

Miscellany from Bern

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1969)**

Heft 1577

PDF erstellt am: **21.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-696554>

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MISCELLANY FROM BERN

THE CAPITAL'S FUTURE SHAPE

Bern covers a total of 19 square kilometres of built-up area accomodating 170,000 people. There remains another 1.4 square kilometres of open space within the perimeter of the town, in which buildings could be erected. The actual area of the town could potentially accommodate a maximum of 270,000 inhabitants, a population that will be reached in 50 or 60 years. If the proportion of number of jobs to number of dwellings remain the same during this evolution, then the 115,000 jobs of today will grow to 180,000.

The largest spaces open to the town's expansion lie to the West of it. Urban planners foresee a continuation of the present growth centered on Buempliz. There will be two Berns in future: Central Bern and West Bern, both of approximately equal size. Planners are already figuring how the new Western town will reach to Oberottingen, but there is still some time to go before this materializes.

A MACHINE COMPANY CELEBRATES ITS HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY

The firm Ulrich Amman Maschinenfabrik AG has been established in Langenthal since 1869. It employs a thousand workers and is the first Swiss producer and agent for building machinery. Its production consists of crushing mills, asphalt finishers, tar sprayers, gravel sorting and washing machines and concrete mixers. The company represents the Caterpillar and Harnischfeger Corporations of America. In 1930, Amman created a subsidiary in St. Dizier, France, thereby doubling its european capacity.

WHAT ABOUT THE REFUSE OF THE SUBURBS?

The waste-disposal factory of the capital is overburdened. Its director said that the wastes of some new suburbs could not be processed in his installations any more and had to be dumped provisionally in two big holes outside of town. In 1971, the waste-disposal factory under construction in Worbental would be ready and the situation would be relaxed. The citizens would be called to the polls in Autumn to vote credits for a new and enlarged town waste-disposal unit: the director urged the Bernese to vote intelligently on that occasion, in view of the importance of the particular problem. Their favourable vote would allow for a new waste-disposal factory by 1974. The director presented some interesting statistics concerning his installations: their two ovens, of 30,000 ton capacity, eliminated refuse with the calorific value of 5,500 tons of oil. This heat was not wasted. Indeed, it

heated at distance 32 big buildings, among them, the Insel- and Frauen-spital, the Station, the Schanzenpost and the law court. The fact that the waste-disposal factory heated vast premises in town precluded its transfer outside of Bern. The installation of two additional filters should silence the complaints of the immediate neighbours of the factory.

THE AIRPORT

Bern's airport has had rather less traffic in 1968 than in the year before. It registered 60,247 passengers, 20,491 of which were airline passengers, 39,301 local passengers to and from Bern, and 3,122 transit passengers. A reason for this decline is that Swissair has cancelled a number of loss-making flights, such as night-flights to Basle. The failures of the charter companies "Globair" and "Autair", the cancellation of the organised journeys to England by "Balair" have cost the airport in passenger traffic. But the airports activity is expected to expand greatly, so much so that it will be insufficient in a decade. Since there have been rumours of rebuilding and resiting the airport elsewhere, an association, already 2,000 strong, has been founded to keep Bern free from a continental airport and from the noise it would bring with it.

THE CHURCHES JOIN FORCES

The Evangelical-Reformed Church, the Roman Catholic and Old Catholic Churches and the Methodist Church of Bern have decided, together with the Bernese Salvation Army, to co-ordinate their christian activity throughout the Canton. They have formed a "Working Community of the Churches of Bern" and have fixed it the following tasks: full communication and information among the churches, co-ordination of the parallel ventures of the churches, common study of the problems at hand, mediation between individual churches should difficulties arise and mutual help in case of need.

OIL SURVEY IN THE CANTON

The eastern and western sides of the Plateau have been systematically investigated for oil ten years ago. There remained to survey the subsoil of Bern and Solothurn. The Bernese Oil Consortium has elaborated a prospection programme spreading over five years and costing 20 million francs. The "Bernische Erdöl AG" is presently carrying through a series of seismic measurements in conjunction with the "Société Nationale des Petroles d'Aquitaine" in order to find out whether deep drillings could be financially justified.

The seismic method, one amongst many others currently used in petrol prospection, is suited to the soil of the canton. It consists in making small

explosions at depths of 20 metres, the small earthquakes thus produced spread out at different speeds according to the kind of rocks they traverse. The presence of petrol-sheets would be betrayed by a measurable reflexion of the shock waves. The registering of these shock waves is the responsibility of a small team of experts, who keep their laboratory at a distance of a few hundred metres from the points of the explosions. On both sides of the laboratory are stretched cables 600 metres long and fitted with hundreds of "ground microphones" which register the smallest vibrations of the ground. Their recordings are sent to Paris for evaluation.

A RAZZIA ON MOTORISTS

The cantonal police of Bern announced the punishments it had meted out to faulty motorists in the first quarter of this year. 42 applicants were refused the driving or learner's licence for being proved unfit to drive. 470 driving licences were confiscated for variable periods following reckless driving and breaking of the highway code. Three quarters of these victims of the law saw their licence again within a year. One person had it confiscated for over a year but less than five. 119 persons were deprived of their driving-licence for unlimited periods. 37 learners were caught driving unaccompanied and their learner's licences were confiscated for variable periods.

731 motorists got a warning. 208 motorists were sent to an approved doctor for examination of their physical and mental abilities. 26 persons were subjected to a psychotechnical test and 31 told to repass their driving exam.

DISCOTHEQUE IN A GASOMETER

Youths in Bern joined forces and, acting on their own initiative, have undertaken to transform two small disused gasometers into a youth centre. They commissioned two freshly diplomaed draughtsmen to do the plans. One of the gasometers will contain a multi-purpose room in which discussions, film projections, concerts, etc. could be organised and a hall for permanent exhibitions at the entrance. The other gasometer, connected to the first, will be transformed into a discothèque to be animated by a disc-jockey. This youth centre will be run democratically by those who make regular use of it. Its originators insisted that the State was out of the project (although the membership of a member of the Town Council would not be spurned upon, just in case there material backing were needed), all that had been given to them was the plot of land on which the gasometers were built. The expenses, estimated at four to five hundred thousand francs, would be covered by private industry, which, in sending them manpower in paid overtime work, who would help to fit up the centre.