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ties in the U.K. with regard to using the S.O. in the same manner. More will be heard of this later.

Finally, the *Solidarity Fund* Council met to discuss the new structure of the Fund. It has been clear for some time that new principles will have to be introduced to make it more attractive to Swiss living in countries where there seems to be no immediate danger of losing one's livelihood through war, revolution and political upheaval. As soon as the revision of the present constitutional set-up has been completed a General Meeting will have to be called to approve it; it is hoped that this will be possible in Berne in August. In the meantime, do not hesitate to join; nothing will be lost and there will be every chance to benefit our new arrangements.

(MM)

SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY: REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1971

Dear Friends and Compatriots,

It is with great pleasure that we present the 102nd Annual Report of our Society, and we will try to give you some idea of the manifold tasks which we endeavour to fulfill in order to help Swiss citizens, living in the London Consular District, who are in some need or other.

The number of people who applied to us or were referred to us by the Swiss Embassy, the Swiss Churches, Hospitals and English Social Workers shows a slight increase, and in the course of the year we were in touch with a total of 353 (118 men, 177 women and 58 children) of whom about two thirds required either casual or continued financial help. We had a total of 664 interviews, 144 of them being visits to people's homes and hospitals. Though very time-consuming, we feel that these visits are indeed necessary as a large number of our clients, in particular the pensioners, often find the journey to our office too far and too tiring. Experience has shown that it sometimes needs a number of contacts before we can discover the real worries and difficulties of people who come initially with a problem that is merely a pretext for contacting us or is a consequence of some deeper trouble of which they themselves may not be conscious at the outset.

Quite a considerable number of the elderly are also visited by members of the Swiss Churches and we are most grateful to those visitors who alert us when they discover a need which requires the intervention of the social worker. Indeed, without their collaboration this might be delayed or, in certain cases with people who are not given to making their needs known, never take place at all.

The number of pensioners has remained stable and during the year

we helped 54. In view of the heavy increase in the cost of living we have been obliged to raise the scale of our pensions considerably and, in some cases, to make extra grants to meet further unexpected expenses. We always endeavour to allow our pensioners a little more than the strict minimum laid down by the State.

For our part, we have referred a number of people to local social workers as the very nature of our service makes it impossible for us to follow any person or family who needs regular contacts over a long period unless they are able to call at our office or live reasonably nearby.

The beginning of the year was difficult because of the postal strike but with the help of a number of volunteers, local social services and matrons of homes, we managed to get pensions and grants to everybody, or failing this, to reassure them that they would be looked after on credit until conditions returned to normal.

Regarding the young Swiss people whom we have to help when they find themselves stranded in London, the Embassy have suggested and put into practice a new system of refunding the loans we give, by which the Police Department in Berne repays immediately and takes over the thankless and difficult task of getting the money back in Switzerland. This is a very real help to us and saves us innumerable letters to defaulters and quite a lot of money in postage. We are grateful to the Embassy for evolving this scheme.

Last summer, an exceptionally great number of applications were made to us for grants towards the holidays organised by Pro Juventute for Swiss children from abroad. It is pleasing to see that there appears to be a growing interest amongst the youngsters to get to know Switzerland. The happy, healthy faces of the children on their return to Victoria station made us feel that this particular service is extremely worthwhile, especially for children from modest homes who would not be able to go otherwise and might be left to themselves a lot during the holidays while their parents are at work.

More of the residents have also accepted our offer of help towards a holiday in this country. For some we paid the whole or part of their stay at a guest house, for others invited by friends or relatives, we helped with the fares and some extra pocket money.

The rooms at 31 Conway Street have been well occupied with a couple of beds being kept available at all times for emergencies, though these were rather fewer than we might have expected. We had a steady stream of young men, some staying for very short periods, others for a number of months and, on the whole, we are happy to use the house in this way.

At Christmas time, we sent out

119 parcels for 176 people. The preparation was again in the able hands of Mmes Raulin and Kaluza and the packing and distribution were greatly helped by the efforts of Mmes Harding, Burri, Gyssler, Harhalakis and Mr. Buol. Thus, once more, all the parcels in the Greater London Area were distributed personally and we are very grateful to all those who helped to make this possible. The Frauenverein and the Réunion de Couture gave us again a marvellous selection of garments which were as beautiful as they were useful. We realise just how much time and effort went into this and thank all those who helped to make them. Swiss firms and individual donors also gave valuable contributions in kind which were greatly appreciated.

The presence of the Welfare Office at Conway Street has again proved successful and was a great help to both social workers, not only because of practical services that could be rendered but above all for the possibility of discussing complex problems with each other.

The Committee met regularly twice a month but, towards the end of the year, decided to cut the meetings down to one a month for a trial period initially.

On the 26th November, 1971, Mr. M. A. Rothlisberger completed 40 years on the Executive Committee of the Society and we thank him warmly for all the devotion and time that he has given to the cause of the needy Swiss in this country.

Our grateful thanks go to our Honorary President, His Excellency the Swiss Ambassador, Dr. A. Weitnauer, for the interest and support that he has shown to us during the year. The Counsellor M. C. H. Bruggmann and the Consul M. F. Adams represented the Embassy at our Executive Meetings.

We are also much indebted to all those who, in one way or another, have helped us to carry out our duties, the Swiss Federal Authorities, the Swiss Embassy in London, the Swiss Churches, the Swiss Societies, "The Swiss Observer", English social workers both of statutory and private bodies and all the individual friends and particularly the many generous contributors without whose support we could not function. A special mention should also be made of the able handling by the Finance Committee of the Society's investments. Last but not least, we extend our thanks to the British authorities for their hospitality and assistance.

We would not wish to close this report without expressing our sincere appreciation to our Secretary, Mrs. A. R. Sharp, for her unfailing devotion and administrative skill shown again during the past year.

On behalf of the Executive Committee
*M. Schneebeli,
President.*