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HELVETIA



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GROUP NEW ZEALAND OF THE NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY.

WELLINGTON, N.Z. Volume 10
OCTOBER, 1949. 14th Year.

ANNUAL REPORT & BALANCE SHEET

Your Committee has the pleasure in presenting the 14th Annual Report and Balance Sheet. Thanks to the ready response of our members to our appeal for an increased subscription fee, the finances of your Society look a bit sounder than at the end of last financial year. Although the Balance Sheet shows a drop of £17.17. 1d. over last year, £52. 1. 8d. was carried over from last year and £30. 0. 0 has been expended on Society badges from Switzerland, this sum of course is recoverable. However, there are three items of expenditure which could be reduced quite a lot. For instance, printing circulars to remind members of their unpaid subscriptions; postage, the bulk of which is used in mailing said circulars and lastly, exchange on cheques; please remit your subscriptions promptly and save your Secretary a lot of unnecessary work and the Society a sum of money.

Membership remains about the same as last year. A few, I am sorry to say, have passed into the great beyond and a couple we have lost through non-payment of their dues. On the other hand thirteen new members have been enrolled during the year. Owing to the absence of Mr. Merz some of these persons may be without the Society's Rule Book. Anyone requiring such, please notify your Secretary.

The long expected Society badges are on the way from Switzerland and should please everyone. Further particulars on their arrival.

THE ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING this year will be held on the 29th of this month at 8 p.m. at the "Chalet" Tea Rooms, Victoria Street. Mr. Cominot kindly made his Tea Rooms available so the meeting can be held in a central part of the city. We invite all members of Auckland and any others who happen to be in town that day to attend and vent their grievances, if any. The Committee would like to discuss matters with members for a change. So please note :-

DATE : Saturday - 29th October, 1949.

PLACE: The "Chalet" Tea Rooms, 12, Victoria Street West.

TIME : 8 p.m.

A. PEYER.

SWITZERLAND TO-DAY - (Concluded)

By E. Merz, Auckland.

During our comparative short stay in Carona, we reserved one week to visit St. Moritz and one for Venice/Florence in Italy. These places are quite easy to reach from Lugano by modern and fast buses. To St. Moritz a "Post-Auto" runs daily, leaving at 9 and arriving at 5 p.m. These buses, managed by the Federal Railways most efficiently and inexpensively, have very comfortable seats and moveable roof to afford unobstructed views of the fine alpine scenery.

The trip is certainly one of the most picturesque imaginable. Directly after Lugano, built at very heavy expense, the famous Gandria road commences to climb along Monte Bre. High above Gandria the road pierces the rocks through numerous long galleries, presently to approach the customs barrier at the Italian border. Passport and customs inspection is quick and proceeding along lovely lake Lugano and through Porlezza, the bus soon approaches a low pass above Menaggio on the shore of the famous lake of Como. After short refreshments, we turned directly north, along the shores of this charming Italian lake. Already in the spring we had paid a visit to this fine district, but from Menaggio we turned south to Tremezzo, where we spent an hour to see the palace "Villa Carlotta" with its vast exotic gardens; this is a former residence of an Italian Prince, now opened to the public. A motor-launch took us to Bellagio, directly on the opposite side of the lake, a resort beautifully situated and affording an unique view of the whole lake and surrounding mountains. Resuming the journey after lunch, the bus skirts close along the shore for about two hours, passing through many narrow typical Italian villages until Cernobbio, near Como, is reached. Incidentally, whilst passing through one of these small towns, our driver slowed down to point out the very tree where Mussolini was hanged by a mob of incensed anti-fascistes in 1944. In Cernobbio, from the terraces of the Hotel d'Este, we obtained a magnificent view of the Bay of Como.

However, returning to the St. Moritz excursion, we travelled due north and at midday had a rather poor lunch at Chiavenna. Shortly after we re-crossed the Swiss border at Castasegna and the long ascent through the Bergell Valley commenced, to finally culminate at the great climb up the Maloja-Pass Road. This wide, modern highway now begins one of the steepest ascends for automotiv traffic, and after negotiating about 20 hairpin corners, reaches Maloja at 6,000 ft. altitude. There, at the foremost rock-bastion is Maloja-Hospiz (now Hotel Kulm), affording a wide and wonderful panorama down the Bergell and the southern alps. We had half an hour's stop here, to move our stiff legs. Maloja is only a small hamlet; the great Maloja-Palace Hotel has been closed ever since the outbreak of the war. However, the place is beautifully situated at the upper end of the broad Engadine. Here the great massifs of Piz Corwatsch, Piz la Margna and Piz Lunghin, are bastions of this famous valley, visited by countless tourists from all over the world.

Looking East, the lake of Sils (the largest of the four in this valley) is close by, and resuming our drive the fine road is running close along the edge of the blue water. Next we pass Lake Silvaplana and Lake Campfer, before arriving in St. Moritz. The combined valleys of the upper and lower Engadine, traversed by the river Inn, which is one of the largest sources of water supply to the Danube, is one of the three greatest valleys in Switzerland. Its outstanding attraction is the splendid mountain-mass of the Bernina group, directly south of St. Moritz, affording some of the most exquisite snow and ice scenes in our alps. But along the whole length of this valley, are countless fine mountains, the lower reaches usually covered with pine and larch forests. The air and the climate are exhilarating, being at the most favourable altitude for both body and mind.

St. Moritz itself is at a height of 6,000 ft., beautifully situated in the wide-open, sunny Upper-Engadine. From this unique position, one obtains a wide perspective of bright landscape, lovely lakes, thick forests, framed by high alpine peaks and glaciers. Here are probably the most marvellous ski-ing grounds in the world; the famous bobsleigh "Cresta-run" and the great ice rinks on the frozen lakes. St. Moritz is called the cradle of winter sport, as it was here where the sport developed from modest beginnings. It was here that for the first time the beneficial influence of the bracing winter-climate on the human organism was proved. St. Moritz gets the fullest benefit of intense sun, through double reflection on the snow, and the valley is protected against the cold north wind, and has a dry, fog-free air.

One of the chief attractions for visitors to St. Moritz is a trip by rail to Alp Grum, past the great Morteratsch Glacier, which nearly reaches the railway near the village of the same name. From there the rail climbs up the valley to the Bernia Pass and then drops down to Alp Grum, with a commanding and great view against the Palu Glacier, and south to the Poschiavo valley towards the Italian border.

about During the last night of our stay in St. Moritz, about ten inches of snow fell, giving us the joy of seeing the Engadine covered by a white mantle of snow. The return trip past the lakes was made in brilliant sunshine and the colour contrasts were very vivid; the incredible blueness of the sky enhanced by the pure alpine air and the white snowfields, the deep rich blue of the lakes, all was a picture of striking beauty. The journey down the Maloja pass, through the Bergell and again past lovely Lake Como, back home, was all too quick, particularly with the thought that this was now our last of the many memorable sight-seeing tours we had been privileged to make throughout our wonderful homeland.

This is the end of my Symphony of Switzerland:

If my readers enjoyed the description as much as I enjoyed writing them, then I am satisfied. I have endeavoured to vary the topic, so that all of you could find something of individual interest. To me it has been an exciting adventure; I have explored old and new paths; I have discovered new beauties, half forgotten during the many years absence. The Swiss people appeared to me much the same as twenty-five years ago when I was a youth. They have an inherent modesty that prevents them from broadcasting their achievements and virtues. Through persistent hard work during the last hundred or more years, they have attained an amazingly high standard of life, and yet the average man and woman is quite ignorant of this startling phenomenon, visible everywhere you go. They have grown up with this gradual rising progress and have hardly noticed the height they have reached. True, too, with all the wealth around them, they are not resting on beds of roses; the toil goes on relentlessly because in these days of economic and political turmoil, and the constant danger of regression, our people seem to sense that idleness and discord would be too dangerous for a land without natural resources.

And now I say "Uf Wiederlueko" to our land of peace and liberty and -

"Honour the country of others
But never cease to love your own."

Dear Compatriots, -

I feel certain that every reader of Mr. Merz's account relating his wonderful experiences in Switzerland will wholeheartedly join me in thanking him for the pains he has taken for our benefit, and for the pleasure he has given us with his well written account. Mr. Merz deserves, indeed, unstinted praise.

B. Gnadinger.

DECLARATION BEFORE PARLIAMENT OF FEDERAL COUNCILLOR NOBS, PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION, REGARDING THE RECENT DEVALUATIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON SWITZERLAND:

In Parliament, recently President Nobs, who is the Minister of Finance, explained that the real causes of the recent devaluation vogue are, from the economic viewpoint, very different from those which prompted the monetary manipulations in 1936. The speaker mentioned the repercussions of the recent devaluation on Swiss economy, saying that the importance of this development as far as the rate of devaluation, as well as the number of countries are concerned, obliges Switzerland to carefully study the advantages and inconveniences that such a step would have for her.