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NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE



*Dr. H. W. Egli,
President.*

The Annual General Meeting of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique took place at the Swiss Hostel for Girls in Hampstead on Tuesday, 21st April. It was an extremely well-attended meeting. The President, Dr. H. W. Egli, was in the chair.

The Annual Report was presented and accepted. It makes impressive reading. Apart from social functions, the N.S.H. organised a number of highly interesting talks and lectures by distinguished men and women from Switzerland or resident in this country. The subjects of the lectures since the previous Annual Meeting ranged from "The Position of Women in Switzerland", "The Experiences of a Swiss Nurse with UNRRA, WHO and the Red Cross", "Wirtschaftspolitische Probleme der Schweiz", "The Administration of Justice in Switzerland", "Features of the Swiss Political System", to "The Important Contribution of the Suisse Romande to the Development of the Modern French Theatre" and "The Little Masters of Swiss Landscape".

The President's report on behalf of the Council goes on as follows:

"By the courtesy of the French Institute we were able to organise the programme of Swiss Folk Music and Dancing with LES MOUETTES and LE VEGNOLAN on their way to the International Eisteddfod, which proved a great success. Our special gratitude is due in this connection to Monsieur Jean Revilliod, Counsellor in Charge of Cultural and Press Affairs at the Swiss Embassy, for his initiative and help, also in arranging a reception for the artistes after the concert at the Glendower Hotel.

"In order to take advantage of the presence in London of two personalities from Switzerland, two functions had to be organised in January. One of them in honour of the Director of the Auslandschweizerwerk, Dr. Halbheer, had to be combined with the annual film show and held at the Livingstone Hall, due to the fact that the Swiss Hostel was being re-decorated. The other function was a small dinner given at the Glendower Hotel in order to enable the Presidents of other Swiss Societies in London as well as our members to meet Monsieur Maurice Jaccard of the Federal Political Department, Berne, who came to London in connection with proposals for the establishment of a Swiss Cultural and Social Centre at the Swiss Centre being built for the Swiss Bank Corporation. This also was a successful function much appreciated by our Colony.

MEMBERSHIP

"We have again lost several members by death in course of the year, namely: Mrs. Clara Müller, Mrs. Clara

Schaellibaum and Mr. Henry Pfirter. Another fourteen members have returned to Switzerland or resigned for other reasons. Nevertheless we were fortunate enough to recruit eighteen new members. This increased our membership by one to 172. It is gratifying to note that our functions continue to be well attended also by non-members, who in time almost invariably express a wish to join our Group. It is our pride to enable our Colony to hear such distinguished people as are listed above and to be looked upon as the main platform for prominent personalities who are willing to talk on a subject of general and, in particular, of cultural interest for the Swiss. We are grateful both to the Hostel and the S.M.S. for posting our invitations to meetings on their blackboards which often brings young compatriots to our functions.

"By the retirement of the Ambassador, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, at the end of last year we have lost not only our Hon. President, but also a member who has always taken a lively interest in our activities. We have presented Monsieur and Madame Daeniker with a small token of our appreciation and affection, apart from contributing our share towards the parting gift from our Colony. We are glad to have received an assurance from the new Ambassador, Monsieur Beat von Fischer, of his full support for our Group.

CONTACTS WITH THE HOMELAND

"While the Auslandschweizerkommission and the Auslandschweizerwerk continue to devote themselves to the interests of the Swiss abroad, this year there will be a very special opportunity for the Swiss living abroad to meet each other from all corners of the earth at the EXPO at Lausanne, where from the 28th to the 30th of August the "Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger" is being held. Mrs. Mariann Meier has been elected by the Presidents' Assembly to represent the Swiss community of South England in the Auslandschweizerkommission with Mr. E. Bonvin as substitute. Mrs. Meier is particularly well qualified to represent our Colony, not least because she is also editing the "Swiss Observer" with as much distinction as devotion.

"The Solidarity Fund also has become a most important living link between our Colonies and the home country, sustained as it is not only by the annual contributions of its members, at present approaching 8,000, but also by a Federal guarantee of all its contractual liabilities. This great gesture of support and confidence from the Federal authorities should also encourage an ever increasing number of our compatriots abroad to join in this great manifestation of patriotic solidarity.

"We are pleased to state that the special drive for subscribers to the monthly "ECHO" has produced many new subscriptions, but we would warmly recommend our members and friends, who may not yet have done so, to subscribe both to the "ECHO" and the "Swiss Observer", both periodicals serving our patriotic interests so admirably, each in its own way."

The Hon. Treasurer's report showed that, owing to the increase in membership fee decided at the last Annual Meeting, the financial state of the Society was satisfactory. Thanks were expressed to the two Hon. Auditors, Messrs. D. E. Bonnet and M. A. Rothlisberger, who were re-elected. The Council was chosen by secret ballot. According to the constitution, the Officers are elected by the Council at the first meeting following the A.G.M. Results will be published at a later date.

There was some animated discussion of the provision in the Federal Constitution regarding the Swiss Abroad. A vote was taken in favour of the preliminary draft by the Federal Council and submitted by the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad in Berne for consideration.

ANNUAL DINNER

The General Meeting was followed by a dinner at which over sixty members and friends were present. The Guests of Honour were the new Swiss Ambassador and Madame de Fischer. In fact, the Society had the pleasure of two Ambassadors gracing the gathering with their presence. Monsieur Jean de Stoutz, recently appointed Ambassador to Israel, was amongst the members of the N.S.H. for the last time before departing for his new post.

The President, Dr. H. W. Egli, welcomed the guests, members and friends after the loyal toast had been drunk. Although it was an informal dinner, this was deemed right and proper as it was the birthday of Her Majesty, the Queen. He announced that the members present at the A.G.M. had unanimously elected Monsieur de Fischer as Honorary President of the Society.

Monsieur de Fischer replied to the President's warm words of welcome in three languages. He referred to the sterling work done by the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in Switzerland and the important part the London Group played in the life of the Swiss Community in Great Britain.

Monsieur de Stoutz expressed good wishes for the Group's future activities. Everyone present must have been touched by the sincerity of his words and the regret at leaving behind the many friends he and Madame de Stoutz had made in the course of their stay in London.

The President also thanked the Warden of the Hostel, Miss R. Preiswerk, and her staff for the invariably kind hospitality and the excellence of the dinner provided. At the suggestion of a former President, Mr. W. Renz, a message, signed by all present, was sent to the Society's former Honorary President, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur and Madame Daeniker, now in well-earned retirement in Switzerland.

An anonymous donor again provided a small present for every lady present, this year in the form of a bottle of *eau de Cologne*. But even without this charming gesture, the evening could undoubtedly be termed a great success. It was the friendly atmosphere and the spontaneous warmth of welcome creating a sense of belonging which were the hallmark of this as of every other get-together organised by the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique.

Mariann.

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