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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

There was an exceptionally large attendance at the Monthly Meeting, held at Swiss House on Monday, October 10th. The Society entertained as guests, Mr. K. Strickler, Central President of the S.K.V., and National Councillor Ph. Schmid-Ruedin, General Secretary of the S.K.V. This was indeed a red-letter day in the annals of the S.M.S. For the first time since the Golden Jubilee celebration in 1938, representatives of the association in Switzerland had come over to pay a short visit to the London Section.

The President, Mr. W. Meier, who was in the Chair, bade a hearty welcome to the distinguished visitors. He was pleased to state that Swiss House had now been largely restored from the ravages of war and took this opportunity of thanking the representatives of the parent association for the funds collected at the time in Switzerland towards the rebuilding and renovations at Swiss House.

For the benefit of our visitors, the proceedings were carried on in our mother tongues, instead of in English, as is customary at our meetings.

The Chairman briefly acquainted the members with the programme arranged for our guests, which included a visit to the bomb-damaged parts of the City, the annual gathering at the Dorchester, a full report of which has already been published, the Lord Mayor's Show, and through the kind offices of the Swiss Minister, the visitors were able to attend the Armistice ceremony at Whitehall and pay a visit to the House of Commons in session. An official visit had also been paid to the College, where the guests were introduced to the Staff and the Students.

In opening the official proceedings, the Chairman, with deep regret, announced the death of Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, late Swiss Minister in London and Hon. President of the Swiss Mercantile Society. He paid a tribute to the departed, who had always been a great supporter of the S.M.S. and in particular its Education Department. Together with the other Swiss Societies, the S.M.S. had sent a telegram of condolence to Mme. Paravicini, as well as a wreath. The meeting rose to pay a last silent tribute to the memory of its late Hon. President.

The newly elected Chairman of the Education Committee, Mr. O. Roethlisberger, delivered his maiden speech in French. In an eloquent address, he gave the meeting the latest news regarding the College and reported that enrolments for next year were coming in very satisfactorily, the term commencing in January being already fully booked.

Central President Strickler then rose to address the meeting. He first gave an outline of the aims and activities of the S.K.V. and referred to the great strides made in the course of the last decade. He had before him a copy of the jubilee issue of the "Kaufm. Zentralblatt," which had just celebrated its 50th anniversary. According to the latest figures published therein, the membership had risen from 36,500 in 1938 to 48,900 in September, 1947. The time, Mr. Strickler stated, was not far off when the 50,000 mark would be approached or even surpassed.

The education of its members, and particularly of the commercial youth remains, as it has always been, one of the foremost tasks of the association. Since the promulgation of the Federal Law for professional education, the S.K.V. has been solely entrusted with

the education of commercial apprentices and the yearly diploma examinations, as the only body able to undertake this gigantic task. Special courses are being held annually for older employees who wish to prepare themselves for the more specialised examinations for correspondents, accountants, etc., which are also held under the auspices of the S.K.V. and for which the successful candidates are awarded the Federal Diploma. These special courses enjoy an ever increasing popularity and the examinations demand a very high standard of proficiency.

Mr. Strickler also referred to the achievements of the association in the field of social security and conditions of employment. Much had been achieved through collective bargaining and whilst safeguarding the interests of the employees, those of the employers' associations were equally served by mutually satisfactory arrangements and agreements.

Finally, the Central President spoke of the happy relations which had always existed between the Central Society and the London Section, which alone among the foreign Sections numbered among its ranks two Honorary Members of the Central Society, viz. Messrs. A. C. Stahelin and J. J. Boos, both of whom were present at the meeting. He further expressed the hope that at next year's 75th anniversary meeting of the S.K.V., the London Section would be represented by a strong delegation.

He then presented two members of the Committee, Mr. L. W. Krucker, Vice-President and Chairman of the House Committee, and Mr. W. Burren, Hon. Secretary, with the golden badge of the S.K.V., in recognition of their services rendered to the London Section in particular and the S.K.V. in general. This gesture was cordially applauded by all present.

A brief interval then followed, when the Ladies' Group of the Society served light refreshments, which were greatly appreciated by everybody and added to the homely atmosphere of the meeting.

National Councillor Schmid-Ruedin, who had been re-elected into the National Council with a record majority of over 27,000 votes at the recent Federal elections, then addressed the meeting. He first gave a general outline of the present representation of the various Parties and the legislation likely to be introduced during the next term of office. In a most interesting account, he informed the meeting of the political and economic trends of our country. Although time did not permit to go into great detail, members were able to learn of the many problems which face our legislators in Berne, such as electricity supplies, provisioning difficulties due to the prolonged drought of last summer, etc. He also referred to agriculture in general, the hotel industry, as well as the present boom in some of the export industries such as watchmaking, etc. He said that he could foresee a prolonged period of full employment and was pleased to state that contrary to the period following the first World War, the labour problems and conditions of employment had been satisfactorily settled; hence the absence of strikes. Finally, he referred to the social welfare schemes, particularly the Old Age and Dependents' Insurance Scheme, of which he and the association had always been ardent supporters.

Our popular General Secretary was given an enthusiastic ovation at the termination of his address and thus came to a close a most interesting and memorable meeting.

W.B.