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AN ADVERTISEMENT COMES TO LIFE

It is often difficult for the layman to understand why vast sums are deemed necessary to advertise a certain idea or product. The value of advertising in general, however, has been recognised and no-one can escape the impact of a clever and eye-catching advertisement. Maybe my journalist's eyes look at any advert from a biased angle — I immediately speculate as to the value of slogans, statements and pictures.

The "Swiss Observer" carries a number of very different advertisements. Some immediately speak for themselves to the readers at large — who could resist a piece of Swiss cheese, mistake a list of wines, or misinterpret the appeal of a holiday picture? — whereas others only mean something to the specialist.

On the surface, the advertisements of LE BAS TUBE COMPANY LIMITED (GF) belong to the latter group, carrying little or no immediate appeal to the general reader.

Having recently been taken round the new London Distribution Centre of the Company by Mr. R. E. Baumann, Joint General Manager, and Mr. K. G. Odell, Sales Promotion Manager, I have changed my mind and suddenly realised that there is hardly a home anywhere which does not need any of their advertised goods — such as steel tubes for conveying water, gas, steam, air or oil, GF malleable iron fittings for joining those tubes together, steel tubes for structural purposes, and profiled steel sections for door and window frames. And so it has come about that, in a matter of two hours, the LE BAS advert has come to life for me. When I look at it now, it stands for an efficient, forward-looking company; for a well-arranged warehouse which has been purpose-designed and built to suit the equipment and goods to be handled (instead of, as so often happens, adapting an existing building to a new use); and for a management which pays more than average attention to the workers' health and interests.

The new Distribution Centre is the Company's largest in Great Britain, others being in Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and Belfast. Some 50-60 men and women are employed in the London sales offices, and 30-40 men in the warehouse. The architect, Mr. Albert E. Barnard, died before the building was completed. He had worked together with a civil engineer and the Company's representative, Mr. Baumann. The result of four years of hard work is excellent.

The new Centre, an important part of the Company's extensive development programme, stands on two-thirds of a site of nearly two acres, plumb in the centre of Greater London, a buff brick building on the south bank of the Regent's Canal. It is provided with the most modern plant and equipment which were decided upon only after the closest possible on-the-spot study of storage and handling methods in the leading warehouses of the U.S.A. and Europe.

The warehouse comprises four bays, each 185 feet long by 60 feet wide. Three bays are used for tubes: cold drawn seamless, electric resistance welded, stainless seamless and welded, hot finished seamless and welded, tubes for every purpose. There are even plastic tubes (Rigid PVC) to meet the growing demand of the Chemical Industry — they resist corrosion. Various methods of tube storage and handling are used according to the nature and sizes of the tubes concerned, one of the most interesting being the selection and carrying of tubes in portable racks — achieved by one man alone in a 5-ton overhead travelling crane fitted with an automatic lifting device

(ACROW DEMAG). Some of the heavy tubes weigh as much as 200-300 kg. each.

The principle of storing is that of "storage in height" — each tube bay having a height of 35 feet from floor to gable-top with a clearance below the crane-hooks of nearly 21 feet. The safe and orderly storage of tubes to a height of 14 feet is quite an impressive sight. The machine shop is located within the tube warehouse itself, the customers' requirements for tubes cut to specific lengths, with plain or screwed ends, are dealt with on the spot.

Accommodated in the fourth bay are the "GF" brand malleable iron tube fittings — manufactured at Bedford by Le Bas' associated company Britannia Iron and Steel Works Ltd. — together with "+GF+" tube cutting and screwing machines, plastic tube fittings and valves, imported mainly from the Georg Fischer works in Schaffhausen. These goods are stored on two floors; the more in demand a fitting is, the nearer it is to the Packing Department on the ground floor; those required less frequently are on the first floor and those even more rarely in demand are kept on the gallery.

Here, "storage in height" to 14 feet is achieved by an installation of bins, specially designed by the Le Bas planners for easy handling. The pallet racks provide space for three pallets one on top of the other. An interesting point which illustrates the attention to detail used in planning, is that the bottom pallet is raised from the floor so that the workman handling the fittings has to bend less and thus gets less tired. Lift trucks are used to move any particular pallet, whether full or empty, whether at the bottom, in the middle or at the top of the stack, in a matter of seconds.

The premises, including the warehouses, are fully heated by radiant panels. This ensures both corrosion-free stocks and the comfort of the company's employees. The changing rooms include hot shower facilities. There is a canteen both for office staff and warehouse employees, and the kitchen is a joy to see — and I saw it at lunch time, too, when the three-course menu was being prepared at the small sum to the staff of 1/- a meal! This canteen is situated in the centre of the warehouse. Later, when a larger canteen in the new administration building will be available, this one will be used as a tea and rest room for the workers.

Another feature of the new premises is the display room which, like the canteen, is a separate building inside the warehouse itself so that to get to it a visitor cannot fail to see and be impressed by the big stocks. On reaching the attractive and well-furnished display room the visitor finds +GF+ tube cutting and screwing machines which are demonstrated on request, technical brochures, photographs, and large showboards holding scores of the Company's tube fittings and valves. There are pictures, too, of the mobile demonstration unit for pipe fitters, which tours the country, of "VelopA" bicycle holders which originated in Switzerland, and the "AutopA" car park posts for controlled reservation of parking space.

The sales offices are equipped with up-to-date machinery, including a new GPO "Key and lamp" telephone system with under-floor ducts. Modern business methods ensure efficient and speedy handling of all merchandise by clever advance planning and competently worked documentation.

The new Centre at Eagle Wharf Road was formally opened by His Worship the Mayor of Shoreditch on 10th November. Mr. P. Bucher, Chairman of Le Bas Tube

Company Limited, recalled the history of the company from the days when Mr. Edward Le Bas, who came from the Channel Islands, established himself as an agent for British and imported steel products in a small office in Leadenhall Street in 1890. It was in 1904 that Georg Fischer Ltd. of Schaffhausen offered Mr. Le Bas the agency for this country. In spite of initial difficulties, the business expanded, and in 1925 it became necessary to create a separate company, the LE BAS TUBE COMPANY LIMITED. The GF Fittings Works at Bedford was established in 1933. Expansion is still going on, and a multi-storey building is being planned on the remaining one-third of the Eagle Wharf Road site to accommodate the Head Office staff and further warehouse space.

It is difficult to say what impressed me most during my visit. In the office building I was struck by the pleasing use of colour and material — even on that far from sunny day they appeared gay and friendly — and by the streamlined “paperwork”. In the warehouses I was fascinated by the smooth and efficient operating procedure of the large cranes, the reach trucks, the specially designed pallets and racks, and, throughout the entire premises, by the careful attention to detail which was so evident wherever I looked — from the automatic disinfectors in the lavatories to the hygienic rubbish bins, from the corrosion-preventing controlled heating to the self-tipping scrap container, from the “piano-key” ringing and flashing telephones to the way very thin tubes are protected against damage in transit by taping them to wooden laths, from the elaborate sprinkler system to the method used for measuring long, heavy pipes — and here we are back again to the pipes, fittings, valves and other GF products advertised by the LE BAS TUBE COMPANY LIMITED. An advert come to life — now we know.

Mariann.

CHURCH LEADERS IN GENEVA ASK TOTAL DISARMAMENT

The development of international peace-keeping machinery so that existing national defence systems may be gradually abolished is “urgent”, top church leaders from countries representing both the East and West positions in current Geneva disarmament negotiations said here.

A consultation on disarmament sponsored by the Commission of the Churches of International Affairs of the World Council of Churches said such machinery could be set up under United Nations auspices or by direct agreement between the nations concerned.

It said its functions would be to provide “on a permanent basis for enquiry, conciliation, mediation, and an international peace-keeping ‘presence’ whether political or military”.

The statement was made public recently following its presentation to the Commission’s Executive Committee.

It welcomed “cautiously but hopefully” agreements between the nuclear powers in the last twelve months. It said there appeared to be two areas in which parties to the Geneva Disarmament Conference were agreed (1) that the reduction of armament must not disturb the balance on which security today is believed to rest; and (2) the ultimate goal is general and complete disarmament.

It is said that as the goal must be arrived at in stages, interim steps must be taken, and emphasized that every

advance in disarmament helps improve the political atmosphere while in turn the easing of political differences facilitates advancements in disarmament.

“It is hard for mutual trust, essential to the achievement of disarmament to grow when the great powers are divided as they are over major political problems, for instance, the future of Germany and of south east Asia,” it said.

Another obstacle, it said, is that local conflicts may lead to local arms races which could involve the large powers.

To prevent this, it said, “international and national efforts must continue until nations and men now subject to domination or discrimination are indeed independent and free.”

The consultation suggested that progress towards disarmament could be achieved by either international means which might concern the balance reduction of nuclear armaments and means of delivery, or by unilateral action “intended to attract a response from the other side”. It added.

“Negotiations can further be assisted by common action which does not directly concern the production or possession of arms, but concerns their deployment or the safeguarding against surprise attack or miscalculation.

“Various defence measures and disarmament proposals have roused great suspicion in opposing camps. These suspicions are in our view accentuated by a failure to listen to each other and sometimes also by misunderstanding of technical aspects. Nevertheless the anxieties themselves are factors which should not be ignored.”

It said that the “distinctive role of the churches in the field has by no means been fully found and exploited”. It called upon the churches in every country to help stimulate imaginative approaches, mould an intelligent and constructive public opinion, strengthen their own fellowship across all frontiers, and support closer contacts in a wider area of scientific, economic, and cultural concerns between people of different political views.

The Churches must warn their governments against “the dangers of self-righteousness and the presumption of power” as “we are all involved in the same fate. We could all be victims of a careless or false step leading to destruction”.

The consultation was addressed by top disarmament negotiators of the USA, the USSR, and Great Britain: Mr. William C. Foster, director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and US Ambassador Clare Timberlake; Ambassador Sir Paul Mason of the UK; and Ambassador Mendelleyevich, deputy chairman of the USSR delegation to the Geneva Disarmament Conference.

Another speaker, Ambassador L.C.N. Obi of Nigeria, presented the views of a non-aligned power.

Participants, all of whom were present in their personal capacity, include: Sir Kenneth Grubb, London; Professor Josef Hromadka, Prague; Metropolitan Justin, Bucharest; Metropolitan Nikodim, Moscow; Dr. O. F. Nolde, New York; Bishop D. G. Noth, Dresden, DDR; Dr. C. L. Patijn, Utrecht; Dr. Adrian Pelt, Geneva; Dr. Elfan Rees, Geneva; Dr. Herman Reisig, New York; Professor Ulrich Scheuner, Bonn, Germany; and Dr. W. A. Visser ’t Hooft, Geneva. Countries represented included the following: USA, USSR, UK, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, India, the Netherlands, Rumania, Switzerland and several African nations.

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