

Swiss Benevolent Society

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SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

The Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Benevolent Society took place at 6.30 p.m. on Monday, 22nd March, at Brown's Hotel, W.1. In his opening remarks the President, Colonel A. Bon, expressed his pleasure at the satisfactory financial position of the Society. Contrary to expectations based on experiences after the first World War no mass unemployment had set in following the War of 1939-45. Consequently the Society's funds had not been called upon more than normally.

The accounts, presented by Mr. Roethlisberger, Hon. Treasurer, showed that the last financial year was particularly successful. Subscriptions and donations amounted to £2,300.—, the largest sum ever collected in one year. The figure under "refund of income tax on covenants" showed that 120 subscriptions had been guaranteed since the scheme was started six years ago. This had brought in £480.— in 1947. The sum spent on casual relief included help given to a new kind of case: Many young Swiss had come to England in the hope of finding employment. When their funds had dried up they applied to the S.B.S. Needless to say that such cases invariably ended in repatriation.

The Hon. Treasurer pointed out that the position of the subsidiary funds was equally sound. These were the Georges Dimier Fund (Home for Aged Swiss) and the Carlin Fund for the maintenance of old age pensioners. The Martha Steiner-Staehelin Fund for holidays for poor Swiss in bad health, and the G. E. de Brunner Christmas Cheer Fund had both received donations by their founders.

Both the Hon. Treasurer and the President assured the meeting that the rising cost of living was being closely watched. The Society tried whenever possible to grant the necessary increases in relief to meet the higher living expenses. The surplus in the General Account made it possible to increase casual relief and pensions by 2/6 a week, and a special gift of £1.— to every adult on the books (10/- to a child) would be distributed at Easter.

After the accounts and the auditors' report had been accepted the Secretary, Mr. Ritter, read a short report. He told of the Christmas parcels which had been sent in generous measure from various people, in particular new clothing made by the ladies of the sewing circles of the Swiss Church. A great surprise had been the timely arrival of 500 food parcels from Malaya, sent by the firm of Diethelm & Co., in Singapore. This was in recognition of the hospitality given in London to eight of their employees on their way home from the Far East to Switzerland two years ago. The Secretary also described various jobs that had fallen to the lot of the Secretariat. They included looking after injured people who for some reason or other could not get compensation, negotiations with Home Office and Police on behalf of compatriots, as well as providing civilian clothing for discharged Swiss prisoners of war from the German Army.

The President then thanked the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Paul Ruegger, who was present at the meeting with Dr. Escher and other members of the Legation, for his unflinching interest in the work of the Swiss Benevolent Society. He wished him success in his new work as Chairman of the International Red Cross Committee. He also thanked the members of the

S.B.S. for their loyal collaboration and then retired from the chair.

Mr. Dupraz, Hon. Vice-President, conducted the elections and the old Committee was re-appointed *en bloc* with two alterations, *viz.*, the Rev. Reverdin was elected in place of the Rev. Pradervand, and Mr. Bonnet in place of Mr. Favre, who had both returned to Switzerland. It was also decided not to accept the resignation of Mr. Gambazzi, Vice-President, and to leave him on the Committee in spite of bad health.

The first task of the new Committee was to elect five new pensioners and the President announced a concert to be given in aid of the Swiss Benevolent Society by the Swiss Male Choir, the Swiss Orchestral Society and the Swiss Accordion Club, on 23rd April.

Monsieur Ruegger then thanked the President for his kind words and wished the Benevolent Society a successful future.

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May I be permitted, in conclusion, to thank the President for the excellent tea which he had offered very generously to all the members of the Committee prior to the meeting. I should also like to add my personal appreciation of the never failing punctuality with which the President of the Swiss Benevolent starts the meetings of his Society. This is particularly striking at a time when so many committee meetings and social gatherings in the Colony seem to have acquired a habit of starting late.

MARIANN.

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