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PLASTIC USED IN A PRECISION INSTRUMENT

The requirements of modern engineering and technical science are continually growing. In order to meet the increasingly high demands, more and more use is made of plastics which have the property of being easily processed. Modern, rationally constructed measuring instruments are no exception to this trend. Thus, for example, a Swiss machinery factory at Bienne (Berne) has completely revised the design of its drives for dial gauges for the measurement of bores, with a view to using plastic instead of brass parts. By means of a cord coupled to a set of pulleys, the linear movement of the gauging pin is converted into a rotary movement, which is then transmitted to the needle of the dial gauge by a pair of gears. The drive gear consisting of a pair of gears, pre-loaded against each other with a helical spring, transmits to the pinion fixed on the needle spindle a movement completely free from any backlash. Replacing the pair of gears by a plastic one has made it possible to cut out the laborious and expensive mounting of the spring. Originally, the helical spring, which has also been replaced by a plastic one, was hooked tangentially onto the two gears. Now this cantilever spring, injected radially into one gear, acts directly on the other by exerting pressure on the pin injected in it. As a result, the torque produced by the two gears prevents any backlash between them and the pinion. In order to cut costs, the latter, which used to be made of metal, is now also made of plastic. Thanks to the properties of the plastic used, the measuring accuracy of 0.01 mm has been maintained.

A SWISS NOVELTY — THE AUTOMATIC SHOWER

When one realises that a shower uses on an average 15 litres of water a minute, one can easily imagine, in the present energy crisis, the saving that could be made in a public swimming pool for example if the problem of the hot water wasted by certain inconsiderate swimmers could be solved. The solution has been found by a firm at Crissier (Vaud—Switzerland) specialising in particular in the manufacture of electronic control appliances and regulators; it has in fact designed a photo-electronic control system for showers worked by reflection. With this new control system, the water flows only when there is somebody actually under the shower; it stops automatically as soon as he leaves the cabin or moves to one side in order to soap himself. This new automatic shower device completes the wide range of products that this Swiss firm — one of the first to specialise in this field — offers in the sector of photo-electric devices for sanitary appliances; in fact, it already manufactures electronic washbasins as well as partitions with automatic rinsing control for urinals.

PARACHUTE JUMPING AND UNDERWATER DIVING COMPASS

A watch manufacturer at Bienne (Berne—Switzerland), specialising in the manufacture of compasses popular with sportsmen all over the world, has just produced a new product fully satisfying the needs of today. It is a wrist-compass, specially designed for submarine exploration and direction finding; it is the perfect answer to the needs of divers who require a luminous, resistant and completely reliable compass. Easy to use, even when wearing gloves, it is available with or without a depth gauge. Its power of resistance also makes it an ideal instrument for all sportsmen who need to determine their position and get their bearings, and especially for parachutists. Elegant in spite of its sturdy plastic case, it is equipped with a dial, hands and a bearing arrow with a high degree of luminosity.

ANGLO-SWISS PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGE

It may be a surprise to many to learn that a number of MPs have formed an "Anglo-Swiss Parliamentary Group" serving as a platform of parliamentary contact between Switzerland and Britain. Mr. Philip Goodhart, a journalist and Conservative MP for Beckenham, is a leading member of that organisation. He kindly accepted to be interviewed by the *Swiss Observer*. The following is the record of our conversation at his Kensington home.

Q: I understand that you're a member of the Anglo-Swiss Parliamentary Group. Could you tell us something about this organisation? Do you meet often?

A: We meet from time to time. We meet leading Swiss citizens and politicians when they come over here.

Q: How many members are there?

A: I think about forty.

Q: They all share a common interest in Switzerland?

A: I think so.

Q: Has this group a political purpose?

A: Not particularly. It represents groups from all the main parties and I think of various shades within these parties.

Q: Does it serve to promote Anglo-Swiss relations?

A: I think so. I think it does. Personal relations are probably more important as far as Switzerland is concerned than most other countries because you, after all, have a policy of non-alignment and this means that you are not a member of the EEC, NATO and various other organisations with the purpose of co-ordinating policies. Therefore, I would say, personal relations with your country are rather more important than, say, with Germany or Holland.

Q: Do you meet Swiss parliamentarians?

A: I of course meet many Swiss parliamentarians if only because of my great interest in ski-ing. I've been Chairman of the Lords and Commons Ski Club for a number of years and indeed I was Chairman for a while of the Developing Committee of the National Ski Federation. One of the nicer activities of the Anglo-Swiss Parliamentary Group is that we have been ski-ing together every year now for the last fifteen years.

Q: So basically it's a platform for establishing parliamentary contact. You do not serve as a channel for "treaties" but rather for enhanced understanding?

A: Yes.

Q: I learnt from Swiss circles in London that you had, at one time, been entrusted with a study of the Swiss Constitution by your party with a view to organising a referendum in Britain on



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Common Market membership. Is this correct?

A: No, rather the reverse. Before the 1970 General Election I thought that we ought to have a referendum in this country on our entry in the EEC. At that particular time, it was not a popular idea with the leadership of any of the three main parties. Indeed all leaders of the three main parties specifically said they did not want a referendum. This was at the beginning of the election campaign in 1970. Therefore, it seemed to me rather pointless to go on in one's constituency just saying one thought that there ought to be a referendum, because it was perfectly plain that whatever government was elected there wasn't going to be one. So I went a bit further and said that, regardless of the outcome of the election, I would organise a referendum in my own constituency — which indeed I did. This led me on to thinking that I ought to know rather more than I did about referenda in theory and in practice. And so I looked around for a book in which I could study all this, but of course there wasn't one, and so I decided that I should write a book on it. So I sat down and did it, the following year.

Of course Switzerland must be a centre of study for any one interested in the whole idea of plebiscites and referenda because you have more experience of this than any other country.

You find a lot of people over here saying that plebiscites undermine the authority of parliamentary democracy. I don't think that that is the Swiss

experience. I don't think that this is the experience of a lot of other countries. There aren't many countries in the world that qualify for the description of "parliamentary democracy." Out of, what, a couple of hundred countries, there are only twenty to twenty-five about which one could put one's hand over one's heart and say "this country is a parliamentary democracy." More than half of those countries do use the referendum to a greater or lesser extent at a national or state level. Of these, Switzerland is the leading country.

It uses the referendum more and has used it for a longer period of time than any other, and has I think, benefited from the results.

Most people over here, I think, look upon Switzerland as being a centre of good government, well ordered life, peace, tranquillity, tidiness, cleanliness and all the adjectives that get trotted out over a country of which one approves. There is also, I think, a rather misguided view in this country that Switzerland is rather dull politically. This is certainly not so, if one looks back over Swiss history, and indeed one considers the problems that Switzerland has to face. Here you have a country which has a long history of considerable internal conflict, of squabbling through the 19th century. The Swiss at times appear to the outside observer to be almost as quarrelsome as the Irish — and indeed with better reason. After all, you have tremendous geographical divisions within the country, you have tremendous linguistic divisions,

you have ethnic divisions and you have religious divisions. In most countries in the world, such factors lead to a considerable degree of conflict and animosity. I think that, at least part of the reason for the remarkable internal stability of Switzerland, given these divisive factors over the last hundred years, has been the widespread use and practice of the referendum.

Q: Did your book have some impact? Was it entirely factual or did you try to draw some conclusions of direct concern to Britain?

A: I professed my own views in it. It came out shortly before the debates in Parliament on this issue.

Q: On the Common Market?

A: Of the Common Market. But within the Common Market debate there was, as you remember, a debate on whether or not there should be a referendum. People took quite a lot of notice of this particular book and indeed, when the debate of the referendum amendment was held in the House, it was noted down that almost every speaker had a copy of the book beside him.

Q: To offer you a bit of publicity, what is the book called?

A: It's called the *Referendum*.

Q: Published by?

A: I regret to say that the publishers are now out of business. They were Tom and Stacey.

Q: So to read your book one would need to go to the public library?

A: I dare say that some public libraries might have a copy.

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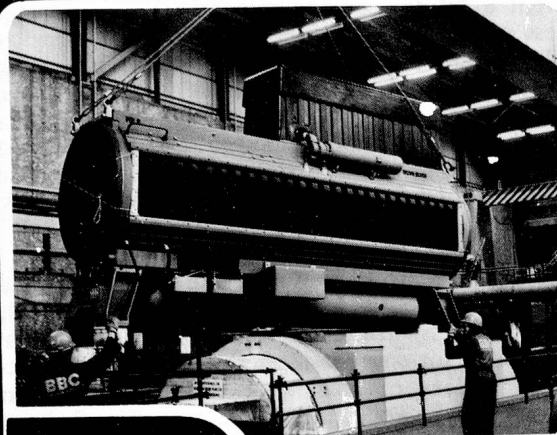
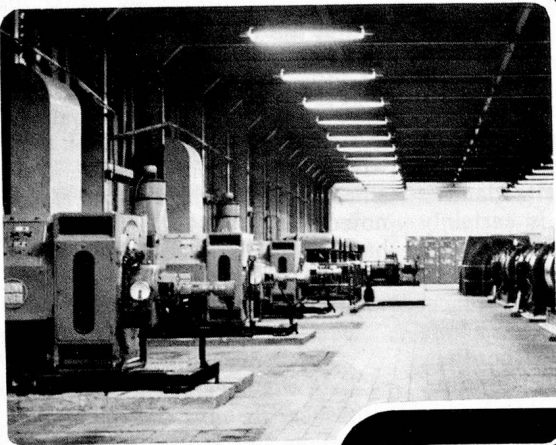
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Q: It can be said that the book was instrumental in triggering the debate on the referendum in the Commons? Although the idea was floating about independently of that book?

A: Yes. But I think that within some months or weeks of the book coming out, there was a noticeable switch within the Labour Party towards the idea of the referendum.

Q: But of course they were the main proponents of the idea.

A: Yes. But although I'm a Conservative, I think it did have some effect in converting some people in the Party.

Q: Would you say that party leaders have read it? Or probably they didn't have the time . . .

A: I don't know whether the party leaders have read it, but it wasn't the party leaders — it wasn't Harold Wilson — who changed the Labour Party's views on this. I'm sure that Wedgewood-Benn has read it. Within the Labour Party he was the leading proponent of the idea and it was largely due to his efforts that the Labour Party changed its official line.

Q: And as far as you are personally concerned, you think the Common Market issue should be put to the people in a referendum? You believe in the wisdom of the people to make the right decision?

A: I certainly thought that we ought to have a referendum on "going in" the Common Market. I myself was marginally in favour of going in. One of the reasons that converted me to the idea of a referendum before I had made a considerable study of the subject was

that, well before the 1970 election, when people were discussing it again, all this had been a factor of some importance in our earlier political life. But always in my constituency I had been more or less in favour of going in, and my Labour opponent had been more or less in favour of going in, and my Liberal opponent had been more or less in favour of going in — so if this was a vital issue, as I think we quite rightly argued, then in fact my constituents couldn't cast a meaningful vote on it because *all* the candidates said more or less the same thing.

Q: Did the referendum which you organised turn out "for" the Common Market?

A: It came out fractionally in favour. On the question of whether one should have a referendum now, I haven't finally made up my mind because, although I believe we ought to have a referendum, I feel that now that we have, as it were, married the EEC, it would be calamity for this country to come out.

One may or may not be enthusiastic about marrying Miss Smith. One can change one's mind on whether or not one will ask her in marriage. One can change one's mind when engaged on whether to go through with the marriage. But once one is married to Miss Smith, then it seems disastrous to turn round a year or two later and go through an agonising reappraisal as to whether or not it was right in the first instance.

Q: It depends on how lightly you envisage divorce.

A: Well, it is better to be sure before one is married than to have a divorce afterwards. Divorces are almost

always . . . er . . . have a bad effect on relations between people.

Q: This is indeed a very telling metaphor on Britain's European predicament. On another subject — you must have studied the Swiss Constitution, this bulky document which incorporates so much that normally belongs to ordinary legislation. What is your impression of it?

A: Well looking at it specifically from the referendum point of view, which after all, is basically what one is interested in, I clearly don't think that we can go nearly as far as you do in Switzerland in saying that 50,000 citizens are now going to sign a petition, or even change this to a million before voters are allowed to have a referendum. We both have the problem of what to do to differentiate between a constitutional measure and a non-constitutional measure. So I would like to see the referendum adopted as part of our constitution. Indeed the Conservative Party did take this view back at the beginning of the 20th century. In the debate on the Parliament Bill in 1911, we, as the official opposition, said that there ought to be a referendum involving major changes in the franchise, or on the question of devolution — on the change of powers between the central government and the regions. Nothing from my study of the Swiss Constitution and Switzerland's history makes me think that we were wrong as a party in 1911 to put this forward. And so I think that we do have quite a lot to learn from you in this respect.

FOR THE GARDENER

THE TULIP (*Tulipa*)

There is, in modern times, a great variety of Tulip available and these handsome, colourful flowers are really a must for the garden.

They are quite easy to grow and good results can be obtained if a few simple rules are followed. Planting time should not be before November and if the ground is very wet this can be delayed until more suitable conditions prevail. The normal planting depth of the bulb should be four to six inches, the lesser depth if the soil is on the heavy side. The reason for the comparatively deep planting is that the foliage of the Tulip is susceptible to frost damage and therefore one does not want the shoots appearing above ground too soon.

The hole for planting should be made with a trowel or dibber and a little sand should be sprinkled into the hole to provide good drainage under the bulb. Place the bulb into position in the hole, pointed end upwards, and fill the hole with soil. If available a good mulch of



rotted manure, compost or coconut fibre should be placed over the planting position, this helps to protect shoots should they break ground early.

Most bulbs, after the foliage goes brown after flowering, benefit from lifting. They should be thoroughly cleaned and stored in an airy place until next planting time. It is possible to leave certain types in the ground for up to three years before lifting. Darwin and late-flowering varieties come under this category. If it is not convenient to leave

plants in the ground until foliage goes brown, the whole may be dug up and replanted in some odd space in the garden to complete their cycle, this is essential in order to ensure that the flower bud develops in the bulb for the following season. The original bulb becomes exhausted after flowering and what are saved are new bulbs and bulblets which are offshoots of the parent bulb. Sometimes there are several tiny bulbs around the base of the parent, these can be planted, but will not flower in the first season, but will develop in the ground and produce flowers the following year.

Some of the varieties which are available: Single Early; Double Early; Cottage; Darwin; Rembrandt Breeder; Parrot; Lily Flowered and Bunch Flowered.

Tulips can also be grown as an indoor plant. They should be planted in good potting medium or fibre with the neck of the bulb just showing above the soil. Move into garden and cover with about four inches of leaf mould, sand or well-weathered ashes, when well rooted and the flower bud can be seen or felt, move into a warm room with temperature of about 65 degrees, keep shaded until shoot is three to four inches high, then expose to the light and keep well moist.