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LUNCHEON AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE (London Group).

Held on 15th January, 1949.

A large number of members of the N.S.H. followed the Council's invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting, which, this year, was held at the Schweizerbund (Swiss Club), 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

After the luncheon, the main dish of which was a savoury Bernerplatte, the President, Dr. H. W. Egli, rose to welcome the guests, in particular the guests of honour, the Swiss Minister and Madame Henry de Torrenté. All the Swiss Societies of the London Colony were represented through their Presidents or delegates. The Ministers of the Swiss Church and Fr. Lanfranchi, and Mr. Stauffer, Editor of the Swiss Observer, had also accepted the invitation.

After Dr. Egli's words of welcome the Swiss Minister addressed the meeting. His Excellency first paid tribute to the so active President of the N.S.H. and then made a survey of the problems which the Swiss Government had to face in the course of 1948, from which it could be learnt that the Federal Council had paid much attention to the question of our national defence and studied a new plan of war economy.

Expressing his thanks for the most interesting address, Dr. Egli proposed that Monsieur de Torrenté be elected Honorary President of the London Group, and the gathering unanimously supported the nomination.

Colonel Anton Bon, whom the President had, together with Mr. Louis Chapuis, specially greeted as a Doyen of the Swiss Colony, spoke on behalf of the guests and expressed with a few humorous and yet so serious remarks his thanks for the invitation.

The last speaker was Mr. A. F. Suter, Past President and Honorary Vice-President. It was very pleasing, said Mr. Suter, to look back on last year's work, which brought the great success of Dr. Egli's speech at the *Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger* at Interlaken.

After an interval, the business part of the meeting began. The Honorary Secretary, Mr. R. Weist, read the minutes of the General Meeting of 10th January, 1948. They were agreed to be a true record of the proceedings.

In his *Annual Report* the President recalled the many interesting events of the year and reviewed the work done by the Council. Dr. Egli said in particular:—

The year 1948 was one of consolidating the new lease of life of this branch society of the N.S.H. in Switzerland. We can look back on this period with some pride, having not only sustained the pace of the first year of promise but extended our work in several respects.

The Council, which was constituted at the last General Meeting and at the subsequent Council Meeting, was deprived of several of its members in the course of the year. The Council met eleven times during its term of office.

Ten *Open Meetings* devoted to Lectures and discussions were held during 1948, and there was one Social Evening with a dinner and dance.

On 17th April a *Conference of the Swiss in Great Britain* was held at the invitation of the London Group,

to discuss proposals for the Interlaken Conference. All Swiss societies in the United Kingdom had been invited, and a gratifying number responded. Proposals for an extensive Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and other suggestions for Interlaken were discussed and sanctioned.

Thanks to timely preparation, the Colony in Great Britain was, for the first time, represented at the *Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger* at Interlaken by a fairly large delegation including representatives of various societies. The views, wishes, and suggestions of the delegates met with much interest and positive response. Our main proposal for a comprehensive Organisation of the Swiss Abroad had been taken up for close examination and would form one of the chief questions to be discussed at a preliminary conference in February and at the next *Journée* in June. The previous year's main proposal from the London delegation for giving the Swiss abroad some token of political rights when in the homeland was well on the way towards enactment.

In line with the suggestion of an Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, the N.S.H. London Group last spring took the initiative for forming a Presidents' Conference of the London Colony "to co-ordinate, further and safeguard the interest of the Swiss Colony." It was formally constituted with the Swiss Minister as Honorary President, Dr. Egli as the first year's Chairman, Mr. F. G. Sommer as Vice-Chairman, and Mr. W. Meier as Honorary Secretary.

The Council's main labours were directed towards the young, with some positive progress being achieved.

(a) As before the war, the N.S.H. resumed responsibility for organizing a *holiday visit to Switzerland for children* of the Colony. It was regrettable that only twelve children took part. The participation

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must be much larger in future to justify the great efforts required.

- (b) The *Swiss Youth Club* loosely formed under the wings of the N.S.H. and formally opened exactly a year ago in the Legation building at Duke Street, proved a great success. The Saturday evening dances were exceedingly popular with ever increasing participation. Mrs. A. Isacco was doing a marvellous job in managing this throng often single-handed. Mme. S. Weibel and Mrs. Bolla of the Rütli Club fully co-operated from the start. The publication of a *Guide to the Swiss Colony* had been delayed longer than expected, but it had been magnificently supported by the Colony. It should be most useful to new arrivals and also to ourselves. The main work had been done by Mr. H. Andrea, Mr. P. Spinnler taking over from him later on.

The offer of the Union Helvetia to sell the lease of their premises in Gerrard Place cheaply to the Colony had been actively taken up by our group. Negotiations for best final terms, preparations of a concrete scheme to be investigated by representatives of various societies were in progress. Hopes of an early realization were growing.

An appeal for positive support of Swiss visiting artists with a view to securing them an encouraging welcome had helped as regards attending the concerts but failed to bring any offers of hospitality. It was hoped to mobilize more and more support in this cultural field.

The appeal for a more active support of the *Swiss Observer* and the *Echo* had not yet yielded the results hoped for. The *Swiss Observer* was needed so that wider circles of the Colony could be reached and the *Echo* for speaking to the sister Colonies abroad. Both papers wanted the moral and financial support of all. The Swiss in England were bound in gratitude to both Mr. A. Stauffer, Editor, and Mr. O. Boehringer, Publisher, for their unfailing help. In Mr. Boehringer senior they had lost a great benefactor to the Colony, whose chief creation, the *Swiss Observer*, continued.

Dr. Egli's report was listened to with much interest, and some of the items were made the subjects of inquiries and discussions.

Mr. R. Weist then submitted the *Treasurer's Report*, and on behalf of the Auditors, Mr. J. Weber proposed that the accounts be passed.

Mr. A. F. Suter, Past President, took the chair for the *Election of the Council*, and the following members were elected for the term of office of 1949:—

Mr. H. Andrea, Mr. P. Bessire, Mr. A. Boller, Mr. C. Chessex, Dr. H. W. Egli, Mr. A. Gautier, Mr. P. Isacco, Mme. A. Isacco, Dr. A. Künzli, M. A. R. Lindt, Mr. H. Marfurt, Mr. R. Schneider, Mr. H. Wasmer, Mme. S. Weibel, Mr. R. Weist, Mr. W. Renz, Miss A. Gretener, Mr. Theo Haller.

Mr. J. Weber and Mr. M. Rothlisberger were confirmed as Auditors.

After some discussion, in the course of which the hope was expressed that a number of generous donations towards the funds of the London Group would be forthcoming during the year and thus help to cope with the steadily increasing expenses, it was agreed that the *annual subscription* should remain at 10/-.

Speaking on the *future activities* of the London Group, Dr. Egli said that the Council would carry on with the programme which he had unfolded in his

report, and that he hoped that it would continue to enjoy the support of the Colony.

During the tea that followed, Madame H. W. Egli read some well-chosen passages about Switzerland by British writers, and Mademoiselle Ruth Huggenberg, a young concert pianist, kindly presented us with some pieces of delightful music.

H.M.

SUBSCRIPTIONS RECEIVED.

Mrs. L. Newman, H. Erni, K. E. Ammann, Mrs. L. Green-Kessler, J. W. Siegenthaler, S. Spargnapani, Florian Schmid, H. J. Markwalder, C. Kunzle, W. P. Walker, R. W. Newton, P. Berti, Miss P. Zurfluh, P. Hutter, W. Burren, J. H. Meyer, G. Moser, A. J. Imobersteg, P. Lusser, Mrs. T. Jakubowski, Dr. P. Langel, L. J. Faivre, Miss E. Struchen, A. Pianca, J. Tache, R. Tschirren, J. Muller, Th. Polti, Swiss Club Bradford, C. Polti, P. E. Meister, J. Weber, Miss Th. Burkhard, Miss Paur, Miss A. Biucchi, R. A. Merz, J. A. Seiffert, Miss M. Portman, G. Poglia, A. Steiner, H. Schmid, Mrs. St. West, Swissair, E. C. Steiner, Mrs. Kruegel, E. Ritzmann, W. Bachmann, Th. O. v. Speyr, V. Ratti, L. P. Croset, J. F. Beer, M. E. Dubois, J. Weber, J. Bassi, Miss A. Allegranza, E. Engler, L. Blatter, Ch. Weibel, M. E. Perrenoud, F. Eggar, Miss J. M. Bruschi, M. Lienhard, Mme. A. Meschini, R. A. Bebié, J. M. Braun, E. W. Hensch, A. W. Burckhardt, Mrs. H. Ellison, C. Isely, R. J. Schwind, Mrs. R. D. Diviani, Mrs. E. TeWinkel-Dubois, Mrs. L. Ayres, J. Scheiwiller, S. B. Vuillimoz.

(To be continued.)

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