

Swiss events

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place the same day in Neuchatel, where 2,000 Swiss Jehovah Witnesses ended a three-day annual congress marked by a collective immersion baptismal ceremony.

ENVIRONMENT

SIGNATURES FOR AN ANTI-MOTORWAY INITIATIVE COLLECTED IN RECORD TIME

Mr. Franz Weber, a Swiss journalist working in Paris, better known for his environmental campaign inside Switzerland, gathered 80,000 signatures in record time to back a proposed initiative that would restrain the construction of motorways. Weber and his team are, in particular, actively engaged in a campaign to alter the path of the future Lausanne-Vevy-Bern motorway, which in its present form would slice through some virgin countryside near Perraudettaz. A procession of cyclists and walkers marched towards the Federal Chancery at the end of last month to deliver the signatures. The demonstrators carried signs with slogans such as "Too many motorways will cause too much unhappiness", "Save the port of Neuchatel", "Stop the Simmenthal Motorway". Most of the signatures had been collected in Zurich and Vaud, where Weber's aides had been the most active.

It is expected that the issue will not be put to the Swiss people before 1977, with the result that some of the motorway stretches built between now and then could, in theory, have to be

demolished if the initiative won the support of the Swiss people.

Roche wins battle to have a factory on its Sisseln site

Hoffman la Roche will be allowed to expand its production facilities on its site at Eiken, a commune in the Fricktal, following confirmation by the Aarau's Government of the planning permission originally given by the Commune. This was the outcome of an action against the international chemical giant by a "clean air committee" which had objected to the company's plan of building a vast vitamin C factory at Eiken which would turn out over half the world production of that product. The State Council rejected the committee's demands, but ordered Roche to install elaborate depolluting equipment that would eliminate sulphurous gasses of the future plant.

Roche already runs a vitamin A and E factory on the site which was bought over ten years ago for development purposes on the old airstrip of Sisseln. Its expansion efforts on this site have had to overcome the constant hesitations of a pollution-conscious communal council.

MODERN LIFE

THE SWISS POLICE TO ADOPT THE COMPUTER

With its many cantonal and municipal police organisations, Switzer-

land has allowed other nations to take a lead in computerising the increasingly demanding task of collecting and retrieving criminal information. Brushing aside federalistic considerations, the Federal Council has asked the Federal Attorney's Office to take part in efforts already launched in this field by some individual cantons, principally Zurich and Tessin.

There are three obvious reasons why bulky and dusty files should be replaced by electronics: the crime rate is rising faster than both the population and car ownership; criminals have speedier means of escape; the range of crimes has widened (with drug offences, hi-jacks, kidnaps, bank frauds, etc.) and this calls for more files.

In Geneva alone, the police hold 800,000 records entered in 60 different files. This can be replaced by one computer which could be questioned 3,500 times a day. Problems are complicated by the difficulty of exchanging the information contained in various cantonal and federal files, so that a centralisation of the information system is now considered as an urgent requirement. Computers are already used on a large scale in the United States and Interpol is in the process of setting up a world criminal information bank. On a rather more modest scale, Ticino has already stored data on all the jewels stolen in the Canton.

The system planned in Switzerland would have cantonal computers dealing with local police matters and a federal



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