

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1960)

Heft: 1374

Artikel: A message to all our readers and friends

Autor: Keller, Gottfried

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-692271>

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A MESSAGE TO ALL OUR READERS AND FRIENDS

The readers of the "Swiss Observer" will have seen, recently, a Publisher's Notice to the effect that the paper's Editor, Alfred Stauffer, has, after long and faithful service, decided to retire in the near future.

The moment to say Farewell to him and to recall at least some of the innumerable services he has, over the years, rendered to the "Swiss Observer" and thus to the Swiss Colony in Great Britain at large, has not come yet — it will come soon enough. But the moment has come for stocktaking and for reviewing the whole position of the Colony's official organ.

The Advisory Council has met recently and will be meeting again in the next few days. It has asked me, pending decisions about the "Swiss Observer's" future and about the appointment of a new Editor, to write this message to all our readers and friends. The aim of it is to bring to the attention of everybody the difficulties experienced in keeping the paper alive.

The position, in which the "Swiss Observer" finds itself, is grave. The Colony's organ is in danger, in mortal danger in fact. It has, so far, been kept going by an enormous effort and by the generosity of two men: Oscar F. Boehringer, the Publisher, and Alfred Stauffer, the Editor.

The simple fact is that, but for the efforts and sacrifices these two men have now made for years it would not have been possible any more to publish the "Swiss Observer". They have both given, and given again, for the sake of the paper. They have done this, not to get any personal publicity or gain, but to keep an Institution alive, which, ever since its foundation in 1919, has been part of the Swiss Colony's life.

There have been appeals for support before. They have been most ably written by Alfred Stauffer. Now this message is not just one more such appeal — to be read or not, and then to be forgotten over more pleasant subjects. It is in the nature of a warning. And the message of the warning is this:

Unless we get more support, and get it soon,
the days of the "Swiss Observer"
are numbered.

Probably many subscribers and readers of our paper are dimly aware of the fact that the position cannot be very rosy. Probably they are more or less conscious of the fact that with costs rising in every field it must be somewhat difficult to make ends meet. But few may realise that ends do not really meet and that for years and years past the Publishers, The Frederick Printing Company, Ltd., have borne items such as the Office Rent, the Telephone, Heating and Lighting, as well as the Auditing of accounts. Yet this is a fact.

On the revenue side there are three items, which bring in money: Subscriptions, Donations, and Advertisements. As regards the donations, i.e., the sums given by subscribers over and above the — modest — subscription fee, neither the Publisher nor the Editor like asking for them. They feel, understandably so, like going begging. Yet it is a fact that but for these donations the position would be even much graver than it is in any case. Of course, we realise that in times like the present, each one of us has obligations on all

sides. Yet, it has to be made very clear now that if the "Swiss Observer" does not get more support soon, it will not be possible for it to continue the struggle for survival much longer.

I have, of late, often wondered what the result would be if a kind of plebiscite could be taken inside the Swiss Colony along the lines: "Do you, or do you not, want the "Swiss Observer" to continue being published?" If the question were simply put in this way, I have no doubt in my mind that a substantial majority would vote for the paper's continued existence. After all, one is accustomed to it and one does not like to see a homely friend pass away. One might also miss the items from the homeland — supplied free of charge by the Agence Télégraphique Suisse — especially if one does not have a Swiss newspaper regularly. Or one might miss the Commercial News, or the occasional communications from the Embassy, or the list of Forthcoming Events, or some other items one has got accustomed to.

But the real question is not, whether you want the "Swiss Observer" to continue appearing, *but what you, each one of you, are prepared to contribute towards its continued existence.*

Here are a few suggestions how you can help, if you feel so inclined. You can help to find new subscribers, be they Swiss or be they British. Amongst the innumerable British people who love our country and who go there regularly for their holidays may well be some who would like to associate with the life of the Swiss in Great Britain. What better means to keep them constantly in touch with things Swiss than by persuading them to subscribe to the "Swiss Observer"?

If, on the other hand, it is not possible for you to find new subscribers for the paper, you are, of course, always welcome to donate a sum over and above the charge for the subscription when the moment for its renewal comes again. It would be platitudinous to repeat here that every little helps, but it remains a fact nevertheless.

You can also help the paper by placing advertisements or by persuading friends to do so. The actual value of an advertisement, in terms of trade brought in, is always difficult to measure. Should you think, if you have something to advertise, that the circulation of the "Swiss Observer" is too small to be interesting, you may well be mistaken: it is often not the quantity of readers of an advertisement which counts, but the quality. And who would deny that there is quality and substance among the readership of the "Swiss Observer"?

It might also be that you have made an interesting journey. Why not put pen to paper and contribute to the paper's reading matter, thus enriching it and adding to the variety of its contents?

As you can see, there are ways and means by which you can contribute and support the paper. Which of the ways you choose is less important than that you do choose one. For let me say it once more: YOUR PAPER IS IN DANGER. The hour is late, the sands are running out. We need your support! Can we count on it?

Gottfried Keller.