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EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

Birkdale House,
Oakfield Road,
Selly Park,
Birmingham, 29.
May 29th, 1950.

The Editor,

The Swiss Observer,

Dear Sir,

In your issue of May 26th you published a letter purporting to be an expression of opinion on your article "Charity begins at Home" but which, in no way relevant to that subject, was meant to be a scathing criticism of the Young Swiss girls who come over here to work.

Despite the fact that many of the statements made are so conflicting as to nullify the accusations, I strongly resent this attempt to cast aspersions on the integrity of Swiss Girls as a whole.

I have always understood that permits are not issued until positions are secured here. So if ever-increasing numbers of these girls are swarming over Britain it must be consequent of an ever-increasing demand for their services. It is absurd to imply that this demand would continue were the *majority* (as stated) "coming with no intention of doing a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, but rather with the express intention of avoiding as much work as possible while enjoying a year's holiday at the British employer's expense. Any employer saddled with a girl of this calibre would give her short shrift and be quite capable of "sending her packing without any help from the Swiss Legation," British Authorities or the publicity of The Swiss Observer. (Not guilty, Ed.)

It would indeed be a miracle if there were no Black Sheep amongst these thousands — since there are some to be found in every society — not excluding employers, but to lump them all into this category is to do them a great injustice.

As for the particular case, instanced in such detail, Mrs. Back admits, that, knowing this girl had left her first post without proper notice, she still allowed her to be employed by a friend who was in dire need of reliable help, listened to continual unsatisfactory reports of laziness, irresponsibility and utter incompetence, yet, reproved this parasite for the "dishonest action" of intending to leave the employer "in the lurch" when "help" was most needed. I would ask which lurch? what help?

Since 1946 I have been in close contact with the numbers of girls who have come here — having arranged

and attended all their meetings during these four years, I have also met their employers.

Birmingham as far as I know has no prerogative in the selection of these young people so one may take them as a fair example of their kind. They are not domestic servants but come from varied walks of life — nurses, students, shop assistants, office girls to mention but a few and they have done and are doing a splendid job of work with great credit to themselves and satisfaction to their employers. They do the usual work of a Domestic Servant (which in England is confined to housework) and in addition undertake the care of children, washing, ironing, sewing, knitting, mending for household and family and even cooking. One can readily understand that at first many difficulties may arise in the kitchen. The English family does not take kindly to foreign dishes, There would certainly be some consternation if part of the precious meat ration were to be served as G'Schnätzlets, Rösti instead of the inevitable mashed potatoes or a dish savouring of onions, cheese and tomato, when the macaroni pudding was expected.

However, should the newcomer fail in making a cup of coffee or an omelette I am inclined to think it might form the basis of a strong bond of sympathy — rather than otherwise — between her and her employer

Reputation is the most fragile thing in the world and the reputation of Birmingham's young Swiss Girls, for the fulfilment of their obligations, still stands high.

Yours faithfully,

Lilian Wüest (Mrs.)



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