

Correspondence

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1922)**

Heft 82

PDF erstellt am: **01.05.2024**

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LA NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE.

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL, DECEMBER 20th.
(Communicated.)

1. At the outset the President was able to convey very happy news to the meeting. Owing to big subventions which have been secured from Switzerland during these last days, the minimum budget for 1923 is now covered, and the services of the Secretary can, therefore, be retained for three days a week.

2. The Monthly Report of the Treasurer was satisfactory.

3. One member was admitted, and there were about 36 resignations, mostly due to members returning to Switzerland or leaving England for other destinations. There are now 480 members.

4. A few communications were made with regard to our correspondence with the Comité Central and other Groups abroad. A telegram was received, stating that a Parliamentary Club for the Swiss Abroad had been founded at Berne. This important step in the development of the Auslandschweizer movement was warmly welcomed.

5. The Council decided that we ought to subscribe to the Bulletin of the N.S.H. for the first six months of 1923.

6. The Committee is on the lookout for a new lecture hall, and will report in due course.

7. The General Programme for 1923 was discussed. Owing to the great demand for social functions, repeatedly expressed by many members, a scheme was proposed which will help to meet this wish more than has been done hitherto. The following arrangements were approved by the Council:—February 16th, Annual Meeting; March 16th, Lecture: Rev. Hoffmann-de Visme, "Le Major Davel"; April 20th, Lantern Lecture: Professor F. Zschokke, "The Swiss National Park"; May 18th, Dinner, with a short causerie on a national question; September 21st, Dinner, with an artistic and entertaining programme, and a short intermediate report on the activities of the Group; October 19th, Lecture: Rev. Arthur Meyer, Liverpool, "Ueber ein Thema der deutschschweizerischen Literatur"; November 16th, Public Concert in aid of the Swiss Benevolent Society, organised, if possible, in conjunction with the Swiss Institute Orchestra and the Swiss Choral Society; December 21st, Lecture: Dr. A. Daemiker, "On a subject of national interest."

8. The Secretary reported on his activity during the past month: (a) he got into personal touch with the World Association for Adult Education and provided them with documentation on the Volkshochschul movement in Switzerland; (b) satisfactory documentation, including photographs, has been secured from Switzerland for an article to be written on the conditions of Swiss nurses; (c) he reviewed the book by Dr. Waldvogel on the economic relations between Great Britain and Switzerland in the Bulletin of the N.S.H.; (d) he got a member, who is eager to give lantern lectures on Switzerland to English audiences, into touch with several institutions for adult education; (e) he is going to give in the course of the next term a lecture in German on "Gottfried Keller" to the Union of German Societies of London University. The one which he gave on November 28th on "Carl Spitteler" to the same audience was attended by about 25 people. (f) the first instalment of his article, "Schweiz, Schweizertum, Auslandschweizer" has appeared in the December issue of the "Echo Suisse." Two more will follow; (g) the Swiss Sub-Committee to the League of Nations Union has now been formed. The Secretary will submit the names within the next few days to the Secretary of the League of Nations Union with a view to promoting an early constitutional meeting; (h) he has started preparing the annual survey on the political events in Switzerland for the "Annual Register"; (i) an offer from the Swiss Travel Almanac to publish the Helvetic Bibliography in their spring issue is not considered suitable, as the publication of the Bibliography should take place not later than January in order that the Secretary may build on it further efforts to spread the interest in Swiss literature amongst British publishers. A very welcome offer from the editor of "The Swiss Observer" to publish it in weekly parts, which would save the cost of setting up, will be considered.

9. The Secretary read his report on his trip to the Groups of Bradford and Manchester between November 22nd and 25th. Both Groups in the North seem to be very solid. The Secretary succeeded in inducing the two Groups to renew direct personal relations with each other and to exchange delegates to social functions. He repeated in Bradford his lecture on "Die gegenwärtige deutschschweizerische Dialekt-dichtung," and in Manchester the one on "The Attitude of the British Foreign Office towards Switzerland in the Nineteenth Century." Our member, Dr. J. Zollinger, of Newcastle-under-Lyme, who spoke to us last spring, will repeat his lecture on German-Swiss dialects to the Manchester Group in January. The Bradford Group has since sent us a very welcome contribution towards our deficit, and the Manchester Group is also discussing this matter.

CORRESPONDENCE.

The Editor is not responsible for the opinions expressed by his Correspondents

MILITARY TAX & MATRICULATION FEE.

To the Editor *The Swiss Observer*.

Sir,—Seeing the importance of the issues raised by the discussion on above subject, I think as many as possible should join in it, but do let us tackle it in thoroughly Swiss fashion.

Don't let us take up your valuable space for the purpose of throwing mud at one another. Although Britain is the land of free speech, she might get shocked at our bad manners, and we do not want *The Swiss Observer* to be the instrument for the reduction of the tourist traffic.

We Swiss abroad have grievances, we may even feel we have been very badly treated; but, then, we must remember that our forefathers, although they had greater grievances, were clean fighters. They even had the foresight to provide us with a

granite rock, in the shape of our constitution and constitutional principles, behind which to take shelter if our highest executive authority thought fit to try experiments of an unconstitutional nature on the *Quatrième Suisse*, because she has not yet been allowed to appoint National and State Councillors to watch over her special interests.

The law regarding the military tax undoubtedly requires bringing into line with more modern principles, especially with regard to the capacity to pay; but, then, don't let us forget that it was an attempt made by our fathers towards equalisation of the load of military duties; as such it is entirely just in principle.

We must not slander our diplomatic staffs when they carry out the instructions they receive from the Bundespalast. It is certainly not their desire to be harsh with us, and if we wake up and seriously try to put matters right, we must take a firm stand on the basis of our constitution, the source of power, and we shall work marvels with it. I am most grateful to your correspondent, Mr. E. Stutz, who made known to us the sort of instructions issued from Berne.

I must confess that the fact that there should exist within our *Recueil Officiel* such an unconstitutional measure as the one referred to recently, positively horrified me. If I had been "strafed" by any Consulate or Legation on account of this measure, as far as it concerns the withholding of passports, visa, or refusal of protection, I might have felt like being cheeky in return—not to the official, however. I would have taken my spare copy of our Federal Constitution, marked the first paragraphs of Art. 43 and 44 in red pencil, would have likewise taken my Certificate of Origin, marked some points therein with red pencil also, and sent these to the Federal Military Department with the simple request to let me know what they thought of their *ordonnance* in the face of that.

I feel pretty sure what the reply would have been. Having blushed at their piece of work, I might have had one morning my passport from the Legation, duly in order, and the Legation might have received shortly afterwards an amended *ordonnance*, the original one having gone into the waste-paper basket. It would not have been the first time that I have written to the Bundespalast and I consider them very expeditious.

If I had felt deeply injured, I might have said that, according to the constitution, there is no such thing as Swiss citizenship as such in a federal sense; that, if the Bundesrat wishes to make a foreigner a Swiss citizen, they have first of all to see that some kind of *mountain commune* and canton accept the stranger as their citizen; that, surely, what is not in their power to give is not within their competence to withdraw. I would have pointed out that the rights implied in my certificate of origin are definite, and not at the mercy or discretion of the military tax collector, whom they had no power to appoint as arbiter of my national rights and empower him to say how far I was allowed to call myself a Swiss or a Heimatloser. As the constitution stands, my certificate of origin is stronger than the very Bundesrat itself, and they have to respect the signature of the Mayor of little Sigrino and that of the Chancellor of State of the Ticino.

I might also have added that they were grossly misinterpreting the virtues of dear Helvetia. Her love is not bestowed only upon the deserters and political criminals of other nations; she loves her own children better still.

From the military point of view I would have mentioned that they were weakening the military power of Switzerland by transferring sound men from the Auszug to the Landsturm, because one who has been shamed at the hands of a Legation or Consulate would not be an A1 man behind a loaded rifle.

My idea of a petition is that of a brief statement of the facts, endorsed by a few signatures. If there is any praying or kneeling to be done, let the authors of the *ordonnance* go down on their knees at the feet of the injured *Quatrième Suisse*.

Of the result I have no doubt, and if we speak out firmly and to the point, letting our executive at home know that when we came to London we put a copy of our constitution in our pocket to read during the voyage, we shall be spared the trouble of further petitions.

As to the question of the Matriculation Fee, it may look small in terms of £ s. d., but as a matter of principle it is worthy of serious attention. Were we to draw up a small petition, pointing out that according to what we learned at school the federal authorities have no right to levy direct taxation on any Swiss except the military tax, this fee might be abolished. The special articles added to the constitution in order to empower the federal authorities to levy the war tax have not altered the position. We must tell them that we consider the matriculation fee as a tax, and we may be relieved of it with greater ease than we anticipated. Really,

if we had wanted we could have got rid of it at the very beginning.

We may perhaps discover some other grievances, but if we stand by the constitution we shall have no trouble in righting them.

Having achieved the redress of our grievances, we might wake up to the fact that really our Legations and Consulates genuinely aspire to the position of national homes away from home, and we should find it a source of pleasure to go there. I should even think we might get a Central Club House sooner than we expected, if we put into practice the fine principles of our constitution.

With heartiest patriotic greetings and the compliments of the season, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

78, High Street, Teddington. O. BRAGA.

PROF. BOREL'S LECTURE.

A correspondent, writing in regard to Professor Borel's lecture, while glad of our good report of it in our last issue, regrets that the audience was so small, which is not encouraging, seeing that the subjects treated were so very important at the present time.

In his remarks Dr. Weibel pointed out how little attention Switzerland formerly paid to foreign affairs, whereas now they have become the most important. One may therefore further emphasise the very great position Switzerland now holds, through being represented at the Hague Tribunal and through the League of Nations, the Lausanne Conferences and many other international deliberations; her first statesman are often nominated to various important committees; also Prof. Borel holds a great position. Further, statesmen and delegates from most countries assemble in Switzerland and make her the centre of the world's affairs. In consequence her people, her character and her beauties become widely known and appreciated; her institutions and schools may become a guide to follow. Ah! Swiss may be justly proud of this and ought to do their best to prove themselves worthy.

Our correspondent concludes thus:—Great thanks are due to you for keeping us abreast of Swiss affairs here and at home, and we must hope for your further success in the coming year.

Best wishes of the season!

PERSONAL.

Dr. H. Rast, who has been acting as house surgeon at the German Hospital at Dalston, is leaving for Berne to take up for the next six months the duties of chief assistant to Prof. F. de Quervain, the eminent surgeon.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que la prochaine

Assemblée Mensuelle

aura lieu le MARDI 9 JANVIER, au Restaurant GATTI, et sera précédée d'un souper familial à 6.30 h. (sh. 5/6 par couvert).

Cet avis tient lieu de convocation. Tous ceux désirant y participer sont invités à s'annoncer en temps utile au Trésorier, M. G. Dimier, 46, Cannon Street, E.C.4. (Téléphone: Central 1321).

Ordre du Jour.

Procès-verbal. Admissions. Démissions. Divers.

EGLISE SUISSE, 79, Endell St., W.C. 2.

Dimanche, 31 Déc., 11h.—M. R. Hoffmann-de Visme, 6.30.—Culte de Sylvestre—en deux langues—suivi d'un Service de Cène.—Invitation à chacun.

Lundi, 1 Janv., 11h.—Culte du Jour de l'an.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Friday, Jan. 5th, 1923, at 8.30 p.m.—SWISS INSTITUTE: Lecture by Mr. F. W. Dunn on "Hypnotism and Suggestion."

Saturday, Jan. 6th, 1923, at 6.30 p.m.—SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY: Cinderella Dance at the Midland Hotel. Fancy Dress Optional.

Tuesday, Jan. 9, at 6.30 p.m.—CITY SWISS CLUB: Monthly Meeting, preceded by a Supper (see adv.).

Wednesday, Jan. 10th, 1923.—SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY: Lecture on "Banking and Currency" at 1, Gerrard Place, W. 1.

Wednesday, Jan. 10th, 1923, at 7 p.m.—SWISS BANK CLUB: Whist Drive at Slater's Restaurant, 34-35, High Holborn, W.C. 1.

Friday, Jan. 12th, 1923, at 8.30 p.m.—SWISS INSTITUTE: Lecture in French by Mr. Em. Cammaerts on "Belgium since 1870."

Friday, Jan. 19th, 1923.—NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE: No Lecture.

Saturday, Jan. 20th, 1923, at 6.30 p.m.—CITY SWISS CLUB: Cinderella Dance at Gatti's Restaurant.

Friday, Jan. 26th, 1923, at 8 p.m.—SWISS INSTITUTE: Reception for Members and Friends of the "Social and Political Education League."

Wednesday, Jan. 31st, at 7.30 p.m.—SWISS BANK CLUB: Dance at the Suffolk Galleries, Suffolk Street, S.W. 1.

Saturday, Feb. 3rd, 1923, at 6.30 p.m.—SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY: Cinderella Dance at the Midland Hotel.

Printed and Published for the Proprietor, F. F. BOHRINGER, by THE FREDERICK PRINTING CO. LTD., at 21, GARLICK HILL, LONDON, E.C.4.

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