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technical items

POSTAL UNION CENTENARY

The 17th Congress of the Universal Postal Union is due to open in Lausanne on 22nd May, 1974. This year's Congress, which will last until 4th July and will be attended by over 600 delegates from 150 countries, is an especially important one, as it coincides with the centenary celebrations of the Universal Postal Union, whose head office is in Berne. Another important event, held in conjunction with the centenary of UPU, but in Basle this time, is Internaba 1974, which will take place from 7th to 16th June, 1974. This will be the biggest philatelic exhibition ever held in Switzerland. The public will be able to admire among many other items a number of very rare stamps on loan from collections from all over the world; in addition, several foreign postal authorities will have their own sales stands; some of them are issuing special stamps for the occasion (Hungary, for example, will reproduce the famous Basle dove motif).

WORLD EXHIBITION OF WINTER SPORTS

"Snow 75", the first World Exhibition of Skiing, Snow and Winter Sports, will be held in the premises of the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle from 14th to 19th October, 1975. It will be open to all industries connected with skiing, winter sports and tourism. Taking place only a few weeks before the start of the 1975-76 winter sports season, "Snow 75" will answer a wide variety of needs: apart from encouraging an active, healthy life through the practice of winter sports, it will enable professionals to exhibit and see the whole tremendous range of articles in this branch concentrated for the first time in the same exhibition area. Manufacturers, businessmen and the man in the street will have an opportunity of meeting the most competent representatives of all public, social or commercial organisations, associations and communities living for snow or dependent on snow for a livelihood. "Snow 75" is likely to become not only the biggest world exhibition of skiing, snow, winter sports and tourism but also an ideal meeting place favouring the promotion of ideas, contacts and exchanges among all those interested in the particular problems raised by these countless activities.

MINI-REVOLUTION IN THE BATHROOM

A firm at Pully (Vaud, Switzerland) has produced a toilet accessory of an entirely new kind: the "active shower-brush". This new bathroom appliance can be used for a normal shower or for a skin massage, without any

lengthy or complicated manipulation. It has two rotary brushes worked by water pressure, in addition to the two fixed brushes; if a capsule of soap (designed for the apparatus) is inserted in the special container provided for the purpose, the brushes produce a refreshing foam. A flick of a switch turns this off and gives a normal shower with fresh, clear water. The complete brush system (available in several qualities and degrees of stiffness) is interchangeable in a matter of seconds. It is very simple to install this new sturdily built and attractive appliance in any bathroom; it fits onto any existing set of taps and can be hung from all standard shower supports.

NEW HEARING AID

A firm at Flamatt (Fribourg, Switzerland), which has specialised since 1946 in the manufacture of instruments that are well known and appreciated all over the world, has just produced a new hearing aid to be worn behind the ear. People who are hard of hearing have for a long time wanted an appliance that makes it possible to increase the regular tonality, by making it rise very gradually from the low to the high frequencies. An ingenious electronic contact has made it possible to obtain an almost perfect line of frequencies on this hearing aid. The consonants of speech are thus made clearer while any disturbing noises are pushed into the background. The appliance is provided with a special microphone preventing any acoustico-mechanical retro-coupling effect; in this way it eliminates any noise produced by the vibrations of the mechanical parts of the hearing aid which, in conventional appliances, take the form of an annoying whistle or hum and are conveyed to the ear by the microphone. This aid is therefore practically proof against noises caused by friction. It can be individually adapted to every difference in hearing, since it is possible to regulate the extreme pressure of the sound at the exit to the apparatus as well as the increase in the continuous tonality of the base tones. The hearing aid, complete with a battery with a working life of 150 hours, weighs only 9 grams!

SWISS CARPETS FOR DANISH SCHOOLCHILDREN

Over 8,000 sq.m. (86,000 sq.ft.) of Syntolan carpeting was recently laid in the Copenhagen Commercial Training School. The stairs, trodden on many times daily by some 3,000 students, have been covered in Syntolan, a floor-covering specially designed and manufactured by a Swiss firm at Schmitten (Fribourg). This type of carpeting, which is noted above all for its

resistance to wear, its antistatic and easy-care properties, is meeting with great success both at home and abroad.

AVANT-GARDE WATER PURIFICATION PLANT

The Roche chemical products factory at Sisseln (Aargau, Switzerland), specializing in the industrial production of vitamins, is to be equipped with what is probably the most modern water purification plant in the world. Compared with conventional purification works, this plant possesses the following new features: all the ponds are "suspended", in order to allow the permanent inspection of the sides and bottoms, thus eliminating any risk of polluting the phreatic water by leakage of wastes; except for the last pond, which is open, the whole plant is covered and ventilated; the gases given off by the waste waters in the course of purification are collected and scrubbed in their turn with active carbon; in addition, all pipes containing the waste waters are placed in watertight channels. The ten purifying stages permit the elimination of all chemical solvents, the neutralisation and mechanical elimination of solid matters, the elimination of organic matter by two successive biological processes, the elimination and solidification of the sludge prior to incineration, the ventilation and processing of the gases and finally the storage of the water, during the weekend, in a pond in a permanent state of equilibrium. The cost of the plant is estimated to be in the neighbourhood of Sw.fr.25 million. Construction work having started in February, 1974, the plant, which will help reduce pollution in the Rhine, should be ready for operation in the summer of 1976.

SWISS EARTH STATION FOR SATELLITES

The new earth station for satellites built by the Swiss Post Office, above Loeche (Valais), has just been put into operation. After several days of tests trying out the new equipment, 12 telephone lines were connected between Zurich and Pittsburgh (USA) via Loeche and the satellite Intelstat IV, at the beginning of January, 1974. Another set of lines was put into service a few days later, connecting Berne and New York; at the end of January, about 80 direct lines had been installed between Switzerland and the USA via satellite, which before then had had to pass through other earth stations. Direct links via satellite with Canada and Israel were also made in January, other lines connecting Switzerland to Brazil being scheduled for the spring.

CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF EMPLOYMENT IN SWITZERLAND

According to the latest Federal census taken in 1970, the some 3 million gainfully employed persons in Switzerland could be broken down as

follows: 48.3 per cent in the secondary sector (industry, craftwork, building), 44.1 per cent in the tertiary sector (services) and 7.6 per cent in the primary sector (agriculture and forestry). Since then, the upward trend in the tertiary sector has continued. According to the latest estimates, the secondary and tertiary sectors both employ about 47 per cent of the working population, and the primary sector only 6 per cent.

HIGH PRECISION INJECTION-MOULDED AND ELECTROFORMED PARTS

At the Exhibition of Assembling, Miniaturization and Automation recently held in Berne, a Le Locle watch firm (Neuchâtel, Switzerland) presented various products obtained by means of special processes of its own design. Visitors were able to see, in particular, injection-moulded parts manufactured according to very precise standards for use not only in watch movements but in various other articles, such as parking meters, impulse counters, telephones, cameras, etc. The firm also displayed electroformed parts, generally obtained by galvanic deposit of nickel, whose hardness the Swiss firm has succeeded in increasing; these parts can be reproduced in large quantities, accurate to the nearest micron, by means of metal matrices. Although originally created to meet the firm's own needs, the electroforming department now manufactures high precision parts for other companies, such as optical mirrors, pinions and gears, wave guides and surface finish gauges.

NEW SWISS MACHINES FOR THE CORRUGATED CARDBOARD INDUSTRY

While just a few years ago the corrugated cardboard industry still produced very simple shipping cases, today it makes a whole range of high quality individual packagings. A firm at Lausanne (Vaud, Switzerland), specializing in the production of machines for the graphic arts, recently introduced a new machine for the corrugated cardboard industry: a combined printing and cutting machine (type SPO-flexo 1575-EEG), specially designed for the processing of corrugated cardboard and comprising a flexo multicolour printer and a high speed cutting press; the hourly output of this machine amounts to 4500 sheets of cardboard printed in several colours, shaped, cut and stacked in counted packets. A machine of this type has already been installed in a big German works specializing in the manufacture of packaging for foodstuffs; equipped with three printing units, it allows the rational production of polychrome packagings of impeccable presentation.

BUHLER RECEIVES ORDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

One of the biggest pasta factories in the United States, the Creamette Company in Minneapolis, is at present building an ultramodern new plant. The order for the complete production lines, stocks of raw materials and transport installations has been placed with the Swiss firm of Buhler Bros. Co. Ltd.

(Uzwil, St. Gall), represented in the United States by its subsidiary Buhler Miag, Inc. Minneapolis. The Swiss firm will supply fully automatic lines for the production of all types of pasta; the daily output will total some 115 tons. The Creamette Company's other plants already possess a number of Buhler machines, some of which have been operating for nearly thirty years. In addition, the American branch of Buhler has received an order for a complete chocolate production plant; the client is the firm of L.S. Heath at Robinson (Illinois). The contract comprises the planning and supervision of the assembly as well as the supply of all machinery and installations, from the placing of the sugar and cocoa beans in the silo to the storage of the manufactured chocolate in large tanks. The order includes the cleaning and storage, roasting, crushing and grinding of the cocoa beans, the storage of the cocoa butter, the mixing, the rolling and passage through the conches as well as the storage of the manufactured chocolate. The most important machines will be supplied by the parent firm at Uzwil, while the conveyor systems as well as the electrical controls will be manufactured in the United States. The plant, which is planned to produce some 9,090 tons of chocolate per year, will go into operation in the spring of 1974.

SWISS GNP: 131 BILLION FRANCS

Switzerland's gross national product for 1973 is estimated at Sw.fr.131.1 billion. In nominal value, the



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increase over the previous year amounts to 12.9 per cent; in actual value, that is to say at constant prices, it works out at 4.3 per cent as opposed to 5.8 per cent in 1972. The economic growth has fallen off accordingly. Per head of the population, the gross national product worked out last year at Fr.20,332; this corresponds to an effective growth of over 3 per cent, which reflects a corresponding improvement in the standard of living. In 1972, this rate of growth was still higher than 4 per cent.

SWITZERLAND: 81 UNEMPLOYED IN 1973

Swiss statistics for the labour market showed that in 1973 there were on an average 81 fully unemployed persons entered in the books of labour offices. Their number is therefore lower than the average for the two previous years, which amounted to 100 and 104. In other words, for every million gainfully employed persons, there are 27 without regular employment. This figure represents less than 0.003 per thousand of the total number of employed persons,

which constitutes the lowest level of unemployment not only on the national but also on the international level. Last year, many other countries experienced rates of unemployment of as much as one or several per cent.

ECONOMIC GROWTH IN SWITZERLAND AND THE WORLD

In real value, that is to say with prices kept constant, Switzerland's gross national product, which represents the total value of goods and services produced by the national economy, increased by 4.7% in 1972 compared with the figure for the previous year. This result places Switzerland in a position somewhere about the middle on the international level; according to statistics drawn up by the International Settlements Bank, Switzerland in fact comes 8th among industrialized countries under consideration. Over a longer period, i.e. from 1961 to 1970, Switzerland is only 13th, with a real annual rate of growth of the gross national product averaging 4.5%.

Children's Xmas Party loses money

The annual Christmas Party organised for the children of the Colony is a loss-making venture. For the third successive year, the cost of staging the party, hiring a film, preparing tea and buying presents for the children, finding a conjurer (£14) and letting Queen Mary Hall at the YMCA surpass the income derived from various donations and the little 'Black Book' circulated at Christmas time among Swiss societies. Income for last February's children's "do" amounted to £127.46 while expenditure totalled £181.70. At this rate, the balance at bank and in hand, now standing at £114, will be used up by the next party. Unless more income is forthcoming, it will be difficult to continue these parties on the same lines as before.

NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE ANNUAL DINNER

About fifty members of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique were present for the Society's Annual Dinner at the Prince of Wales Hotel on Friday, 28th March. Grace having been said by the President, Mrs. Mariann Meier, they were treated to a simple fare consisting of asparagus soup, coq au vin with creamed potatoes and peas, and a cassata. The relatively small room in which this dinner was being enjoyed no doubt enhanced the proximity of its participants to one another and hence their animated conversation and merriment.

Dr. Albert Weitnauer, our Ambassador, and Dr. Jurg Iselin and Mrs. Iselin, Plenipotentiary Minister, were among the distinguished members in attendance. But these were by no means the only persons singled out by the President in her post-prandial welcome to the guests. It is customary for the NSH President to make a fairly complete introduction of the guests at Annual Dinners. But this time she made an exceptionally thorough job of it, since she singled *everyone* by name starting from the person to her right – the Ambassador – and moving further to the right until all the tables had been scanned in an anti-clockwise direction.

Mrs. Meier asked each person to stand up when his or her turn for introduction had come so as to allow everyone a chance to be known.

Each of these persons was gratified by an individual introduction and a clatter of applause. Laughter was produced when many members were described as *Baslers* because the Rhine port and its neighbourhood, homeland of the President, Dr. Weitnauer and Dr. Iselin and countless other guests, had really sent a high-powered delegation to the Dinner. This presentation was done proficiently because it was carried out fast enough not to become tedious (and to deprive those at the end of the list of a clap) but slow enough for everyone to get a word of introduction. It took exactly eighteen minutes for Mrs. Meier to dwell

wished to thank again our Consul-General, Mr. R. Born, for all he has done for us and to wish him and his wife the best of luck. He thanked also Messrs. Ciba-Geigy Ltd. for the use of the room and Messrs. Clayton Aniline Co., Ltd., for the free printing of our accounts.

The previous Committee having been re-elected, the meeting was declared closed and we could now retire to what was to be a most excellent buffet, looking forward to the second part of the evening, the General Meeting of the Swiss Club Manchester.

E.B.

CITY SWISS CLUB FAMILY EVENING

This year's Family Evening was a highly intimate gathering. About forty people enjoyed the warm atmosphere of the Dorchester's Park Suite, which had been partitioned in view of the relatively small attendance. For the first time in our experience of City Swiss Club functions, pop music was played on records. A "disc jockey" played modern hits and also some older ones, such as "Locomotion" by Little Eva which set the middle-aged Swiss attendance jiving and twisting merrily. A set of lamps flashing coloured light lent an appropriate discotheque atmosphere, attuned to the music, to the usually more formal climate of the Park Suite. An excellent dinner was provided for. The Embassy was represented by Dr. Jurg Iselin.

IN MEMORIAM

Robert Lehner, FHCI, FCFA
12th August, 1892–22nd April, 1967
St. Gall; Zürich; Goring-by-Sea.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY

Swiss Relief Society Manchester

This year's general meeting was held at the premises of Messrs. Ciba-Geigy Ltd., Simonsway, Manchester, and we are most grateful to this firm for having extended to us once again their generous hospitality and the same feelings go towards the Swiss Club Manchester who asked us to start our proceedings ahead of their own general meeting.

Well supported by the usual faithful friends the meeting was opened by our Honorary Secretary, Mr. Laurence Themans, in the absence of the President who was on the Continent. The President had sent his good wishes for a happy and successful evening and his apologies to everybody present.

The accounts, showing the usual good results and nothing controversial emerging, were read and accepted. Our chairman then appealed for an increased effort in the recruitment of new members and it is for all of us to act for the best in this direction.

In his concluding remarks he