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President's Report

Swiss Federal Railways(SBB)

1991 revenues are reported to have reached SFr.5882 million against an overall expenditure of SFr.5910.6 million, resulting in an operating loss of SFr28 million. Compared with 1990, the SBB succeeded in reaching a turnover which was SFr.515.4 millions higher, but costs rose by SFr.546.7 million, half of which is due to the rise of staffing costs. 275.5 million passengers used the SBB; 11.5 million more than in 1990 and 12 billion passenger/kilometers were sold. Freight traffic earned SFr.1308.6 million, the highest yield ever produced, but the total tonnage moved was only 50.7 million tonnes, 2.2% lower than in 1990.

The SBB point to the success of the joint venture with the Zürich traffic union (S-bahn, bus routes, tramways, lake boats etc. in the Canton of Zürich), which contributed an appreciable part of the increase in passenger traffic, which means that the investment in this project is considered to be satisfactory.

In this connection, the question of privatization has been raised once more, but most economists in Switzerland agree that privatization is not the solution for the problems of the state owned railway, though it is not denied that there are still considerable reserves for rationalisation. The main causes of the present difficulties of the SBB lie in:

- a) the fact that road traffic does not pay the full cost it incurs (an expert German group says that only 20% of the costs are covered by fuel and vehicle taxes),
- b) the archaic and over-costly financing of the SBB investments and
- c) in an absolutely stupid price policy forced by the politicians on the management

A privatization act would, of course, depend on a "yes" in a referendum and, last but by no means least, it could well be that investors buying the lines with the most promising traffic would be badly deceived.

We can be sure of one thing, most people

living in areas with abandoned lines would turn to the private car and with this they would travel to their destination, whilst today, with the Taktfartplan, many people travel by train because they can change at each important town without experiencing any difficulties with connections.

42 *Kolibri* trains have been ordered to the same design as the original batch. Due to the higher first cost and the need to maintain separate spares for two different classes, the SBB have decided to abandon the idea of employing the superior converter technology.

The Re4/4 460 class locomotives have been tested at Munich and Vienna with satisfactory outcome. The class can run at 330 km/h if necessary and withstand temperatures down to -40° Celsius.

AlpTransit (formerly NEAT).

The referendum against *AlpTransit* has materialised, by the narrow margin of 52 signatures. The sensation is not that the referendum is on the table, but the low number of signatures gathered, a fact that has surprised everyone familiar with Swiss internal politics

Indeed, one could even, in an exaggerated fashion, speak of a preliminary vote in favour of *AlpTransit* as, from experience, we know that opponents of a Federal Issue usually collect 4 to 5 times the number of votes they obtained in collecting signatures, or, to put it another way, all referendums with more than 250000 valid signatures usually mean a serious threat to a new law.

(Editor's note. Under the Swiss Constitution it is necessary to obtain a specific number of valid signatures [ie, from registered voters] in order to introduce a referendum on any matter. Most referendums obtain well in excess of the statutory minimum initial support.)

Private Railways

The first of 23 modern shuttle trains for the metre gauge lines, RBS (Regionalverkehr Bern-Solothurn), WSB (Wymen-und-Suhrentalbahn) and BD (Bremgarten-Dietikon) are now being

delivered. These low-floor trains, with converter technology and asynchronous motors, air sprung bogies and seating 120 passengers in aluminium bodies have been enthusiastically acclaimed by the public and are greatly preferred to the existing, relatively modern stock. Despite the fact that not all 23 sets have yet been delivered, all administrations have experienced a considerable increase in passenger revenue, the more so since the new trains have reduced running times, in some cases by a considerable amount. All 23 units are identical, except for liveries, this fact has brought about a price reduction of 15%.

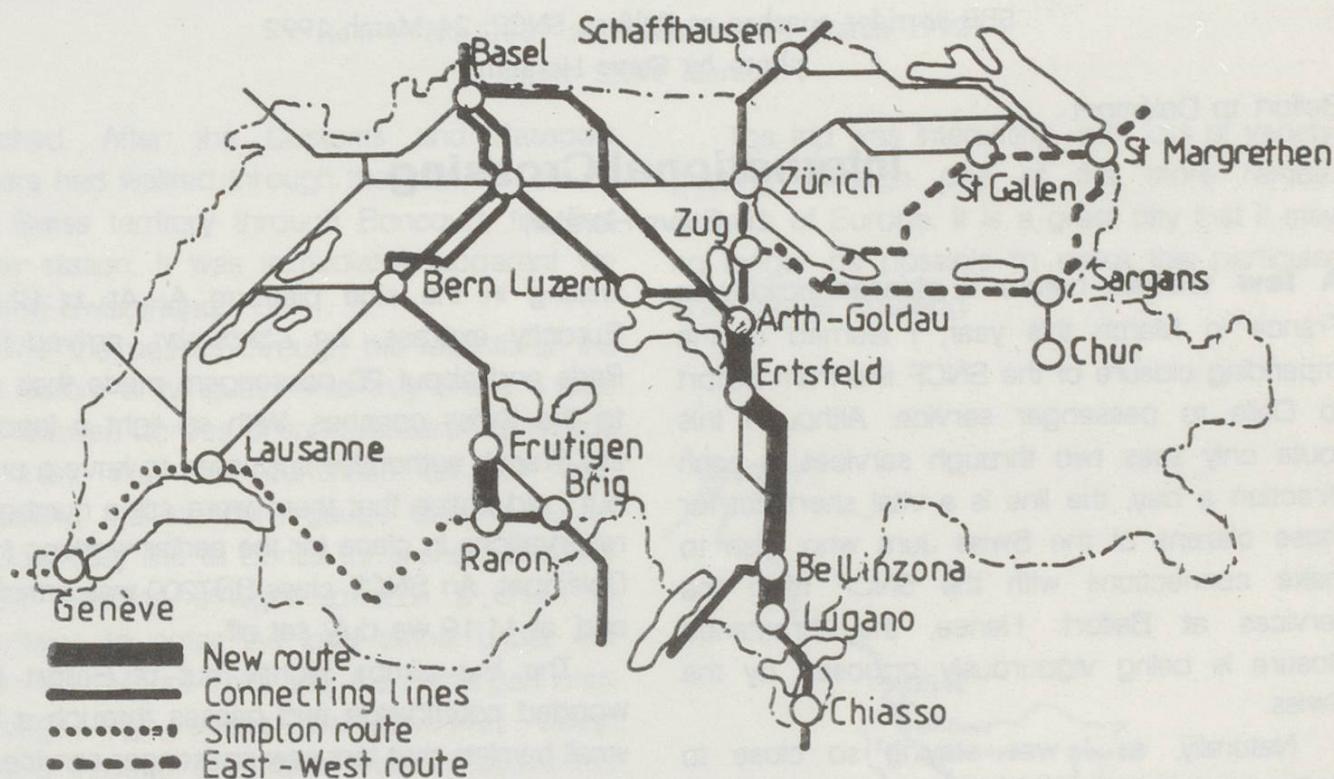
Tourism

Switzerland's tourist industry has enjoyed the best winter season since 1982. In some

regions, Graubunden, Berner Oberland and the Valais report substantial increases in hotel bookings. At the same time the RhB, MOB, FO and BVZ and other private mountain railways have reported a welcome increase in passenger traffic, forcing the lines to use virtually every available passenger coach. This was not always appreciated by passengers on the RhB who had to travel in the 4-wheel coaches normally reserved for Steam Specials!

However, this has convinced Canton Graubunden to increase their yearly subvention to the Rhaetische Bahn from SFr42 million to SFr50 million in order to accelerate the provision of passing loops to allow more trains and to purchase more modern coaches and Ge4/4" locomotives.

AlpTransit



The sketch map above is derived from one which appears in issue 2/92 of the SBB Magazin, showing, diagrammatically, the various routes that will be upgraded in connection with the new deep level basis tunnels under the Gotthard and Lötschberg. Our map in the September 1990 issue of Swiss Express gives rather more detail of the proposed tunnels.

The object of AlpTransit is to speed through traffic across Switzerland and provide for a larger load gauge at the same time. The existing routes will remain open for tourist traffic, hopefully the low level lines will be full of long freight trains earning useful revenue for the Federal system.