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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Switzerland's comparative freedom from labour troubles.

Ever since Switzerland's metallurgical and machinery industries signed the so-called "Labour Peace" agreement some twenty years ago, collective labour contracts have been increasing considerably in number. By the end of last year more than 1,500 of them had been drawn up governing the working conditions of over one million workers and office staff. This great increase in the number of labour contracts has been followed by a corresponding decrease in the number of strikes and other labour disputes. Between 1927 and 1936 there were on an average 32 strikes each year, representing a loss of more than 90,000 working days. These figures have fallen off considerably, as is shown by the fact that last year work was stopped on only 5 occasions, with a total loss of 1,400 working days.

At Lausanne, the first Swiss Plastics Exhibition.

Within the framework of its various sections, which give a picture of Swiss economic life, the 38th Foire de Lausanne (Lausanne Fair) will present, as from 7th September, the first Swiss Salon of plastic material. This innovation will reveal to the public a world which is still unknown to them, and show them the extraordinary progress achieved in a number of fields by this most modern of productions, that goes under the name of plastic materials. There is hardly any branch of ordinary and industrial life which does not benefit from the new possibilities offered by plastic materials. Henceforth, they will be used everywhere and the Swiss plastic materials industry is developing in a way which the Lausanne Fair will help to promote.

A new plant in Switzerland for the chemical transformation and use of saw-dust and other timber waste.

A joint-stock company has been established in Fribourg, for the purpose of setting up and running a plant for the chemical transformation of saw-dust, and also, of other timber waste, which comes from the Swiss firms engaged in the timber trade. At present, the only plant of this kind in Switzerland is that of Domat-Ems, in the Grisons.

Nigerian students spend a period of practical study in Switzerland.

A certain number of coloured students from Nigeria are staying at present in Switzerland. These are young men and girls who are studying in Great Britain and to whom the "Swiss Aid to Extra-European countries" has offered the possibility of a visit to Switzerland, in order to enable them to get into touch, in the practice of their speciality, with European life. The friendly relations which are thus being established with the future intellectual élite of a country which will be independent in two years' time, cannot but prove to be favourable to future relations between Switzerland and Nigeria.

Radio-activity in Switzerland.

Radio-activity has increased in Switzerland, both in the air and in the waters; this is what we learn

from the first Report of the Commission set up by the Government to go into this matter. For the moment, however, the increase in question is not such as to give rise to any anxiety. On the other hand, the radio-activity to be found in the precipitations has recently attained dimensions which can no longer be considered as being inoffensive, especially in those regions of the country where the only drinking water available to man and beast is that obtained from the rains, by means of devices which collect it into cisterns. This water might prove harmful if it were drunk over a long period. Research work is going to be started with the object of discovering a means to ward off this danger. The Commission is now going to devote its studies to finding out the degree of radio-activity which exists in the soil and in milk.

A famous Swiss watchmaking town celebrates its 300th anniversary.

La Chaux-de-Fonds ranks as the tenth town in Switzerland, in regard to the number of its inhabitants. In spite of this, it is known throughout the world because of its watches and it claims for itself — and not without reason — the title of the "Metropolis of Watchmaking". La Chaux-de-Fonds, the name of which was mentioned for the first time in the Chronicles, some six hundred years ago, is celebrating, this year, the three hundredth anniversary of its constitution as an autonomous Commune. At that time it was only an agricultural market-town, and it was only at the beginning of the eighteenth

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century that the watch-making industry was started there; to-day, it is a modern town of some 40,000 inhabitants, equipped in a manner worthy of its economic importance.

ECNR's synchro-cyclotron in Switzerland is now working at maximum power.

The synchro-cyclotron of Meyrin, near Geneva, which is the first of the two big installations for imparting high speeds to electrified particles, belonging to the "European Centre for Nuclear Research" for the use of the scientists of Europe, is now operating at the maximum of its power. After rather more than two years of intensive work in the laboratories of Meyrin, it has proved possible to proceed with tests of the functioning of this accelerator, at its maximum power which amounts to six hundred million electron-volts (600MeV). The synchro-cyclotron of Meyrin is one of the three biggest accelerators of this type, in the world.

The Swiss Society of Painters, Sculptors and Architects celebrates its 25th Exhibition.

The traditional Exhibition of the Swiss Society of Painters, Sculptors and Architects will be held this autumn for the 25th time. It will open, in October, at the Museum of Fine Arts, in Lausanne; this will be the first time, since 1911, for it to take place in the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

An original application of television in Switzerland.

In order to replace communications by means of a pneumatic tube, which have had to be suspended whilst

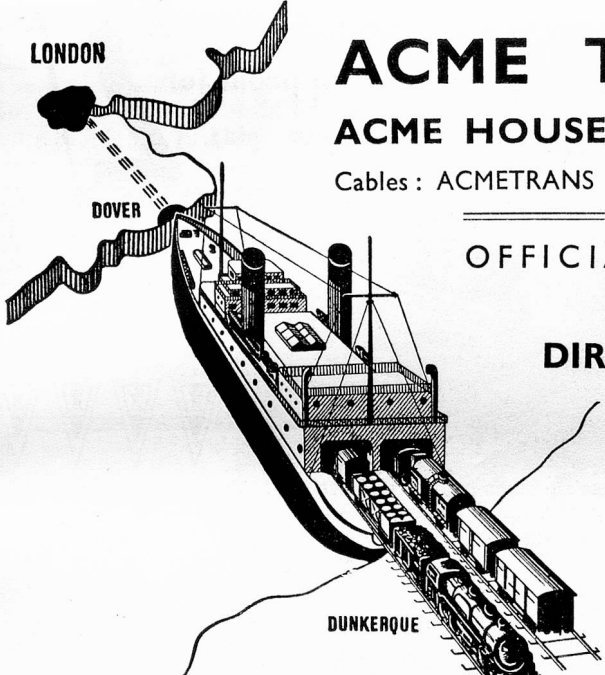
work is being done on the Post Office at Neuchâtel, the Swiss Postal Administration has had the idea of replacing this means of communication by television which operates between the pay-desk, at which cheques are cashed, and the Accounts Department. The picture of the cheques presented at the pay-desk is transmitted from there to the office which has to verify whether the signature is valid and whether the account in question possesses the necessary cover. The experiment has proved so successful that there is talk of maintaining this system and of extending its application.

Zurich, prop of New York's Port.

In order to develop goods traffic between Europe and the United States, the Port Authority of New York, which is in charge of the maritime and air ports, intends to open two branch offices in Europe, this autumn, one of which is to be in Zurich. Its sphere of activity will extend to France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, Italy and Switzerland. The city of Zurich has been chosen because of its central position and because of the excellent communications which it offers, in all directions.

The activity of the Swiss Ciné Journal.

In 1956, the Swiss Ciné Journal produced forty-nine films, of an average length of 170 metres (*i.e.* time of projection lasting for six minutes). These forty-nine film journals of current events dealt with 266 topical Swiss subjects relating to the various activities to be found in Swiss life, to culture, the arts, customs, sport, etc.



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