

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

**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

**Band:** - (1973)

**Heft:** 1665

**Rubrik:** Technical items

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increase in the postal charges — which have anyway gone up considerably since last January.

The reaction of the public to these facts varies. Some people write furious letters to newspapers, complaining bitterly — but some are quite philosophical about it. I have heard one gentleman say that he is quite glad not to be bothered by mail twice a day and certainly happy that his Saturday will hitherto be undisturbed by the arrival of bills or

income tax demands. As far as I am concerned, what disturbs me most is the fact that the Highest Magistrate in Berne can talk and issue instructions — and remains powerless to see to it that they are followed. One lady I saw recently has called this "revolution against Berne". Even if one does not wish to use such strong words, it remains nevertheless a very disturbing development.

*Gottfried Keller*

# TECHNICAL ITEMS

## SWISS PLANT FOR A TRAIN OF THE FUTURE

The magnetic air-cushion train, a new high speed means of transport, will help to solve traffic problems in the years to come. This train of the future will run at cruising speeds of 200 and 300 m. p. h. and be able to reach top speeds of 350 m. p. h.; consequently over short distances it will be faster even than travelling by air. Japan is at present working on plans for a magnetic air-cushion train; the Swiss firm Sulzer Bros. (Winterthur, Zürich) is taking part in the development of this project with the supply of a low temperature refrigerating plant. The technical side of planning this new train should be completed by the end of 1975, and it is expected to be ready to go into operation during the year 1980.

## MINI CLOTHES HORSE

A Swiss inventor from St. Gall recently invented and put on the market a mini clothes horse of entirely new design offering a neat solution to the problem of hanging up clothes at night. This useful device, which successfully replaces a chair or a traditional clothes horse, offers the advantage of taking up very little room and of being easily suspended almost anywhere, on a wall, the side of a cupboard, a door, etc. It is made of plastic and measures approximately 10 by 15 cm (4 by 6 in.); it is easily fixed by pressing the small adhesive tapes attached to the back onto any smooth clean surface. Trousers can be hung from the press so as to keep their creases, while the shirt and underwear are hung on the curved upper part. A small hook is provided for the coat hanger holding the jacket. This ingenious device won a gold medal at the Inventors Exhibition in Brussels.

## TRAVELLING STACKING CRANES AND ELECTRIC HOISTS

The transport and mechanical handling of panels and laminated goods have raised many new problems, which have been rationally solved by the travelling stacking cranes produced and built by an engineering works at Nebikon (Lucerne, Switzerland). Among the many travelling cranes produced by this firm (travelling column-type stacking cranes, travelling gantry cranes, etc.) mention can be made of the travelling cranes with grabs for maximum use of the area available for stacking panels. It is sufficient to allow passage 40 cm wide between the stacks for the crane to operate under the best conditions. Technically, the lifting force, hoisting range and height are unlimited. Controlled from the ground, by means of a pear switch, or from a cabin fixed to the crane-grab, it can be operated by one man. The use of special brakes makes it possible to increase working speeds as well as efficiency. The same factory has also just placed on the market a new electric hoise, a twin version of which is capable of lifting 64 tons.

## FIRST FULLY AUTOMATIC ALARM WRIST-WATCH

One year after launching the "Memotron" alarm wrist-watch with a self-winding movement, a Chaux-de-Fonds watch factory (Neuchâtel, Switzerland) presented at the Besle Fair 1973 the first fully automatic battery-powered alarm wrist-watch; this is the only watch in the world whose movement and alarm mechanism never need winding. Like the self-winding model, this new "Memotron" powered by a type 651 battery is equipped with a powerful acoustic generator. The electronic sound is transmitted by the watch glass acting as an acoustic membrane. The alarm operates automatically for 5 minutes. The battery has a life of one year under normal conditions of use. The new "Memotron" type 651 also possesses a unique alarm system making it possible to set the alarm according to a 24-hour cycle. The high frequency battery-powered movement fitted with a shockproof mechanism also indicates the date and seconds.



## Quins born in Liestal

A woman gave birth to Switzerland's first quintuplets in Liestal, near Basle. The five survived, and it is believed that this has happened only four or five times in the world. The children required special treatment and were put in oxygen tents. Their mother, aged 32, had been unable to bear children until 1965 for health reasons. Following an interruption of her ovulations, she had submitted to a hormone treatment.



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