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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY. Annual General Meeting.

This meeting was held at Swiss House on 11th February, 1953 and was well attended.

Before entering upon the official business Mr. W. Meier, our President, announced that, after consultation between the various Swiss Societies in Great Britain, it had been decided to launch an appeal through the "Swiss Observer," inviting donations to a fund being raised for the victims of the flood disasters in England. He appealed warmly to the assembled company to give generously to this deserving cause.

Coming to the business before the meeting, it was decided to leave the confirmation of the minutes of the 1951 Annual General Meeting to the Council at their next meeting.

The accounts, which had been circulated with the notice of the meeting, were received for discussion. They had been audited, as in the past, by Mr. Robert P. Huxley, F.C.A. We were informed that, to insure continuity, our auditor had gone into partnership with Mr. Hetherington, who was also present. It was Mr. Huxley's intention, however, to continue to audit our accounts personally, so long as there was nothing to prevent him from doing so. Commenting on the figures of the London Section, Mr. Meier made special mention of the exceptionally small amount of outstanding subscriptions, for which the credit went to our able treasurer, Mr. Rolf Senn, and his willing helpers. The Expense and Income Account of the College showed a deficit of £1509.6.0., which will be refunded in due course by the BIGA (Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit), bringing our own resources to about £4,000. We are authorised by the Federal Authorities to spend annually £400 for seven years on replacement and renewal of furniture, and full use was made of this authority. The balance sheet again discloses a very liquid position. The College Re-Establishment Fund will be largely used up during 1953 with expenses connected with our taking over the building next door at the end of May next, and adapting it to our needs. The accounts were adopted.

Our President then read extracts from the 64th Annual Report of the Council. There was one outstanding event in 1952. Mr. Ph. Schmid-Ruedin, National Councillor and General Secretary of the S.K.V., visited us in May and addressed a very full meeting on "Der Schweizerische Parlaments-Betrieb", dealing in his most lucid manner with the history, character and work of the Swiss legislature. He also paid a visit to our College.

There has again been a small decrease in our membership, mainly owing to the return to Switzerland of some of our members. At the close of 1952 we had :

- 20 Honorary Members (end 1951 : 20)
- 248 active members (end 1951 : 254)
- 23 corresponding members (end 1951 : 22)
- 69 contributing members.

Mr. F. von Bergen, a member of our secretarial staff before the war, who had often entertained us with his jodel songs, passed away during the year.

At the S.K.V. Delegates Meeting in Chur in May, Mr. F. Dannmeyer was presented with the bronze plaque for 50 years membership, and Mr. F. Kibiger was similarly honoured at our June meeting in London.

A list of the special attraction at our monthly meetings is given below :

- 9th January : Address by Dr. Umbricht, Counsellor of Legation on "New Problems in Switzerland's Relations with the Sterling Area."
- 20th February : Annual General Meeting held at Swiss House.
- 12th March : A talk illustrated by his own slides by Mr. E. W. Alther, Dipl. Agr. S.I.T., entitled "Across the Paths of David Livingstone". 2
- 9th April : A lecture by Mr. P. Halstead, B.A., one of our teachers, "The Work of a Probation Officer".
- 28th May : Address by National-Councillor Ph. Schmid-Ruedin on "Der schweizerische Parlaments-betrieb".
- 25th June : Report by Mr. J. J. Boos on his visit to the S.K.V. Delegates Meeting at Chur."
- 10th Sept. : After the business of the meeting, members showed their holiday snaps.
- 8th October : Films kindly lent by the British Transport Commission, dealing with various aspects of transport.
- 12th November : Address by Mr. Stanley H. C. Woolrych, O.B.E., on "The Council of Europe".
- 10th Dec. : The Traditional film show. Films lent by Swiss National Tourist Office, Trafalgar Square.

It was reported with deep regret that our Secretary for over 20 years, Mr. J. J. Schneider, F.I.A.C., had to go on pension because of ill-health, and our best wishes accompany him into his retirement. Mr. J. Hauser has been appointed as his successor.

Swiss House continues to be used for meetings by :

Catholic Choir, Committee of Swiss Catholics in London, First of August Committee, Helvetica Lodge of Instruction, London Swiss Philatelic Society, Nouvelle Société Helvétique, Swiss Benevolent Society, Swiss Sports Committee, Unione Ticinese.

Mr. W. Burren, chairman of the Education Committee, gave the report on the College. The attendance during the first term was somewhat lower than in 1951, but the College was full to capacity during the summer. In view of the restricted accommodation, propaganda was confined to a few periodical advertisements in the Zentralblatt, and an attractive poster in German and French was sent to all branches of the S.K.V., commercial schools, and Employment Bureaux in Switzerland. More intensive propaganda is envisaged for the time when 34 Fitzroy Square is ready later this year. — The Education Committee is enquiring into the possibilities of :

- 1) Extending the courses for commercial students from four to six months.
- 2) Special courses for a) teachers. b) higher grade hotel employees. c) technical personnel and professional students.
- 3) Introduction of a separate section for all non-commercial students with a general standard of education commensurate with that required of commercial students.

375 students (247 men, 128 women) attended the College in 1952 as against 407 (279 men, 128 women) in 1951.

There was a welcome increase in the number of students sitting for the diploma examination. There were 255 candidates, of whom 214 obtained the diploma, representing 84% passes.

The College lost through death Mr. J. Lockyer, B.A., one of its most able masters. We are indebted to him for the compilation of an English Grammar which was published a short time before his death and should prove a real asset to our students.

569 students attended the Evening Classes in 1952 (491 in 1951). Several classes were run and are continuing to prepare students for the lower certificate in English (Cambridge University). The examination results obtained are very gratifying.

The Employment Department placed 31 of our compatriots in 1952 — only one less than in 1951 — in spite of the continuance of very difficult conditions.

Mr. W. L. Krucker, chairman of the House Committee, reported that Swiss House was now in a very good state of repair, all class rooms having been re-decorated. Further new furniture had been bought which was much appreciated by the students. 34 Fitzroy Square would be taken over on 31st May next on a seven year lease, and should accommodate 80/100 students.

After Mr. Robert P. Huxley, F.C.A., had been re-elected as auditor, Mr. Willy Deutsch was elected as chairman pro tem. He thanked the past President, and the outgoing committee and council members for

their indefatigable efforts during 1952, and had a special word of thanks for Mrs. Mariann Meier for her forbearance. As all officials, council and committee members were willing to serve for another term, the re-election en bloc was disposed off in a thrice.

Mr. J. J. Boos proposed that we send Messrs. E. Steiner, our trustee, J. J. Schneider, our former secretary, and M. Heilinger, our former treasurer, hearty greetings, and express the hope that they will soon be able to join our meetings again from time to time. This was readily agreed to.

The meeting was conducted with exemplary efficiency and punctuated by light-hearted banter which was appreciated on all sides. Little wonder we got through the agenda well before 9 p.m.

E.H.S.

PERSONAL.

We deeply regret to announce the passing away, after a short illness of Mr. Ch. Bertschinger, of "Bonnyvale", Sheering nr. Bishops Stortford, Herts. An obituary will appear in our next issue.

* * *

We extend our heartiest congratulations to Mr. Richard H. Weist, son of Mr. and Mrs. R. Weist of 19, Leinster Road, Muswell Hill, N. 10. on the occasion of his marriage on Saturday, February 21st at Hounslow Congregational Church. The couple left the same day by air for a honeymoon in Paris.

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