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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Extension of the chemistry department of the Federal Polytechnical School at Zurich.

The Swiss Government has just submitted to Parliament the Draft Bill of a project concerning the extension of some of the chemical institutes attached to the Federal Polytechnical School at Zurich. The appropriation required for work in this connection and for the equipment of laboratories, lecture-rooms, etc., amounts to twelve-and-a-half million Swiss francs, of which sum 2,050,000 francs have already been obtained, as a donation from six important Swiss firms in the chemical industry, for the purpose of building a new institute for physical chemistry. It may be recalled in this connection that the Federal Polytechnical School has always reserved an important place for chemistry, as regards both teaching and research. The best proof of this is to be found in the fact that among the elect in the ranks of scientists and research-workers of world fame who have taught — or are still teaching — chemistry at the Federal Polytechnical School, no fewer than five professors have already received the Nobel Prize.

Addition to Swiss River Fleet.

A new ship belonging to the Swiss River Fleet, has just been launched on the Rhine, for the account of a shipping firm in Basle; this is the "City of Berne", a 750-ton barge possessing an engine of 500 h.p.

Great increase in the consumption of cement in Switzerland.

The amount of cement consumed gives some idea of the development of the building trade. In Switzerland the consumption of cement amounted in 1946 to 155 kilos per head of the population, in 1952 to 284 kilos, and in 1955 to 424 kilos. In this way, consumption of cement is higher in Switzerland than in the United States.

New Swiss postage stamps.

On 5th March next, the Swiss Postal Administration will issue a new series of propaganda stamps, which will be valid from the day of their issue to 31st December 1958. The vignettes on these stamps will be devoted to the following subjects: the bi-millenary of Nyon, a small town on the banks of Lake Lemman; the 1958 Exhibition (SAFFA) of feminine work in Zurich; the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the Swiss trade mark "The Crossbow"; and the 75th anniversary of the Salvation Army in Switzerland.

Slight decrease in Switzerland's imports of motor vehicles.

After having suffered a marked decline during the period July-October 1957, Swiss imports of motor vehicles once more developed an upward trend during the last two months of the year. Thus, although the record figures for 1956 were not attained, the decrease was only a slight one. More than 62,000 new motor vehicles passed through the Swiss Customs in 1957, representing a value of more than 355 million Swiss francs.

Swiss equipment for a Brazilian hydro-electric plant.

The hydro-electric plant of Barra Bonita, on the Rio Tiéte, in Brazil, the dam for which is now under construction, will be put into service in 1959; its capacity will amount to 132,000 kilowatts. The major part of the electric equipment will be supplied by the Brazilian branch of an important Swiss firm, but those pieces of machinery which it is not capable of producing will be delivered by the parent-firm in Baden, near Zurich.

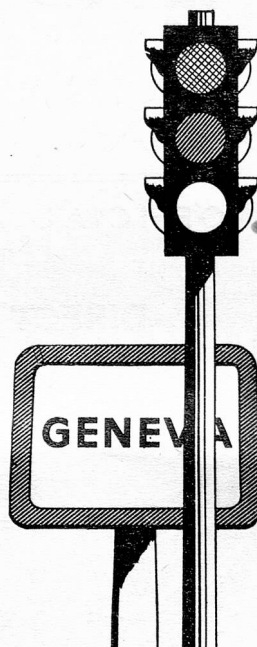
SWISS BANKS DIVIDENDS.

The following Swiss Banks have declared their dividends for 1957: Schweiz. Bankgesellschaft, Zurich: 10 per cent (1956: 9%); Schweiz. Bankverein, Basle: 9 per cent (1956: 9%); Schweiz. Kreditanstalt, Zurich: 9 per cent (1956: 9%); Bündner Privatbank: 4 per cent (1956: 4%); Schweiz. Bodenkreditanstalt, Zurich: 6 per cent (1956: 6%); Schweiz. Volksbank, Berne: 6 per cent (1956: 6%); Gewerbebank, Zurich: 6 per cent (1956: 6%); Schweiz. Hypothekbank, Solothurn, 5½ per cent; Hypothekarkasse des Kanton Fribourg: 5 per cent (1956: 5%). [A.T.S.]

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