

Committee of presidents of our colony

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COMMITTEE OF PRESIDENTS OF OUR COLONY.

As already mentioned in the last issue of the *Swiss Observer*, a central committee of Presidents of the Swiss Societies in London has been formed by decision of a Presidents' meeting, held on June 21st, at the Swiss Legation. The initiative for this important step was taken by Dr. H. W. Egli, President of the London Group of the N.S.H., with the warm support of our Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, who offered the participants a cocktail before the meeting and took an active part at the ensuing deliberations.

In the letter of invitation to the meeting Dr. Egli enumerated two problems requiring urgent attention of the Colony: that of ensuring a closer and constant co-operation amongst our societies and that of the thousands of young Swiss who have come to England since the end of the war. The invitation was issued to the Presidents of all societies and other organisations of the London Colony, including also the three pastors. Despite the relatively short notice of five days the meeting was fully attended with the exception of the Presidents of two of the smaller organisations and Pastor Blum, who were unable to be present and fully excused either because of important previous engagements or due to absence from London.

By unanimous approval M. de Cintra, President of the City Swiss Club, presided the meeting with great skill, tact and firmness. It was in no small measure due to him that the important questions at issue could be dealt with so successfully in such a short time. Dr. Egli's main proposition that the time for the formation of a *permanent presidents' council or committee* had come, following similar developments in the Swiss colonies of France, Italy and Holland, met with a ready response from all sides. There was no need for any lengthy explanations or special reasons being given.

It seemed as though the Colony had been waiting for someone to take this initiative which, indeed, was already foreshadowed by the proposals for a comprehensive Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, sponsored by most societies in the Colony. The Chairman invited the participants one by one round the table to comment on the proposition. One after another pronounced his sympathy and agreement with the suggestion, only one or two took up a neutral attitude, no one opposed. Thus the decision to constitute a permanent Presidents' Committee was arrived at unanimously with only one friendly abstention. It is, of course, intended to invite also the Presidents of Societies outside London to join the Presidents' Council.

A committee of five was charged with the task to elaborate the necessary rules for the functioning and tasks of the Presidents' Council, to be submitted at the next presidents' meeting. But the new central organ of co-operation and co-ordination can be regarded as already existing. This is indeed a great step forward which may be the more welcomed because it has come about so smoothly and with evident good will on all sides.

The second agenda was also discussed in the same friendly spirit although no final answers could, according to the nature of the matter, be arrived at. Dr. Egli explained that the efforts of the churches, the Swiss Club "Schweizerbund" and the N.S.H. alone to provide suitable meeting places for the *four thousand*

young Swiss in London, mostly girls but also many young men, for social and spiritual purposes, advice and help in difficulties, were not enough to meet the case. This was one more urgent reason for persuing the possibilities of establishing a *Maison Suisse*, a social centre of the Colony at large, more energetically than hitherto. But in the meantime a more satisfactory or adequate temporary solution must be found. Dr. Egli appealed to all Presidents and Societies to join in the efforts to solve this problem. The meeting expressed not only full appreciation of the urgency of the situation, but the discussion led to some tangible results, while a general understanding was arrived at that more positive help would be forthcoming should it be proved necessary.

One particularly fruitful avenue of possibilities was opened up by the appointment of a small committee of four to study all aspects of the problem and especially to go into the facilities offered by the Y.W.C.A. and the Y.M.C.A. The Presidents were reminded that some twelve years ago a Swiss Parlour was opened at the headquarters of the Y.W.C.A. in Great Russell Street with the help of a fund of £1,000 under the patronage of Madame Paravicini. The very varied facilities available to the young of all nationalities in these two institutions have not been sufficiently known hitherto. It may very well turn out that in the re-discovery and suitable publicising of these facilities lies a large part of the solution of the problem of the young Swiss.

The indication in some reports in the Swiss press that a solution of the problem of the young Swiss in London may be sought in connection with the Union Helvetia building off Shaftesbury Avenue was unauthorised, premature and misleading.

The very active interest Minister de Torrenté is taking in these and other questions of the Swiss Colony offers ground for special satisfaction and hope that the proposals at present before the Colony for a fuller co-operation in every field may, under his benevolent patronage, prosper and yield rich fruit in the best interest of the Colony and Switzerland.

Helveticus.

MORE INTERESTING NEWS IN A ROUND-ABOUT WAY.

In the *Daily Telegraph* of the 15th July, 1948, in the column of the "Court Circular" appeared the following:—

"The Swiss Mercantile Society gave a dinner party last night at the Trocadero Restaurant in honour of the Swiss Minister, M. H. de Torrenté. Mr. Meier, President of the Society, was in the Chair."

Is it perhaps possible that at the recent meeting of Presidents of Swiss Societies in London it was resolved that, in order to establish better co-ordination, Members of the various Swiss Societies should look up the column of the Court Circular of Daily papers and not our Official Organ, "*The Swiss Observer*," nor expect any "Members Circulars" informing us of Forthcoming Events?

H.A.