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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Increased consumption of electricity in Switzerland.

During the month of June, the Swiss power stations supplied thirty million more kWh of electricity than they did during the same period in 1956. The increase amounted to 6%. The consumption of electric power during the first six months of this year showed an increase of 7.1% as compared with the first half of last year.

Small decline of the Swiss emigration.

Nine hundred and sixty-six Swiss citizens emigrated during the first six months of this year, that is to say 15% less than during the corresponding period of 1956. Emigration, in June alone, declined by 7%, in comparison with the same month, last year.

Progress of the Swiss television.

The number of owners of television sets in Switzerland rose by 549 during the month of June, and has now attained a total of 27,001. The greatest number of receiving sets, namely 6,677, is to be found in the Zurich postal district.

An Agreement between France and Switzerland for the utilisation of atomic energy.

An Agreement has just been signed by the Swiss Government and the French Government on the subject of the utilisation of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. The aim of the Agreement is to strengthen the co-operation that already exists between these two countries within the International Organisations of which they are members, more especially the O.E.E.C. The two Governments have agreed to promote the exchange of information relating to the experiments carried out on their territory and to facilitate the reciprocal supply of nuclear material and equipment as well as the exchange of specialists and of students.

A good crop in view in Switzerland.

In Switzerland, the wheat harvest promises to be exceptionally good. Fine weather having favoured the harvesting, this crop will help to efface the memory of the double catastrophe that occurred last year, namely the severe frost in winter and too much rain in the summer. Each year, from September to January, some two million metric quintals (one quintal = 220.46 lb.) are taken over, at special delivery places, by the experts of the Swiss Wheat and Milling Administration, and stored in the Confederation's silos and in the mills, whilst more than a million metric quintals serves for the direct provisioning of the producers.

Increase of the industrial building projects.

Although the building of houses for residential purposes would appear to be somewhat on the decline, in Switzerland, the number of new buildings which are being put up for industrial purposes continues to increase, in spite of the official efforts made to check economic over-expansion.

The number of construction projects examined during the second quarter of this year by the Federal factory inspectors has increased by 4% in comparison with the corresponding period of last year. The majority of these projects related to new buildings, to extensions and to the putting up of technical plants.

An international prize to a Swiss scientist.

Mr. Juerg Marmet, who is on the staff of the Institute for Hygiene and the Physiology of Labour, attached to the Federal Polytechnical School, has just received the Nicolo Castellino prize amounting in value to one million lire. This international prize is awarded every three years to recompense any remarkable activity in the field of industrial medicine. Mr. Marmet was given this prize for his research work in regard to toxicology among leadworkers.

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Twenty years of social peace in the Swiss Machine Industry.

It was on the 19th July, 1937, that the so-called "Labour Peace" Convention was signed by the Swiss Employers' Association and the various Swiss Trade Unions of the machine and metallurgical industries. This Convention, whereby the contracting parties bound themselves not to have any recourse to fighting measures in order to obtain their claims, has assured remarkable stability to social conditions in Swiss industry, for the last twenty years. Concluded, at first, for an experimental period of two years, it has already been renewed four times, namely in 1939, 1944, 1949 and finally in 1954 for a new five-year period, which expires on the 18th July, 1959. It is very rare, indeed, that contractual understandings between employers and workers have lasted for so long, without any change in the basic principles. There can be no doubt about it that the reason for this longevity comes from the long-term views of the authors of this Convention, who strove to produce a new state of mind and to place the general interests above the personal interests of the men who were working in the same plants. More than 150,000 workers and employees enjoy the benefits of this Convention which has also rendered appreciable services to the country.

Fifty wagons ordered in Switzerland by the Mexican Railways.

It has just been learnt that the Mexican Railways have signed an important contract, amounting in value to three million two hundred thousand dollars, with a Swiss firm. This contract provides for the delivery by the said firm of fifty postal wagons. Deliveries are to start in February, 1958. This business deal is the only one to have been concluded this year by the Mexican Railways, with any European country.

The situation in the Swiss hosiery industry improves.

After the difficulties experienced because of the impossibility to obtain nylon threads in sufficient quantities after the war, the Swiss hosiery industry has now entered upon a period of consolidation, in

spite of the dumping prices quoted during a certain time, by foreign competition. The efforts made by the Swiss manufacturers to follow the dictates of fashion, without for that giving up the high quality of their products, would appear to have proved successful and, at the present time, a fresh tendency is to be observed in favour of high quality articles. In spite of sharp competition, a relative calm prevails on the market and the situation allows the Swiss manufacturers to contemplate the future with a certain amount of optimism.

Swiss chocolate appreciated all over the world.

In 1956, the production of chocolate in Switzerland attained a record figure. It amounted to more than thirty-five million kilos of chocolate in tablet form, thus exceeding by more than sixty thousand kilos, the record figure achieved in 1915, and never equalled since then. From 1955 to 1956 the production of Swiss chocolate increased by 20 per cent. The consumption of chocolate per head of the population is higher in Switzerland than in any other country, coming even before Great Britain and Belgium. As for exports, these also show a satisfactory development. Thus, in 1956, exports amounted in weight to almost 6.5 million kilos, and in value to 35.5 million Swiss francs; there was an increase of more than ten million francs, in comparison with 1955. Last year, Switzerland exported her chocolate to some ninety different countries.

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Switzerland

