

Society and social Scene : Changing shape of the community

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Changing shape of the community

LOOKING back over the last few decades, one cannot fail to realise that one Swiss organisation after another has gone; no more Swiss Orchestra or Gymnastic Society, no Accordion Club, no Male Choir, the Ruetli Ladies' Club went, as did the Confrérie Vaudoise.

The Fête Suisse disappeared and the Secours Mutuel closed down; the Sezione Femile of the Unione Ticinese and the once so popular Chorale Ticinese went the same way as the Ladies' Group of the Swiss Mercantile Society.

And last year it was the hostel that closed down and the Swiss Club (Schweizerbund) decided that it had to disband.

Swiss emigrants of today are mostly a new breed and come for a contracted number of years – a new term has been created “Kontraktauslandschweizer” – and the theme of this year's Assembly of the Swiss Abroad in Solothurn at the end of August will be devoted to this

new type of emigrant and the problems for them and their families.

The life of the Swiss community in Britain has been much affected. Most societies complain that their intake is well below the number of losses through death or return to Switzerland. Functions are often badly attended and have to be curtailed.

One of the few exceptions is the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique where new admissions are considerably above losses and whose meetings and other events are well attended.

Yet the NSH has great difficulties in finding officers willing to take on the arduous work of organising the programme of such an active group.

This has induced the council to study how one could possibly spread the president's work load. One of the council members, Mr Joe Brogini, a young Ticinese architect, has put a great deal of work into this study.

At a meeting on January 22 – surprisingly and encouragingly well attended for such a topic – he explained the structure of the society and its council and made valuable proposals. Obviously, changes cannot be made all at once and they have to be worked out carefully in order to be of lasting value.

The discussion led by the president, who had given a short outline of the group's history going back to its foundation in 1916, was very lively and many valid ideas were put forward and

carefully noted.

The desirability of working together with other societies was stressed by several people – many of them are members of a number of societies anyway.

Social functions and meetings could be held jointly more often than is already the case with the NSH which works closely together with the SMS and others.

The members passed a resolution that:

- A clear devolution of tasks in the council was needed and should be attended to by the first council meeting after the elections (at the AGM on March 19).

- The desirability of a revision of the constitution should be studied further with a view to finding ways of securing closer co-operation between all societies in the colony.

The state of the various societies and organisations in the Swiss community in London as well as in other parts of Britain was mentioned at last year's AGM of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK, and there too, the closing of ranks and much closer co-ordination and co-operation were held out as not only desirable but necessary.

It is hoped that the dialogue will get under way and as much discussion within and without the individual organisations will result in finding a solution to the problems of an ageing community.

Mariann Meier

That's the right spirit!

CONGRATULATIONS from the depth of my heart to the two ladies (Swiss Observer, March issue) for coming forward and putting their foot down on those “lovely Swiss ideals”. Of course I am very surprised that “Swiss ideals” really exist, because I have never heard of any.

Usually Swiss are down to earth and have virtues: they are conscientious, hard working, serious minded, independent. But they are usually balanced with corresponding vices: they are narrow minded, hard

hitting, stubborn and reckless.

The Austrians at Morgarten and Sempach got a good lesson of such virtues and vices. At Marignano the Swiss got it too.

Was the battle of the Bahnhofstrasse, Zurich, the Marignano for our police force? If I am not mistaken more of these “brutal” policemen had to be treated in hospital than of these “poor” youth who had outnumbered them by at least 10 to 1.

Many of these demonstrators had been on the payroll

of foreign agents at the rate of Sfr. 50 for taking part and of Sfr. 200 for breaking a window. But I have no idea what the price was for wounding a policeman.

Never mind, let us not be too serious minded about it and let us take the hint of these two Swiss ladies to bring a little bit of the spirit of “Nebelspalter” into the Swiss Observer, having a good laugh about ourselves from time to time. That is what we are in need of! — **Paul Bossard, Swiss Catholic Mission, London.**



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Bound for New York

THE Swiss of London have lost one of their livelier young members, and it was with regret that they said goodbye to Jürg Schmid who, with his wife Monique, left for New York at the end of February.

He was in London for nearly 21 years and played an active part in a number of Swiss societies and organisations. For many years he was secretary of the now defunct Swiss Club (Schweizerbund) and a valuable member of the First of August Committee.

As president of the London group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique I know what a great help he was as a member of the council. As a former editor of the Swiss Observer I had dealings with him before that and valued the ever-ready assistance which he gave me in his capacity as publicity manager of the Swiss National Tourist Office in London.

He has now taken up a position with the SNTTO in New York, and I am sure his efficiency and reliability will be appreciated in his new job as much as in the Swiss community in New York.

His successor at the SNTTO in London is Franz Blum. He worked with the same organisation in Zurich, New York, London, Rome and again in Zurich. He is married to an English girl and they have a baby daughter. We wish him and his family a happy and successful stay in London. — **Mariann Meier.**

Dates for your diary

THE Bournemouth Swiss Club has drawn up the following diary of forthcoming events:

April 4: Fondue party. **May 3:** Afternoon tea party. **June 6:** Dinner and dance. **July 3:** Social evening. **August 1:** Garden party and bonfire. **September 4:** Social evening and film show. **October 3:** Lunch in the country. **November 6:** Talk and discussion. **December 5:** St Nicholas fete.