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SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DAM

The small Alpine village of Grimentz in the canton of the Valais has managed to preserve its original cachet in spite of being for several years the strategic centre for the construction of the Moiry hydro-electric dam. Abandoned once more to its original peace and quiet by the completion of the project, this attractive and picturesque village at an altitude of 5,160 feet has once again become conscious of its tourist vocation. Unfortunately, an Alpine economy does not provide sufficient livelihood for a large number of people; consequently, the younger generation, more than their elders, are tending to leave their birth-place in search of work and greater excitement in the towns. With a view to creating opportunities for work on the spot and thus keeping back some of the younger members of the community, the authorities of the commune of Grimentz, on whose territory the dam and artificial lake of Moiry are situated, have used the dues paid by the electricity company in order to buy back and re-equip the only hotel in the village. This establishment had been abandoned, after serving as accommodation for the truck drivers working on the construction of the dam. Enlarged and completely renovated, with all modern conveniences but in the traditional local style, the new hotel, which is now the property of the commune, has been re-opened with a view to attracting a rather special category of tourists, those who prefer rest, quiet and tranquility in comfortable surroundings in a splendid natural setting, to crowds and traffic. Other plans for local improvement and development are being studied, within the framework of an overall plan designed to safeguard the unspoiled character and appearance of the village. In this way, today's growing industrialization is being used to foster traditional values.

[O.S.E.C.]

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