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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Switzerland builds the highest dam in the world.

Ever since 1950, 1,500 workmen have been busy up in the Alpes Valaisannes, at an altitude of 2,500 metres, building the highest dam in the world. Once it is finished, the dam of the Grande-Dixence will have the same height as the Eiffel Tower, that is to say, three hundred metres, and it will keep back a mass of water amounting to 400 millions of cubic metres, proceeding from the surrounding valleys. The construction work is already very advanced and more than 6,500 m³ of concrete are mixed each day, an average which represents an European record figure and, indeed, probably a world record. With its five million cubic metres of concrete, this dam will be the biggest construction ever realized by Man. The Grande-Dixence will furnish each year 1,650 million Kwhs.; this represents about one-tenth of the consumption of electric power in Switzerland.

Cost of living in Switzerland.

It would appear from some statistics published by the United Nations that Switzerland is the country in which cost of living has increased the least, since 1948. Whereas in France, for example, the increase amounts to 45 per cent and, in Italy to 21 per cent, in Switzerland the cost of living has only gone up by 6 per cent.

Searching for natural gas in Switzerland.

Traces of natural gas, known as methane, have been discovered in the Tessin. The work of prospecting is being carried out actively, with the support of the authorities. This gas would form an appreciable source of revenue for one of the Swiss Cantons which is one of the least privileged from the economic point of view. In neighbouring Italy, methane gas covers one-fifth of the national consumption of gas.

Swiss Diesel engines for Australia.

An agreement has been concluded between the Swiss firm of Sulzer Bros. and an Australian firm, which provides for technical co operation in respect of the manufacture of new motor locomotives for the Australian Railways. The locomotives are to be built on the spot, in Australia, and will be equipped with

Sulzer Diesel Engines, specially adapted for the conditions of the Australian network.

Motorisation in Switzerland.

As from the 1st of July of this year, the number of motor vehicles in circulation in Switzerland has exceeded the half-million figure, and may be estimated at about 520,000. More than half of these vehicles consist of motor-cars, whilst motorcycles and scooters form almost one-third of this imposing number. The average rate for the whole of the country amounts to one motor vehicle per every nine or ten inhabitants, which makes Switzerland one of the most mechanised countries in the world. This average even goes up to from four to five inhabitants, in Geneva, the city in Switzerland which possesses the most dense motorised traffic, and comes very close to the standard of the United States.

Social welfare in Switzerland.

The Confederation's expenses in regard to social welfare have increased considerably during the last few years. The same remark is applicable to the appropriation of the Cantons and the Communes, which, together with those of the Federal State represent a sum of almost one thousand million francs per annum. It is estimated that social contributions

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on the part of private enterprise represent an annual sum of two thousand million francs, so that, taken together more than three thousand million francs are expended in Switzerland yearly for social welfare schemes. This figure is considerable, if one compares it with the national income of Switzerland, which attains approximately twenty-two thousand million francs.

A loan in Swiss francs for Uruguay.

The Worldbank has granted a loan to Uruguay, amounting to five million dollars, in order that this country may develop its production of electric power. This loan will be paid out in various currencies, among these being Swiss francs. This money will serve to pay for the purchase of a turbo-generator manufactured by Brown, Boveri & Cie S.A., of Baden, in Switzerland, and which is intended for the Battle Electric Plant, near Montevideo.

Swiss movie-cameras for Sweden.

During the last few years, imports of cameras, of films and of photographic material have increased tremendously in Sweden. It is Switzerland who heads the list of suppliers of movie-cameras, having sent goods of this kind to the value of 700,000 Swedish crowns, in 1954.

Swiss emigration in July.

In July last, the number of persons to leave Switzerland amounted to 183, this being a slight in-

crease in comparison with the corresponding month for last year. Nevertheless, as a result of the economic prosperity which prevails in this country, emigration shows a definite decline, as the number of emigrants for the period covering the first seven months of this year is lower by 200 to that for the same period of last year.

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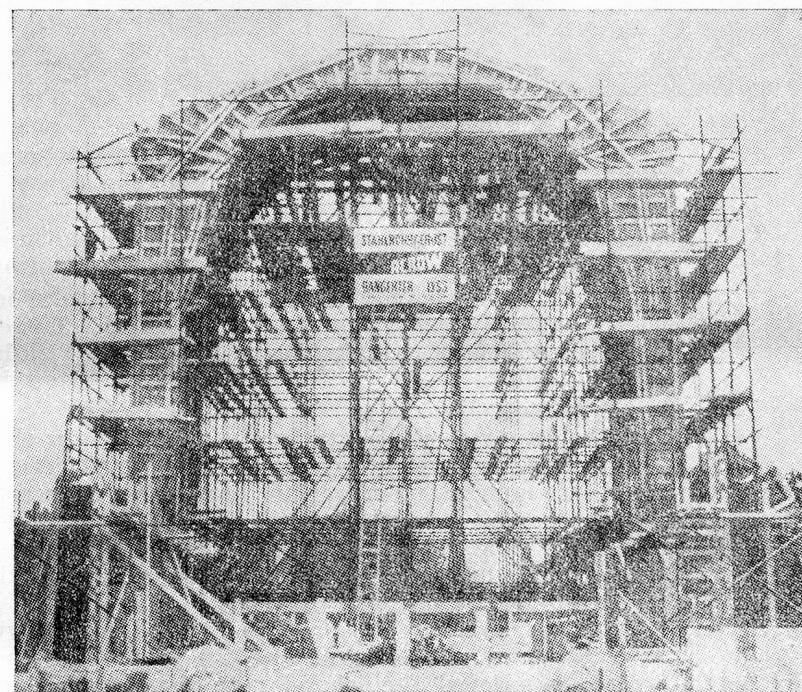
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