Hot air in a cold climate

THE CULT of the management seminar is growing. So is the cost. Anyone with a finely developed sense of the ridiculous will welcome the news that in Davos, Switzerland, later this month 500 of Europe’s top businessmen will each pay about £700 to sit and learn at the feet of such mighty gurus as Herman Kahn and John Kenneth Galbraith.

The first European Management Symposium, organized by the Geneva business school, Centre d’Etudes Industrielles, to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary, will cost each visitor £500 in registration fees, £100 for accommodation, plus travel £150 fare from London.) You can, of course, add a few pounds here and there for drinks and other sundries, which businessmen require when they are away from home.

It is a tribute to this leading business school that the huge talk-in will be a raging financial success. Not only is the two-week session the biggest and most expensive of its kind ever held, it has attracted a full house and a total revenue of £200,000. But to be fair to the organizers, they are trying to deliver the goods by spending £200,000.

The list of speakers reads like the International Who’s Who: as well as Messrs Kahn and Galbraith, Jacques Maizière, president of the IBM World Trade Corporation, Jean-Jacques Rauth, president of the European Economic Community, are among the notables who will be dispensing costly words of wisdom.

For those who are not content simply to listen, management consultants Urwick Orr are organizing a massive business game using four computers and six of their consultants. If that isn’t enough, there’s always Keuper-Tregoe. This famous course in problem solving has been adopted by many major companies in America and Europe and usually costs more than £100. Dr. Ben Tregoe will be putting a third of the students through 16 hours of training that is so grueling that the experience has been known to reduce participants to tears.

Undaunted, senior managers from 40 British companies, including Glaxo, Metal Box, British Leyland and Shell International, are going to Davos. So are 11 top Japanese executives, 20 Americans, half a dozen Israelis and a sprinkling of Russians and South Africans.

Klaus Schwab, who is organizing the whole gigantic circus and lectures on management at the Centre, says it will be no holiday. Students start work at 8.30 a.m. and go on until nearly midnight. “They will meet our learning objectives,” says Schwab. “If each top man comes back and makes an impact on his company as result of his participation.”

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industrialists who like to keep to

their own pigeonhole. No outside directors. But on court of governors of Birmingham University and unobtrusive member of Industrial Policy Group, top businessmen’s think-tank. Company one of biggest donors to Tories (£30,000 in 1969) but also gave £34,000 to charity—most of it for education. Would be shock if Sir Raymond were not Conservative. But far from a backwoodsman. When he sees caring for the company’s own staff is not enough, he is as likely to get down to shopfloor and chat to them. Has strong views about expenses of British workers. Believes successful industrial relations depend on keeping talking. Concerned by level of industrial strife and looks favorably on American industrial relations pattern and probably feels the same way about the “new British” Bill listeners to admire, but when mind made up sticks to it. Was part-time member of British Steel Corporation, of which GKN is biggest customer, but quits after dis agreement. Very pro-Cash Market. Likes flying-fishing on Upper Wye and has had 40-year love-hate relationship with golf. Awarded testimonial after saving boy from River Avon. Son also in GKN. Off-land, GKN Press Office couldn’t recollect who. Can expect from Sir Raymond a fair hearing of electricity workers’ case but tough defence of national interest.

Give us this day

EMPLOYERS who watched with resigned despair as their growing and depleted staff staggered into work on Friday morning can breathe a sigh of relief. Next year, New Year’s Day falls on a Saturday, and will be a brief respite. Thanks to the Leap Year, 1973 dawns on a Monday.

By then, New Year’s Day might last have been accepted by the stubborn English as a public holiday. It would only be facing the facts. The Scots already have the day off officially, and the nearer you go to the border on 1 January, the quieter it gets. A survey carried out by the Confederation of British Industry recently found that three-quarters of firms in the north west region gave their staff New Year’s Day off.

England’s six public holidays look more compared with the Italians, who get 17 statutory days off with full pay, and the Virgin Islands, which get 23 days, and the Brzilians, who must hold the world record with 23 days. In the Common Market, only the French do worse than us—officially they have 11 days, but only five are usually paid. The Common Market average works out at about 10 days a year. Clearly Mr Rippon should demand standardization as a condition of British membership.

TRANSCRIPTION:

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GIVE US this day

New knight holds court

Mechanical Engineers Start the New Year with FERRANTI

Organic Chemist

British Museum Conservation Officers

Engineers

Royal Air Force

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