

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1955)

Heft: 1258

Rubrik: Commercial news

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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Cost of Living in Switzerland.

The index figure for wholesale prices, which comprises the principal non-manufactured foodstuffs and the principal raw materials, stood at 214.5, at the end of July, 1955 (August 1939 = 100), that is to say at practically the same level as in the previous month.

The Swiss index figure for consumer prices rose to 172.4 at the end of July, thus being slightly higher than for the preceding month. The index figures for six different groups of expenditure were as follows: foodstuffs 189.2 heating and lighting 139.7, clothing 214.7, cleaning 203.4, divers 153.8, rents 127.8.

Dairy produce in 1954.

The total production of milk for the whole country amounted in 1954 to 28,330,000 quintals. More than a quarter of this amount was used for cattle-breeding, one-fifth for the manufacture of cheese and the same quantity for the preparation of butter and cream for consumption. Only 25 per cent of this milk was delivered for direct consumption. At the present time the average consumption of milk in Switzerland amounts to 1.2 litre, per day and per person. It would have to increase by 30 per cent in order to cover the entire production of this country. Imports of milk and of dairy produce represent only about five per cent of the consumption.

Commercial activities in the retail trade in June.

The turnover figures for Swiss retail trade reflect the boom which is prevailing in the country. In June, the turnover figure had increased by five per cent, as compared with the corresponding month in 1954. This favourable trend relates more especially to the group comprising foodstuffs, beverages and tobacco.

Indo-Swiss technical collaboration.

On the 2nd of October next, Mr. Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, will be present at the departure from the plant of the first aluminium railway carriage to be built entirely in India. The Indian State has put up at Perambur, near Madras, a national factory for the manufacture of railway carriages, with the technical collaboration of a pool of firms belonging to eight European countries. It is the "Fabrique

suisse de wagons et d'ascenseurs S.A." at Schlieren, which has had the honour of carrying out the technical direction of the construction of this plant. At the present time, no fewer than sixty Indian engineers are receiving technical training in the work-shops of the plant in question. Furthermore, five hundred specialists and technicians are to be trained each year, within the framework of this establishment, so that it is anticipated that in 1960, it will be possible to produce a railway carriage every six hours.

Cantonal taxes in Switzerland.

The federative structure of Switzerland is to be found also in her fiscal organisation. In Switzerland, there are Communal, Cantonal and Federal taxes. Obviously, it is the fiscality of the Confederation that has developed most during recent years, because of its various obligations, such, as for instance, National Defence. Nevertheless, Cantonal budgets remain very high, owing to the constitutional autonomy which they enjoy. In 1954, the taxes levied by the Cantons alone amounted to 788 million francs, that is to say, they totalled almost half as much as the Confederation's fiscal receipts. The fiscal receipts of the — approximately — 3,000 Swiss Communes were equally high, so that the total of taxes paid in Switzerland during the course of one year, exceeds the sum of three thousand million francs, that is to say one-seventh of the national revenue.

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"Swissair" activities in July.

Continuing its upward trend, the Swiss National Navigation Company "Swissair" has still further developed its activities, during the month of July. Indeed, it is the first time that the kilometric-tons tendered by the regular air line service have surpassed the figure of ten millions, in one month. Passenger service shows an increase in its activities, amounting to 16 per cent, 78,500 passengers being carried within this period. The volume of air freight rose by 51 per cent, in comparison with the corresponding month in 1954, whilst traffic in air mail has progressed steadily by about 15 per cent.

The average rate of utilisation has improved considerably, attaining 70 per cent as against 64 per cent in July, 1954.

Increase in telephones.

At the beginning of 1955, the number of Swiss telephone subscribers had exceeded 700,000, whilst the number of new connections is steadily increasing. It may be mentioned that the Swiss telephone network is automatic to the extent of 98 per cent, and it will be completely automatic in three years' time. In view of the technical conveniences that it is able to offer to its users, this telephone network is one of the most used in the world. In 1953, more than 628 million local conversations were registered and 469 million long-distance calls. This average of nearly three hundred calls per year and per inhabitant is one of the highest in the world. Switzerland also has 800 official teletypers, thus occupying the fifth place, in this respect, among the countries of Europe.

Swiss watch exports in July.

In July, Swiss watch exports attained 108 million francs, thus showing an increase of five millions when compared with July, 1954. However slight it may be, this progression shows nevertheless the sustained effort made by the Swiss producers to find new sales possibilities and to develop existing markets. The United States still remain Switzerland's best customer, although their purchases continue to decline to a considerable degree. The decline in respect of the first seven months of this year amounts to 12 million francs, whereas for the total of Swiss watch-making exports the improvement amounts to 18 million francs.

Swiss Machine and Metallurgical Industry.

Although of relatively recent origine, the Swiss machine and metallurgical industry, as also the metal-working branches have developed considerably during the course of the last decades. The machine and metallurgical industry worked originally almost entirely for the requirements of the domestic market, but later on, it became one of Switzerland's traditional export industries. Indeed, two-thirds of its production are sold, at present, on the foreign markets. In 1954, exports from this branch of Swiss industry amounted in value to more than a thousand million francs, thus ranking in front of watch exports. At the present time, the number of plants surpasses 2,800, no fewer than 205,000 workers, that is to say 36 per cent of all the workers in Swiss industry, being employed in the Machine and Metallurgical Industry.

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