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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Switzerland at the Lyons Fair 1956.

Nearly one hundred Swiss firms are taking part, this year, in the International Fair in Lyons which opened its doors on Saturday, April 7th. While these firms are located in the different sections of the Fair, an official stand is to be found in the building which houses the foreign participations. Its principal task is one of information and documentation, and it deals with industrial and commercial questions as well as those pertaining to tourism. The decorative element is provided by tastefully arranged show-cases evocating the charm of the Swiss lakes and presenting Switzerland's two big industrial fairs, the Swiss Industries Fair in Basel and the "Comptoir Suisse" in Lausanne.

Conference on Atomic Energy.

The first international conference on atomic energy, which was held last August in Geneva, has shown that, in a great many countries, technical and physical studies relating to the industrial utilisation of nuclear energy are already very advanced and have produced some important results. The question of the production of nuclear energy figures on the order of the day, and several power stations are already under construction. A congress devoted to the construction of such power stations was held in Cleveland (Ohio) from September 12th to 16th, 1955, and has brought to light a great many data which were still unknown during the Geneva Conference.

In view of the wider knowledge which has become available in this field, the Swiss Society of Engineers and Architects has with the support of the two Polytechnical Schools in Zurich and Lausanne and the Institute of Physics in Neuchâtel recently organised a study conference. The object of this conference was to furnish constructors of electric power stations with information regarding the technological and economic efficiency of nuclear power plants, and to provide

standards of comparison with traditional sources of energy.

The conference was attended by three hundred specialists from all parts of Switzerland as well as from several foreign countries. There were a number of lectures by Swiss, British, French and American experts.

Switzerland and International Economic Co-operation.

The Report of the Federal Department of Public Economy on its activities during 1955, which was published recently, deals in particular with the relations between Switzerland and the international organisations.

In view of the increasing importance of these organisations, it was deemed necessary to create a central service within the Department's Commercial Division, which would be particularly qualified for dealing with questions of multilateral trade and payments, and for clarifying Switzerland's position with regard to the general undertakings made in this field. With this aim in view, a Secretariat was established at the beginning of January, its principal mission being to ensure a liaison with the Swiss Delegation to the O.E.E.C. in Paris. Questions of principle are regularly submitted to the Federal Council and to its Economic and Financial Delegation.

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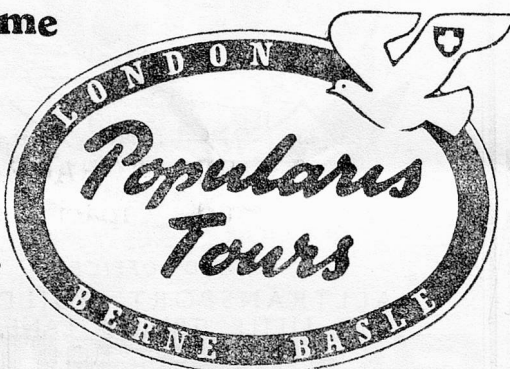
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Watchmakers' Museum in Le Locle.

The town of Le Locle, which thanks to Daniel Jeanrichard became the cradle of Swiss watchmaking, in 1705, has just acquired a fine property, on which a Horological Museum is to be set up. This project has aroused a very keen interest in the watchmaking industry and various personalities have already promised their co-operation or have donated collector's pieces. The museum will comprise a room in which there will be a faithful reconstitution of a home workshop of the last century; then, there will be rooms in which the history of watchmaking will be retraced chronologically, and the great names of the local industry will be recalled. Finally, two rooms will be devoted to the watchmaking industry throughout the ages and to the technological development of watchmaking.

Switzerland's housing market.

Recently compiled statistics show that more than 31,000 new apartments were constructed in Switzerland in 1955, 2,000 more than in the preceding year. Building permits for more than 40,000 have been granted for 1956 and it is thought that this year will see a continuation of the construction climb in Switzerland.

Switzerland and E.P.U.

At the end of last year, Switzerland's active balance with the European Payments Union was 441

million francs. This represents a drop of nearly 300 millions over 1954. The drop is attributed mainly to a loan of 200 million francs made by the Swiss National Railways to the Italian Railways.

New twenty Swiss-franc note.

A new twenty-franc banknote was recently put into circulation in Switzerland. The new bill bears an image of General Dufour on one side and a thistle on the other. It is slightly longer and narrower than the old twenty-franc note, decorated with a picture of Swiss educator Heinrich Pestalozzi, which is being withdrawn from circulation by the Swiss treasury.

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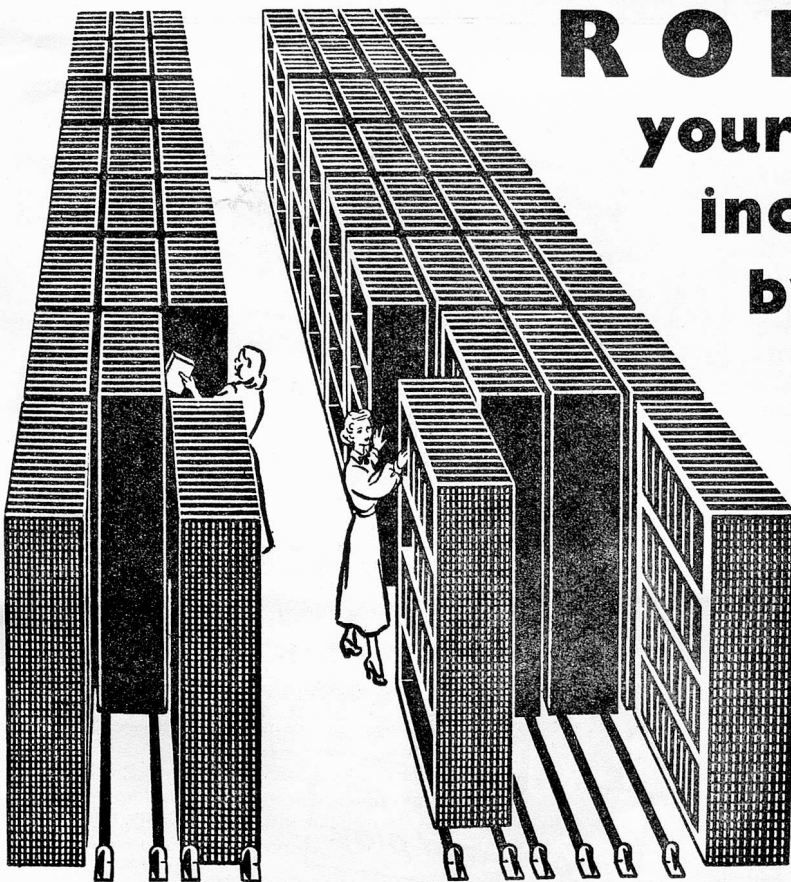
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