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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Extension of the network of electric plants

In 1959 nine new electric plants were put into service in Switzerland, and thirteen others are under construction. The programme of the Swiss electric concerns provides for the setting-up of twenty-nine new electric stations during the course of the next five years. At present approximately 55 per cent of the capacity of production of hydro-electric power is already being exploited under profitable conditions. The average annual productivity of all the sources of "white coal" is estimated at some 35,000 million kWh.

Official control of watch movements

The seven Swiss offices for the official control of watch movements had nearly 100,000 watches under observation in 1959. The majority of the watches stood the tests with success and merited the title of "Chronometer". In order to meet the increasing amount of work that has to be done, these offices have now been equipped with perforating and verifying machines. The condition of the watch, its movements, variations in the movement, results, dimensions and peculiarities of the movements, and an indication as to the failure or success of the tested watch, are all grouped together on a collective official report.

New Swiss plant in Belgium

The Belgian Minister for Economic Affairs recently laid the foundation stone of a new Swiss plant belonging to Brown Boveri and Co., Ltd., in the industrial centre of Bornem. As from October next, this plant will manufacture electro-mechanical apparatus; at the initial stage its essential personnel will number about 150.

The next "Comptoir Suisse"

The 41st National Fair at Lausanne, known as the "Comptoir Suisse", is being held this year from 10th to 25th September. Within the framework of a special pavilion, the 1960 Lausanne Fair gives an extremely comprehensive view of the work done in the Canton of Vaud, from the commercial, economic and industrial angles. The foreign pavilion, which is occupied each year by a Guest of Honour, was reserved this year for Australia.

The Salon of Domestic Arts in Geneva

The 8th Salon of Domestic Arts will take place in Geneva from 26th October to 6th November. It will occupy 16,740 square yards at the Palace of Exhibitions.

Swiss chocolate

A Swiss has just perfected a rational method by which the manufacture of milk chocolate can be accelerated by the use of ultrasonics. The new apparatus — which renders superfluous the use of rolling-mills and grinding couches — makes it possible to carry out in about three hours the work which would have taken several days when performed in accordance with classical methods. The hourly output can attain one-and-a-half metric tons.

Swiss invention in thermoplastics industry

A firm in Zurich is putting on the market a machine, called "Formpack", for the mass-production of goblets — made of a thermoplastic material — such as are used currently in automatic machines dispensing drinks. This invention makes it possible to manufacture goblets of every kind and shape. Its output can attain 14,000 to 24,000 goblets per hour. Two of the interesting forms which can be produced are the goblets which possess a reinforced rim — which gives them great stability — and the goblets with rims that turn outside — greatly appreciated when used for the partaking of hot beverages.

Paradox of the Swiss national economy

In spite of the fact that she has no direct access to the sea, Switzerland possesses an important plant which specialises in the manufacture of marine diesel engines. A large number of ships sailing the high seas are equipped with engines that were built either in Switzerland or under licence in other countries. For example, twelve ships ordered by the Philippine Government, to be built in Japanese shipyards, will be equipped with Swiss diesel engines of 11,700 h.p.

Professor Auguste Piccard and Swiss industry

On his last "submersion", Mr. Jacques Piccard, son of Professor Auguste Piccard, with one of his colleagues, achieved by means of a bathysphere a record Pacific Ocean dive — 12,029.7 yards. It was a world-renowned Swiss firm that attended to the arrangement of the interior of the sphere in which the two young scientists carried out this operation. This firm had to conceive and execute the entire internal equipment of the cabin, from fixing the brackets which held the various pieces of apparatus, installing the electrical outfit, etc., to providing seats for the two explorers. Available space being very limited, it was necessary to utilise even the tiniest bit; the aperture to the sphere allowed only articles of small dimensions to be used; furthermore, the saline and humid atmosphere made it necessary to choose light alloys, as for instance stainless steel, for the 1,200 articles furnished by this Swiss firm.

Special contributions leading to success

Surgery is making great progress and is adding more and more noteworthy successes to its records, this being due partly to the apparatus and accessories which are being constantly improved. A firm in Bienne has just made a welcome contribution to modern surgery with two new inventions: one of them is a hypodermic syringe, the "Malix", which can be easily taken to pieces, sterilised and cleaned, made of stainless steel and calibrated precision glass; the other is an atraumatic needle, "Sutagor", without any eye and already provided with a thread 27.5 inches in length. These needles are supplied in a double envelope, made of plastic, the intermediary space being filled with an antiseptic liquid. These small bags are encased in containers, the colours of which vary in accordance with the nature of the sutural material (catgut, silk, flax fibre, nylon or stainless steel). With one snip of the scissors, one can cut open the little bag and take out a perfectly sterile needle, the thread

of which cannot become tangled. This needle is also available specially packed for the emergency instrument case carried by doctors. In short, the "Sutagor" innovations reduce the number of manipulations required by half, while at the same time increasing the rapidity and the safety of preparations.

Next "Watches and Jewellery" exhibition in Geneva

The XVIIIth Exhibition "Watches and Jewellery" is taking place in Geneva, from 9th September to 2nd October. Each year this Exhibition presents the latest creations of the Swiss watchmakers, jewellers and goldsmiths. For the first time, some foreign firms are taking part in this exhibition; an invitation was sent to some jewellers in the German Federal Republic. The Exhibition is being held on the premises of the Rath Museum, in accordance with a completely new plan. An important place was reserved for the complementary exhibition, which is always greatly appreciated by the public and which, this year, is devoted to diamond cutting.

Rolling-bridges and other installations ordered

In addition to the orders received from Swiss customers, an important Swiss firm specialising in mechanical constructions has just obtained an order for a rolling-bridge weighing fifty metric tons, which is intended for a hydro-electric station in Colombia. This same firm has also delivered to the city of Rome a plant for the recuperation of the offal in slaughterhouses, as well as for the removal of fat from the offal and its subsequent transformation, through grinding, into a flour which is used as fodder for cattle.

New Swiss turbines revolving in antipodes

Three Swiss "Pelton" turbines of 35,000 h.p., equipped with regulators and with seven spherical sluices, are to start revolving in Malay. Four turbines, of the same type, of 1,100 h.p. each are to be set up in a gas-purifying plant at Lacq.

New Swiss sweetening medium

Synthetic sweetening substances are not used only in times of penury; many people are obliged to abstain from the use of sugar. A Swiss firm has put on the market a new synthetic edulcorative preparation, called "Assugrine", the principal component being pure sodium cyclamate, and not containing — as is the case with many similar products — any admixture of saccharin. "Assugrine" is a product that is fifty times sweeter than cane sugar, is absolutely harmless, and does not suffer any deleterious effects from cooking.

Foreign capital pours into Switzerland

A conference was held recently by the General Direction of the Swiss National Bank, the principal banks and banking associations, on the subject of the evolution that has taken place in Switzerland in the monetary situation, and in that of the Money and Capital Markets, as a result of the big influx of currency from abroad which has occurred during these last few weeks. Considering the dangers which these new forces of expansion of a monetary origin might have on the future development of the prevailing economic prosperity in Switzerland, the Swiss National Bank suggested to the banking establishments that an agreement should be concluded immediately which would tend to check the influx of foreign funds and to reduce the sum total of these assets. The banks and the banking associations represented at this conference declared their readiness to adhere to such an agreement.

The agreement will be abrogated as soon as circumstances permit.

Labour shortage in Switzerland continues

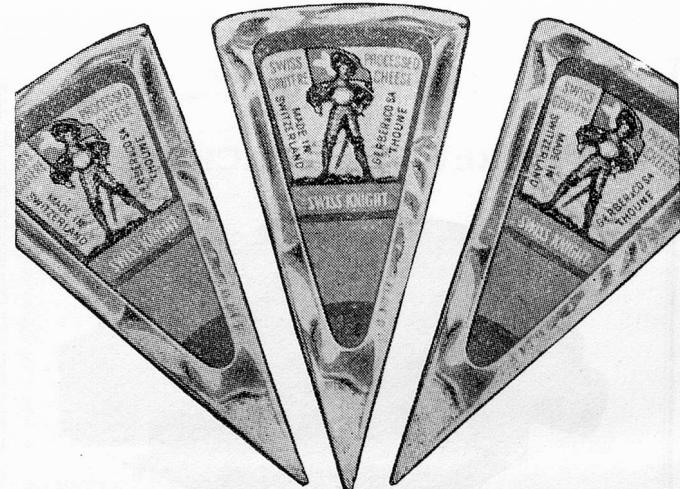
The general and considerable shortage of labour continues to affect the Swiss labour market. The available labour already very inadequate, has continued to shrink, whereas the demand for manpower continues to be very great — in spite of the advanced season. At the end of July the Labour Exchanges had only 297 fully unemployed entered in their books, as against 400 at the end of June, and 760 in July 1959.

Industrial firms in Switzerland increase in number

The number of Swiss business undertakings which come under the Federal Law on Factories reached 12,607 at the end of June 1960; this represents an increase of 188 factories within the space of twelve months. The biggest increases are in respect of the branches specialising in machinery, apparatus and instruments, clothing, woodworking, printing, watchmaking, and jewellery.

A 50th anniversary at the university of Neuchâtel

The Section for Commercial, Economic and Social Sciences, attached to the Neuchâtel University, will be commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation, on 28th and 29th October 1960. On this occasion there will be various festivities in which all the former students of this Institution, including a great many who are now abroad, will take part, in so far as is possible for them.



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