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CHAS. GYSIN,
President, City Swiss Club.

On Friday, November 16th, 1956, the City Swiss Club joined the small group of Centenarians in the Swiss Colony of Great Britain. First honours, as far as Societies are concerned, go to the "Société de Secours Mutuels des Suisses à Londres", which has over two and a half centuries to its credit, followed — a long way behind — by the Swiss Club, Manchester, which celebrated its 100th birthday six years ago.

It might be recalled here that the "Eglise Suisse" was founded anno Domini 1762.

That a Centenary event should not pass unnoticed stands to reason, and consequently the City Swiss Club decided to mark this important mile-stone in their history in an adequate and dignified manner. Their endeavours were highly successful, the Centenary Banquet being a most brilliant affair, and the members and their friends — numbering nearly 450 — who attended this happy birthday party left The Dorchester with most happy and pleasurable feelings.

One of the many noticeable features of this remarkable evening was that so many of the older members who have not been seen for many a long day turned up, thus testifying by their attendance to their loyalty and attachment to the Club; they were joined by a good number of our many English friends to whom the City Swiss Club has, throughout its existence, always afforded a hearty welcome.

I am happy to record that no less than five members of the Club can look back, on this occasion, to fifty or more years of membership; they are: M. E. Dubois (1897), E. F. Sommer (1906), F. Dannmeyer (1906), H. Huber (1906), and J. G. Bachmann (1906).

* * *

The evening started, as is customary, with a reception by H.E. the Swiss Minister, in the capacity of Honorary President of the Club; he was assisted by Madame Daeniker, Mr. Charles Gysin, President, and Mrs. Gysin, Monsieur Paul Burgdorfer, and Madame Burgdorfer.

The candelabras in the two ante-rooms shed their brilliant light over an animated company, who chatted and greeted their friends whilst cocktails were drunk previous to the dinner being served.

Outstanding at this intimate gathering were the ladies, who in honour of the occasion were wearing

CITY SWISS CLUB

Centenary Banquet and Ball

at the
DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, LONDON, W.I
on
FRIDAY, 16th NOVEMBER, 1956

In the Chair:

THE SWISS MINISTER MONSIEUR ARMIN DAENIKER

all the latest creations. Their sparkling eyes almost dimmed the brilliant light of the candelabras.

What a Babel of tongues one could hear! Eloquent French, melodious Italian, homely "Schwyzerdütsch", and, of course, English. When the conversation was at its height, and the atmosphere becoming almost unbearable, the Toast-Master in his red coat, adorned with many medals, informed "His Excellency, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen", that dinner was served.

Slowly the company made its entry into the brilliantly lit Banqueting Hall, whilst the orchestra played a lively tune. This ballroom, which enjoys the reputation of being one of the finest in the Metropolis, presented a lovely sight; not only was the top table a mass of flowers, but also each individual table was adorned with flowers in our national colours. The attractive Menu cards also added to the decoration.

When everyone had found his or her allotted place, the company awaited upstanding the entry of H.E. the Swiss Minister, the President, and the principal guest, with their ladies, who carried large bouquets of flowers, which were previously presented to them on behalf of the members of the Club. Their entry was greeted with lively applause.

Grace was then said by Pastor H. Spoerri of the "Schweizerkirche", and the dinner began.

Before I relate the various courses in detail, I wish heartily to congratulate the Management of The Dorchester, especially Mr. G. A. Ronus, and its famous Chef, Mr. E. Käufeler — a compatriot of ours — for the excellent dinner which they had provided. By looking so well after the material needs of the visitors they can claim no mean share in the success of the evening.

The Menu started with "Paté de Lièvre Chasseur", followed by "Fumet de Tortue en Tasse, Chausson au Gruyère", then came "Le Filet de Sole, au Vin de la Côte du Beau Leman bleu", "Tournedos Sauté Lucernoise", "Haricots Verts au Beurre, Pommes Olivettes," and, "Ananas Voile Mont Cervin, Mignardises", concluding with "Café".

With the dinner excellent vintage wines, amongst them some grown on the sun-kissed slopes of our country, were served. The musical fare was provided very appropriately by Les Brown and his orchestra.

Towards the end of the dinner the Toasts were given, the first one to H.M. the Queen, immediately followed by the one "La Suisse" whilst the orchestra intoned the respective National Anthems. (Instead of playing "Rufst Du Mein Vaterland", which is still the authorised Swiss National Anthem, the "Schweizerpsalm" was substituted, to the surprise of many of the visitors; what is wrong with our National Anthem?)

The loyal Toasts having been given, and duly honoured, the Chairman gave permission "to smoke". Very generously the Club presented the gentlemen with a cigar and cigarettes, and the ladies too were not forgotten, they received a charming little box containing a pretty "Stoffel" handkerchief. This *beau geste* was highly appreciated.

Once again the little hammer of the Toast-Master came into action, and by requesting silence, he announced that the President wished to address the company. Mr. Gysin, on rising received a cordial reception.

He said that this festival was a unique mile-stone in the life of the City Swiss Club, and that those present were fortunate in being able to take part in these Centenary celebrations. "The archives of the Society", he mentioned, "were destroyed during the last war and I am therefore not in a position to give you as much data as I would have liked concerning the past history. May I state briefly that the Club was founded in December, 1856, by eighteen of our compatriots, and named 'Schweizerverein'. This was altered in January, 1861, to City Swiss Club. The

50th anniversary was held in April 1908 at the Cecil Hotel (now the Shell House) in the Strand, and the 75th in April, 1931, at the May Fair. It is interesting to note that for a period of 36 years, which came to an end in 1924, the meetings took place at Gatti's Royal Adelaide Gallery, a record which I venture to hope The Dorchester may help our successors to beat.

"Whilst on the subject of records, I consider it apt to mention one which has been so magnificently set up by the Chapuis family, who — as always — are with us now. Mr. Louis Chapuis, incidentally one of the Doyens of our Colony and one of our Honorary Vice-Presidents, arrived in this country with his brother Charles as far back as 1891, but although both have well exceeded the allotted span of life, they remain so young in physique, in heart and in spirit that one might almost compare them to the proverbial 'Johnny Walker' who is still going strong after this long lapse of time." (Applause).

The President then said: "In the past this great and hospitable country always found room for a number of our younger compatriots who, attracted by the vast field offered in so many spheres by this thriving nation, left the homeland to try their luck in this island. Many of them succeeded, founded a family and eventually became the settlers who were the backbone of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain. Through the damaging consequences of two conflicts this process has unfortunately been very much halted, with the result that the Colony is now unable to replenish its ranks and is facing the risk of having its strength and vitality impaired by the existing circumstances.



RECEPTION.

Left to right: H.E. the Swiss Minister, Mme Daeniker, M. Gysin, Mme Gysin, M. Burgdorfer.



A PART OF THE TOP TABLE.

Left to Right: Mme Daeniker, M. Burgdorfer, Mme Gysin, H.E. the Swiss Minister, Mme Burgdorfer, M. Gysin, Lady Nathan

Let us hope and trust that ways and means may be found to improve matters in the not-too-distant future." The speaker continued as follows:

"A l'occasion de notre Centenaire, nous avons tenu à inviter à notre fête intime un représentant de cette chère patrie à laquelle nous restons toujours si fermement attaché et c'est pour moi un privilège de saluer au nom du Club un haut dignitaire de la Confédération en la personne de Monsieur Paul Burgdorfer, Président du Conseil National, qui est venu spécialement à Londres avec Madame Burgdorfer pour assister à notre célébration, nous lui en sommes très reconnaissants car il nous apporte un souffle de cet air vivifiant qui descend des sommets neigeux pour embaumer les vertes vallées et faire frissonner les eaux de nos lacs bleus. Il suffit d'évoquer cette vision pour qu'elle devienne une réalité dans nos coeurs." (Loud Applause.)

Mr. Gysin then announced that the Club had extended a pressing invitation to General and Madame Guisan, but unfortunately the General had, on doctor's orders, to decline. He, however, sent the following telegram:

"Chers Compatriotes, Cordiales Félicitations au Club Centenaire quelle joie auraient ses fondateurs à constater sa vitalité. En pensée avec vous je forme les voeux les plus chaleureux pour votre entrée dans le deuxième centenaire, amical souvenir.

GENERAL GUISAN".

to which a reply was sent in the following words:

General Guisan Pully près Lausanne, "Vous adressons très vifs remerciements pour votre message

si cordial. Apprécié par tous réunis pour célébrations centenaires qui vous envoient sincères souhaits pour votre bien-être.

Gysin, Président, City Swiss Club".

The President continued his oration by extending a hearty welcome to all the invited guests, the number of whom, befitting the occasion, was larger than usual. He voiced his regret that the following had, at the last moment, been unavoidably prevented from attending: Lord and Lady Brabazon of Tara, Sir John and Lady Hunt, and Mr. P. Jacomelli, President of the Unione Ticinese. He warmly greeted Lord and Lady Nathan of Churt, Sir Clifford and Lady Norton (Sir Clifford was British Minister in Berne during the period from 1942 to 1946), Sir Seymour and Lady Howard (Lord Mayor of London in 1954/55), Mr. Salvador de Madariago (Diplomat, Academician, Historian, Broadcaster and Journalist), H.E. the Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker, and M. J. de Trobolet, 1st Counsellor of Legation.

The speaker also mentioned the presence of the following official guests: Mr. Buchi, Swiss Consul in Manchester, Mr. Hofstetter, Swiss Consul in Balloch, Mr. Monney, President of the Swiss Club, Manchester, and Mrs. Monney, Mr. Illi, President of the Swiss Club, Bradford, and Mrs. Illi, Mr. & Mrs. Crepin, representing the British members of the Swiss Alpine Club, Mr. & Mrs. Crammond, representing the Cresta Club, and Lt. Colonel Townend, representing the Anglo-Swiss Society, Mr. A. Stauffer, Editor "Swiss Observer", and Mrs. Stauffer, Mr. W. Meier, President, Swiss Mercantile Society, and Mrs. Meier, Dr. H. Egli, President, Nouvelle Société Helvétique

and Mrs. Egli, Pasteur & Mme. Reverdin, Pastor Spoerri, and Father Lanfranchi.

He greeted the following members of the Swiss Legation: M. & Mme. Faessler, Dr. Bircher, Lt. Colonel & Mme. Koch, M. & Mme. Thevenaz, M. & Mme. Albertini, M. & Mme. Weber, M. & Mme. Ansermoz, M. & Mme. Valloton, M. & Mme. Luy, and M. & Mme. Huber.

The President concluded his address with a tribute to the Ladies, saying: "It is a pleasure to see them in such large numbers, and showing off to such advantage the latest creations of the *haut couture*".

The excellent oration of the President was acknowledged by prolonged applause. When calm was restored, H.E. the Swiss Minister, who received a vociferous reception, addressed the company. He said:

"It is indeed a great honour for me and a particularly auspicious occasion to preside over this Banquet and to extend to your Club the congratulations of the Swiss Legation. I know that the relations between your Club and my distinguished predecessors have always been excellent and very close. Ever since my arrival in London, I have drawn fruitful inspirations from your meetings and was glad to see that you foster not only the true and sound traditions of our people, but keep a wide and unbiased outlook on the problems of this modern world."

"Social life is an important feature of our national character. The fact that this habit flourishes also in our colonies here is a vivid proof of the liberal conditions which our compatriots in this country so largely enjoy.

"Young and vigorous though the Club appears on this auspicious day of the completion of its first one hundred years, let me remind you that it is by no means the most ancient community in this colony or the only one of such venerable age. We are able to trace through the records of the colony the existence of a "Société des Suisses", which was founded in 1703 and soon after united with the "Société des Genevois". In 1762, the Swiss Church was founded and those who favour us sometime with their visit at the Legation will have noticed the flag presented in 1745 by King George II. to a Battalion of 500 Swiss who volunteered for the defence of this country; it bears the significant device: *ibi patria ubi libertas*.

"Whatever the motive was, be it an inspiration of the husbands, or from dissatisfaction in seeing those husbands stay out so late in the Club at night, or because they were so rarely given the privilege to participate, in 1857 anyhow, the Ladies founded their own "Comité des Dames". After the spectacular achievement of making the huge benefit of £670 at their first Church sale, the Consistoire decided to make this very efficient ladies Committee a permanent institution.

"It is difficult for us, who are absorbed by the problems of our time, to realise exactly the state of mind and outlook of those country-men who laid the foundations of your Club a hundred years ago. It was a period of great impetus, of social and political upheaval; a period when great peoples on the borders of our country strove for their national unity. The fight for democratic rights and constitutional safeguards against autocratic rule threatened the foundations of many a powerful state; a period when the removal of ancient trade barriers promised the be-

ginning of an era of increased international intercourse. Thus to the compatriots who lived then in London, Great Britain must have appeared a haven of peace and a place apt to fulfil their highest ambitions.

"Events at home, too, must have inspired them with pride, confidence and exultation. But eight years previously, the Swiss Confederation had been set on new and solid foundations. The new life and energy in all branches of our economy is reflected by the formation of many of our great commercial banks during that period. In 1855, a liberal treaty of friendship and commerce was concluded with Great Britain.

"But how distant, how far away the homeland in the middle of the Continent must have seemed to the founders of the Club; the main continental trunk railway lines were hardly built and a journey from London to Switzerland will have looked to them as much of a venture as to us a voyage to Chile or Korea.

"In our churches those words: 'nous te prions pour ceux qui sont en voyage', were still included in their prayers. It was precisely in the autumn of 1856 that our Federal Parliament decreed the construction of a railway link between the German and French parts of Switzerland; it took another six years before it was built.

"The winter of 1856-57 will moreover always be remembered in our country on account of the dispute with Prussia. It threatened to cause a war which could have spread over the greater part of Europe. I refer to the demand by King Frederick William of



Left to Right: Mme Daeniker, M. Gysin, President, Mme Gysin.

Prussia for the release of the prisoners arrested upon the miscarried royalist coup against the constitutional authorities of Neuchâtel. The federal council was prepared to give way on condition that the King would renounce all claims to the principality which for the last forty years had already been a Swiss canton. A Swiss army of up to 30,000 men was mobilised and General Dufour was made Commander in Chief. That was the time when the inspiring and stimulating song 'Roulez tambours' was composed. For the only time, I believe, in our history, a plan for offensive action in order to meet and forestall the Prussian army, was worked out by our general staff. The King had apparently decided to burn out that rats' nest of rebellion and subversion and Switzerland was the focus of European attention. That this conflict was settled on a compromise, we owe to the loyal support and mediation by Her British Majesty's Government. Nor was it the only or the first time in the last century that Great Britain proved to be our most faithful friend and protector. Not even the urgent personal appeals by the Prussian King to Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort were of avail; in their answers they left no doubt that an aggression against Switzerland would have very serious consequences for the peace of Europe. During all those troubles, the British Envoy in Berne, George Gordon, was the confidant and most loyal adviser of our Federal Council. He must have been a particular brand of diplomat, because it is said of him that he showed his sympathies so openly as to address, and accept homage from, a popular assembly at Chaux-de-Fonds and even to applaud from the galleries of the National Council the speeches of his radical friends.

"We can therefore well imagine the anxiety and agitation prevailing in the meetings of the City Swiss Club during the first winter of its existence, and also the patriotic exultation and satisfaction of its members on the happy solution of this conflict. During the first World War, our Nation's great poet, Carl Spitteler, referred to the many instances when Great Britain assisted our country in times of great danger and called Britain our only reliable friend. It is a friendship indeed, which is based on more than mere sympathies and feelings; it is based on a common affinity, on a common sense of civic liberties and human rights and a realistic appraisal of the advantages of a balance of power in Europe, which proved so beneficial to both, England and neutral Switzerland.

"At this, the start of the second century of its life, I hope and trust that the City Swiss Club may continue to be favoured by this same spirit of goodwill and sympathetic understanding from the people of this great Nation and may further grow and prosper on such a solid foundation for the benefit of all concerned."

The address of the Swiss Minister was much applauded.

Then the word was given to the principal guest of the evening, Monsieur Paul Burgdörfer, President of one of the two Chambers of the Federal Parliament; he received a hearty and sincere ovation on rising. He said :

"Vous avez aimablement convié un représentant des chambres fédérales à l'anniversaire du City Swiss Club de Londres.

"Ma qualité de président du Conseil national et de

l'Assemblée fédérale me vaut le grand honneur et le vif plaisir de célébrer avec vous ce soir le centenaire de l'association suisse la plus représentative et la plus importante du royaume de Grande-Bretagne.

"Mon épouse et moi-même apprécions cet honneur. Nous nous réjouissons avec vous en ce jour et vous remercions de tout coeur de votre gentille invitation.

"Cent ans d'existence et d'activité constituent de beaux états de service pour une société suisse. Cela représente beaucoup de dévouement à la chose commune et une belle œuvre accomplie au service du pays. Cela signifie aussi action exercée pour le maintien de notre patrimoine suisse, de nos traditions, de notre culture, de notre forme d'Etat et de notre idéal de liberté.

"Quand bien même vous vous dénommez modestement une 'société', vous constituez un groupement solide qui réunit les Suisses et leur rappelle la patrie commune par le simple fait de son existence, de ses lettres, de ses appels téléphoniques, de ses réunions, qu'il s'agisse de manifestations de la vie de société ou de manifestations patriotiques. Elle est un des maillons de la chaîne que forment nos sociétés suisses autour de la terre et qui, auprès ou au loin, témoignent avec fierté de leur attachement à la Confédération suisse.

"Celui qui vous parle a vécu aussi à l'étranger dans ses jeunes années pour y compléter sa formation professionnelle et sa connaissance des langues. Il était ainsi et demeure l'un des vôtres. Aussi participe-t-il du fond du cœur à la commémoration de votre anniversaire.

"Il est fier de vous apporter de la part du Conseil

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fédéral et des chambres le salut fraternel de la patrie. Il est sûr enfin que le pays apprendra avec un vif plaisir que vous fêtez votre centenaire.

“Notre peuple suit avec attention les activités des associations suisses à l'étranger. Comme le disait au mois d'août le conseiller fédéral Petitpierre à Locarno, il est nécessaire d'avoir une politique aussi active et cohérente que possible à l'égard des Suisses à l'étranger et de revoir constamment les problèmes qui les concernent”. Le peuple suisse en est bien convaincu.

“Le pays sait gré à la Nouvelle Société helvétique des efforts qu'elle déploie pour raffermir les liens entre les Suisses de l'étranger et en faire des colonies fortes et actives. Si les circonstances s'y protéraient aujourd'hui, je serais tenté de parler brièvement des problèmes qui intéressent nos compatriotes et de les renseigner sur l'état des travaux. Il s'agit des rentes transitoires aux indigents, de la participation des Suisses à l'étranger à la future assurance-invalidité, de l'aide suisse aux victimes de la guerre, de la taxe militaire et de la création d'un fonds de solidarité des Suisses à l'étranger. Toutefois je ne voudrais pas profaner ce jour d'anniversaire en traitant des questions d'ordre matériel; je désire simplement dire combien je suis heureux que le Conseil national, dans sa session d'automne, ait décidé d'inclure, dans le système des rentes transitoires de l'assurance-vieillesse et survivants, les Suisses de l'étranger qui sont dans le besoin. Je puis en outre vous révéler que la commission du Conseil des Etats réunie à Schwyz a décidé à l'unanimité le 5 novembre de recommander à ce conseil une adhésion à cette décision. Il y a tout lieu de penser que le Conseil des Etats adoptera cette proposition lors de la session de décembre et que les nouvelles dispositions entreront en vigueur le 1er janvier 1957.

“Il me reste enfin à vous remercier sincèrement de votre fidélité et de votre attachement à notre patrie commune, des efforts continuels que vous faites pour le maintien d'un sain esprit suisse. Je forme mes meilleurs voeux pour l'avenir de votre société au seuil de son deuxième siècle d'existence. J'adresse en outre à tous les membres de la société et à leurs familles des souhaits de bonheur, de santé et de prospérité, avec la protection divine et sous les plis flottants du drapeau du très respecté

City Swiss Club.”

On resuming his seat, Monsieur Burgdorfer was loudly cheered.

The next speaker was Sir H. W. Seymour Howard, J.P., a former Lord Mayor of London; to him was entrusted the task of expressing thanks, on behalf of the guests, for the generous hospitality extended to them; he did this very efficiently and wittily, and his address, interwoven with amusing stories, was much enjoyed.

To conclude the official part of the evening, Mr. R. Dupraz, Vice-President of the Swiss Benevolent Society, made an Appeal for our compatriots who, often through no fault of their own, have fallen on evil days. His sincere address was nobly answered resulting in £160.0.0. being collected.

Generosity indeed was one of the features of this evening; the lovely birthday cake made and presented by Mr. Käufeler, Chef of The Dorchester, it was announced, was to be given to the French Hospital, the President explaining that in cutting it up into

over 400 pieces, hardly a mouthful for each visitor would be available. I hope the patients of this hospital enjoyed it.

A birthday without presents is almost like roast beef without dripping, and I am glad to report that the City Swiss Club was not forgotten. Monsieur Burgdorfer handed over to the President a beautifully illustrated volume dealing with the history of the canton of Berne, presented to the Club, with a dedication, by the Government of this canton. Dr. H. W. Egli, on behalf of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique also made a presentation of a handsomely bound and initialed visitors book; both presents were acknowledged with thanks by Mr. Gysin.

Once again the President rose inviting those who were present at the 50th Jubilee of the Club, “to take wine with him”; two gentlemen rose (namely the brothers Chapuis), and Mr. & Mrs. Martin; he then requested those to stand up who had attended the 75th anniversary, and I am glad to say that quite an impressive number of ladies and gentlemen answered the request. Finally all former Presidents of the City Swiss Club were asked to share the “loving cup” with the President; those who followed the invitation were: Messrs. R. de Cintra, L. Jobin, Charles Chapuis, E. Werner, R. Dupraz, Louis Chapuis, and C. E. Seinet.

A short interval was then introduced to get the Banqueting Hall ready for dancing, and the second part of the evening started with a Cabaret introducing a pair of ballroom dancers, and the Schmeed Trio, billed as the “International and World Famous Swiss Harmony Group”, all entertainers being members of the present Dorchester Cabaret.

The Trio sang, danced and yodelled. Unfortunately, I am one of those old-fashioned people who prefer to listen to yodelling in the entourage of our mountains where it originated, and I can never familiarise myself by hearing it on the concert stage or in the ballroom. The attractive lady and her two partners were very smartly attired in silk embroidered “Mälcherchuttl” and evening dress trousers, somewhat different from how we are used to seeing our yodellers dressed, but they sang so nicely and yodelled so heartily that I almost forgave them the liberty they had taken; but when they started to Rock-an'-Roll, jumping over chairs and on the piano, I shuddered. Even with the wildest imagination I could hardly visualize the members of our yodelling fraternity at

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home jumping and hopping about like that, perhaps over a couple of cows or goats! Still, the big applause they earned with their performance proved it was liked, so why grumble?

After this nerve-racking *entre acte* dancing started and was continued until 2 a.m., and judging from the smiling and happy faces it was much enjoyed; proof of this was that few left before the end.

As all good things must come to an end, the orchestra — which by the way was excellent — played "God save the Queen", followed by the singing of "Auld Lang Syne", during which the President and Madame Gysin were ushered into the circle. Everybody then joined in singing "For they are jolly good fellows!"

Thus a memorable and brilliant evening came to its close, an evening which will be remembered for many a long day by all those who were privileged to be present.

Thanks must go in the first place to the President and his committee, who had organised in such an efficient manner this Centenary Festival, to the Management of The Dorchester, and to all those who, in one way or another, supported and helped the organisers to make this birthday party such an outstanding success.

The City Swiss Club now enters into its second Century, and all our wishes must be that it will be as successful as the last 100 years which have just been completed.

ST.

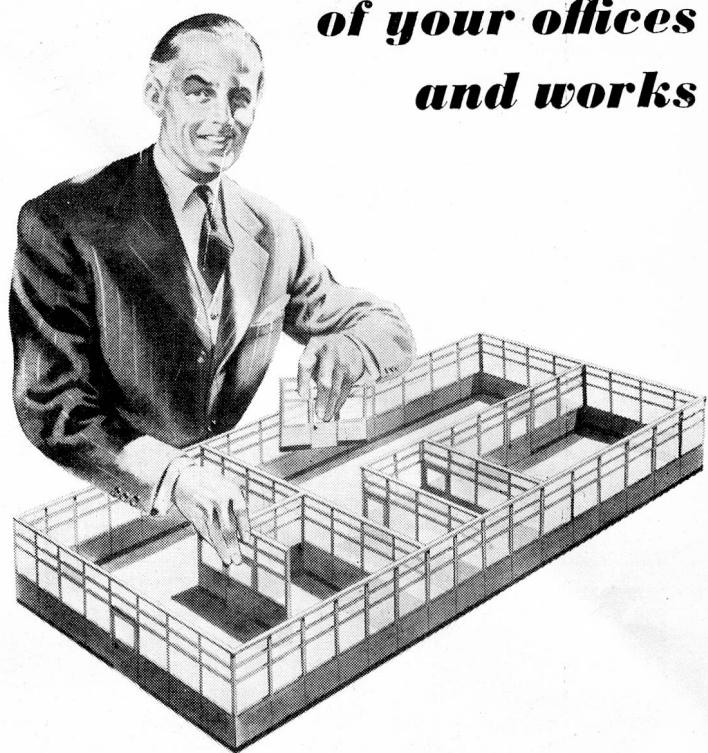


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