in hotels amounts really to only 1.5 per cent as compared with last year. 3/5 of the foreign visitors came from Germany, France and Great-Britain.

Switzerland at Barcelona Fair.

Switzerland is represented by 175 exhibitors and by an official Pavillon at the Barcelona Fair, which has just opened its doors. The Official Pavillon was shown to the Spanish Press shortly before the Exhibition opened. Its principal attraction is to be found in the "Girostand", which presents in an animated and lively form all the principal aspects of the Swiss industry. The journalists who were present were greatly interested by this novelty in the technique of exhibition and they engaged in long conversations, filled with questions regarding the economic relations which exist between Switzerland and Spain, with Mr. A. Ochsenbein, the Swiss Consul General in Barcelona and with Mr. John Brunner, First Secretary of the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade, whose guests they were.

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