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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

The Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society was held at Swiss House on 15th February, Mr. A. Jaccard, the Chairman, presiding.

In opening the proceedings, the Chairman extended a cordial welcome to Monsieur R. Gaechter, Secretary of Embassy, and the new Auditor, Mr. R. D. Rose, Chartered Accountant and partner of V. F. Newton & Co., who had taken over the late Robert P. Huxley's business. Mr. Jaccard had the sad duty of reporting the death of Dr. Anna Woessner, who had been a member of the Society since 1927.

Dealing with the accounts for 1966, the Chairman stated that, despite mounting running expenses, the year had closed satisfactorily and could be considered as one of steady and encouraging progress. The accounts as submitted were adopted unanimously, thanks being expressed to all who had contributed towards another successful period.

In the preamble of his report on the Society's activities during the past year, the Chairman referred to the economic difficulties through which this country had been passing and their effects on individual members. He expressed the hope that the efforts being made by all concerned would bring about a favourable change.

Referring to the retirement at the end of last year of the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Henry-Béat de Fischer, who had been Honorary President of the S.M.S. during his stay in London, the Chairman expressed thanks to him and Madame de Fischer for the great interest they had taken in the affairs of the Society and the College, in recognition of which Monsieur de Fischer had been elected an Honorary Member at the December meeting.

The activities of the Society had followed traditional lines and included lectures on topical subjects and film shows in conjunction with the monthly meetings, as well as social functions, all of which were well supported. Every effort was being made to sustain the members' interest.

A factor which continued to cause concern to the Committees, had been the slow but, nevertheless, steady decline in the resident membership, due to departures, deaths and causes beyond the Society's control. This was only partially being offset by the admission of young compatriots, who were here for comparatively short periods only and the Chairman urged all who were able to do so to assist in the recruitment of new members.

At the end of the year, the Society was composed of 217 (220) Active Members, 21 (22) Honorary Members, 14 (13) Corresponding Members and 40 (41) contributing firms and subscribing members. (The figures in parenthesis denote the previous year's membership.)

College

Reporting on the activities of the College, the Chairman of the Education Committee, Mr. J. F. Carlen, was able to give a very satisfactory account in respect of the past year. Despite an unavoidable increase in fees from the summer term, our young compatriots were continuing to patronise the College in ever increasing numbers. Due to a remarkable increase in attendance during the spring term with an average of 250 students, compared with 192

for the same period in the previous year, the College had, for the first time, been full from January to December.

A total of 633 students were admitted during 1966, compared with 598 during the previous year, the average attendance being 264 and 246 respectively. Of the 450 candidates for the diploma examinations held last year, 420 (93%) were successful, the respective figures for the preceding year being 404 and 386 (95%).

The intensive programme of studies was supplemented by special lectures and film shows by representatives of the National Coal Board, the British Iron and Steel Federation, British Transport, the River Police, Swissair, as well as by talks on many subjects of interest by members of the teaching staff.

Full-day excursions were arranged to Hampton Court and Windsor, Portsmouth (Naval Dockyard), Oxford and Cambridge Universities, Coventry Cathedral, Warwick and Arundel Castles, Canterbury, etc., and had again proved very popular, as did Saturday morning outings, under the guidance of teachers, to places of interest in and around London. Apart from these, class visits were arranged to various produce exchanges and to factories of well-known firms.

The College also continued to publish its own periodical "The S.M.S. Student", which appeared twice a term and contained, apart from College news, articles by students and teachers.

The football team of the College, which played for the first time in the West End Intermediate League during the season 1965/66, had finished in third position and at the time of reporting, was heading the league table for 1966/67.

Thanks were expressed to Mr. R. Bachmann, who had returned to Switzerland last summer and whose enthusiastic leadership and coaching had been largely responsible for bringing the team to its present peak. Best wishes were expressed to his successor, Mr. R. Signore, a member of the London Section, for the continued success of the team.

The evening courses were also well attended, 45 classes with a total of 919 students having been held, compared with 48 classes and 984 students in the preceding year. Whilst the average of 20 students per class was maintained, there had been a drop in the number of classes run due to the departure abroad of one of the teachers. This had now, however, been remedied by a new appointment.

The external examination held by Cambridge University in June and December for the Certificate of Proficiency and the Lower Certificate in English were also becoming ever more popular with the S.M.S. students of both day and evening classes. Last year 72 candidates presented themselves for the former and a record number of 315 for the latter. The results obtained at the June examinations had again been well above the average for the whole of England, whilst those for the December examinations were still awaited.

The teaching staff of the College now comprised 15 fully-qualified teachers of British nationality, to whom, as well as the administrative staff, thanks were expressed for their loyal and devoted services.

Information and advice was given to students and other young compatriots seeking commercial employment in this country. This service was again provided in accordance with arrangements made with the Swiss commercial Employment Service (S.K.S.A.) and resulted in 70 applicants being able to obtain clerical employment for which the necessary Ministry of Labour Permits had been granted. The figures for the preceding three years 1964-1966 were respectively 40, 43 and 69.

Swiss House

Mr. Jaccard then briefly reported on the activities of the House Committee, which had been chiefly confined to repairs and renewals. With the accommodation at Swiss House taxed to capacity during the whole of the past year, the wear and tear had accordingly been greater.

The vexing problem of unsatisfactory blackboards had at last been solved when a new type of revolving surface chalkboards was installed in all the classrooms last year. These had proved to be very suitable.

Apart from the Society's own meetings and educational activities, Swiss House had continued to provide accommodation in the evenings to various other Swiss societies for their meetings and again served as a centre for the external examinations of Cambridge University.

In conclusion, Mr. Jaccard gratefully acknowledged the annual subsidy received from B.I.G.A. in Berne, whose financial support ensured the continued existence of the College. He also expressed appreciation of the assistance and encouragement received from the Central Secretariat in Zurich, whose efforts had contributed a great deal towards the excellent attendance at the College. He further thanked the donors and subscribing members for their continued support of the Society's endeavours.

Elections

Under the temporary chairmanship of Mr. M. Rothlisberger, the meeting proceeded with the elections. He thanked the President, as well as the members of the Council and the Committees for their devoted services and congratulated them on a most successful year of office. He proposed the re-election of Mr. Jaccard as President and Chairman of the Council, which was carried with acclamation.

After Messrs. J. Frei and J. Weibel had been nominated members of the General Purposes & House Committee and Mr. L. A. Simon a member of the Education Committee, and there being no further nominations, the Council and the Committees for the financial year 1967 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 and House Committee: Chairman: Mr. A. Jaccard; Vice-Chairman: Mr. J. F. Carlen; Hon. Secretary: Mr. J. E. Schneider; Hon. Treasurer: Mr. R. Senn; Members: Mrs. M. Meier and Messrs. H. Andrea, J. Frei, W. Schedler, J. Weibel, E. Zwicky.

Education Committee: Chairman: Mr. J. F. Carlen; Members: Messrs. J. W. Bonjour, F. Burri, F. O. Häusermann, G. Hediger, O. Luterbacher, M. Schneebeli and L. A. Simon.

Press Reporter: Mr. W. Burren.

Delegate to the N.S.H.: Mrs. M. Meier.

W.B.

THE SWISS HOSTEL IS TEN YEARS OLD

The Council of Management of the Swiss Hostel for Girls held a special dinner at Belsize Grove on 27th January to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the institution which, under the Wardenship of Miss Preiswerk and more recently of Miss Siegrist, and with the help of the Swiss Benevolent Society who own the premises, has so far given shelter to over 12,000 Swiss girls studying or working in and around London.

Mrs. M. Daeniker, Honorary President of the Swiss Hostel, who had come especially to London for the ceremony, recalled for the benefit of the newest members of the Council some of the thoughts expressed on Inauguration day by the Swiss Minister, as he then was, Mr. Armin Daeniker:

"In this hour of dedication, let us therefore rejoice in the birth of this our youngest member of our Colony. Before it came into the world it caused considerable trouble to its sponsors, but it is blessed with the highest patronage, and great hopes have been put on it. We all want to see this infant live up to our expectations; but — let us not forget it — it needs more than the good wishes of us all. In order to grow, put on strength and to stand on its own legs, it needs the willing support of our Swiss community here as well as of the sponsors at home. Thus only it will justify our hope that it should contribute to the good reputation of our country, and be a shining token of the goodwill and spirit of social service which has always distinguished the Swiss Colony in Great Britain."

These words are as significant to-day as they were in 1957. The infant has grown and will soon be a teenager, bringing new problems to those responsible for its well-being and behaviour. May it be blessed and, with the support of the Colony, prosper for many years to come.

Congratulatory telegrams were received from Mr. Max Petitpierre who as Swiss Foreign Minister headed the first list of sponsors, from Dr. Amstad, Manager of the Swiss Bank Corporation in Berne and from Miss Prieswerk who taken by new voluntary duties had been unable to accept the Council's invitation.

The gathering was the occasion for the Council of Management to take official leave with grateful thanks of Mr. J. P. Christen who gave eight years of devoted service to the Hostel, first as Treasurer, then also as Chairman of the Company.

Looking back on these first ten years of the Hostel our grateful thoughts go to all those who have helped us with the launching and through the difficult early period: Among them the ladies of the House Committee as well as two former members of the Council of Management, the late Mr. Walter Meier and Mr. F. G. Sommer who both had the interest of the Hostel especially at heart.

F.A.

"SWISS OBSERVER" PUBLISHING DATES

The "Swiss Observer" is published every second and fourth Friday of the month. Our next issue will appear on 24th March. We shall be glad to receive articles and reports not later than Tuesday 14th March. Short news items only can be accepted later.

The next issue but one will be published on Friday, 14th April. For that number we shall require articles and reports not later than Tuesday, 4th April.