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UNSOLVED PROBLEMS OF THE SWISS ABROAD.

An N.S.H. Lecture.

On the 17th July the N.S.H. held an Open Meeting at the Swiss Hostel for Girls to discuss problems and questions to be brought forward at the forthcoming Auslandschweizertag, which will take place at Brunnen on August 31st and September 1st. The guest speaker was Dr. jur. Gerhart Schürch, President of the "Rückwandererkommission" and formerly a Co-director of the Auslandschweizerwerk. Having been concerned with all sorts of problems of the Swiss abroad during the last twenty years or so, the N.S.H. could not have found a more qualified visitor from Switzerland to initiate this most interesting discussion in preparation for the Auslandschweizertag.

Dr. Schürch introduced his talk with some general remarks on the difficulties of holding the right balance between sentiment and reality when dealing with the problems of the Swiss abroad. Our position is a delicate one wherever we may have found a place of residence outside the home country. While it is not desirable that we should remain a "Fremdkörper" in the foreign host country, we yet should on the other hand not lose our attachment to far away Switzerland. Our Government can only secure for us that we should not be treated unfairly in the host country for which purpose various agreements and conventions between governments have been concluded and are being adapted from time to time to changing circumstances. But the task of keeping alive our attachment to the home country can be fulfilled only by ourselves in co-operation with the authorities and organisations in Switzerland concerned with these matters.

The first requirement to maintain our loyalty to the homeland, as Dr. Schürch pointed out quite pertinently, is obviously that the fair name of Switzerland should remain untarnished. The recent scandals in connection with some official personages were not helpful in this respect, but their significance should not be exaggerated. The other fundamental requirement is that the Swiss abroad should be made to feel that their importance to the homeland is appreciated and acknowledged by an understanding and generous treatment where their relations with the homeland are concerned. The A.H.V., the reform of the "Bürgerrecht" and the pending changes of the Military Tax, as well as the repeated attempts to settle the claims of our compatriots who have suffered war damage in foreign countries without receiving due compensation, are examples of the good-will existing at home towards the Swiss abroad. Dr. Schürch hoped that further proofs in that respect may be forth-

coming in connection with the financial backing needed to start the "Solidaritätsfonds" for the Swiss abroad, or concerning the granting of some sort of civic rights to the Swiss abroad, or in the treatment of compatriots on a different basis from foreigners when entering Switzerland, or even as regards the "Verrechnungssteuer".

In the subsequent discussion Mr. Walter Meier expressed some degree of disappointment and impatience regarding our many wishes that have remained unheeded. Mr. W. Renz, the new President of the N.S.H., suggested that all higher officials in the Federal Government should be required to have a spell abroad in order to understand our problems and psychology. Mrs. Mariann Meier supported the plea for whatever encouragement is possible to the difficult task of keeping especially our children attached both to Switzerland and our Colony. She also wished that the thousands of Swiss girls coming here every year should be properly prepared for the conditions they are likely to meet. Dr. Egli pleaded above all for more help from Switzerland in the matter of cultural propaganda for our country, which could best be carried on in the milieu of a social centre or club in London worthy of our traditions where we could take our English friends and our own children with pride and confidence in the good impression thereby created. He appealed to everyone in the Colony to make a determined attempt to bring about our old dream of such club premises in conformity with the great reputation our Colony enjoys at home as well as here amongst our English friends.

Dr. E.

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