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ALBERT FINGER †

As mentioned briefly in the last issue, Albert Finger passed peacefully away, after a long illness courageously borne, at the age of 71. The deceased came to this country in 1911, and occupied various situations in the catering trade. He was for five years secretary of the Union Helvetia (now extinct). During the tenure of his office he rendered good and faithful services, which were much appreciated. He then started an employment bureau in Frith Street, W.1, which he managed for about ten years.

In 1952/3 he acted for about eighteen months as steward at the "Schweizerbund" (Swiss Club), and for the last few years he was active in the family florist business.

Albert Finger was for many years a member of the Swiss Male Choir, where he made many friends, and where he was much liked. He leaves a widow, a daughter and a son, to whom we extend our deep sympathy in their sad loss.

ST.

* * *

The funeral service for Mr. Finger was held at the Eglise Suisse on Thursday, 12th July. The Rev. P. Wipf officiated, and the service was attended by relatives and friends, amongst them Monsieur Ansermoz representing the Swiss Ambassador.

A Worthwhile Experiment

by

THE SWISS ECONOMIC COUNCIL

The Swiss Economic Council was host to some twenty young Swiss at the Dorchester Hotel on Wednesday, 18th July.

Mr. J. P. Christen (Sandoz), Chairman, in welcoming the guests, drew attention to the problems to be faced as a result of a progressive fall in the number of Swiss living abroad. While this appeared to be a universal trend, comparative figures quoted in respect of the United Kingdom were well above the average and such as to cause concern. The Chairman then introduced three Members of the Council and Mr. W. Strub, each of whom briefly addressed the meeting.

Dr. H. B. Knuchel (Geigy) surveyed the structure and location of the Swiss chemical industry in Great Britain and discussed the opportunities existing today. The calibre of candidates was well defined as requiring to compare favourably with that of United Kingdom applicants. The Swiss industry abroad had to have regard to its principal obligations which were to run its business efficiently. Those seeking employment with the express purpose of learning the language for, at the most, a period of one year should ask themselves whether this was the correct formula of approach.

Mr. O. Rohn (Roamer), Vice-Chairman of the Council, in speaking about the Swiss watch industry lay stress on its significance in terms of exports, 95% of its production being sold abroad and which amounted to about one-fifth of Swiss exports as a whole. To maintain performance at this level needed an enthusiastic cadre, not armchair salesmen but people who would go out to visit, and to live in, the markets of the world. The speaker also touched on another problem distinct from but concurrent with the fall in mere numbers of Swiss at action stations abroad: "The greying heads around us."

Mr. A. Faes (Pongees) devoted himself to some of the more immediately personal aspects of working and settling abroad. The urge — laudable in itself — to gain experience away from home was, at times, blind to some of the probable consequences arising out of choice of country, or unmindful of biological forces that converged on to the same critical span of years. A decision was likely to be more rewarding if informed of circumstances beyond the merely linguistic or professional, so that marriage and family might be assured of a chance of congenial surroundings.

Mr. W. Strub (Credit Suisse) thanked the Council on behalf of the young guests for having invited them and offering them an opportunity both, of first-hand appraisal of the problems and of giving their views. English life had many advantages and there was much gratifying social work to be done within the colony. Being away from one's native country made one more conscious of the absence of the protective umbrella of what might be called the establishment. This made for greater self-reliance amongst members of a colony abroad and often greater harmony amongst individuals.

The general discussion covered an unexpectedly wide field ranging from questions of language, integration with ways of life of host country, labour permits, publicity, sense of frustration at loss of political status when abroad, climate of work in England, comparisons of opportunities of professional advancement and prosperity in Switzerland, right to the competing demands by Swiss industry at home on available resources of qualified personnel. It was encouraging to hear our young compatriots expressing themselves freely, some with disarming sincerity and frankness.

Mr. A. Renou (Buser), Vice-Chairman of the Council, in a characteristic summing-up warned of the potential danger, to the economy of Switzerland, that lay (concealed to some but evident to others — distance had its advantages) in boom and affluence at home, one of the effects of which was to denude numerically and in age and quality, the very bridgeheads, colonies, outposts by whose agency the economy had gained so much. One capable Swiss, judiciously placed abroad, might do more than teams that stayed behind. To have an aim, a purpose and a sense of duty was a challenge worthy of the young.

Mr. V. Berti, the President of Presidents of Swiss Societies in U.K., followed with a few words of appreciation.

Earnest private discussion between guests and hosts carried on naturally until well after the official termination of the meeting.

F.