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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

TWENTIETH "LANDSGEMEINDE" OF THE NORTH

On Sunday, 16th June, nineteen of the twenty-two Swiss Cantons were represented at the twentieth "Landsgemeinde" of the Swiss in the North of England, in the most beautiful weather we could have wished for. On arrival from Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Leeds and many towns of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire, our compatriots were received by the authorities of Hebden Bridge who joined us at the Civic Hall for coffee and light refreshments, graciously offered by the Chairman of the Rural District Council of Hepton, the authority under which the region of Hardcastle Crags is placed.

One hour's walk took the younger members to the picnic place under the trees and facing the most attractive hilly landscape. Amongst them were a guitarist with a strong contingent from the Calder Valley High School brought by one of their teachers, Mr. David Fletcher, a great friend of Switzerland, his wife and their two lovely little daughters, Heidi and Trudi! In contrast with previous occasions, the ceremony of the "Landsgemeinde" in the afternoon was performed, not on the usual open space below the road, in process of transformation, but under the trees where all the families were already established with a big Swiss flag flying over them.

Although our "Landsgemeinde" has no constitutional authority whatever, it affords an opportunity to, share, not only our appreciation for what we, the Swiss of today, owe to our ancestors of the last six centuries, but also our vision of the future of our country and the individual contribution we can make towards it.

So when, on our brief history of Switzerland, we reached 1352, Zug being represented by the Chaplain of the Swiss Catholic Mission in London, the Rev. Paul Bossard, he summed up the meaning of Ecumenism in our country where centuries of strife had broken our unity; looking at the future and our own responsibilities he said: "The majority of our Swiss communities is of Christian Faith, either the Protestant or the Catholic blend. Since the Ecumenical services which we conduct from time to time are by now a valid and generally accepted form of Divine Service by both denominations, such a service, especially prepared for the occasion by the different Ministers (who have established a very cordial co-operation among themselves) could well become an integral part of the "Landsgemeinde". This would build a solid foundation for the discussions which would follow about the different problems which our country has to face, especially in our troubled times. In England, a country where the colonies have mostly become independent and part of a Commonwealth, we were pleased to acknowledge our indebtedness to the French Revolution which transformed five of our dependent provinces into equal partners. The mention of Vaud and Lausanne reminded us of the resolution of "Journées de 1964" about the creation of an international orientation centre for volunteers going to serve in developing countries; whilst Geneva's entry in 1815 brought back the memory of our dear friend, Mrs. Geneviève Davidson of the well known Genevese family, the Oltramare. She died last Autumn in Liverpool where she had been, for many years, the

soul of the Swiss community. Those compatriots who care for the cultural contribution of our country, will never forget her remarkable lectures on Henri Dunant and the Red Cross, Toepfer, Ramuz, Zermatt and other Swiss writers.

To conclude this part of the proceedings, the last letter from our dear old friend, John Jenny, was read, conveying to us the serene spirit of his old age.

We then started to walk down to Hebden Bridge to be received at the Civic Hall by the Chairman of Hebden Royd Urban District Council and his wife, Mrs. Greenwood, as well as by Councillor Marshall, Chairman of the Rural District Council of Hepton. As our three London guests had to catch the evening express from Manchester, at the beginning of the High Tea Mr. Adams, Swiss Consul in London, representing the Embassy, and Mr. Brunner, our Consul in the North, gave us encouraging messages and "au revoir", whilst Dr. Egli and Father Bossard had already expressed their appreciation and good wishes at Hardcastle Crags.

Fortunately, we still had time to enjoy the friendly addresses of the Chairmen of both Councils and of the President of the Manchester Swiss Club, Dr. Jaggi, with his wife and two children. Besides the presence of the delegation from the Calder High School as a natural and important link with the younger generation of our Swiss Colony, we had the welcome company of Mr. Edwin Fletcher and his wife, invited as guests of our Vice-President, Rotarian Ermanno Berner, to represent the Hebden Bridge Rotary Club. This is a valuable addition of our contacts which may lead to a "twinning" of this lovely part of Yorkshire, with some congenial region of Switzerland.

In this light, our "Landsgemeinde" can become a true and practical way to activate the "Fifth Switzerland" on behalf of our country. Quoting Dr. Egli in the Swiss Observer (26th May, 1967):

"Let us all help in this great work of making the "FIFTH SWITZERLAND" a living reality — first by the pooling of ideas as to what should be done and secondly by supporting whatever actions and projects may emerge from this exchange of views."

J.P.I.

* * *

In the "Halifax Courier" there was a picture of the happy party at the "Landsgemeinde" with Prof. J. P. Inebnit in the centre. The write-up referred to Mr. Inebnit's reminder that immigrants must learn that to be accepted and properly integrated, they had to bring something to the country rather than look out for just what they could get out of it.

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