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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Comptoir Suisse, Lausanne.

This autumn exhibition was opened in Lausanne on September 8th. Its success was considerable. The "Pavillon de l'Homme" and the "Pavillon du Maroc" aroused general admiration. On the opening day M. Rubattel, Minister for Economic Affairs, delivered a speech in which he gave a vivid picture of the position of Switzerland and the difficulties with which our country is faced at present.

The Comptoir, which closed on September 22nd, had attracted 2,200 exhibitors, a new record entry.

Cost of Living Allocation to Federal Employees.

The Swiss Federal Council published a few days ago a Message concerning the payment of a supplementary allocation to the federal employees to offset the increase in the cost of living in 1951. It is stated in the message that the basis on which the federal employees' present salaries are calculated has been considerably modified in past months and years, and that an adaptation appears justified as well as unavoidable.

This proposal by the Federal Council does not meet with universal approval in Switzerland. Many in industrial circles believe indeed that the payment of a supplementary allocation to the Swiss civil servant will entail similar demands by other salaried categories of our economic life, and that it may lead to a general request for wage increases. This, they believe, is a risky policy.

Swiss Participation in Swedish Exhibition.

The well known Swedish St. Erik Exhibition opened its doors in Stockholm on August 25th for a month. The Swiss horological industry had erected an horological pavilion, which proved to be the greatest attraction of the exhibition. This pavilion was opened by the Swedish Minister of Commerce, Mr. Andersen, accompanied by Mr. Amez-Droz, director of the Chambre Suisse de l'Horlogerie.

Swiss Silk Exports to Holland.

According to information recently received Holland intends to raise the luxury tax from 15 to 30% for silk articles, in particular for silk textiles. As the import duty on silk is already very heavy in Holland, the Swiss exporters of silk textiles are afraid that this new measure will jeopardise their sales to Holland very seriously. This tax increase opens moreover a very questionable policy since it offsets the effect of the liberalisation of the European trade by new internal duties.

Exhibition in Leopoldville (Belgian Congo).

There is a yearly trade exhibition in Leopoldville, which normally takes place during the month of August. Switzerland for the first time participated in the last exhibition, when 43 Swiss exporters erected an official Swiss pavilion to show their products.

U.K. Purchase Tax.

During the GATT conference in October-November, 1950, in Torquay the discriminative purchase tax levied in the United Kingdom on certain imported

utility goods was heavily criticised, and the British delegation was invited to remove this discrimination by the next GATT meeting. This new GATT meeting is at present taking place in Geneva, but unfortunately Great Britain has not yet done away with the discrimination. The President of the Board of Trade, Sir Hartley Shawcross, stated in Geneva that Great Britain will need more time to take the measures asked for, and that it was unlikely that the newly appointed British Purchase Tax Committee would finish its task before the early months of 1952. Canada, France and the Netherlands complained bitterly in Geneva that Great Britain had failed to keep her promise to remove the purchase tax. Switzerland, who is not a member of GATT, has joined in this complaint by repeating her protests to the Board of Trade against the discrimination to which Swiss exports to the United Kingdom are subject.

Swiss Merchant Fleet.

As announced in the Swiss Observer a few months ago, the Federal Council decided towards the end of 1950 to assist Swiss shipping companies in increasing the tonnage under Swiss flag. The official assistance consisted mainly in the granting of some financial facilities — loans to companies, low interest rate, etc. — and in the assurance that sea transport for the

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Swiss Confederation would be assigned in the first place to Swiss ship owners who had agreed to carry out this programme of tonnage increase.

The Federal programme envisaged an increase of the existing fleet, which amounted on 31st December, 1950, to 111,131 tons, to approximately 200-250,000 tons. The financial facilities offered by the Confederation were made use of quicker than had been expected, and it now appears that the action of the Federal Council to increase the sea tonnage can be regarded as terminated and as successful. The new ships, which have partly been ordered for construction or bought in the market, will be ready to enter service at the latest by the end of 1953. It should then be possible for Switzerland to cover her sea transport needs through her own efforts and means, in principle without being dependent on foreign marine units.

For the information of the readers of the Swiss Observer, a list is hereafter given of the sea going ships that were registered under Swiss flag on 31st December, 1950 :

Name	Type	BRT	Ton- nage	Year of con- struction
St. Gotthard	Freighter	5,461	8,339	1911
Chasseral	"	3,128	4,046	1897
Säntis	"	4,349	6,690	1915
Certenago	Tanker	6,128	9,000	1920
St. Cergue	Freighter	4,260	7,600	1937
Général Guisan	"	5,142	9,100	1948
San Moritz	Tanker	5,168	10,400	1920
Léman	Wine tanker	320	440	1947
Laupen	Freighter	468	880	1948
Ville de Genève	"	1,254	1,700	1915
Simplon	"	455	470	1940
Anunciada	"	5,370	9,320	1948
Carona	"	2,351	3,000	1949
Cristallina (II)	"	2,351	3,000	1949
Generoso	"	1,552	2,755	1913
Misox	"	616	850	1949
Neuchâtel	Tanker	9,555	14,500	1930
Ticino	Freighter	6,528	9,841	1920
San Salvatore	"	5,591	8,541	1919
Murten	"	511	650	1942

WINTER PROGRAMME OF THE SWISS SHORT-WAVE SERVICE IN BERNE.

From 1st November, 1951, to 29th February, 1952.

Call	Times G.M.T.	Letters	kc/s.	m.
EUROPE				
Weekdays	05.15—06.40	HER 3	6,165	48,66
Sunday	05.55—06.40	HER 4	9,535	31,46
Monday to Friday	10.00—13.30			
	15.00—22.30			
		HER 3	6,165	48,66
		HER 4	9,535	31,46
Saturdays	10.00—22.30			
Sundays	07.45—22.30			
GREAT BRITAIN				
IRELAND	18.45—20.30	HER 2	6,055	49,55
		HEU 3	9,665	31,04

Illustrated and detailed program schedules are available post-free on request. Please write to the following address: Swiss Shortwave Service, Neuen-gasse 23, Berne, Switzerland.

Nouvelle Société Helvétique

(LONDON GROUP)

OPEN MEETING

Tuesday, 9th October, 1951, 7 p.m.

ROBERT STAEGER

will talk in dialect on the

"LIFE AND PEOPLE IN A SWISS VILLAGE"

at the

Vienna Café, Berkeley Arcade,

opposite Baker Street Station, N.W.1.

All Swiss and Friends are heartily welcome.

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