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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

The Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society (Limited by Guarantee) was held at Swiss House on Saturday, February 10th.

The Chairman, Mr. J. J. Boos, in opening the proceedings, extended a cordial welcome to the sixty members present.

In the absence, owing to illness, of the Secretary, Mr. J. J. Schneider, the notice convening the meeting and the report of the auditor were read by Mr. W. Burren.

The accounts for 1944 were presented by Mr. Robert P. Huxley, Chartered Accountant, the Society's newly appointed auditor. He created a very good impression by the lucid manner in which he explained the accounts and the Society appears to be well served by the late Mr. Green's successor. The finances, he said, could be considered in a very sound state and whilst the year under review closed with a loss, no provision had been made in respect of a subsidy which may be received from the Swiss Government.

As customary, the Chairman gave a detailed review of the activities during the past year and as the Annual Report, including the full report and accounts will shortly be published and circulated, suffice it to quote a few salient passages from the Chairman's Report:—

“ For the S.M.S., the year 1944 was quite a memorable one. I cannot give a glowing report of achievements in the field of Educational and Social activities, but in spite of the dangerous and difficult times which we have experienced, we can record success in increased membership, the restarting of education and maintenance of Social activities.

MEMBERSHIP. The Society to-day is composed of:—

- 23 Honorary Members.
- 81 Contributing Members, Firms and Donors.
- 254 Active Members.
- Admissions during the year — 12.
- Resignations — 3.

The increase in membership is indeed pleasing, and I hope the new members will take a very active interest in the future of the S.M.S.

Our sympathy goes to the many members whose homes and business premises were damaged during renewed air activities, some have unfortunately lost their entire home, but we are pleased to say that none has received fatal injuries.

MEETINGS. The Council met on four occasions and the General Purposes Committee had four meetings, two in conjunction with the Council. The Monthly meetings were held on Saturday afternoons during the winter months and on Wednesday evenings from April to June. The danger from flying bombs during July, August and September, made the holding of meetings inadvisable. The attendance at the Monthly Meetings was, in view of prevailing conditions, very satisfactory and nearly 100 members and friends were present at the March and October meetings.

LADIES GROUP. Under the active leadership of Mrs. G. Jenne, Mrs. W. Meier, and Miss J. Bossard, the 15 lady members formed a group with a view to bringing about a more active participation in the Society's activities of the lady members, and also to

provide whenever possible, amenities such as refreshments after meetings.

EDUCATIONAL. With pleasure I am able to announce that we were able to resume educational activities for our members.

A *French Language Circle* was formed in April and 13 meetings were held under the leadership of Mlle. D. Béale. The participants spent most interesting hours in “ brushing up ” their French.

A *French Elementary Class* was attended by nine students under Mr. M. A. Brulé. It enabled these compatriots to spend some of their evening hours in refreshing their school French.

But the most successful were the *Russian Elementary classes*, stages 1 and 2, attended by 13 and 11 students respectively (all members of the S.M.S.). The lecturer, Mrs. Kira Gondos, was found to be a most capable teacher and the participants eagerly look forward to a resumption of the Class (Stage 3) this year.

EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT. The difficulties of the Employment Department have not diminished, and it speaks well for Mr. J. Pfaendler's patience and efforts that he was able to place 240 applicants (an increase of 35 compared with the previous year), the number of places offered being 423 and places applied for 219.

S.K.V. HEADQUARTERS. Postal restrictions have during the year still further curtailed our contact with our Headquarters in Switzerland, and since August we have received no “ Zentralblatt.” We sincerely hope that in the New Year better postal facilities will prevail so that we can again get in closer contact and prepare, in common with our friends at home, for the future.

SWISS HOUSE. Swiss House remains not only the meeting place of the S.M.S. and its manifold activities, but has more than ever become a centre of Swiss activities. In addition to the Swiss Societies which have held their meetings at Swiss House for many years, we welcome since January 1945 also the very active and patriotic “ Unione Ticinese ” to our centre, and trust that they will feel at home with us.

FINANCE. Generous Donors and Contributors, both here and in Switzerland, have subscribed to our cause and in addition an amount of £1179. 14. 7 has up to now been received towards the College Re-establishment Fund. This does not include any amounts received by the S.K.V. as a result of their collection for rebuilding London and Milan S.K.V. centres. During the year we received through our Headquarters subsidies in respect of the years 1942 and 1943 from the Federal Authorities, which support we value very much, seeing that our efforts to keep Swiss House and our activities going receive due consideration from our highest authorities.

To all Donors and Contributors, I extend our most sincere thanks. As ever our efforts are directed towards husbanding our resources so that as and when conditions permit, our full educational activities for the benefit of our young Swiss can be restarted.

CONCLUSION. The support so generously given by our older members may not benefit them much in the future, but they will have the satisfaction of having supported a cause which in their youth and time has given them help, advice and pleasure, just as the younger generation we expect to come and take our places, will need help and advice in the future.

Finally, I thank the Swiss Minister and the Staff of the Legation, especially Mr. de Graffenried, the

Commercial Attaché, for the valued support given to me. Thanks also to Mr. P. F. Boehringer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer," for giving us much valuable space in his paper for the reports of our activities, and last but not least, I express my thanks to the colleagues on Council and Committee and all members for their valued support during the year."

A motion that the report and accounts be adopted, printed and circulated was passed unanimously, a hearty vote of thanks being accorded to the Chairman.

Mr. R. P. Huxley, C.A., was reappointed auditor for the financial year 1945.

On the proposition of the Council, two Honorary Members were elected by the meeting, viz., Mr. E. Hardmeier, who as Vice-President and Chairman of the Education Committee for four years and as member of the Council for thirteen years had given sterling services to the Society, and Mr. E. Steiner, Manager of Volkart Brothers, in appreciation of his invaluable services as Trustee to the S.M.S. and Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Employment Department.

In vacating the Chair for the election, the President stated that the Honorary Secretary, Mr. R. Chappuis, did not seek re-election owing to pressure of work. He thanked Mr. Chappuis for his excellent services rendered to the S.M.S., which was enthusiastically endorsed by all present.

Mr. E. Luterbacher, who acted as Chairman *pro tem.* in a most businesslike fashion, expressed thanks to the outgoing Council and Committee and in particular to Mr. Boos, for having presided over the Society during six difficult years.

As a result of the ensuing election, the Council and the Committee for the financial year 1945 were constituted 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. W. Burren, Ch. Chapuis, R. Chappuis, O. Grob, M. Heilinger, G. Jenne, L. W. Krucker, J. J. Pfaendler, A. C. Stahelin, A. Steinmann, F. Sreit.

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: President, Mr. J. J. Boos; Vice-Presidents, Messrs. W. Meier and L. W. Krucker; Hon. Secretary, Mr. W. Burren; Hon. Treasurer, Mr. M. Heilinger; Members, Messrs. K. E. Ammann, W. Fuchs, E. M. Huber, R. Senn.

Auditor: Mr. Robert P. Huxley, C.A.; **Secretary:** Mr. J. J. Schneider, F.I.A.C.; **Press Reporter:** Mr. W. Burren; **Delegate on the Advisory Board of the Employment Dept.:** Mr. Ch. Chapuis; **Delegate to the N.S.H.:** Mr. W. Beckmann.

This terminated the proceedings, the Annual General Meeting being followed by the Ordinary Monthly Meeting, at the close of which an excellent and very welcome tea was served by the lady members.

The next Monthly Meeting will be held at Swiss House on Saturday, March 10th at 2.30 p.m., following which through the good offices of Mr. Ch. Chapuis, two most interesting films, "Born in Britain" and "Training of French Paratroops" will be shown. They are from the "Amis des Volontaires Français" (English commentary) and show the fine spirit of the Free French movement. The projection will as usual be in the hands of our member Mr. C. Fer. Please, therefore, reserve March 10th for the S.M.S.

W.B.

CITY SWISS CLUB — Monthly Meeting.

The Monthly Meeting of the City Swiss Club took place on Tuesday, February 6th at the Dorchester Hotel. Mr. A. Bon was in the Chair, and there were 120 members and friends present.

The guest of honour was the Rt. Hon. Viscount Bennett, P.C., formerly Prime Minister of Canada. Other guests were: The Swiss Minister, Monsieur P. Ruegger, Nat. Councillors Oprecht and Leuenberger, Mr. Bernasconi, General Secretary of the Swiss Trade Union Council, General Lombard of the French Army and Mr. Patteson, Managing-Director of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

The President extended a hearty welcome to Viscount Bennett expressing to him, on behalf of the members, their appreciation for having consented to address the Meeting. He also voiced his pleasure at seeing two members of the Swiss Parliament in our midst, as well as the other distinguished visitors.

Viscount Bennett, after some very kind and complimentary references to our country and its activities during the war, be it as the Protecting Power or in connection with the Red Cross, gave a most interesting address on the British Empire. He likened the Empire to a partnership, and referred to the Dominions as independent partners, who were only tied to each other by their joint loyalty to the Crown.

The Crown had become the symbol of all the tradition and cultural values which preceding generations had created in the mother country as well as in the Dominions. He drew a picture of the tremendous development of Canada in the last fifty years; how he himself as a young man had gone out West, and watched the growth of a small Western community from 3,000 inhabitants to over 100,000; he showed that there is still unlimited room for expansion, and that with the small population a man need have no fear of being unemployed; pioneer conditions still prevail in a good many parts, especially up north, where modern transport devices have only now begun to give access to untold mineral wealth.

He showed how Canada, of all the Dominions of the Empire, is probably the one most similar to Switzerland in its democratic institutions and its respect for the individual, not so much for where he comes from as for what he does; and he ended his most interesting exposé on a truly philosophical level, saying neither a man's nor a people's achievements should be judged by the acquisition or success of any material gains, but on the wider basis of mankind's evolution, where each one of us has to ask himself — "Has my life been in vain, or has it contributed some slight share to the improvement of the lot of future generations?"

Viscount Bennett received a hearty ovation on resuming his seat. The President once more thanked him for his interesting address and the Swiss Minister, associated himself with Mr. Bon's remarks.

Close of the Meeting 9 o'clock.

ST.

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