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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY



The Annual General Meeting of the Society, held at Swiss House on Wednesday, 16th February, at which the Swiss Embassy was represented by Monsieur M. Feller, Commercial Counsellor, opened on a sad note. The Chairman, Mr. A. Jaccard, with deep regret, reported the death at Langenthal on 29th January of Mr. Robert Brand, Hon. Treasurer of the Society from 1924 to 1928, who had remained a member of the London Section ever since his return to Switzerland for health reasons.

Referring to the severe loss suffered by the Society through the death on 7th February, of Mr. Arnold Stahelin, a former President, of which the members had already been informed by circular, the Chairman stated that a very long chapter in the annals of the S.M.S. had now come to an end. In an eloquent eulogy, he paid tribute to the great services rendered by Mr. Stahelin, who had for many years played a leading role in the activities of the Society and the College in recognition of which both the London Section and the S.K.V. had elected him to honorary membership. All who had known and worked with him would cherish his memory and share in the sorrow of his family, to whom Mr. Jaccard had offered the members' sympathy in their bereavement.

Reviewing the accounts for 1965 as submitted to the meeting, the Chairman stated that the past year had again been one of continued progress and satisfactory working. He added that the results obtained during recent years, together with the immediate prospects, enabled the Society to face the future with every confidence.

In the report on the Society's activities, Mr. Jaccard referred to the year under review as one of quiet but steady and fruitful achievement. A varied and interesting programme of lectures and film shows had been arranged in conjunction with the monthly meetings, which were generally well attended.

The membership again showed a slight drop and at 31st December was as follows, with figures for the previous year in parenthesis:— 22 (23) Honorary Members; 220 (223) Active Members; 13 (14) Corresponding Members; 42 (42) Contributing firms and subscribing members.

In common with other Swiss societies, the problem of an ageing membership and consequent losses through departures, retirement and deaths, was becoming gradually more acute. The Chairman made a strong appeal to all members present to assist in the recruitment of new members to enable the Society to maintain at least a *status quo*.

In the report on the College, a continued increase in the attendance could again be recorded, with an average of 246 students per month, compared with 239 for 1964. Due to the ever lengthening waiting list for the summer months, which still remained the most popular period, the autumn and spring terms were now also gradually being fully booked due to consequent deferments and a state of full attendance all the year round was fast being reached. Whilst this was most gratifying from the point of view of the College, it was sincerely regretted that, due to lack of accommodation, many prospective students who were unable to postpone their stay had to seek tuition elsewhere and were consequently lost to the S.M.S.

A total of 598 students were admitted during the year, compared with 586 in 1964. Of these 404 sat for the diploma examination, of whom 386 (95%) were successful, the comparable figures for the preceding year being 402 and 386 (96%) respectively.

The evening classes, too, had shown a welcome increase in attendance, with a total of 984 enrolments, as against 902 in 1964, the number of classes held being 46 and 48 respectively.

A record number of students from both day and evening classes had presented themselves for the examinations of Cambridge University for the Certificate of Proficiency in English and the Lower Certificate in English, 77 candidates having sat for the former and 273 for the latter. The results obtained at the June examinations had again proved satisfactory whilst those for the December examinations were not as yet available.

The College football team under the enthusiastic leadership of Mr. R. Bachmann, a former student and for some years a member of the Society, had kept up its run of success, having won the championship of the London South-West District League for the season 1964/65 and being at present top of the West End League, to which it had been admitted for the 1965/66 season.

In the first part of the year, the College also had had a very good record in cup football, losing only in the finals of the S.W. District League and the London F.A. Junior Cup, Division I, but winning the London Hospital's six-a-side tournament for the second time in the nine years the fixture had been held and the annual match for the Lint's Smith Cup versus "The Times".

The employment advisory service provided by the Society in conjunction with the Swiss Commercial Employment Office (S.K.S.A.) had been instrumental in providing clerical employment to 70 young compatriots, the necessary Ministry of Labour permits having been obtained by their employers. The comparable figures for recent years were 40, 43 and 50 for 1962, 1963 and 1964 respectively.

Thanks were expressed to the Principal of the College and his staff, now numbering 15 full-time teachers, for their devoted services, and to the secretarial staff for their co-operation and the efficient manner in which they had carried out their duties.

Reporting on the activities of the House Committee, Mr. L. W. Krucker, Vice-President, gave details of the repairs, renewals and renovations carried out at Swiss House. With the tenure of Swiss House secured until June 1973, and any major alterations being unlikely, Mr. Krucker pointed out that the work of his committee during the next few years was likely to be confined to the upkeep of the premises. A resolution to combine the House Committee with the General Purposes Committee, in order to streamline the duties of the members connected with both

committees, had for that reason been moved and adopted earlier in the evening.

Finally details were given of the accommodation, provided at Swiss House in the evening, apart from the Society's own meetings and educational courses, to other Swiss organisations and institutions. As in the past, it continued to serve as a centre for the external examinations of Cambridge University.

In conclusion, Mr. Jaccard expressed thanks to the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Béat de Fischer, for his support and encouragement. He also gratefully acknowledged the annual subsidy from BIGA, which enabled the College to provide a high standard of education, whilst keeping the tuition fees within the means of the less affluent, but, nevertheless, very desirable students. The Chairman further expressed appreciation of the unstinted support received from the Central Secretariat in Zurich, to whose constant efforts the excellent attendance at the College could in no small measure be ascribed.

Last but not least, Mr. Jaccard thanked the subscribing firms and donors for their generous and valued support, the Trustees and the members of the Council and the various Committees for their continued and loyal assistance and to all members of the Society for the confidence placed in their elected representatives and their faithful adherence to the cause espoused by them.

The meeting next confirmed the Council's proposal for the Society to join The Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom, which had been formed on 5th October 1965, to take the place of the Assembly of Swiss Presidents and who was now negotiating for a multi-purpose room in the new Swiss Centre, Leicester Square, to be put at the disposal of the Swiss Colony. The rules of this Federation had already been submitted and discussed at the monthly meeting in December.

Elections: Under the temporary Chairmanship of Mr. O. Grob, Hon. Member and Past President of the Society, the meeting then proceeded with the elections.

Mr. Grob paid a special tribute to the President, Mr. A. Jaccard, who for the last two years had acted in the dual capacity of President of the Society and Chairman of the Education Committee. He voiced the sentiments of all present when he expressed the Society's gratitude for the efficient manner in which he had conducted the affairs of both the Society and the College. Happily, it was now possible to relieve Mr. Jaccard of some of his burden, as Mr. J. F. Carlen had accepted nomination as Chairman of the Education Committee, having previously been Vice-Chairman of that Committee.

Mr. Grob also expressed warm thanks to Mr. Krucker, who was relinquishing the Chairmanship of the House Committee and Vice-Presidency, which he had held on and off for a large number of years. It was largely thanks to his efforts and personal acquaintance of the landlords that the Society enjoyed such favourable terms of tenancy of Swiss House.

After Mr. F. O. Haeusermann and Mr. L. A. Simon had been nominated additional members of the Education Committee and the General Purposes & House Committee respectively, and there being no further nominations, the Council and the Committees for the financial year 1965 were declared duly elected and constituted as follows:—

Council:— Chairman: Mr. A. Jaccard; Trustees: Messrs. J. J. Boos, H. Knoll, L. W. Krucker, F. G. Sommer; Members: Messrs. J. W. Bonjour, F. Burri, J. F. Carlen, R. Chappuis, O. Grob, E. M. Huber, J. E. Schneider, R. Senn, F. Streit.

General Purposes & House Committees:— President: Mr. A. Jaccard; Vice-President: Mr. J. F. Carlen; Hon. Secretary: Mr. J. E. Schneider; Hon. Treasurer: Mr. R. Senn; Members: Messrs. H. Andrea, R. Bachmann, Mrs. W. Meier, Messrs. W. Schedler, L. A. Simon, E. Zwicky.

Education Committee:— Chairman: Mr. J. F. Carlen; Vice-Chairman: Mr. H. Gruninger; Members: Messrs. J. W. Bonjour, F. Burri, F. O. Haeusermann, G. Hediger, O. Luterbacher, M. Schneebeli.

The Chairman then briefly recalled Mr. Krucker's activities in the Society since he joined in 1919. Although his efforts had been mainly centred on Swiss House, as a member of the Council ever since the formation of the Company in 1931 and for many years as Vice-President, he had taken a very active part in the general direction of the Society's affairs, in recognition of which both the London Section and the Central Society had elected him an Honorary Member.

In appreciation of his valued services to the Society and the College, the Chairman, on behalf of the Council, thereupon presented Mr. Krucker with a fine pair of Chinese wood-carvings as a memento and token of esteem. This presentation was cordially applauded by all present and gratefully acknowledged by Mr. Krucker, who related some of the highlights in his long association with the Society.

Finally, Mr. F. Burgunder, Vice-Consul, who had been a keen and regular supporter of the Society during his sojourn in London and who will shortly be moving to his new sphere of activities in California, was elected a Corresponding Member.

At an informal farewell party following the meeting, members had an opportunity of bidding god-speed to Mr. and Mrs. Burgunder, who were leaving behind in London many good friends.

W.B.

Nouvelle Société Helvétique London Group

Thursday, 17th March 1966, at 7.45 p.m.

at

Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9-11 Belsize Grove, N.W.3.

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