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DREAM COMES TRUE FOR YORKSHIRE SCHOOL.

Teacher will get his Swiss alphorn.
By Derek Meakin.

Swiss and high Yorkshire officials met for the handing over of a 14-foot-long wooden alphorn this week and the last chapter in what started as a private joke came to an end.

It began when a Yorkshire headmaster and his divisional education officer, determined to protest about the telephone shortage in their areas, sent in an official — but lighthearted — request for an alphorn to be used for signalling to other schools in the neighbourhood.

The head of the county supplies department, while not actually turning down the offer, suggested a set of tom-toms might be cheaper.

When Swiss officials in London heard that difficulties in obtaining an alphorn might result in the sound of native drums echoing over Yorkshire moors they were stung into action. An urgent telephone call was made to Switzerland to obtain an alphorn for the school.

It was flown to London at the beginning of this week. With it was a star Swiss alphornist, Mr. Martin Christen, to teach the headmaster how to blow it, and a colourful Swiss costume for him to wear on ceremonial occasions.

The letter that started it all was from the West Riding divisional education officer, Mr. L. Blake. He had been discussing with Mr. Albert Harvey, the headmaster of Spenborough Millbridge School, the difficulty of communicating with neighbouring schools. At Millbridge school housecraft and handicraft classes are attended by children from five other schools. If the teacher failed to turn up there was no means of letting the pupils know that the classes were cancelled. Some of them had to make a fruitless journey of up to two miles.

So to County Hall, Wakefield, Mr. Blake sent in an official requisition for an alphorn, so that the headmaster could send "an unmistakable signal to the surrounding hills and avoid those unnecessary journeys".

"Head likes velvet jackets"

Continued the letter: "I gather that alphorns vary in length from ten to 18 feet, and naturally the longer the horn the better the fundamental note. We should like a deep note, but not too deep, and I can confirm that it is the Swiss kind we wish to have and not the sort used in the Himalaya or South America.

"Incidentally the headmaster is rather attracted by the velvet jackets and although these are obviously not essential, we do think we ought to do the thing properly if at all."

From Mr. Norman Calvert, county supplies officer, came this reply: "I cannot at this stage give a firm quotation for the supply of an alphorn nor for the supply of a uniform for use of the hornblower. An instrument of the authentic Swiss type would probably have to be imported from Switzerland, and the cost is, I understand, likely to be in the region of £30. I have no reason to suppose that the Himalayan or South American types would be any less expensive.

"If you wish alternative signalling devices, such as a set of tom-tom drums (which might simplify the problem of appropriate clothing for the operator since a tin of black grease-paint might suffice) or some visual mechanical, electrical or radio-signalling apparatus to be considered, no doubt you will let me know. I assume that you would also obtain the necessary consent from the police authorities for the use of any audible signalling device."

Horn-tuners expenses?

Then the education department, after studying the correspondence carefully, gave the official answer: "As this item costs more than £10, and might involve the committee in heavy maintenance costs — to wit, travelling expenses from Interlaken for a horn-tuner — the divisional education officer might be asked for confirmation of the approval of the school governors before the request is submitted to the committee".

Down to London, where Mr. Albert Kunz of the Swiss National Tourist Office read about this unusual inter-departmental correspondence — and put the wheels in motion.

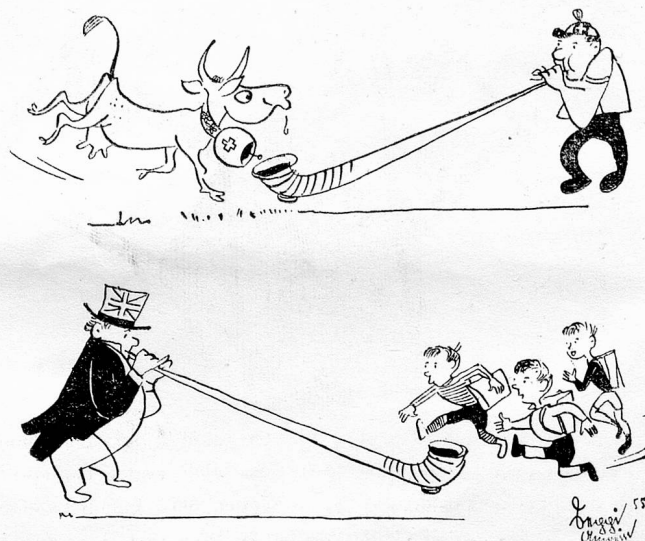
After making his preliminary phone call he flew to Switzerland where he supervised final arrangements.

The horn has been specially carved by Mr. Johann Christen, a 68-year-old retired chimney sweep who lives in the orchard-village of Hergiswil, which lies between the lake of Lucerne and the slopes of the 7,500 feet high Pilatus.

Made from tree.

It was made from a slender tree trunk which Mr. Christen first had to saw lengthwise into two pieces. His main task was chiselling out the inside until the walls were only a fraction of an inch thick, after which the two halves were fastened together, fitted with a mouthpiece, and the instrument was ready for use.

On its journey to Yorkshire the alphorn had a two-man escort — Mr. Christen's 42-year-old son Martin, who is one of Switzerland's best-known alphorn players, and Mr. Martin Mengelt, Manager of



At home and abroad: two ways of using an alphorn as seen by Luzerner Tagblatt.

the Central Switzerland Tourist Board. He had with him another present from the five central Swiss cantons, a traditional costume from Obwalden which consists of a wide-rimmed black hat, a richly embroidered black jacket depicting colourful alpine flowers, a special type of tie and a pair of wooden shoes. Mr. Christen was wearing his own costume — from Nidwalden — for the flight to London and the later journey to Yorkshire.

The official handing-over ceremony took place in the 17-century Woolley Hall, near Wakefield, in the presence of Swiss and county officials.

Guests were entertained by a choir of more than 50 children. Mr. Christen gave a demonstration of how an alphorn should be blown.

And radio and TV units were there to record the ending to a story that has made headlines in newspapers all over the world.

BIRTHDAY HONOURS.

Lt. Col. A. T. Abate was awarded the O.B.E. (Mil.) in the recent Birthday Honours. Col. Abate is the son of the late John and Caterina Abate of Malvaglia, C. Ticino. His sisters Irma and the late Rita were founder members of the Unione Ticinese Sezione Femminile. Born in London, 31st January, 1911, Col. Abate was educated at the Regent St. Polytechnic and gained top place in Great Britain for University entrance. First-class honours man for the Bachelor of Science (Engineering) Degree. After a period in industry Col. Abate joined the Regular Army and has seen service at Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and has been on official visits to the U.S.A.

1st OF AUGUST BADGE.

This year the proceeds from the sale of badges will be used for helping the population living in the mountain parts of our country.

The Committee of the 1st of August collection writes as follows:—

Am 1. Juni wird die Bundesfeier-Sammlung 1955 mit dem *Karten- und Markenverkauf* beginnen. Volle 90% des Reinertrages sind für Hilfeleistungen zugunsten der schweizerischen *Bergbewohner* bestimmt, deren wirtschaftliche Selbständigkeit gestärkt, deren Selbsthilfe gefördert und erleichtert werden soll. Berücksichtigt wird die im Alpengebiet und im Hochjura wohnhafte Bevölkerung.

Die geplanten Hilfeleistungen umfassen in erster Linie *bauliche Projekte*, welche der Gemeinschaft dienen. So können mitfinanziert werden: Erstellung von Alp-, Flur-, und Waldwegen durch Korporationen, Einrichtung von Wasser- und Lichtversorgungen in Gemeinden, Verbesserung der Transportmöglichkeiten durch Bau von Seilbahnen zu abgelegenen Siedelungen, Wäldern oder Alpen, Erstellung von Lawinen- oder Wildbachverbauungen usw. Sofern die Mittel ausreichen, soll überdies das bergbäuerliche Kurswesen gefördert werden; insbesondere sind Massnahmen vorgesehen, welche der land- und hauswirtschaftlichen, sowie der handwerklichen Ausbildung dienen.

Dieses weitgesteckte Ziel verdient die Mitwirkung des ganzen Schweizervolkes. Die schweren Existenzverhältnisse unserer Bergbevölkerung sind zu bekannt, als dass nicht jedermann sich zu ihrer Erleichterung aufgerufen wissen müsste. Das Schweizerische Bundesfeierkomitee appelliert daher warm an das Verständnis aller Mitbürger: Tragen Sie durch den regen Kauf der Bundesfeier-Marken und -Karten dazu bei, dass möglichst umfassende Leistungen gewährt werden können!

Die restlichen 10% des Reinerlöses sind dem Schweizerischen Institut für Kunstwissenschaft in Zürich zugesprochen, dem die Bestandesaufnahme, Bearbeitung und Publikation des Lebenswerkes bedeutender schweizerischer Maler und Bildhauer anvertraut ist.

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