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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

The Swiss Catholics nearly lose their Church

The John Southwark Centre in Great Peter Street, Westminster, was nearly wrecked by fire one weekday at the beginning of May when a plumber forgetfully left a candle burning in the loft of the building while taking an 11 a.m. break.

The John Southwark Centre is the new Church and Meeting Place of the Swiss Catholics in London. As the place, which is rented from the Archdiocese of Westminster, is still under transformation, Father Paul Bosshard, Chaplain of the Swiss Catholic Mission was not on site to see the fire break out. He is temporarily housed in a modern bachelor's apartment in a neighbouring block, at no small cost to Westminster Cathedral. The plumber was busy improving the water system.

The candle which he had left alight while taking his morning cup of tea set fire to a heap of polystyrene panels used for heat and sound insulation. Within seconds, the whole loft was ablaze. Providentially, Father Bosshard, who was at that very moment working on his sermon for the Sunday Mass of 14th May in his model apartment, felt the need to consult a work of theology which had already been moved to the John Southwark Centre. He crossed the street and climbed to the upper floor of the Centre. It was then that he heard a crackling sound above. He climbed another flight of stairs and was met by an eruption of suffocating and noxious fumes billowing from the loft. Father Bosshard rushed like lightning to the telephone and summoned the immediate aid of London's fire brigade. Up again with a fire extinguisher, he fought valiantly against the smoke and the flames until his implement had run out. Fortunately, the first of six fire engines were on the spot within five minutes. The firemen rushed their high powered hose up the stairs and quickly brought everything under control.

They told Father Bosshard that if they had been called a few minutes later, there would have been no salvation for the John Southwark Centre. It would have ended its existence as a blackened and charred ruin . . . and the Swiss Catholics would have had to start their search for new premises all over again. Father Bosshard said later that he had been on the verge of being overwhelmed by the smoke and that it took him several hours to clear his lungs and recover fully from the incident. Damages are estimated at £250 and will be paid by the contractors.

TWO SWISS-LINKED FIRMS BLACKED IN THE HULL CONTAINER DISPUTE

The two transport firms blacked in the Hull docks container dispute, Panalpina Northern and M.A.T. Transport Ltd., have close associations with Switzerland. Panalpina Northern is a member of the Basle-based Panalpina World Transport group of companies and is headed by a Swiss managing director, Mr. J. Hug. M.A.T. (Machinery and Technical) Transport, which has a sister company in Basle, was founded by Swiss-born, Mr. Arnold Kunzler.

Mr. F. Daley, Advertising and Public Relations Manager of M.A.T. Transport in London, stressed that the blacking of the firms was a pure coincidence. It was hardly surprising that the firms affected should have Swiss connections, since this was the case of most of the main forwarding firms in this country. Mr. Daley said that the Swiss were leaders in the international forwarding business.

An official at Panalpina in London said that the Swiss-style management of Panalpina Northern Ltd. may have had some bearing on the dispute. The management of the company may possibly shown less patience with the docker's militant action. Panalpina was in fact the only one of the two firms concerned to bring the case to the Industrial Relations Court.

But Mr. Daley said that there was not the slightest connection between the dispute and the fact that the two companies had Swiss affiliations.

"It is pure coincidence. You can be sure that Mr. Walter Cunningham (leader of the striking dockers) has

never heard of Mr. Kunzler", he said.

The reasons why the two particular firms were blacked were simple: They were the two main undertakings with groupage depots in the Hull area and were therefore obvious targets.

Mr. Daley said that M.A.T. had no intention of going to the Industrial Relations Court and were leaving the door open for negotiations. Although the Hull depot had been affected by the blacking, the firm's activities in other parts of Britain were unaffected. Mr. Daley said that no single firm could campaign alone for an end to the British docker problem, and added that the whole matter would soon have to come to a head. Mr. Daley said that the entry of Britain into the Common Market would be beneficial to the trade and force "some proper competition".

The origin of the container dispute has been discussed at length in the Press. Groupage operations used to be carried out with rail ferry wagons. For the past five or six years, vast metal crates of standard dimensions, the so-called containers, have come into increasing use. The crux of the problem is that they are filled by transport firm employees, who are not registered dockers. Goods from various areas are channelled to groupage depots, conveniently "stuffed" in containers, and then transported to specially designed container ships with the minimum of handling. The new operations drastically reduce the necessary docker labour force, which is why they have reacted by blacking container firms in various ports.

One could justifiably ask why transport firms do not hire dock labour. Miss Sylvia Streit, Secretary to M.A.T. General Manager, Mr. P.

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Kunzler, said that forwarding firms preferred to use their own employees in their groupage depots because there were more guarantees that the goods in their care would be handled with care and properly placed in containers. Another good reason why the firms should rely on their own staff is that they are spared the extremely high wage bills which the employment of registered dockers would entail.

(PMB)

SWISS CHURCH

Journalist speaks to Youth Club

Mr. Bernard Feller, the London correspondent of the three most important French-speaking dailies, "Vingt-quatre Heures", "Tribune de Lausanne" and "Tribune de Geneve" spoke to the regular weekly meeting of the youth club at the Eglise Suisse about his visit to six Bantu homelands in South Africa.

Mr. Feller, who was speaking to a good forty youths, mainly au pair girls, began by situating the background of Apartheid policy introduced by the white Nationalist Party 22 years ago. Recalling developments in South Africa up to the present day, he said that all the published figures showed that Apartheid had dismally failed in its prime purpose: in separate development. Mr. Feller, said that there were far more blacks in white urban areas than before Apartheid.

Mr. Feller, who was one of the first western journalists to make an exclusive report on African homelands, all of which are generally closed to whites with the exception of the Transkei, said that most of these areas could just about survive on a subsistence level if they weren't overpopulated. But primitive methods of agriculture hastened the erosion of the soil and the disappearance of arable land. Many of the African homelands have only one harvest a year and famines are not uncommon. Mr. Feller said that although the homelands may one

day become independent and even form a federation speaking on equal terms with Pretoria, there was no hope of these states becoming economically viable. The white South Africans held all the levers of wealth and power and it was economically inconceivable to launch new industries in areas totally devoid of the necessary infrastructure when the necessary white-ruled centres already existed.

Although the speaker agreed that life in an African homeland was not necessarily as bad as often depicted, he said there was no means for the overcrowded populations of these areas to improve their lot without aid from the white-run South African government. At present, the government has drastically cut its Bantu-advancement budget and cancelled a vital five-year job creation plan. Mr. Feller said that white South Africans considered spending money on the negro majority "rather in the same way that Swiss people react when asked to allocate more public funds to prisons". Despite this, Mr. Feller said that Apartheid was spoken of in every paper, visible on every street corner and troubled many white consciences.

He did not foresee any change of attitude among the whites in the immediate future but said that young people were becoming increasingly critical of Apartheid. The speaker also ruled out any mass revolt by the blacks for many years to come. This was impossible because of the absence of organisation and preparation among the black masses, and also because of the immense power wielded by the South African police state.

Among the many points raised during question time, one African listener stressed that it was shameful that Christian Missionaries should condone with Apartheid. The speaker said that he had met Missionaries who not only accepted this institution, but actually made good use of it by running colonial-type farms with dirt cheap labour. The Rev. Nicod wanted to know why a minister friend of his with liberal principles returned after six years in South Africa as a firm

supporter of Apartheid. This the speaker could not answer. The answer would probably sound as illogical as the principles on which Apartheid are based.

(PMB)

TWO QUEEN'S AWARD WINNERS MERGE

Acrow (Engineers) Limited announce that the merger between themselves and the Steel Group has been ratified by shareholders and will proceed as planned.

On the basis of the last published balance sheet (which excludes Acrow's overseas companies), the new Group has a combined turnover of £55 million with a combined pre-tax profit of £5,650,000. The new market evaluation of the Acrow Group is approximately £57 million.

The acquisition of the Steel Group constitutes a major advance of Acrow's formidable growth rate. The enlarged Group—with a combined labour force of 10,000—now represents a powerful and broadly-based group with widespread interests in both the construction and mechanical handling industries.

Substantial customer benefits are expected as a result of both companies' crane and hoist manufacturing interests and from the development of their complementary network of sales, service and production facilities throughout the world.

Acrow, which has just been awarded the 1972 Queen's Award to Industry for export achievement, has established itself as the world's foremost manufacturer of steel formwork. This, together with Acrow shoring and scaffolding systems, is being used in virtually every country in the world. Other interests include industrial storage and materials handling equipment, pressure vessels for the oil and petrochemical industries, storage tanks, steel freight containers, Bailey bridge-



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