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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

Annual General Meeting.

The Ordinary General Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society (Limited by Guarantee) was held at the Swiss Club, Charlotte Street, on Wednesday, 11th February.

The meeting, which was preceded by a supper, was attended by about 70 members, to whom the Chairman, Mr. W. Meier, extended a cordial welcome. Amongst those present were several past Presidents and Veteran Members.

The Secretary, Mr. J. J. Schneider, read the notice convening the meeting and the auditor's report.

In presenting the accounts for the year under review, the auditor, Mr. Robert Huxley, A.C.A., explained that no comparative figures could be given as far as the years 1947 and 1946 were concerned, since the circumstances in the two years were not alike. In 1946, the College was open only for part of the year, whereas 1947 comprised a complete scholastic year. This was reflected in both income and expenditure and the past year closed with a slightly lower deficit than the previous year. It is anticipated that this will be covered, at least to a very substantial extent, by a subsidy receivable from the Swiss Government. Turning to the Balance Sheet, the Auditor asserted that the Society's financial position was both strong and sound, the assets being readily convertible.

A motion to adopt the accounts was carried unanimously, thanks being expressed to the Auditor for the lucid manner these had been presented. Mr. Huxley was thereupon re-appointed Auditor for the financial year 1948.

In a comprehensive report, the Chairman surveyed the activities of the Society during 1947.

After a short preamble, dealing with the outstanding economic and social developments of the year, the Chairman stated that for the S.M.S. it had been one of quiet development, of growing friendship amongst its members and, as regards the College, of steady progress and expansion.

At the close of the year, the Society was composed of 24 Honorary Members, 68 Contributing Members and Donors, 273 Active Members, and 21 Corresponding Members. There were 14 admissions and 11 resignations during the year. Of the latter, several came from members who had returned to Switzerland and the loss to the London Section was in most cases compensated by a transfer to one or another of the S.K.V. Sections.

The Chairman then went on to give a detailed account of the outstanding events and happenings, which we will refrain from recording here, as these have already been fully reported. Suffice it to state that the programme was varied and attractive, the meetings, well attended and the support from the members, generally speaking, wholehearted and very satisfactory.

Under the Chairmanship of Mrs. W. Meier, the Ladies' Group again took a prominent part in the Society's activities and greatly contributed to the success of some of the meetings.

The relations of the S.M.S. with the parent association in Switzerland, which has now all but surpassed a membership of 50,000, remain as cordial as ever and were further consolidated by mutual visits and exchange of views.

Referring to the work of the Employment Depart-

ment, which forms an integral part of the activities of the association, the Chairman stated that the number of vacancies registered was more than double the number of applicants placed. The difficulty at present was to find enough suitable candidates, especially as shorthand typists and foreign correspondents. The Authorities had granted permits in a limited number of cases to Swiss possessing special qualifications and a further number of compatriots had been allowed to take up work as student employees.

Mr. Pfaendler's work as Manager of the Employment Department, he stated, went back 38 years, and many members of the S.M.S. owed their first introduction to business life in London to his unfailing service and advice.

Turning to the Society's finances, the Chairman expressed grateful thanks to the Federal Authorities in Berne for their contributions towards the deficits which the annual accounts must inevitably show, since the fees paid by the students only cover part of the cost of maintaining the College. He said the Society was also indebted to the many Donors and Contributing Members for their generous support of the Educational Fund and to the S.K.V. for their ever-ready co-operation.

With the other Swiss Societies, several of whom continued to use Swiss House for their meetings and for practice, the S.M.S. maintained the usual friendly relations. In addition, Swiss House had always been put at the disposal of Committees dealing with matters of general interest to the Swiss Colony, in whose endeavours the S.M.S. always greatly co-operated.

Finally, the Chairman thanked all those who had in one way or another contributed towards a successful year.

A hearty ovation was accorded to the Chairman at the conclusion of his address.

In reporting on the activities of the College, Mr. O. Roethlisberger, Chairman of the Education Committee, was pleased to record that despite adverse circumstances, encouraging progress had been made during the past year. Whilst at the reopening in May, 1946, barely 50 students could be admitted, the College was to-day in a position to offer accommodation to no fewer than 125 students of both sexes.

Numbers would necessarily have to remain restricted until such time as the Society could secure additional accommodation. In the meanwhile, the Committee was devoting its efforts to improving the scholastic programme, to furthering the social side and to modernising some of the present amenities and College equipment.

The report then went on to give details of courses held, subjects taught and results achieved at the Diploma examinations. The latter were regularly attended by Mr. E. Steiner, one of the Society's Trustees, to whom the Chairman expressed the Committee's appreciation for having given the College the benefit of his wide experience and for having taken such a keen interest in the achievements of the students.

During the year, bursaries had been granted by the Swiss Government to 10 students attending the College to enable them to defray the somewhat high cost of a stay in London.

Additional classes necessitated the appointment of two new masters, including one lady teacher, having regard to the growing number of students of the fair sex. The Teaching Staff now comprised six fully

qualified lecturers, two of whom were in the employ of the Society already in pre-war years.

The administrative staff continued to deal efficiently with the multifarious work connected with an educational establishment, not least of which in the present circumstances was the finding of suitable accommodation in private families.

Finally, Mr. Roethlisberger gave details of the many cultural, historical and industrial centres visited by the students. These excursions had always been regarded as an essential part of the educational programme.

Due to the considerable influx of young Swiss people, particularly girls who had taken up domestic employment, the demand for evening classes in English had greatly increased. No less than 11 classes with over 200 students had been held in the various stages of English. A Russian language course, as well as a class in Commercial Correspondence had also been held, and classes in other languages and commercial subjects could be arranged, provided there was a sufficient demand.

Mr. Roethlisberger was warmly applauded for the able manner in which he had presented his report, particularly in view of his short tenure of office.

Concluding the Council's report, Mr. L. W. Krucker, Chairman of the House Committee, gave an account of the repairs, renovations and improvements effected at Swiss House in 1947. These included the erection of a new class room, reinforcement of the staircase with steel girders, fire escapes to comply with L.C.C. regulations, the installation of fluorescent lighting and other amenities for members and students.

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Slow though progress had been due to the inclement weather in the early part of the year, the supply of building materials and other difficulties, the efforts of the House Committee, and particularly its Chairman, were rewarded by having been able by the end of the year to present Swiss House in a state that, were it not for the immediate surroundings, bore no traces of the extensive war damage.

A motion to adopt the reports was accepted unanimously, with a hearty vote of thanks to the various officers who had compiled them.

The meeting then proceeded with the election of the Council and the Committees, with Mr. J. J. Boos, Honorary Member and past President, acting as Chairman *pro tem*.

He thanked the retiring members for the services they had rendered to the Society during the past year and was pleased to announce that all had offered themselves for re-election.

In view of the increased work, it was proposed to elect an additional member on both the General Purposes Committee and the Educational Committee.

Following is the composition of the Council for the financial year 1948:—

COUNCIL:— *Chairman*: Mr. W. Meier; *Vice-Chairman*: M. L. W. Krucker; *Trustees*: Messrs G. E. De Brunner, W. Eichenberger, E. Steiner; *Members*: Messrs. J. J. Boos, W. Burren, R. Chappuis, O. Grob, M. Heilingner, G. Jenne, J. J. Pfaendler, O. Roethlisberger, A. C. Stahelin, A. Steinmann and F. Streit.

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE:— *President*: Mr. W. Meier; *Vice-Presidents*: Messrs. L. W. Krucker and O. Roethlisberger; *Hon. Secretary*: Mr. W. Burren; *Hon. Treasurer*: Mr. W. Heilingner; *Members*: Mrs. R. Foot, Messrs. E. H. Schlatter, J. E. Schneider, R. Senn, A. F. P. De Westenholz.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE:— *Chairman*: Mr. O. Roethlisberger; *Vice-Chairman*: Mr. H. Marfurt; *Members*: Messrs. F. Burri, E. M. Huber, E. A. Hueni, A. A. Jaccard, H. Knoll.

HOUSE COMMITTEE:— *Chairman*: Mr. L. W. Krucker; *Vice-Chairman*: M. O. Grob; *Members*: Mrs. G. Jenne and Mr. W. Fuchs.

AUDITOR:— Mr. Robert P. Huxley, A.C.A.

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

PRESS REPORTER:— Mr. W. Burren.

DELEGATE ON THE ADVISORY BOARD OF THE EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT:— Mr. Ch. Chapuis.

DELEGATE TO THE N.S.H.:— Mr. R. Weist.

The meeting decided to send a telegram of good wishes to National Councillor Ph. Schmid-Ruedin, General Secretary of the S.K.V., who had recently celebrated his 30th anniversary in the service of the association.

The members learnt with pleasure that Dr. Paul Ruegger, Swiss Minister, had been elected President of the International Red Cross, and it was decided to offer him, on behalf of the Society, heartiest congratulations on this highly honourable appointment, whilst at the same time expressing regret at losing his services as Swiss Minister in London, in which capacity he had taken a keen interest in the affairs of the Society.

Finally, the meeting accepted applications for membership from Messrs. A. W. Burgener, J. Galliker and W. E. R. Schneider, the two first-named being transfers from Swiss Sections, and the proceedings then terminated.

W.B.