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problems of supply, population growth and conservation was reflected this year by a number of very important conferences. The Law of the Sea Conference which has just adjourned in Caracas, Venezuela, was concerned with the exploitation of the sea's natural resources. In April, the United Nations held a special General Assembly to discuss the protection of the natural resources of developing countries. Last year, the United Nations sponsored the first world conference on the environment in Stockholm and last month, it organised the world's first population congress in Bucharest.

This concern is expressed with varying emphasis in individual countries. Switzerland is particularly concerned with environmental protection because of her small size, large population, high standards in respect of the quality of life, advanced economic development and great natural beauty. The coexistence of these factors carries a number of contradictions which have lent particular urgency to problems of the environment in our small country. The fact that the environment has now been discussed at world level indicates the need for a common approach and the necessity to do something about the problem. In Switzerland, the debate has been mainly held at parliamentary level and has led to new legislation on land planning, and to a referendum on the matter.

A great new idea of modern times is that the future can be controlled by creating, today, the right circumstances. So far, western countries have laid emphasis on their economic development and have gleefully expanded economically without too much consideration on the side-effects of this policy. But now, the West, and particularly Switzerland, has accepted that the future has to be *planned* and that the trend of the past two decades cannot be left uncorrected.

One of the things covered by planning is population. It is not envisaged at this stage to fix a national target for population growth and influence individual families in their fertility. In fact, Switzerland has a small demographic growth which is not expected to push population to much more than seven millions by the turn of the century. But even if the population only rises by a million during the next thirty years, it will still be necessary to organise the way these new inhabitants will live and work. Urban distribution and accommodation will have to be planned. There is some political uncertainty attached to the problem, since an initiative like the one heralding the 20th October Referendum on foreign presence can obviously affect population forecasts.

Planning also touches on economic development. Establishing growth rates, calculating curves in production, employment and traffic has a meaning for individual income. Planning in this respect really consists in deciding whether or not we should be more prosperous.

Deciding on our optimal individual wealth would obviously depend on outside factors, such as world supply of commodities and the buoyancy of world trade. It is therefore impossible to make long term forecasts which, incidentally would also be related to the problem of foreign labour. By keeping many foreigners in their country, the Swiss are preserving a precious aid to their prosperity. But this presence has its disadvantages and the choice facing the people is: Are we prepared to maintain our prosperity, or become even richer, with the help of a vast supply of outside manpower, or do we consider the economic benefits of so many foreigners as not worth the disadvantages. Not all the Swiss who will vote for the repatriation of a sizeable part of the foreign resident population see the problem in this light. They believe that their standards of living will not be affected by their decision.

Planning generally deals with figures and statistics. A federal commission chaired by Mr. Alois Huerlimann, a national councillor, is currently at work on finding the optimal road map of the country. It has recently produced data on commuting to and from work. It established that the Swiss on average take 15.2 minutes to go to

work, and that 44 per cent of them go by foot. The average distance covered by all those who do not work at home is 4.3 km. This distance is covered on average 2.9 times a day, with the result that the Swiss spend about three quarters of an hour a day in commuting. Students have been found to take far longer because of the much larger distances they have to travel.

One wonders whether this data has immediate relevance to planning road transport, or whether it was collected for the pleasure of pure knowledge. But the effort does remind us that working is only one part of our active life. Transportation also has a bearing on the quality of life, and it should be possible to establish an optimal time of journey, bearing in mind the physical and mental effects of commuting. The figures released by the Huerlimann commission indicate that every part of our lives, considered for a large sample of people, can be measured and quantified. These statistical results may not be particularly relevant to the solution of individual problems, but aim nevertheless at controlling the future of society as a whole. However, these studies must be guided by the principle that the welfare of man should be placed above everything else. P.M.B.

# SWISS EVENTS

## FEDERAL

### Austro-Swiss contacts

The Austrian foreign affairs minister, Mr. Erich Bielka, paid an official 3-day visit to Switzerland at the beginning of the month during which he had talks with his Swiss counterpart, Mr. Pierre Graber. This visit was part of a regular exchange at this level by the two neighbouring countries which have many common interests and share the same points of view on many international matters. The topics discussed by the two men included the planned nuclear power station at Ruethi, in Canton St. Gall. The Austrians living across the border in the Vorarlberg area have voiced concern over the environmental risk of the future installations and a bilateral commission is currently studying this problem.

Mr. Graber also played host during the month to the Cuban foreign affairs minister, Mr. Raul Roa, who is on a tour of European countries. Mr. Graber entertained him to a working lunch at the "Lohn". The two men discussed international and bilateral affairs.

### Beginning of "Operation Sahel"

The Swiss Rescue Corps set up to

help in disasters abroad has begun its first mission in the Lake Tchad area of the Sahelian zone of Africa. Work to raise this voluntary force began in 1971. Three years later, everything was ready for putting a generous idea into practice. The Tchad mission will serve as a test for future missions. Five million francs have been allocated for its work of aid and reconstruction in an area which has been particularly badly hit by famine. Eighty-five hand-picked young Swiss, chosen as much for their human qualities as for their professional qualifications, have been sent to the area. Fifteen are remaining in Switzerland to handle logistics. The teams on the field will have 12 Land-Rovers, 10 Unimog lorries, eight heavy trucks, two Pilatus Porter monoplanes and six radio transmitters at their disposal. Most of this material was supplied by the Swiss Army. The teams have been told to help the locals to be as active as possible in the reconstruction programme they have gone to Africa to promote; Mr. Pierre Graber, Head of the Political Department, launched the operation with a Press conference in which he said that the mission was in keeping with Swiss aid across the world: making the best possible use of limited development resources.

### Increased telephone charges

To offset the increasing losses of the telephone system, the Government has increased telephone rates by 40 per cent. Subscriptions will increase, and so will the cost of inter-city conversations. These increases will bring about 390

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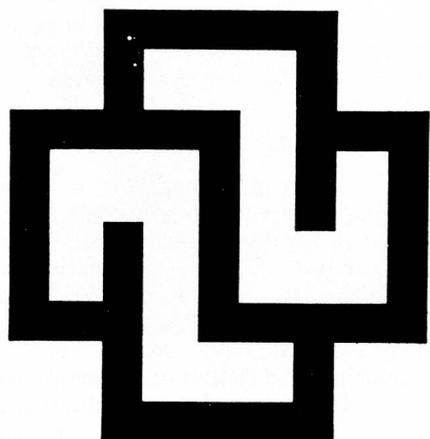


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million francs of additional resources to the Swiss GPO. A three-minute conversation over a distance of 50 kilometres will cost 80 cents as from December 4th, against 50 cents so far. Similar conversations for distances of 100 kilometres and over will rise from 70 to 110 cents, and conversations from distances of 200 kilometres and over will rise from a franc to 140 cents.

#### **The Swiss Tax-Payer is privileged, says Mr. Chevallaz**

Opening this year's *Comptoir* in Lausanne, Mr. Georges-André Chevallaz, former Mayor of the City and Head of Department of Finance, said that it would be necessary to increase direct and indirect taxation. He claimed that the tax burden of the Swiss was considerably inferior to that of other people and that the necessary commitments of the Confederation and the Cantons could only be honoured if additional revenue was forthcoming. He recognised that the current deficit of Confederation, cantonal and communal authorities had to be reduced because it was a strong inflationary factor. For these reasons, the Federal Council had asked for an increase in federal income tax, Turnover Tax and petrol duties. In his speech Mr. Chevallaz also dwelt on the paradoxical nature of Switzerland's prosperity, stressing that this prosperity was the result of hard work and innovation.

#### **Electricity may have to be rationed**

If hydrological conditions are unsatisfactory Switzerland could suffer a 10 per cent shortfall in her electricity supply during the winter of next year. If rainfall and the volume of the mountain streams that supply hydroelectric installations are normal, there will still be a shortage of about 200,000 kWh, or one per cent of total requirement. The situation should improve for the winter of 1977-78 with the commissioning of the Goesgen Nuclear Power station and the connection of the Swiss network to nuclear power stations abroad. But with the expected rise in demand, Switzerland could still be short that year of 5 per cent of its requirements if hydrological conditions are unfavourable.

The situation should again improve slightly the following year with the commissioning of Kaiseraugst power station, but provisions are that the country's electricity supply will be very tight indeed and the Federal Council has already made plans for an eventual rationing of electricity, starting this winter. This rationing could hit non-essential consumption, such as illuminated advertisements and heated swimming pools, and allow a saving of 10 to 20 per cent. Electricity, which in Switzerland is nearly all of hydraulic origin, accounts for only 14 per cent of the country's energy consumption. The remainder is nearly all provided for by petrol, whose import bill has resulted in a balance of payment deficit of nearly

£600 million (4,360 million francs) during the first six months of the year. The Federal Railways used 7 per cent of the country's electricity or only 1 per cent of total consumption.

## **MODERN LIFE**

#### **Inspectors on Geneva Transport need protection**

Geneva Public Transport have had to face the growing problem of passengers without tickets and of thieves breaking the ticket vending machines standing at the tram and bus stops of the town. Both offences are on a sharp increase and there have been many cases of inspectors being assaulted.

The whole Transport system has at present to operate with only twelve inspectors who visit some 50 buses and trams daily. They usually find about 25 passengers without a ticket a day. These passengers are usually asked to pay an instant fine. If they do not have the money, they are told to supply their names and addresses and show documents proving their identity. If they refuse to submit to this request, they are asked to accompany the inspector to the nearest police station.

A growing number of people caught in this way and refusing to show their identity break away from the inspector and make their escape at the next tram stop. There have been several instances of inspectors attempting to stand in the frauder's way and getting punched, sometimes seriously enough to require hospital treatment. Geneva Transport has reacted by having buses visited by patrols of three or four inspectors, with one checking on tickets while the others guard the exits so as to trap eventual offenders. The method appears to be most effective, although the surveillance of the network is obviously more thinly spread. Passengers without tickets are not usually found in the rush hours but mainly late at night and in the suburbs. Last year, the network's inspectors found 12,000 passengers without tickets. This figure is remarkably high for a country where traditions of honesty are still strong, but one must remember that conductors no longer exist and that passengers are trusted to buy their tickets at the automatic machines standing at each stop.

These machines have been broken into at an alarming rate. Although their cash safes weigh 20 kilograms and are secured by two locking systems, 40 of them have been ripped away from ticket machines this year. It is unfortunately difficult to keep a watch on these machines as there are no less than 348 of them.

#### **Anti-hunting initiative in Vaud**

An initiative has been launched in Vaud to ban hunting and could lead to this Canton following Geneva's example

in making all hunters unwanted. The initiative was not sponsored by the Society for the Protection of Animals, as it was in Geneva, but by a Conservative National Councillor, Mr. Pierre Teuscher, who is also a farmer and a forester. Mr. Teuscher claims that he was well placed in his professional capacity to assess the necessity of banning all forms of hunting in the Canton. He said that the appropriate law could prevent wild animals from harming crops and farm property.

#### **Cartoon exhibition**

A rare exhibition of cartoons on the Swiss was staged at Pully, near Lausanne. A large crowd of visitors were at the opening of this month-long exhibition showing the work of 13 Swiss artists. Although most of the pictures (some were printed in the Press) hardly seemed funny to those used to English humour, this rare show of national wit proved that the Swiss are well able to take themselves not too seriously, and have a good laugh at their idiosyncrasies. The majority of the caricatures centred on the traditional thrift and attachment to material things of our compatriots. Many cartoons touched on banking and saving. One showed Wilhelm Tell telling his son how to bow in front of the Austrian Bailiff's hat with the words: "Salute him. Who knows, we might come into a business relationship with him?"

The foreign labour problem was not ignored (Schwarzenbach stuffing his pipe with little foreign workers) and the cost of living (a museum exhibiting a clod of earth selling at 35 francs the square metre).

(Conversely, we were surprised to learn from an on-the-spot inquiry, that the magazine *Punch* had no set of cartoons on the Swiss in its records!).

#### **Discovery in the field of genetics**

A team of geneticists at Zurich University have found a way of altering genes and restoring them to their original configuration. This discovery was announced by Mr. Charles Weissmann, Director of Zurich's Institute of Molecular Biology. Acting on the ribonucleic acid (RBN) of a bacteria, they deprived it of one of its constituent parts so that it could no longer reproduce itself. These experiments were designed to understand the way genetic information is transmitted.

## **ANGLO-SWISS**

#### **The misfortunes of a British bank in Lugano**

The Lugano branch of Lloyds Bank International suspended its exchange operations following losses on the money market totalling 230 million francs (£33

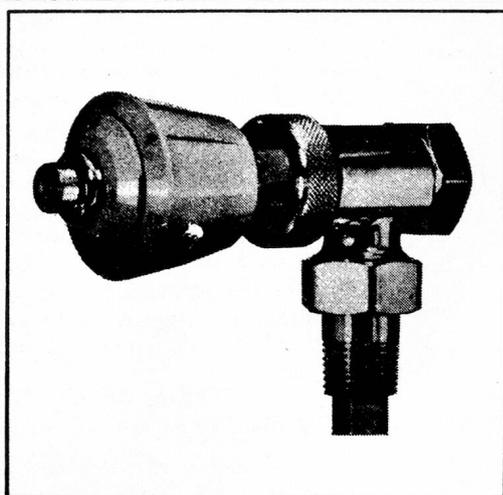
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million). This news, which was given ample coverage in the British Press, caused a slight drop in Lloyds shares as the losses will be deducted from the bank's profits. These profits totalled £77 million before tax during the first six months of the year so that no repetition of the Herstatt Bank crash need be feared. This West German bank, the largest private establishment in the Federal Republic, had failed because of miscalculated forward buying. The bank had pledged to buy vast amounts of currency expecting it to drop, whereas the opposite happened. The bank's dealers repeated the operation in the hope of recouping their losses but they were again contradicted by the vagaries of the market. They tried lucklessly until the bank's losses ran at several hundred million marks and compelled it to call in the receiver.

Although the enquiry into the Lugano branch is progressing it is more than likely that its money dealer, Mr. Marc Colombo, 28, who had joined the branch in March 1973, had fallen in the same trap. Mr. Colombo has been arrested and the manager of the branch has been asked to hand his passport to the cantonal authorities and remain at the disposal of the enquirers. The manager claimed that he knew nothing of Mr. Colombo's transactions. This appeared quite probable since the temptation must have been very great to keep these losses secret and continue to play on the money market in a vain hope to redress the balance. The sums handled in this way were enormous in relation to the branch's small size. Sir Eric Faulkner, President of Lloyds Bank said that they amounted to

several times the normal volume of the bank's transactions in Switzerland.

### Football

The European football season started poorly for Switzerland. FC Zurich, last season's Champions, lost away to Leeds by 4-1 in the first leg of the first round of the European Champions' Cup, while Servette lost by the same score to Derby County at the start of the UEFA Cup competition.

## MONEY

### Transport companies lose heavily

Forty-nine private railway companies out of sixty-two have made a loss last year. This was due to costs rising faster than traffic and turnover. Of the thirteen companies that did make a profit, the most important was netted by the Berne-Loetschberg line. Other companies to make a profit were those operating the Brigue-Vispen-Zermatt line, the Aigle-Leysin, Lauterbrunner-Muerren, Lake of Constance-Toggenburg, Pont-Brassus, Rorschach-Heiden, Sierre-Montana Crans, Sud-Est Suisse and the Waldemburg railways. Among the greatest loss-makers were the Furka-Oberalp, the Guerbetal-Berne-Schwarzenburg, the Montreux-Oberland Bernois.

However, high mountain railways are generally profitable. Of the 23 companies listed in this group, 22 have made a profit. Only one made a small loss, the Brienz-Rothorn railway which still operates on steam. The largest profits

were made by the Jungfrau railway, the Saas-Fee aerial cableway, the Wengeralp railway, the Schilthorn cableway and the Gornergrat railway.

To help these innumerable companies to survive, the Confederation and the Cantons have allocated 217.7 million francs towards their costs in 1973.

### Towards indexing savings on the cost of living

A hairdresser from Geneva has launched a federal initiative for the institution of a national savings booklet indexed on the rise in the cost of living. This lone hairdresser, Mr. Louis Chuat, sacrificed his holidays this year to prepare the text of his initiative and send 4,000 copies to all the main cantonal and federal authorities of the land, as well as to fellow hairdressers in the country, so that they could promote the idea to their customers. The idea of indexing savings to the cost of living is gaining increasing appeal with the present rate of inflation annihilating the value of savings. Mr. Chuat's savings system would be free of charge for savers. They would not carry any interest but be upvalued every six months according to the cost of living index. There are apparently no provisions for the case where the cost of living should fall - which is, however, unlikely in the foreseeable future. Another stipulation is that the money thus raised should be placed only in Swiss real estate and property.

## JURA

### Defending the interests of the "Romands" of Biel

Two French-speaking movements have appeared in Biel and its area with the same purpose. The first is called "Mouvement Romand de Bienne" and the second "Regroupement des Romands des districts de Bienne, Nidau et Buren". Neither claim to stand for any kind of Latin militancy, but have set themselves the aim of enhancing the neighbourly relations between the German-speaking majority and the 30,000 French-speaking people who live in Biel and its suburbs, and to establish the bilingual status of the City. The "Mouvement Romand de Bienne" has called on French-speaking townspeople to abstain from any interference with the Jura problem until the second plebiscite (which should seal the Jura's fate in three to six months time) is over. The other organisation concerned with the suburbs plans to launch "information campaigns" to maintain and improve the good relations between the two communities.

### HUGE ATTENDANCE AT THE ANNUAL JURASSIAN RALLY

An unprecedented crowd of 50,000 attended the 27th "Fête de Peuple Jurassien" at Délémont. This patriotic gathering was in effect attended by nearly



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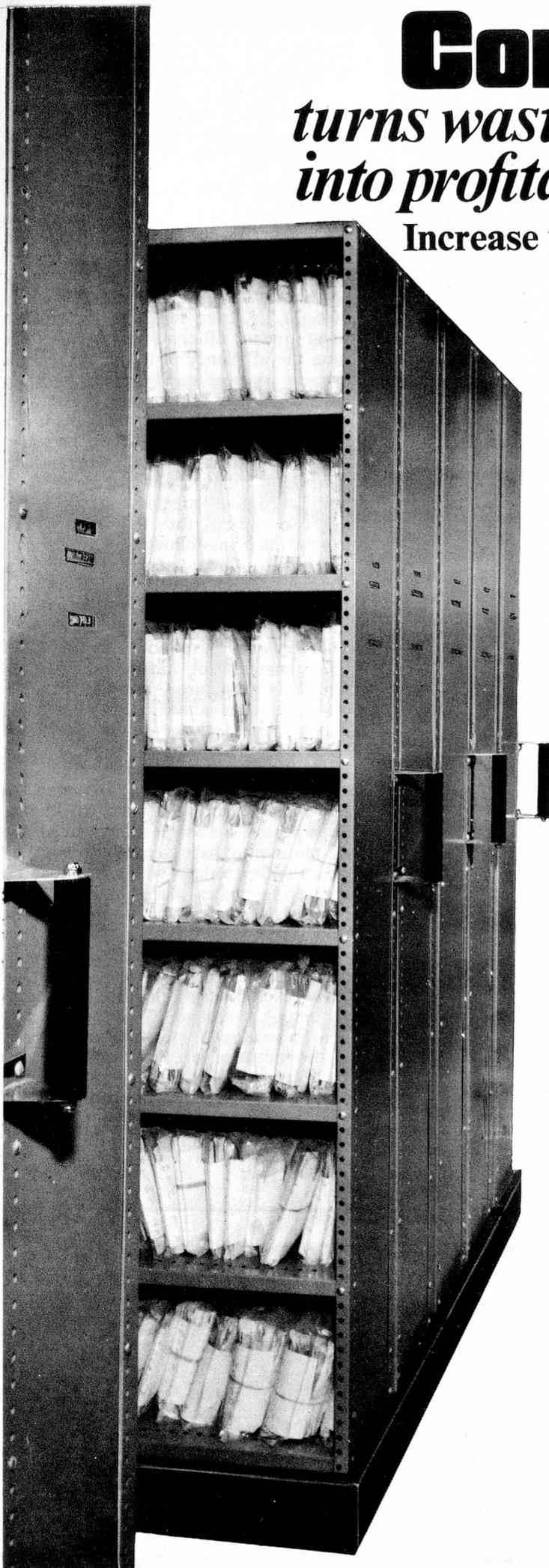
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half of the population of the Jura. The festivities began on Saturday, September 7th, with a show in the Summer Palace of the old bishopric by the French singer Guy Béart. Crowds swarmed in the city during the whole of the following Sunday and thousands of patriotic Jurassians waved flags of their future Canton. Never had so many people been present at these annual rallies which are by far the most important popular events in Switzerland.

The crowd's eagerness for biting, hard-hitting words was amply satisfied by Mr. Roland Béguelin, General Secretary of the Rassemblement Jurrassien, who in his speech said that: "The Jura owes nothing to Switzerland." Earlier, Mr. Béguelin had stressed at a Press conference that the results of the June 23rd Plebiscite in the Jura, which showed an overall majority in favour of a new Canton, were final. The provisions of the Bernese Constitution allowing for a second vote to satisfy voters in the three southern districts (who were in their majority against separation) were "outdated and contrary to the right of self-determination". The fiery Separatist leader said that if the three northern districts were condemned to form a new Canton by themselves following a second plebiscite, the Separatist Movement would set up a Secretariat in the southern districts to continue its campaign for a united Jura.

"There will be no peace in Switzerland if the Jura's unity is tampered with," he said.

Mr. Béguelin's second-in-command, Mr. Roger Schaffter, Vice-President of the Mouvement Jurassien, said at the same Press conference that the Jura's unity was an "historical evidence" and added that reconciliation between the different tendencies of the Jura was indispensable to achieve this unity.

Meanwhile, the representatives of the three southern districts of La Neuveville, Courtelary and Moutier presented the Bernese Cantonal Chancery with signatures in support of an initiative backing the maintenance of these three districts in Canton Berne.

## LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

### FIGHTING INFLATION WITH HIGHER CHARGES . . .

If one reads or listens to the speeches made by our highest magistrates, one gets the impression that fighting inflation and aiming at a policy of economic stabilisation have top priority in Berne. But there is, frankly, a wide gap between theory and practice and some of the measures either decided on or sanctioned by the Federal Council itself or its official delegate for watching prices are very difficult to understand.

Thus the Federal Council has decided to massively increase the import duties on petrol as well as on light and heavy heating oil. On petrol the increase amounts to 10 centimes per litre, which, if my calculation is right, corresponds to an increase of approximately 7 new pence per gallon. This decision has been justified by the need to reduce the expected deficit in the Confederation's budget for the current year from well above 2,000 million francs to well below this figure. The surcharge is, in other words, expected to bring in about 500 million francs. But it will, naturally provide additional fuel to heat up inflation and, of course, this attempt at reducing the heavy load on the federal finances by increasing the accounts for heating will be anything but popular. Compared with the level of just before the beginning of the oil crisis, the average heating bill has anyway already been increased by about 100 per cent. The answer given in Berne to all this is simply that the present federal Finance Minister, the newly elected Mr. Chevallaz, has inherited heavy deficits and that no Finance Minister has been elected in order to court popularity. But even so moderate a newspaper as the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* speaks of "uneasiness", about such surcharges being imposed at a moment when, after a period of upheaval, the market for heating oil seems to quieten down.

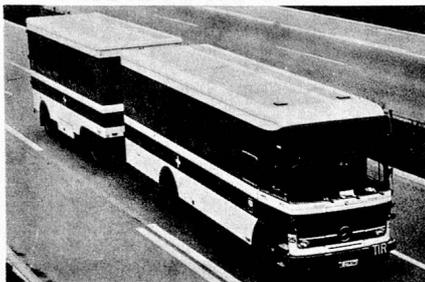
So far so bad. In order to wipe out a 300 million francs deficit of the PTT — a state monopoly — the cost of telephoning will go up by 40% (!) as from 2nd December and the subscription rate for having a telephone will follow early in the new year. On July first the charge for sending mail abroad — letters, postcards, parcels — went up considerably, letters by 50% (!), i.e. from formerly 40 centimes to at present 60 centimes. At the same time the efficiency of the postal services and the work done is being constantly reduced all over the country. Most postal districts around Zürich — and some in the town itself also — only have one mail delivery per day now, whereas on Saturdays only newspapers "with political content" are delivered.

So much for the PTT. Their example is being followed by yet another enterprise of the State: The Federal Railways. (And they in turn have been followed not long ago by the municipal tramways and trolley-buses in Zürich.) The Railways have not only increased their charges for tickets and season tickets, but they are — not without a few crocodile tears aimed at the travelling public — also abolishing the "Sonntagsbillete" or cheaper Sunday fares.

Switzerland is fast becoming an extremely expensive country to live in. So expensive that some American friends of mine who have recently spent five weeks in Switzerland with a keen eye on comparing prices have told me that Switzerland nowadays is much more expensive than the USA.

The price inflation is, according to official figures — on a so-called split index which excludes the prices for heating oil — running at around 8% per annum. But it is to be feared that — split index or not — the measures sanctioned and adopted by "Berne" will bring it up much higher. And not one of the beautiful speeches about fighting the inflation can alter this unhealthy trend.

Gottfried Keller



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