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NEWS FROM THE COLONY



SWISS CENTRE IN LONDON

In the last issue of the "Swiss Observer", it was reported that an appeal had been launched in Switzerland for the new Swiss Centre in London. It is in the form of an illustrated brochure with a foreword by Federal Councillor H. Schaffner. Having heard of the general plans, it may interest readers now to learn a little more about facts and figures concerning this attractive building in the heart of London.

It is estimated that every hour between 500 and 8,000 pedestrians (according to the time of day) pass between Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square. Of these, in all probability, some 3,000 will visit the restaurants and the exhibitions in the Swiss Centre every day. The restaurants in the basement will have accommodation for 350 people. The attraction will not only be the eating places, but also the market place with permanent exhibitions and four sales counters.

On ground level there will be "Shopping in Switzerland" with seven sales counters or shops. The Swiss National Tourist Office, Swissair and the West End Branch of the Swiss Bank Corporation will have their offices on the ground floor, too. The Swiss Economic Council's Trade Information Centre should be situated on the next floor. The "Forum of Switzerland" with which the Swiss community in this country is most closely concerned, will be in the extended mushroom-shaped hall built onto the basic building and connected with the tower block of offices.

500 square metres will be at the disposal of shops and sales counters. 300 m² will be available for exhibitions, not counting the area of 400 square metres in the "Forum".

It is estimated that the restaurants will have an annual turnover of between Fr.4,000,000.— and Fr.5,700,000.—. That of the shops should reach between 1.7 and 2.3 million francs.

The building budget for restaurants, exhibitions and delivery bays (total of 7,200 m³), including interior designing, rents and reserves, estimates 7.3 mio, that for the shops (1,200 m³) Fr.800,000.— and the communal stores and offices (2,000 m³) Fr.600,000.—. The "Forum of Switzerland" will need 1½ million francs to build and equip, and the rent and rates for 21 years will amount to Fr.950,000.—. The share capital of "Swiss Fair" already amounted to 3.6 million francs before the appeal was launched in November.

The office block is ready to be moved into now. The shops should be open in the summer of 1966. The "Forum of Switzerland", restaurants and exhibitions are expected to be ready by next autumn.

Finally, some figures regarding the human element: Every year 2.4 million foreign visitors come to London, most of whom will be in the neighbourhood of Piccadilly Circus at least once during their stay. The Swiss community counts 12,000 members, not including the young Swiss who come to England every year on a temporary basis (approximately 4,000). The number of people expected to be employed in the Swiss Centre is 1,000.

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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

There was an unusually large attendance at the Monthly Meeting on 10th November, when the Society had the privilege of a visit from Baron Lindgren of Wellingborough, who gave a talk on "Lords and Commons".

In welcoming the eminent speaker, the Chairman, Mr. A. Jaccard, referred to his distinguished parliamentary career.

Having previously been active on local and county councils and having held high office in the Trade Union movement, Lord Lindgren had been elected to the House of Commons in 1945. It was there where he had made his mark, first as a member and later in a ministerial capacity, in which he had served with distinction for many years. His Lordship's political background and experience, first in the Commons and later in the House of Lords, to which he was elevated as a Life Peer in 1961, had given him a profound knowledge of both Houses.

Having given his audience an outline of parliamentary procedure in the Commons, he elucidated some of the terms employed which one often reads in the press but which remain something of a mystery to the uninitiated. It was most appropriate that this lecture should be given on the 600th anniversary of the Foundation of the Mother of Parliaments, with all its history and traditions.

As the Chairman had pointed out in his introductory remarks, most of those present had spent their adult life in this country and although ineligible to vote here, nevertheless took a keen interest in the affairs of the country of their adoption.

Lord Lindgren then went on to give a comprehensive account of his experiences in the Second Chamber, which he said, often came under attack as an illogical anachronism. Attempts to abolish it had been made on numerous occasions and it was in fact discontinued by Oliver Cromwell only to be resuscitated after a short spell. The speaker felt that a Second Chamber had useful functions to perform, some of which he enumerated, and stated that practically all modern democracies had in fact such a chamber, mentioning the U.S.A. and Switzerland among others.

Of special interest were some of the quaint ceremonies and their origin, as well as some of the age-old customs and traditions still being observed.

The lecturer also dwelt at some length on the composition and attendance at the Lords. He also explained that Bills could be originated there, a fact not always realised by the general public.

Finally, Lord Lindgren answered questions put to him by an eager and obviously very interested audience and the Chairman, on behalf of all present, expressed thanks to his Lordship for a most fascinating and instructive address and to the Principal of the College, Mr. C. Slade, for having been instrumental in arranging the visit.

W.B.