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HOME NEWS

Federal

Speaking at the opening of the "Books of Switzerland" exhibition in Zurich, Federal Minister for Home Affairs Mr. H. P. Tschudi underlined the importance of books in cultural life. Cinema, radio and television cannot replace books, he said. The minister went on to note that although working hours had been reduced he was pleased to see leisure time being well spent.

Books published in Switzerland last year numbered nearly 5,000 — nearly a dozen new works per day. Of these, nearly half were written by foreign authors. Last year's book exports totalled 40,000,000 francs in value — but imports were higher by another million.

Mr. Felix Schnyder, of Switzerland, who is UNO's High Commissioner for Refugees, has announced that the Nansen medal of merit will be given this year to H.M. King Olaf of Norway.

The State Council have given their approval of a 100-million-Swiss-francs loan to the World Bank. The loan, redeemable in five years, has an interest rate of 3¾%. It was also accepted by the National Council. Dr. Jean Bourqknecht, Minister of Public Finance, told Parliament that the World Bank loan would have no effect on the Swiss currency situation.

At the end of August there were 1,472,505 licensed radios and 172,900 licensed television sets in Switzerland. Since the beginning of this year, the number of radio sets has increased by 27,530 and of television sets by 43,944.

Cantonal

For the fortieth time the "Mouvement de la Jeunesse Suisse Romande" has asked the public of French-speaking Switzerland to observe a Day of Hunger by sending donations to the movement to help look after the underprivileged children of Switzerland and the world. The Hunger Day has become a yearly tradition in French-speaking Switzerland. Last year 157,000 francs were collected so that more than 800 children could be looked after.

The 42nd Comptoir Suisse came to a close in Lausanne with the recorded figure of no less than 875,000 visitors this year, representing an increase of 75,000 on the previous year. Amongst them were 25,000 foreign visitors.

Zurich, the banking capital of Europe, may give a lead to other Continental banking centres next year with a proposal to overhaul banking hours. The main suggestion is to cut the employee's lunch break by half. The effect on the banking public will be that though banks will open later in the morning and close earlier at night, the lunch-time closing will be all but eliminated.

For the first time in many years the Canton of St. Gall has full employment. In fact, there are still five hundred jobs vacant in offices.

The Stadtrat, the City Executive Council of Zurich, has just asked the legislative Council to provide a credit of 17,416,000 francs for the construction of a parking garage and air-raid shelter to be located at the home

promenade overlooking Bellevue in downtown Zurich. The date of the beginning of construction has not yet been set.

Berne's "Forum for the Democracy", which groups several political parties and professional organizations, has sent a message of goodwill to the City of Berlin, congratulating it on its courage in the present crisis.

The newly installed Museum of Music in Greifensee Castle, close to Zurich, boasts the world's largest collection of military-band instruments. On show are 279 brass instruments from 127 manufacturers.

Two cases of poliomyelitis have been recorded in Fribourg. They are two men between the ages of 33 and 44, who were admitted to the cantonal hospital of Lausanne for treatment.

Mr. Peter Ubersax has been appointed editor-in-chief of the Zurich daily newspaper "Blick".

Big Ben of Switzerland, the bell of Berne munster, is 350 years old. Cast in 1611 by bellmakers Abraham Zeender, of Berne, and Peter Fussli, of Zurich, it is eight feet in diameter and weighs nearly thirteen tons. Before the electric bell-ringing system was installed seventeen years ago, it took eight men, with the same number of ropes, to set the Swiss Big Ben ringing.

Zurich's Schauspielhaus has presented David Wechsler's "Wege zu Rahel" in three acts. This is Wechsler's first play; he is already a well-known novelist and story-teller.

Twenty-four new cities have grown up in Switzerland in the last ten years. The privilege of being called a Swiss city is given to localities whose population is 10,000 inhabitants. Davos, where the population decreased considerably, was the only locality to lose that privilege.

The discovery of the body of a woman in Serrières, a suburb of Neuchâtel, has caused a great stir. There was a quick inquest, which revealed that the woman had been stabbed. The police presume that it is the crime of a sadist.

In Zurich the famous radio-reporter, Arthur Welti, has just died at the age of 60.

(Most of the above items were received from the A.T.S. News Service)

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