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Lyster of the Welfare Office for the very pleasant collaboration and support both practical and moral which she gives to Mrs. Sharp.

The clients who came to us with needs other than lack of money have again presented a wide spectrum of problems which we have endeavoured to help them solve either ourselves or in collaboration with whatever agency seemed to be the most suitable. Some of the questions which have cropped up were as varied as loneliness, sorting out of financial problems, marital breakdown, a search of a home or simply for help around the house, returning to Switzerland or any combination of those. We also do act quite frequently as intermediaries between our clients and their families in the home country. Sometimes, it is just an occasional exchange of letters to give them news of people who cannot write themselves any more, and sometimes it involves advice and discussions on how the families can best help their relative.

The welfare of our clients takes up by far the largest slice of our time and energy, but great care is also given to the administrative tasks involved and to the upkeep of our two properties at Conway Street and Belsize Grove. The Swiss Hostel for Girls, as shown by our allowance granted for nights spent there by Swiss girls has again had a larger proportion of our nationals staying there.

At Conway Street, we had a difficult period of nearly five months without the help of caretakers, but we are now extremely lucky with Mr.

and Mrs. Jackson who are a great support in many ways. The central heating system was proving to be more and more unsatisfactory in spite of many efforts to get it to work properly and, therefore in the autumn, we carried out a thorough overhaul. The large expenditure has been rewarded by a much more efficient control of each individual radiator which should provide appreciable savings in fuel. The rooms for young men at Conway Street were occupied at a very satisfactory rate.

As usual, our premises were a hive of activity in early December when, under the leadership of Mmes. Burri and Kaluza, we prepared 158 parcels for 241 people. This action has again given great pleasure to many and we are indebted not only to the two ladies but also to the Swiss firms who gave generously some of their products and beautiful calendars and to Mmes. S. Annette, M. Bruggemann, L. Hall, M. Lyster, G. Senn, W. J. Turner, Mr. and Mrs. R. Glarner, Mr. and Mrs. St. Kaluza, Mr. and Mrs. M. Röthlisberger, Mr. and Mrs. E. Tangemann, Mr. and Mrs. P. Zimmermann and Messrs. E. Huber and L. Smith who assisted with the distribution of the parcels.

The Executive Committee met regularly on the first Monday of each month to discuss applications and other problems arising from the running of the Society and great care was taken to ensure adequate solutions to the varied questions that presented themselves. The Embassy was represented at the

meeting by Consul M. Ch. Glauser. He and Mme. Glauser gave us a memorable evening at their home where the Committee were lavishly entertained to dinner. We do wish to record here our gratitude to Consul and Mme. Glauser.

During Mrs. Sharp's holiday we were fortunate to enlist the assistance of Mrs. Elisabeth Gunn to whom we are greatly indebted. As last year, we were lucky to share with the Welfare Office the secretarial services of Mrs. Marietta Lee whom we thank warmly for her devoted work.

We are very grateful to our Honorary President Ambassador Dr. E. Thalmann for his support and the keen interest he is taking in our activities.

We also wish to express our thanks to all the institutions and individuals who, in the course of the year, have been helping us; the Swiss Embassy, the *Swiss Observer*, English Social Services and, particularly to our individual friends and supporters on whose interest and financial contributions we depend so much in the accomplishment of our worthwhile task.

Last but not least, our thanks go to our secretary and social worker Mrs. A.-R. Sharp for the skill and enthusiasm she continues to bring to her job.

On behalf of the Executive
Committee

M. Schneebeli
President

CITY SWISS CLUB: COMPUTER: Master or Servant?

By an ironic coincidence the strike of civil servants manning amongst others this country's social security computers was just beginning to bite as the anxious question of the real role of this highly sophisticated modern machinery, whether master or servant to humanity's needs, was the subject-matter set for debate at the March meeting of the City Swiss Club after a pleasant dinner held as usual at the Dorchester Hotel. Fittingly it was presided over by a banker, Mr. H. Jauslin, who presumably spoke from practical experience of computers' achievements and risks in his introductory remarks calling on guest-speaker, Mr. A. L. C. Humphreys, C.B.E., F.B.I.M., a Director of the sole British firm in this field, International Computers Ltd, to give us his expert views on the theme.

Without going into the technicalities of the computer Mr. Humphreys characterised its importance for modern society as comparable with what the industrial revolution achieved these last two hundred years. Evidently the computer's phenomenal speed of recording and digesting the facts fed into it and presenting accurate answers to the complicated problems entrusted to its unbiased mechanism represents its chief merit. A multitude of difficult operations that used to bog down the work of scientists, technicians and managements to snail's pace are speeded up to an undreamt of degree by the computer. Man's development over thousands of years have suddenly been advanced by electronics in leaps and bounds scarcely requiring more than a few hours or days.

Having regard to the infinite variety of uses of the computer things can of course go wrong and have gone wrong on occasions, Mr. Humphreys did not hesitate to admit in reply to some anxious questioners fearing breakdowns in entire services and complex industries, possibly amounting to national if not worldwide disasters. But when and where things go wrong depends invariably, the speaker argued, on the human element that cannot be entirely eliminated from the proper use and functioning of the computer. Its usefulness and correct answers depend on the correct choice of problems being fed correctly into the computer. It requires above all a revision of the traditional ways of looking at problems which cannot always be reduced to precise facts and figures needed for the compu-

ter's tasks and uses. The problem of displacement of labour and employment by the infinite variety of uses of the computer, admittedly a serious aspect of all technical

progress, the speaker concluded, should not lead to its condemnation. Its proper solution is, as in all matters of mechanisation, in the hands of politicians, authorities and man-

agements. A shortening of the working week and earlier retirement of employees might well provide one of the remedies.

H.W.E.

WHO SAYS SWITZERLAND IS EXPENSIVE?

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ECONOMIC INDICATORS

	Unit	1978 3rd qtr	1978 2nd qtr	1978 yearly average	1977
Industrial production	1963 = 100	140	153	144	148
Employment industry	3rd quarter 1966 = 100	84.8	85.0	84.6	84.5
Jobs vacant	Jan. 1979	8027	7840	8290	6478
Consumer prices	September 1977 = 100	101.4	101.0	100.8	99.7
Wholesale prices	1963 = 100	143.0	142.1	142.9	147.9
Exports	mill. Sw.Fr.	3169	3672	3482	3513
Imports	mill. Sw.Fr.	3356	3388	3525	3585
Exports/Imports surplus	mill. Sw.Fr.	-187	+284	-43	-72
	in %	End February 1979	End January 1979	End December 1978	End December 1977
Official discount rate		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.50
Call money rate	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
Private discount rate		3.00	3.00	3.00	3.75
Time deposits (3 months)		0.13	0.13	0.13	1.50
Medium-term notes (average rate)		2.25	2.25	2.50	3.50
Mortgage credits (12 cantonal banks)		4.23	4.23	4.31	5.06
Federal bonds (yield)		3.08	3.10	3.02	3.75
Credit Suisse index		268.5	272.4	253.1	247.5