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SOCIETY AND SOCIAL SCENE

Change in rules heralds the New Helvetic Society

THE Nouvelle Société Helvétique held its well attended annual dinner in March at the Throgmorton Restaurant in the City, now a regular venue for the Society.

Dinner was preceded by the annual meeting, during which Mrs Mariann Meier announced that she would be resigning as President in a year's time. She said she had been in office for the past 13 years and that the time had come to find a successor.

The meeting also examined the new Rules of the Society which had been drafted by Dr Hans Egli.

A further innovation was to have these Rules officially published in English and the three national languages and not only in French, as used to be the case. It will thus be legitimate to call the Society the "New Helvetic Society", or NHS.

The President was pleased to note that the Society remained in good shape in terms of finance and membership.

The AGM was followed by a period at the bar, which enabled old friends to meet again before dinner was served to more than 70 people.

After dinner, Mrs Meier began her address by recalling that the evening was held in rather more auspicious circumstances than on

the previous occasion, when the rail strike had made life difficult for most members.

She thanked Mrs Rodda and Mr Berti for their work in organising the dinner and presented the apologies of the Ambassador and Mrs Caillat for their absence. But she welcomed the First Secretary, Mr Claudio Caratsch, a Romansch who had taken over from Mr Fritsch, now in Moscow.

She especially welcomed an Honorary Member, Mr Paul Bessire, who at 86 must be the doyen of the Society, and she greeted Dr Hans Egli, Honorary Vice-President and still alert and active at 84.

Mrs Meier thanked the ladies who had prepared the presents traditionally given to lady guests on this annual occasion.

Other guests welcomed by name were Mr Bernie Simon, the President of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK, and Father Paul Bossard, whose forthcoming departure to Switzerland after 16 years of ministry in London was deeply regretted.

Mrs Meier took pride in observing that there were no fewer than nine presidents or leaders of Swiss societies and institutions and that four of them were women. This provided a splendid opportunity for her to

underline the important role of women in today's society.

Mrs Meier then briefly recalled the background of the London group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique and its early days when it actually enjoyed the services of a full-time Secretary.

She remembered the problems which arose in 1947, following the retirement of Mr Fred Sutter as President, and said that, without the work of Dr Hans Egli, the Society might never have been brought back to life again.

Referring to her retirement from the Presidency next year, she said she had taken the decision because "you have not had the courage to sack me". She said the Society was thriving and enjoying a growing membership.

Mrs Meier ended her address by mentioning the words on the edge of the 5 Sfr coin, "Deus Providebit", and suggested that this was a fitting motto for the Society and its future.

Mr Caratsch then expressed his pleasure at the co-operation between the Embassy and the Society. Mr Simon rose to say that the two previous speakers had robbed him of the things he had planned to say. He, nevertheless, managed to deliver some light hearted banter which was a most fitting way to finish the speeches.

P.M.B.