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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY LTD. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Tenth Ordinary General Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society was held at Swiss House on Saturday, February 8th.

Mr. J. J. Boos, President, was in the Chair and the attendance numbered 30.

The Secretary read the notice convening the meeting and the report of the auditor.

ACCOUNTS. The auditor, Mr. Percy H. Green, F.C.A., elucidated the accounts as circulated to the members. As the period under review was an abnormal one the auditor refrained from submitting the usual comparative statement. Had it not been for the generous support of the Swiss Government, the loss for the year would have been considerable, but taking all circumstances into account, the final result was deemed to be fairly satisfactory. A resolution to adopt the accounts as presented was carried unanimously and the auditor, Mr. Green, was re-appointed.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT. The Chairman read his report on the activities of the Society during the past year, the salient features of which were as follows:—

Membership. On December 31st the Society was composed of 24 honorary members, 44 contributing members, 35 contributing firms and donors, 217 active members and 17 corresponding members. One new member was admitted whilst 11 members resigned, most of whom were, however, transferred to Swiss Sections.

Meetings. Despite adverse conditions, black-out, travelling restrictions, etc., the meetings of the Society, the Council and the General Purposes Committee were held regularly during evenings in the summer and Saturday afternoons in the winter. The meetings were generally well attended and although no special lectures could be arranged, members listened with great interest to the various informal talks by fellow-members. Outstanding among these were a film première presented by Mr. A. Tall, entitled "Air France Challenge Cup," and a talk by Mr. O. Grob on his experiences in the New World. There were also narratives by a compatriot evacuated from Belgium and two legionaries who described their adventures in Morocco, France and Norway.

The New Minister. The event in 1940 in the Swiss Colony was the arrival of the new Minister, M. Walter Thurnheer. The S.M.S. had the honour of entertaining the Minister and his collaborators at Pagani's Restaurant and subsequently at the Monthly Meeting at Swiss House, when the Society's aims and activities, past and present, were explained to the visitors both in words and pictures.

Educational. Educational activities, which in former years formed an integral part of the Society's work, were restricted to two evening classes, and an attempt to reopen the College (day classes) on a reduced scale in the spring was frustrated by later events.

Employment Department. For the sake of economy the Employment Department was transferred from the City, where it originally started over 50 years

ago, to Swiss House. Mr. Pfaundler is carrying on there under somewhat difficult conditions.

Swiss House. Until the middle of June, Swiss House, once a hive of industry, stood almost deserted, when at the suggestion of the Swiss Minister and with the co-operation of the Swiss Colony it was transformed into a Relief Centre and clearing station for air raid affected compatriots. By the end of June accommodation for some 30-40 guests could be provided. Its capacity as a hostel was put to a full test when later on a large number of prospective participants in the convoy to Switzerland were collected there and for several weeks awaited its departure, which, alas, was never to take place. It was during this time that Swiss House suffered severe damage through enemy action and the work so nobly begun came to an abrupt end. Fortunately all occupants were sheltering in the front basement and had a miraculous escape, being none the worse for this most unpleasant experience. The damage to Swiss House did not prove so serious as was first anticipated and while most of the back rooms can no longer be used, the front was only slightly affected and the activities of the S.M.S., the Employment Dept. and the affiliated Swiss societies, suffered no interruption. At the end of December the Swiss Benevolent Society, after 11 years of residence at Swiss House, transferred its office to their Home for aged Swiss (recently evacuated) at Conway Street, as the rooms occupied by them at Swiss House were no longer suitable.

Staff. Both the Secretary, Mr. J. J. Schneider, and the Assistant Secretary, Mr. W. Burren, who had been in the employ of the Society for many years, found suitable positions in Swiss firms, Mr. Schneider carrying on the secretaryship as a part-time occupation. The Chairman expressed the Society's appreciation to both these gentlemen for their loyal service.

Conclusion. In conclusion the Chairman said that the Society was greatly indebted to the Swiss Government, the Swiss Legation, the Central Secretariat of the S.K.V. and the numerous donors and contributors for their continued support. He furthermore expressed his personal thanks to the Council, the Committee and all the members for their collaboration during the past year.

A motion to adopt the report was carried with acclamation.

ELECTIONS. Mr. W. Deutsch, a member of the S.K.V. of 40 years' standing, was elected Chairman *pro tem* to conduct the elections. He paid a special tribute to the Chairman for his untiring work during a particularly difficult period and on behalf of the meeting thanked the members of the Council and the General Purposes Committee for the services rendered, which all present heartily endorsed by acclamation.

The retiring members were re-elected and the Constitution of the Council and the General Purposes Committee for the financial year 1941 is as follows:—

COUNCIL. *Chairman* — Mr. J. J. Boos; *Vice-Chairman* — Mr. W. Meier. *Trustees* — Messrs. G. E. De Brunner, W. Eichenberger, E. Steiner. *Members* — Messrs. Ch. Chapuis, R. Chappuis, O. Grob, E. Hardmeier, M. Heilinger, G. Jenne, L. W. Krucker, J. J. Pfaundler, A. C. Stahelin, A. Steinmann.

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE. *President* — Mr. J. J. Boos; *Vice-Presidents* — Messrs. W. Meier and L. W. Krucker; *Hon. Secretary* — Mr. R. Chappuis; *Hon. Treasurer* — Mr. M. Heilinger; *Members* — Messrs. W. Burren, W. Fuchs, R. Senn, F. Streit.

AUDITOR — Mr. Percy H. Green, F.C.A.

SECRETARY — Mr. J. J. Schneider, F.I.A.C.

PRESS REPORTER — Mr. W. Burren.

DELEGATE TO THE ADVISORY BOARD OF THE EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT — Mr. Ch. Chappuis.

DELEGATES TO THE SWISS SPORTS COMMITTEE. — Messrs. R. Chappuis and F. von Bergen.

DELEGATE to the Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Mr. F. Streit.

This terminated the proceedings, a cordial vote of thanks being passed to the Chairman.

WB.

NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE LONDON GROUP.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1941.

Held at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, London, W.1, on Saturday, 18th January, 1941.

Members of the London Group of the Society and their guests foregathered between 12.30 and 1 o'clock at the Dorchester (Ball Room). It was particularly gratifying in view of the present times, to observe the great number of Members and their friends who turned up. Many a one had undertaken what may be described as an arduous journey in order to be able to be present at this gathering; all the greater was the joy to see so many familiar faces. Lunch was served punctually at one o'clock, and a pleasant informal atmosphere reigned. Special appreciation was expressed by everyone that the Swiss Minister and Madame Thurnheer were present as guests of honour of the Society. Grace was said before sitting down to lunch by our beloved Pasteur Pradervand. After toasting the King and Switzerland and the Swiss Federal Council, the President, Mr. A. F. Suter, gave an impressive address, reviewing the present situation and how it affected the Members of the Society and all other Swiss in these Islands and our beloved home country. On behalf of the Society Mr. Suter thanked our Minister for the devotion and efficiency with which he was fulfilling his arduous and delicate mission; to Madame Thurnheer he said he wished to express the deepest gratitude of himself and all his compatriots here for her untiring efforts to help and comfort those in need. The President assured both our Minister and Madame Thurnheer that they were held in the highest esteem and deepest affection by all Swiss living in this hospitable country. In reply our Minister gave to the Society an account of Switzerland's present problems, in particular how our country was struggling to maintain its traditions and independence, both spiritual and political, against all difficulties, whether political or economical. Needless to mention with what interest the statements of our representative at the Court of St. James were

listened to by all those present. We all felt that the representation of Switzerland's interests over here could not be in better hands.

After an interval of scarcely ten minutes the Official Annual General Meeting was held, preceded by a paper on the present international situation read by Mr. G. Keller, one of our journalist members who has done such invaluable work in making known in Switzerland the true spirit and magnificent effort of this country. Mr. Keller's review of the situation was followed with tense attention by all. Thereupon the various items on the agenda of the actual Annual General Meeting were proceeded with speedily. After the reading of the record of the last Annual General Meeting by Mr. Campart, Secretary of the Society, and after approval of the Treasurer's and Auditors' Report, the Council officially resigned. Mr. Henry C. Balser took the chair as Interim-President during the election of the Council, which was elected, constituted as for the past year with one exception and — with great applause — Mr. Suter was again elected unanimously President of the Society for the year 1941-42. Mr. Bernhard Sigerist, on behalf of the Society, paid tribute in moving terms to the invaluable offices rendered to the Society by the President and to his devotion to the well-being of the Swiss in Great Britain and the maintenance of close relations between them and our home country. It is natural that Mr. Campart was re-elected Secretary of the Society, and as a tribute to his untiring efforts on its behalf, he was made — among stirring applause — a free member of the Society, he having been member and Secretary thereof for twenty-four years.

At the conclusion of the meeting Mr. Suter again addressed the Society, appealing to all to pull together and thanking all for the confidence placed by them in him.

Special applause followed the President's words of thanks addressed to Mr. Anton Bon to whose generosity it was due that the meeting could be held at the Dorchester and who offered us such a delicious luncheon — although it in every way complied with the spirit of the food regulations! Mr. Suter took the opportunity of thanking Mr. Bon for his tireless devotion to the cause of the Swiss who are destitute in this country.

After the official ending of the Meeting most of us sat down to an informal tea and were entertained by some of our own members with songs and music. A pleasantly hilarious mood was the result of the community singing, but at 5.40 — the time simply having flown — we all had to break up in view of the Black-out. Many a one was heard to say how much it was appreciated that our Minister and Madame Thurnheer stayed with us from the beginning to the end of the Meeting. This will long remain a memorable day in the history of the N.S.H. Gravé were the times in which we met, but we have faith in the future!

President's Address.

The period under review has been the first full year of war and it was to be expected that the serious interference with the Group's activity already apparent during the last quarter of 1939 would be further intensified. However, we were resolved to hold our monthly meetings at all costs, and in this we were successful with the exception of September,