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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Vocational training in Switzerland.

The shortage of labour, from which Switzerland is suffering at the present time, is primarily in respect of skilled workers. Although it has proved possible to remedy this, at any rate partially, by having recourse to foreign man-power, pains are being taken also to facilitate technical training in our own country. Great efforts have been made to inform parents and teachers on this subject by means of documentation regarding the various trades. An interesting experiment has also been tried out in the Canton of Valais, where pre-apprenticeship courses have been organised. During several weeks the young people work in a special kind of boarding-school where they are shown a number of different trades. During this time a careful study is made of their characters and their capabilities, thus making it possible, later on, to direct them towards the trade for which they have the greatest aptitude. This example deserves to be imitated, for it happens, only too often, that young people choose a trade about which they know nothing, or very little, and for which they are not suited.

The Swiss housing market.

A definite relaxation is to be observed on the Swiss housing market. In 1955 it proved possible to build a further forty thousand or so housing units, which represents an increase of 60 per cent as compared with 1950. It would seem, however, as if the culminating point had been reached, and even exceeded, as the figures for 1956 have not increased in comparison with the previous year. In fact, a marked decline in building activities may be anticipated in the near future as the number of building licences issued have already decreased by 17 per cent, in comparison with the record year of 1955. What is happening, in fact, is a return to normal, as the deficiency would appear to have now been filled and the normal annual requirement can be established at about 20,000, i.e. only half the number of houses being put up at the present rate of building.

Productivity and salaries in Switzerland.

It is estimated that the productivity of Swiss national economy has increased regularly by 1.5 per cent per annum since the war. Obviously, it is

difficult to establish in what way this increase is re-partitioned, as Swiss business undertakings have been obliged to devote large sums to investments intended for the modernisation of their plants. Nevertheless, it has been established that wages and salaries have also followed the movement, as the substantial wage of the workers has increased each year by 1.9 per cent, on an average, and the salary of employees has also risen annually by 1.1 per cent. If one takes into account the increase in cost-of-living, then the Swiss wage-earner, to-day, gets 30 per cent more than he did in 1939. The growth of Swiss imports during the course of the last few years and the marked increase in the turnover figures in the Swiss retail trade are evident proof of a greater purchasing power on the part of the population and of a standard of living which is rising steadily.

Swiss edition abroad.

In 1955 Swiss exports of books and of periodicals attained the total value of more than 34 million francs. Thus, Switzerland has now become one of the most important exporters of books in the world, after Great Britain, the United States, France and Western Germany. Switzerland's immediate neighbours are, quite naturally, her best customers. France and Western Germany alone buy two-thirds of the books exported by Switzerland. As for the United States, they come third and purchase about one-tenth of the books and periodicals exported by this country.

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Interesting Swiss experiment in road building.

In North West Switzerland a new section has been opened of the important arterial road linking Switzerland with Austria. This road passes along the south of the Lake of Wallenstadt — whose shores are very precipitous and where there is danger of sheet-ice in winter. To meet this danger, an interesting experiment has been made: electric road-heating points have been set up on the four bridges of the new road. This electric heating installation will function experimentally during the coming winter. It is hoped that all sheet-ice will be done away with and that motorists will be able to drive in perfect safety.

Important coming event in the graphic arts.

A big international Graphical Industries Exhibition is to be opened at Lausanne on the 1st June, 1957; it will be known as "Graphic 57" and will be held in the halls of the Swiss Autumn Fair. The exhibition will occupy 40,000 square metres of floor-space and will have three main sections. The section of machines and materials will be given over to manufacturing techniques of all the special fields in the graphical industries. The section for papers and inks will show the latest progress in the field of printing underlays and inks. The section for finished products will give a general picture of the graphical industries' market. There will also be some special pavilions, non-commercial, devoted to artistic creation, to professional training, to scientific research and to the history of the graphic arts. "Graphic 57" is meant in the first place to be of interest to the trade, and it is hoped that more than 40,000 printing specialists from abroad will come to Lausanne during the first fortnight of June. But the general public too will



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complete printing-presses in operation, and visitors will be able to follow the stages as a book or newspaper is produced before them. find things to interest them — there will be

VISIT OF AN EMINENT CONDUCTOR.

The Swiss conductor Jean MEYLAN was introduced to members of the Colony and the Swiss press at a cocktail party given in his honour on November 9th, at the Montana Hotel, 67, Gloucester Road, S.W.7.

A pupil of Felix Weingartner and Paul Klecki, Jean Meylan has been guest conductor for a number of years of most of our Swiss orchestras including the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. He has also led some of the best ensembles in Germany (where he was for two years Chefdirigent of Radio Cologne), France, Italy and a variety of other European countries. He now has had his Première in Great Britain with a concert for the Third Programme with the B.B.C. Northern Orchestra in Manchester. This included, besides Bizet's Symphony in Ut and music by de Falla and Fricker, a first performance in Great Britain of a Hymnus by Willy Burkhard, the Bernese composer who died last year.

THE SWISS LAW AND PRACTICE OF GUARDIANSHIP.

An N.S.H. Lecture.

We draw the attention of our readers to a most interesting lecture and discussion at a forthcoming meeting of the N.S.H. The great problem of protecting the interests of children, deprived of one or both parents, of minors generally, of the mentally deficient and of lunatics is tackled differently in differing countries. The Swiss law and practice in this field are claimed to be progressive and in many ways exemplary, though shortcomings are occasionally complained of. The N.S.H. has invited an official guardian of Zürich, Amtsvormund C. Grassi, who is visiting this country, to speak at the next Open Meeting, on December 11th, on this vitally important subject (details, see advertisement). To open the subsequent discussion an expert will throw some light also on the English law and practice in the same field of public responsibility.

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