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## SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

The monthly meeting, held at Swiss House on 25th June, was not too well attended, partly on account of holidays, and for the rest because of the warm weather.

Swiss Sports. Arising out of the minutes Mr. Meier reported the decision of the General Purposes Committee, that the Relay Cup shall in future be presented to the winning team, and held by it for one year, to be returned to Swiss House a fortnight before the next sports meeting. Should there be no sports meeting the following year, the cup will also have to be returned to Swiss House.

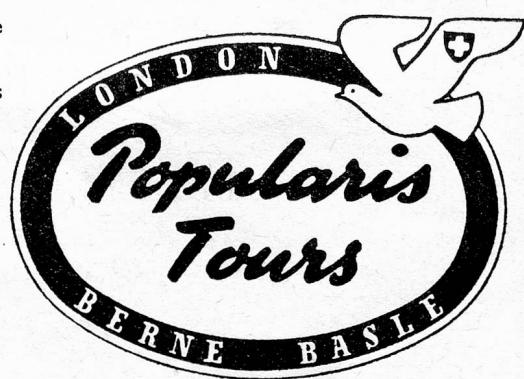
The President also referred to a letter from our General Secretary, thanking us for our hospitality during the recent visit of himself and his wife. We received from him a book entitled "Kurs ins Neue", which has been added to our library.

Letters have come to hand from the Swiss Minister, M. Henry de Torrenté, and from Mr. Schmid-Ruedin, expressing appreciation for our 63rd annual report, praising our accomplishments, and the pleasant relations existing between them and our society.

Earlier in the year we gave a guarantee to share in an eventual loss on the recital of Miss Elsie Attenhofer. Full accounts have now come to hand, showing that the estimates were wrong. We have sent a cheque for £6 5s. 9d. in implementation of our guarantee.

Mr. J. J. Boos then gave his report on the Delegates Meeting of the S.K.V., early in May at Chur, which he attended with Mr. F. Dannmeyer. He referred to the full accounts which appeared in the Zentralblatt, and contented himself with conveying to us a picture of the atmosphere, and the growing importance of these gatherings, in our national affairs. Nevertheless he dealt in greater detail with the main resolutions: 1) concerning the cost of living allowances which are not paid in full by all firms; 2) the action of the "Hausverband" of Brown, Boveri & Co., who published their preparedness to forego the cost of living allowance to make the firm more competitive, at a time when the firm's accounts show Frs.  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million more profits; 3) dealing with the provision of employment for older office workers who have become redundant. Mr. Boos received a warm applause for his interesting and instructive report.

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Mr. Meier informed us that negotiations were about to start between the Swiss and the British Governments on the important question of reciprocity in the matter of the national old age insurance schemes. The endeavour will be to reach agreement on:

1. Pensions awarded in England being transferrable to Switzerland, if the recipient repatriates for good, and vice-versa.
2. A Swiss national returning home before reaching retiring age should receive a commensurate pension, failing that, refund of his contributions in full or in part.
3. Swiss nationals who are over here for a short time should continue to pay their premiums in Switzerland, and should not have to contribute to the English scheme.

The President then dealt with the proposal before the Presidents Assembly for the setting up of a Youth Centre in London. For some years since the war, there have been between 3,000 and 6,000 Swiss girls in the U.K., with permits to work for one year, mostly in domestic employment. Some of these girls arrive here with slenderest knowledge of English, or of their rights and duties. There is exploitation by some employers. Whatever the cause, some of these girls leave their jobs and arrive in London without money and friends. Others fall ill, are homesick, or associate with the wrong type of men. At first these girls were taken care of by our Churches. Later the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls in Great Britain was created and is in the charge of Miss Wolfer. In a single year she dealt with 825 girls who sought guidance and advice. Mr. and Mrs. Bachofen, who succeeded Mr. and Mrs. Isacco as organisers and supervisors of the Swiss Youth Club, are running a dance and social on Saturday nights at the Duke Street Building belonging to the Swiss Legation. This building which has proved unsuitable for adaption to the needs of our Legation, may be disposed of in the near future. The Youth Club would then be unable to continue. This is the position at present. The Social Secretariat and the hostel for girls in need of quarters until other arrangements can be made, have been taken care of by the Benevolent Society. The question of the Youth Centre remains. Dr. Egli, president of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, has been in Switzerland and has discussed the problem with the Auslandschweizer-Kommission. It is held in those quarters that substantial financial support for

a Youth Centre can be mobilised in Switzerland. Dr. Egli has prepared a statement of minimum requirements as to accomodation, organisation etc. Mr. Meier asked for guidance as to the line he should follow at the next Presidents Assembly. In the ensuing discussion, which approached the question from many angles, particular stress was laid on the importance of a thorough preliminary statement being prepared and placed before the Swiss Colony, before we can reasonably be expected to express our opinion one way or another. The site of a Youth Centre, its organisation, the cost of setting it up, and the subsequent running expenses, were considered as being of utmost importance. It was decided that:

- a. A full statement be published in the Swiss Observer, and comments invited from the Colony.
- b. The matter be discussed later at a monthly meeting, at which the attitude of our members be ascertained.
- c. At this meeting two or three members be appointed to join our President in the discussions, which should comprise representatives from the whole Colony.

Mr. Meier, after announcing that no meetings would be in July and August, declared the meeting closed at 9.30 p.m.

E.H.S.

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