

News from the colony

Objekttyp: **Group**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1961)**

Heft 1389

PDF erstellt am: **29.04.2024**

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THE ASSEMBLY OF PRESIDENTS OF SWISS SOCIETIES IN GREAT BRITAIN

For the first time since the formation of the Presidents' Meeting of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom some ten years ago as an institution, it was held on 17th June away from London: at the Midland Hotel in Manchester. The Ambassador, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, as honorary president, and Madame Daeniker, as President of the Swiss Hostel for Girls were present. The Swiss Benevolent Society was represented by Mr. F. G. Sommer, the City Swiss Club by Mr. T. von Speyr, the Swiss Mercantile Society by Mr. R. Chappuis, the Nouvelle Société Helvétique by Dr. H. W. Egli as vice-president, the Swiss Economic Council by Mr. J. P. Christen, the Swiss Welfare Office by Mrs. Mariann Meier, the Unione Ticinese by Mr. P. Jacomelli, the Schweizerbund by Mr. V. Berti. From the provinces were present Mr. B. Simon for the Swiss Club Manchester, Mr. Kübler for the Manchester Relief Society, Prof. Inebnit for the Swiss Club Leeds, Mr. C. F. Illy for the Swiss Club Bradford, Mr. Brauchli for the Swiss Club Birmingham and Mrs. O. Davidson for the Swiss Relief Society Liverpool. Also present were the Rev. P. K. Wipf for the Swiss Church London and Monsieur F. Ansermoz, Social Attaché Swiss Embassy.

Mr. Kübler presided over the meeting as chairman of presidents and he was confirmed in this position for another period. The meeting was mainly discussing the problem of the rejuvenation of the Swiss Colony in the United Kingdom based on a report by a sub-committee, who were requested to continue studying various aspects of the matter. The question whether the inclusion of a special clause regarding the status and rights of the Swiss abroad in the Federal Constitution is desirable was also discussed preparatory to the coming Journée des Suisses à l'étranger in St. Gallen, mainly devoted to the same subject. Six presidents voted in principle in favour and three against the proposition, while five abstained.

E.

NEWS FROM

INSPIRATION OR WASTEPAPER?

Early in the year a series of annual meetings starts in the Swiss Colony. Our husbands announce that they will be out, and in some cases we may accompany them, sometimes invited and welcome as members in our own right, sometimes just more or less graciously tolerated. There are some societies where membership is not recorded as such, but where we "belong" because we give financial reports.

Later in the year annual reports are sent out, often accompanied by an appeal for new funds. Such reports have recently come into our homes. It would be very interesting to know whether these documents are studied and immediately acted upon, or whether they are dismissed as so much wastepaper. My guess is that most of them, after a cursory glance, are put aside under pressure of work, to be taken out later for careful study. Alas, leisure is scarce, and the pile of papers not requiring immediate action grows, and the day comes when even the most topical of reports no longer has any appeal at all, and another copy comes to a permanent resting place somewhere on a shelf, if it is not thrown away altogether.

With many societies that would not really matter — persistent neglect would soon enough get us struck off the membership register. But with some organisations it really is vital what we do with their annual report. One of them — perhaps the most important of them all, seeing that they look after the welfare of a few hundred people and dispose of nearly £10,000 a year — is the *Swiss Benevolent Society*.

Now, we all know that the less fortunate compatriots are well looked after, and many of us support the SBS as well as other good causes in the Colony. But are we really aware of how the work is carried out and how much effort is required in looking after the Swiss in need? Are we sure that there is enough money available year after year to meet all the requirements?

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THE COLONY

The Annual Report of the Swiss Benevolent Society not only answers our questions, but the President, Mr. F. G. Sommer, gives a very vivid picture of the many aspects of the work. If we have no heads for figures there is no need to study the accounts and balance sheet. Suffice it to realize that there was again a deficit of over £700 last year. But we should endeavour to go through the President's report very carefully; it makes extremely interesting reading and describes all the fields of activities, the care of the young and the old, the sick and the infirm, the cash and the kind. But it also gives pointers as to where and how we could give more support.

To judge from one's letter-box we certainly seem to live in the age of printed matter. Don't let us treat this particular report as "only" so much print. It tells a very important story if we take the trouble to read it, and to read it *now*, and to deliberate conscientiously what more we should do.

If any reader of the Swiss Observer does not receive an annual report of the Swiss Benevolent Society, their Secretary, Mr. J. Zimmermann, 31 Conway Street, London, W.1, will be only too pleased to send one on application.

MARIANN.

AT THE SWISS HOSTEL FOR GIRLS

Extracts from the Warden's Annual Report 1960

The past year has brought us a record number of 19,893 (1959: 19,742) overnight stays, but the total number of visitors has gone down to 1,553 (1959: 1,654), which, in fact, means only that we had more long-term residents. There was a notable change in favour of attending a language school rather than taking up domestic work.


We had again 270 (1959: 273) girls of other than Swiss nationality, mostly German, French, Italian and Austrian. In view of the increasing number of bookings from our own nationals, we are, much to our regret, obliged to limit the stay of other girls. This does not prevent us from welcoming them whenever there is an opportunity. Our Christmas Party, joined by three charming Indian girl-students, is particularly worthy of being remembered.

Free hospitality was offered to a few destitute girls. Financial hardship is, however, rather exceptional among our Swiss girls. Their main problems are of quite a different nature and are common to all classes. The younger generation is growing up in a society which has lost and not replaced old values. The family ties are often so loose that the children do not know where they belong. They feel lonely and insecure. The tales we hear in this respect are a sad and humiliating chapter. No wonder that the girls are often unbalanced and morally confused! Apparently self-assured and independent, they yet seek protection and guidance.


Now and again the Hostel is mistaken for some sort of a Finishing School. Parents who have lost control over their daughters try to put the whole responsibility on our shoulders and expect us to change a beatnik into a well-behaved young lady.

The television set is greatly appreciated. It is difficult to say whether it has helped to keep the girls more at home and to improve their English. In fact, the TV room is never more crowded than when a "Western" is on!

Lectures have not been as well attended as in former years. Is it a consequence of TV, or lack of interest and general apathy? It is somewhat depressing that only a few residents try to widen their cultural horizon, and that they hardly ever want to know about ultimate things.



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