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NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE.

Open Meeting of 15th July.

We give below a fuller account of the interesting discussion that took place at this meeting of the N.S.H. on the questions to be raised at the Journée Suisse at Berne in September. The results of this discussion have already been summarised shortly in the last issue of the Swiss Observer.

Mr. Meier, President of the Swiss Mercantile Society was the first to speak after Dr. Egli, the President of the N.S.H., had welcomed the numerous guests. Mr. Meier raised in the first place the inevitable question of the Military Tax, not in order to cavil against the principle of the Tax, payable in lieu of Military Service, but in order to plead most strongly for a more just and less archaic method of calculating and levying the Tax. There was no reason, he declared, why this Tax should not conform with taxation practice adopted in all civilised countries, namely that it should be levied exclusively according to Income and family circumstances, and leave out any regard to a fictitious expected inheritance. In the second place Mr. Meier advocated an intensification of the efforts to educate the children of Swiss families abroad in the Swiss spirit. He suggested a free periodic distribution of suitable books about Switzerland to these children according to age group. In the third place the speaker suggested that the 1st August Celebration of Swiss colonies might usefully be enriched from time to time by organised visits of Swiss gymnastic or yodelling or flag waving teams from the home country.

Mr. Bessire declared that the Military Tax of the Swiss abroad should be handled by the Federal instead of the Cantonal authorities, a suggestion seconded by Mr. Suter. The latter said, regarding the children, that their education in the Swiss spirit, so that they felt Swiss, depended principally or mainly on their parents. He thought that in actual fact there are more books about Switzerland available to children, than have so far been made use of. Mr. Ferraris however warmly supported Mr. Meier's plea for a bigger effort on the part of the authorities concerned in Switzerland, to help the emigrated Swiss to bring up their families so that they remained a Swiss. Mr. Ferraris further pleaded most strongly in favour of a revision of the Military Tax, eliminating the reference to expectations which may never eventuate and putting a stop to the bad practice of worrying parents and relations in Switzerland for the payment of the Tax. It was a sad fact that the first thing many Swiss here got from the authorities of their country was a Tax demand, which made not a few shy-off for ever.

Mr. Andrea raised the question of some participation of the Swiss abroad in the political life of their country. He suggested the right of Swiss citizens from abroad to participate in votes and also to elect their own representatives in parliament. Mr. Campart joined in this suggestion regarding votes, specifying that participation should be restricted to Federal votes. Mr. Marfurt thought that such participation through the post was not so simple and that possibly voting at the Legations and Consulates might be more feasible. Full information was essential for an intelligent exercise of the vote, in which regard the Swiss Observer would have to play an extremely important role. Mr. Tall observed that Swiss from abroad should at least

be able to vote in Switzerland when there on visits without being called upon to pay local taxes first. Mr. Mr. Campart put in a plea for Swiss women also being allowed to vote.

Mr. Ferraris, reverting to the Military Tax asked the representative going to Berne to demand in due form an earlier revision of the Military Tax coupled with the suggestion that the Swiss abroad should take the revision in hand, if nothing was decided in Switzerland within one year. Mr. Suter warned the meeting that the Military Tax was raised year by year at the Journée des Suisses à l'étranger without getting any further. Dr. Egli declared himself ready however, to bring the question up again, as it was foremost in so many people's minds. He suggested that Mr. Meier's suggestion seemed most helpful, and the meeting agreed that they could be brought forward at the conference at Berne. Mr. Renz thought that the methods permitted for getting the Tax paid should be more clearly defined.

Mr. Wasmer declared that the Swiss abroad should not claim any privileged position regarding the Military Tax. Dr. Lindt on the other hand suggested that the proceeds of the Military Tax from the colonies should be devoted to educational purposes in the colonies. Dr. Egli summarised the sense of the meeting on these questions as well as questions raised at previous meetings with a view to bringing them forward at the Journée des Suisses à l'étranger. Four propositions have been tabled by Dr. Egli for discussion at the Berne conference, based on the previous London discussion. They comprise: The Military Tax, The Participation in the Political Life of Switzerland, The Educational Problem and Measures to Assist the Colonies in Keeping the Swiss Spirit Strong and Alive.

Helvetica.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

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