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A SWISS ENGINEER TACKLES THE PARKING PROBLEM

The steady growth in road traffic in all industrial countries has created a parking problem that it is of the utmost urgency to solve. Realising this, a Swiss engineer has for several years now been studying the parking problem in all its aspects. He has consequently accumulated a whole series of patents, which we shall have occasion to discuss later.

Among the most interesting of his inventions are undoubtedly the "Zid parking meter" and the "Autonomic" automatic parking device. From the point of view of public car parks (with parking meters), these two inventions together — which have been designed with an eye to simplicity and great speed of operation — are at present the only ones in which the parking system and the charging of parking fees have been combined with a view to rational use and wholly automatic operation, without any need for car park attendants or regular supervision. Nevertheless, "Autonomic" also offers considerable scope for private parking, without parking meters.

The parking spaces are located longitudinally along the sides of straight or slightly curved lanes, arranged so as to make the best use of the space available. The "Zid" parking meter, which may be double, i.e. designed for two parking spaces, is provided with an individual key controlling parking and departure. The motorist drives his car to the space indicated as free by special light signals and stops it on a platform parallel to the actual parking space. He locks his car, inserts a coin in the parking meter and turns the key, whereupon the car is automatically moved into place by the lateral displacement of the platform on which the car is standing.

The special feature of the "Zid" parking meter is that the car-owner can occupy the parking space as long as he likes. The first coin inserted into the parking meter switches on the mechanism controlling the lateral displacement of the car. It is at the same time a sort of first instalment on the total fee to be paid for parking. On this return, the driver inserts the number of coins indicated on the parking meter, introduces the key and turns it. Once his car has been automatically moved back onto the lane, he gets in and drives off. If the right number of coins is not inserted, he will not be able to turn the key and, the car remaining where it is, he will be unable to drive off. Once the key has been turned to "departure", it cannot be withdrawn. A programme of tariffs can be set and changed in less than five minutes. The programme may include different rates for the day and night, for slack periods and peak hours, weekends and weekdays. In addition, the charge per hour may be set to decrease, remain constant or increase, depending on the policy adopted by the local authorities. It should also be added that the parking meter rejects coins that are not of the right size and may even, on payment of a supplement, be designed to check the alloy. Finally, each "Zid" parking meter comprises two visible counters, indicating respectively the takings and the number of cars using the space, which greatly simplifies book-keeping and the running of the garage.

A combination of the "Zid" parking meter and the "Autonomic" is used in the "Zidpark", a high capacity multiple floor parking system. "Zidpark" garages are very economical and at the same time provide not only a saving of space of over 32% compared with a normal

parking lot but also well-planned ventilation, low consumption of current, high turnover and complete safety.

A "Zidpark" garage with space for 500 cars has just been built in London by the Swiss inventor. Other projects on an even larger scale are already planned for several big towns in Switzerland, Germany, Portugal and Latin America. [O.S.E.C.]

THE "SWISS OBSERVER" THIRTY YEARS AGO

Looking through the "Swiss Observer" of March and April 1934, I felt quite nostalgic — there were many more Swiss Societies in England at that time, and their functions showed larger attendances, a sure sign that the Colony is getting smaller. There was the Union Helvetia, the Swiss Choral and Orchestral Societies, the Swiss Gymnastic Society. The Schweizerbund (Swiss Club) in Charlotte Street held an Annual Dinner and Ball, there was the Foyer Suisse and there was Pagani's, and, of course, there were the Swiss Sports.

Nearly every issue had an article of consequence, Prof. Max Weber wrote on "Wesen und Sinn des Schweizerischen Staates", Gonzague de Reynolds on "La Suisse et le Monde", Prof. A. Laett on "L'Oeuvre pour les Suisses a l'Etranger", and there were several instalments on "Historical Relations of England and Switzerland".

Much was written about Switzerland's economic problems. Most towns and Cantons showed deficits for the previous year, Neuchâtel, for instance was on the wrong side by five and a half million francs, Basle by fourteen. Help was extended by the Confederation to talented Swiss musicians whose plight was very bad owing to the Depression. There was a "Hunger March" by 600 unemployed from Bienne to Berne.

"Whither Switzerland" was the heading of an article on the first "Cabinet Crisis" since 1948 during which Federal Councillor Haeblerlin had resigned on account of the Referendum being taken against his Bill on the Protection of the State. His successor was Dr. J. Baumann. Federal Councillor M. Musy had also tendered his resignation, and Dr. Etter was elected in his place.

Federal Councillor Schulthess's speech at the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle was reported in full, and write-ups of football matches and ice hockey appeared regularly. The Swiss Bank Club London was beaten 5:0 by the Swiss Bank Club Geneva in Geneva. News of reductions in fares to help the tourist industry was published and a report that the Swiss gold efflux had ended.

Concerning functions in the Swiss Colony, reports appeared of the Ladies' Festival of the Lucullus Lodge under the chairmanship of the late Mr. G. Wyss. The Wilhelm Tell Yodle Club of the Swiss Federal Railways were the guests of the Union Helvetia, and Mr. P. Brun presided over the Annual Banquet and Ball of the Swiss Club Birmingham. There was a Sunday School outing of the "Schweizerkirche", and the late Mr. H. Senn was in the chair at the A.G.M. of the City Swiss Club at Pagani's. At a meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society, Sir Arnold Theiler, the eminent veterinary surgeon, was a guest, and Dr. L. D. A. Hussey spoke on "The Story of Sir Ernest Shackleton's Expedition to the South Pole".

The item which shows most clearly how times have changed was the news that Swissair were going to introduce a Curtiss-Condor twin-engined plane in which fifteen people could sit comfortably and which travelled at a speed of 144 m.p.h.!