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BUSINESS IN SWITZERLAND

Compulsory Testing of Swiss Watches

Over forty million is the figure quoted for the annual production of watches capable of being checked by statistically governed sampling at the thirteen offices set up by the Federation of Swiss Associations of Watch Manufacturers (FH) for the compulsory testing of the quality of Swiss watches. The main administrative centre of the testing organisation is equipped with an electronic ordinator, which calculates the final appreciations from the technical results fed to it, makes out the tables of statistics and prepares the monthly reports for the manufacturers concerned.

It is interesting to note that it is 75 years since the introduction of the first Swiss watch test, which was restricted to the optional and competitive testing of chronometers, carried out in two observatories and seven official timing stations. Since then, the FH has introduced a scheme for the general testing of watches, which became compulsory a few months ago for all members of the Federation and is now carried out in thirteen offices situated in the main watchmaking regions. This system of compulsory testing has been introduced to help industrialists improve their products and to enable them to equal and even exceed the standards of workmanship and quality laid down. Since this system came into force, the average level of quality has risen even higher than it was, thus contributing to strengthening the position the Swiss watch has won for itself in the markets of the world.

Perpetually running radio or other electronic apparatus

The use of photoelectric cells for supplying current to transistor radio sets and other small electronic appliances was hitherto only possible in the light, without it being possible to store the energy thus obtained. Thanks to the patent recently taken out by an inventor domiciled in Switzerland, it is now possible to make transistor radios work without batteries, even in the dark. This result has been achieved by the permanent or alternating stabilisation of the voltage by means of an electronic valve, which makes it possible to store energy even under very feeble light conditions and prevents accumulators fed by photoelectric cells from discharging in the dark. One of the first uses to which this invention was put was to make a transistor radio set without battery or external source of current, which will run practically for ever. Placed in ordinary daylight for a few hours only, this apparatus will have a reserve of running time of over a hundred hours even in total darkness. No change is needed in the standard methods of manufacture to replace the battery by this new device, which can easily be made from components readily available in the trade. The new invention has already been used on the industrial scale in Switzerland for the perpetual transistor radio as well as for other electronic appliances. The patent, which may be worked under licence, can be adapted to various other purposes: transistor tape recorders, perpetual clocks, automatic stop-setting on cameras, electronic appliances for the hard-of-hearing, etc.

Swiss Grain Silos in Iraq

At the beginning of last October, a grain silo belonging to the Grain Board of Iraq was officially inaugurated at Basrah (Iraq). This plant, built in less than three years by the Swiss firm of Bühler Bros., which specialises in this field, was constructed with all the latest technical improvements. Its capacity of 65,000 tons makes it the biggest grain silo in the Middle East. The intake plant can handle 700 tons of cereals an hour, brought to it by road, rail and sea, while its capacity for loading ocean-going vessels is 1,100 tons an hour; this silo, which is the most modern in the world, is equipped with all the necessary cleaning, drying and fumigation plant. All operations are controlled and supervised entirely automatically from a central control room.

Swiss Aid to Dahomey

Mr. Sebastian Dassi, Dahomey Minister of Agriculture, has just signed, in Zurich on behalf of his government, an agreement with the Swiss Foundation for Assistance to Technical Development, for the purpose of setting up a technical development centre in Dahomey. The cost of the construction, fitting up and equipping of this centre where young Dahomans will be initiated into the rational use of agricultural implements and machinery, is estimated at almost 700,000 Swiss francs, nearly 41 per cent of which will be provided by the Swiss Foundation.

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