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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

Should our special Article 45bis be accepted as it stands at present, or do we want any changes in it? "The Confederation is empowered to promote the relationship amongst the Swiss Abroad themselves and between them and the home country and to assist institutions which pursue such aims.

"The Confederation may legislate concerning the execution of their rights and duties, taking into account the special circumstances of the Swiss Abroad. This applies in particular to political rights, liability for military service and social assistance. The Cantons are to be consulted preliminarily".

The last question asks us if we consider a total revision really necessary, or if we should be satisfied with further partial revisions.

The questionnaire is available at the Manchester Swiss Club or the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, also at the Secretariat in Switzerland, 26 Alpenstrasse, 3000 Berne. Would interested compatriots please return their answers to one of the two delegates on the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, Dr. H. R. Bolliger (Fern Cottage, Mereside Road, Mere, Cheshire) for the Midlands and the North, and Mrs. Mariann Meier (53 Priory Road, London N.W.6.) for the South. Please not later than 20th June. The questionnaires will be returned to Berne in the end, but it will help the two delegates to make their report if they can evaluate the answers.

Once the working group under Mr. Wahlen comes to the conclusion that a total revision is necessary, the Federal Council will appoint a much larger commission to work out a draft. The Government would then put this to Parliament, and finally, the electorate will have to vote on it.

Considerable time will elapse before then. An optimistic view is that a new Constitution might come into force by the end of May 1974—exactly 100 years after the present one. We shall see.

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THE SWISS OF YORKSHIRE

THEIR GENERAL MEETING, A DINNER SOCIAL AND SOME HISTORICAL REMINISCENCES

This year's General Meeting took place on Tuesday, 7th April, 1970, in our Headquarters at the British Council House, 1 St. Marks Avenue, Leeds, in the presence of a fair number of members and friends. Our President, Professor J. Ph. Inebnit was in the chair.

Our Club was able to look back on an active and interesting year, adding to their usual activities, an enjoyable dinner-social and a visit to Liverpool (mentioned in an earlier issue of the "Swiss Observer"). One of the highlights was our yearly Landsgemeinde, this time made even more interesting by the welcome presence of our Ambassador from London, and Madam Keller, and a large gathering of prominent and leading compatriots, who the day before had attended the General Meeting in Manchester of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom.

The town of Hebden Bridge takes an ever increasing active part in our proceedings and the newly formed Hebden Bridge-Swiss Association organises a yearly Swiss Week and lends a helping hand in our combined function in Hardcastle Crags. Although Hebden Bridge is entirely an industrial town, their main industries being textile and clothing, revolving to a great degree around both the woollens of Yorkshire and cottons of Lancashire, it does enjoy the advantage of unspoiled and very beautiful scenery on all sides. Furthermore, it is conveniently placed at almost equal distances from the centre of Manchester and centres of Leeds/Bradford, easily reached by train or road. Our monthly meetings were all well attended and made more interesting by slide-shows and talks, some of a very high standard.

Accounts submitted showed favourable results, reserves having considerably increased and we hope that we may be able to maintain this favourable trend.

Then came the election of the Committee, Professor J. Ph. Inebnit offered to withdraw but he was persuaded to accept this office for another year, and thus assure us of the continuity of a long year's established club practice and policy.

The New Committee Elected consists of:

President—Professor J. Ph. Inebnit
Vice President—Mr. Ermanno Berner

Honorary Treasurer—Mr. Kaegi
Honorary Secretary—Mrs. Edith Lerch

and Mrs. Ruth Leathly

Committee Member—Mrs. Laura Berner.

The following members were elected to the Hebden Bridge-Swiss Association

Mr. T. Amman

Mr. E. Berner

Mrs. L. Berner

Special thanks were expressed to Mr. Richard Mueller for so generously providing for our circulars. The execution of this work being in the able hands of his Secretary, Mrs. Mary Briggs.

It is the cherished wish of our President to keep such meetings as informal and friendly as possible, and we are proud of his long, fruitful and dedicated service to the cause of the Yorkshire Swiss, and being almost on the threshold of his 80 years we wish him many more happy and active years. A great moral responsibility lies on all of us, being the heirs of 105 years of Swiss history in this County.

It all started in 1865 when a small, enterprising and patriotic group broke away from the cosmopolitan German "Schiller-Verein", to found their own "Schweizer-Verein", to be known as the Société Suisse de Bradford. Their first President was a Mr. Charles Federer from St. Gallen. It must have been a young, warmhearted, and perhaps at times, unruly "Gesellschaft", liquors standing high in their budget. Once a special General Meeting was convened to deal with a "tapage nocturn", or as it was stated: "...par suite de quelques visites nocturnes se prolongeant même jusqu'au temps du cris du coq..." and necessitating the additional rule of: "... que le local de la Société Suisse doit être évacué toujours à minuit au plus tard..."

At that time Switzerland was far away, bad communications, no wireless, no television, and they did not hesitate to spend quite substantial sums on newspapers and periodicals from home and well over £10.0.0 yearly (quite a sum at that time) was laid out for such publications as the "Bund" the "Journal de Genève", the "Postheiri", the "Neue Zuercher Zeitung", the "Zuercher Freiheitszeitung", etc., etc.

In 1869 they contributed, with the help of the town of Bradford, a sum of £140.0.0 towards the "Swiss Inundation Fund"—at that time a great achievement.

Tragedy befell the Club, when in 1872 their President was made to resign for some kind of indiscretion or "faux-pas" in the approach to the "Conseil Fédéral" in matters of revision of the Constitution. The Club did not survive for long after this sad affair because a couple of years later it ceased to exist. Very fittingly the following words were entered in the final statement of their gilt-edged Minute Book: "Hic finis gloria mundi".

After a short interruption the "Swiss Club of Bradford" appeared on the scene, a more important and business like organisation which had a long and useful lifetime with its ups and downs—as every club has to face from time to time. Their activities were many-fold and varied, although in later years the pace slackened off quite considerably. There were the usual "weekly" meetings, lectures, discussion groups, charabanc-outings, glee parties, film shows, dinners to which neighbouring clubs were invited, financial contributions towards good causes, etc., etc.

There was also the latent and continuous fight for the "women-rights" still not over in our Homeland. In 1949 a vote went against the membership for Ladies. Although our menfolk did not refuse their help when they needed it. In one of the Club-meetings it can be

read: ". . . and suggesting to hold again an annual dinner and that it should be held exclusively for men, so that there will be "more fun" . . ."

These early Clubs were not very large ones, although they tried very hard to keep up a varied and interesting activity, but when around 1945 the new West Riding Swiss Club of Leeds came into being, lead by Professor J. Ph. Inebnit, the real trouble for survival started. It was his ambition to unite the separate Swiss Clubs of Yorkshire into one great organisation. However, twenty years had to pass before this idea was realised. Several intermediate solutions were adopted such as a loose affiliation between the two societies and later on a restricted amalgamation with the West Riding Club, but with continued "self-rule". Gradually it became more and more apparent that the Brad-

ford Swiss Club, if not "de jure" at least "de facto" had become part of the Leeds Organisation. At that time Mr. Illi was the President and we can read in the minutes of the 11th March, 1965: ". . . Mr. Inebnit proposed a merger of the Bradford Club with the West Riding Swiss Club, because of low membership and no activities over the past ten years. The Bradford Swiss Club after having been in existence for over 94 years is closing down . . ." This fusion with the West Riding Swiss Club—now known as the Yorkshire Swiss Club—will certainly have a greater scope and serve in a better way, the Swiss Colony, from a financial as well as cultural and social point of view.

The archives of the two Bradford Swiss Clubs will remain in our safe-keeping. They show us very clearly that the activities and prosperity of any Club

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are in direct relation with an enlightened, efficient and dedicated leadership, coupled with the wholehearted and loyal support of its members, and any deviation from this could well endanger its very life.

A few weeks after our General Meeting we were able to hold our second "Dinner-Social". This was held on April 25th, 1970, at the Griffin Hotel in Leeds. It proved to be a great success and a source of great satisfaction to the organising social-committee.

As usual we assembled gradually in the foyer-bar of this most hospitable Hotel until called by the unexpected homely ring of a Swiss cow-bell to the banqueting hall, which had been nicely decorated with wall and table flags, individually decorated menu cards with its Kantons-Wappen and entry into the Confederation. The whole history laid down on our tables. The Hotel Management had also added some lovely flower arrangements.

Our President, Professor J. Ph. Inebnit, having taken the chair, our Vice-President stood up to welcome our guests and expressed our great satisfaction and pleasure in seeing our Consul and Madam Born amongst us, who had come a long and hazardous way, but had found a temporary refuge in this Hotel. We had also Mr. and Mrs. L. Themans with us, reminding us of the very friendly relationship we have with the Manchester Swiss Club. Also Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher who through the newly founded Hebden Bridge-Swiss Association are trying very hard to strengthen the already friendly bonds linking us with that community, organising a yearly Swiss Week, supporting our Landsgemeinde, and encouraging the personal exchange of ideas and hospitality. There were other faithful members at the top table, some of our Committee, and then Mr. and Mrs. R. Mueller who are very generous in their financial support of our Club.

After having said grace everybody sat down to what proved to be an excellent dinner, helped along by a good selection of vintage wines. Eventually sweets and coffee were served, after which our President stood up to propose the toast to the Queen and to Switzerland. He did this in a most unusual way by linking together both toasts—quite a deviation from established order.

It was with pleasure and great interest that we listened to the short address of our Consul, Mr. Born, who spoke to us in his very friendly and homely way, touching on some actualities and topics of our homeland and the world around us. When he mentioned to us the early increase of 10% in the Swiss Pension Scheme benefits, he was straight away assured of our fullest sympathy and his popularity further increased. The loud and warm applause was a clear indication to him how much we appreciated both himself and his wife being with us.

All the time we could listen to

pleasant, discreet, and subdued background music, which later on increased in volume and the tunes of our mountain valleys, the yodlers, the landlers, created the type of atmosphere which appeals to us.

The second part of our evening commenced with a raffle, enhanced by some lovely and interesting prizes. The modest proceeds—we preferred it that way—went towards the expenses of the evening. One of our guests provided us with some "mystifying entertainment". Although a young member of the Leeds Magic Circle even to a professional or critical observer his performance was of a high standard. At the finish of his act he received a well deserved applause.

Society games, some of a most amusing character and occasional sing songs made us forgetful of the passing time. Alas all too soon our most enjoyable evening neared its close. There was much handshaking, good wishes for a safe journey home—some facing quite long car drives—but all were quite determined in their mind to meet again soon under similar circumstances.

BRAVO! Yorkshire Swiss Club.

(E. Berner)

FIDIRA, FIDIRA . . .

The faithful family of Schweizerbund members turned up in force at the Orpheus Club on Friday evening, 22nd May, for one of their usual merry parties. One or two faithful and old time members couldn't attend and had sent us their regrets. There were on the other hand newcomers among the young and we were blessed by a strong representation from the Embassy as Mr. F. Adams, our Consul in London, had come with Mrs. Adams and Mr. Charles Abegglen and Mr. Franz Bischoff had also come with their ladies. After a particularly filling meal, Mr. Virgil Berti, the Schweizerbund's president for so many years, rose and made a bucolic and vibrant address, praising the joys of Schweizerbund friendship and togetherness. Mr. Adams then rose to say a few short words. He told us how glad he was to be with the Schweizerbund and to enjoy a carefree evening. With his characteristic humour, he cracked the joke that he hadn't been sure until moments before, when he had rediscovered his membership card, whether he was actually a member, but now he knew that after a meal at the Schweizerbund one became a *full* member! But Mr. Adams would say no more jokes. He reminded us of the old after-dinner saying that there are three kinds of after-dinner speakers—those who are expected to speak, those who actually have something to say and those who cannot be prevented from speaking. Afraid that he should fall into the latter category, Mr. Adams obstinately sat down and soon the singing got started under the direction of his colleague at the Embassy, Mr. Charles Abegglen, Vice-Consul.

Now Mr. Abegglen is not only a remarkable vice-consul, he is an outstanding mixed choir conductor and cheerleader as well! What a pity for the Schweizerbund that he and Mrs. Adams will have to be leaving us soon, as was disclosed by Mr. Berti.

He launched the singing with 's *Ramseyers wei go grase*, that breezy example of Swiss folklore. We then flicked the pages of our song books (a Swissair publication called "Let's sing with the Swiss"!) and sang the song on page number two, which was *Fa mal i pe*, a swinging song from Ticino. All warmed up by that first bout, we then sang something softer and more romantic (and in French) *Là haut sur la montagne*. That was just a beginning. I could enumerate half the Swiss Folklore, it all got trumpeted through our chords. Some of the songs were percussive and martial, such as *Roulez Tambours*, others were as sweet as the springs of Mount Parnassus. One of them (it was *Im Oberland uf* or *Lustig is das Zigeunerleben*) offered plenty of scope for vocalisation and for one moment I thought I was at a showing of "Ivan the Terrible".

In the end, when voices were getting hoarse and the wind falling, half the attendance broke into frolicsome conversation while Mr. Abegglen, *singing relentlessly onward*, led his faithful band of minstrels in the quivering and melodious world of Alpine Songs.

The party began to break up at eleven after a particularly friendly and merry evening.

(PMB)

SOCIETE DE SECOURS MUTUELS DES SUISSES A LONDRES

Ten members attended the Annual General Meeting of the Society at its headquarters 34/5 Fitzroy Square, W.1, on Wednesday, May 13th, 1970.

Following the reading of the minutes of last year's A.G.M. and a brief discussion on the Accounts the Balance Sheet for 1969 was duly adopted.

The proposed increase in the annual subscription (the first in over 50 years) recommended by the Committee in its circular letter of April 1970 was debated and comments received by post from three members taken into consideration before finally recording a vote in favour of one of two counter proposals for a modified increase of just over 50%, the various benefits remained unaltered.

Similarly the customary donation to the Swiss Benevolent Society, the subscription to the Federation of Swiss Societies in the U.K. and the Swiss Observer were re-confirmed.

Before vacating the chair, the President, Mr. A. L. Gandon, thanked his officers and committee members for their loyal support in the past year. The chairman pro-tem, Mr. F. Delaloye, received a ready response from the members present and in the absence of other nominations obtained