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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Swiss atomic problems commission visits the U.S.A.

In accordance with the provisions contained in the agreement recently signed by the United States and Switzerland in regard to the exchange of information and of specialists in the domain of nuclear energy, a Swiss delegation composed of experts belonging to some of the most important industrial firms in the country has now crossed the Atlantic and is engaged in visiting various nuclear research stations at Chicago, Chalk River and in the region of Idaho Falls.

Swiss Publicity Films awarded at Cannes.

Switzerland, often reproached for her passivity in the field of the cinema, has just redeemed herself by obtaining great success — due to the films produced by a Film Company in Zürich — at the IVth International Festival of Publicity Films. The Company in question carried off a large number of prizes, among them being the Golden Palm presented by the town of Cannes for the highest average of six films shown and the Special Prize awarded by the French Ministry of Commerce and Industry for the most original technique.

47-hour week and half-a-day work in Switzerland.

The economic prosperity which continues to prevail in this country makes it difficult to proceed with any reduction in working hours, about which there is so much talk. Nevertheless, considerable efforts in this direction are being made in certain branches of activity. Thus, for instance, the Convention of Employers in the Watchmaking Industry has just concluded an agreement with the Trade Unions and with the Employees' Association in this trade, by virtue of which working time has been reduced, as from 1st October, to forty-seven hours a week. A further reduction of one hour is to take place, as from the same date next year. An equitable compensation has been fixed in respect of hour-wages.

Passing to another subject which has to do with working hours, we learn that, in order to palliate the considerable shortage of labour which exists in Switzerland, a big Swiss firm has engaged in an interesting experiment. Considering, quite rightly, that there must be a large number of women who would like to work but are unable to devote the entire day to a job, this firm decided to engage women workers

for part-time work, viz. half a day. It would appear that this experiment has proved to be satisfactory, both from the social and the economic point of view. We may, therefore, expect other firms to follow this example, and this system, which has been applied for a long time in various other countries, to become general in Switzerland.

Creation of a Management Development Institute at Lausanne.

At a time when the problem of essential staffs is giving a headache to the Swiss authorities, as well as to a great many economic circles, the very recent inauguration, in Lausanne, of the Management Development Institute (IMEDE) was welcomed with the greatest satisfaction. This new Institute, which is available to all Swiss and foreign business undertakings, has adopted a method of training — the so-called "Case" method — which is as yet little known in Europe, and which is only applied to such men as have already had some business experience. In view of the fact that this method is used a great deal in the United States the organisers have called upon specialists selected from the most renowned American Universities for the purpose of putting this method into practice in Switzerland.

A new pipe-line for milk in the Swiss Alps.

A tube 1,500 metres long has been laid in the Swiss Alps for the purpose of conveying milk directly from the Alpine pastures to the dairy which is situated

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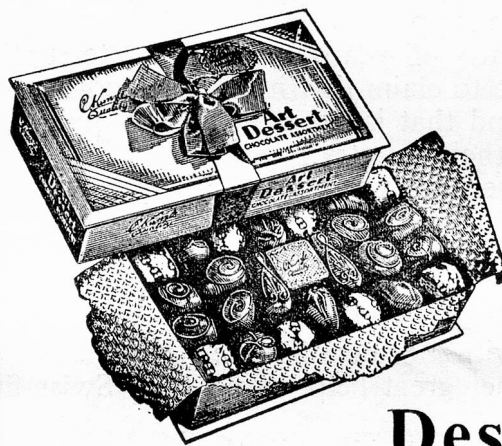
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some 600 metres lower down. The whole of this new-style pipe-line, which is made of a plastic substance, weighs only 295 kilos. As it is laid at a depth of 60 to 70 centimetres it can be used also during the cold season, so that the dairies which it supplies with milk will now be able to work for ten months in the year — and not only six, as has been the case hitherto. Thus, we find that alpine economy is giving the lie to the definition of rudimentary activity which is only too often applied to it.

Project for the construction of a giant cold-storage plant in the Valais.

The Canton of Valais, as is well known, possesses a very mild climate, and has thus become an immense orchard, the production of which brings a rich contribution to Swiss economy. Fruit-growing in the Valais, however, is exposed to difficulties which it sometimes has great difficulty in surmounting. For this reason, and in order to find a solution for the problem, plans are being made for the construction of a vast cold-storage plant, capable of containing 340 railway freight cars, which would make it possible to stock, sort and deliver fruit as required, and thus avoid those enormous losses from which the Valaisan fruit-growers only too frequently suffer.

The problem of electrical energy in Switzerland.

During the last five years the total consumption of electricity in Switzerland has increased by more than 7%, whereas the production of electric current has only gone up by 5.5%. Thus, whilst awaiting the appearance of nuclear energy, the industrial utilisation of which will not be available to-morrow or the


day after, particular efforts are being made to increase the hydraulic reserves in the country. At the beginning of 1957 no fewer than twenty-three power stations were in the course of construction; several of these have now been completed. As for the workers engaged last year on hydro-electrical construction jobs, their number amounted to fifteen thousand.

A new Swiss organ played by an expert.

During his visit to Switzerland Dr. Albert Schweitzer was given a very special mission to perform, nothing more nor less than to examine and try for himself an organ of Swiss manufacture which a wealthy American has presented, as a token of friendship, to a village in this country.

830,000 Swiss women work outside their homes.

One-third of the Swiss population engaged in work is constituted by women. Thus, as many as 830,000 Swiss women exercise a lucrative activity outside their homes, of which number 170,000 are married.



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