

Editor's postbag

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EDITOR'S POSTBAG.

COMITE DE LA FETE SUISSE

A. Stauffer, Esq.,
Editor,
Swiss Observer,
London.

June 30th, 1954.

Dear Mr. Stauffer,

Our Committee met yesterday to review the last Fête and the Members have entrusted me with the very pleasant task of expressing to the Publishers and the popular Editor of the "Swiss Observer" their very sincere thanks for the way you have supported the Fête and the very fair and cheerful reports you published in your May issue. We very much appreciate this gesture and we are glad to know that for the S.O. "good news is still news".

The Swiss Press, both daily and weekly papers, has been very kind and encouraging and the concluding remark of one writer "On dit que les Suisses à l' Etranger laissent toujours un coin de leur coeur au pays natal; le contraire aussi est vrai, j'en suis certain maintenant" only comes to show that a lot of good is done by such rencontres.

Our attention however has been called to the report in the N.Z.Z. of May 27th which might well lead to misunderstandings and is not fair to the organizers nor to those kind people who come here to give us Happiness. In his article the correspondent states that the Fête suisse has changed in character, a thing not welcome by everybody. "It is now an occasion to offer spectacular displays of "Volksgruppen" from home" and complains that local talents are thus relegated, disposing of the homely atmosphere it created. It states further that I, as President, rather exaggerate when it comes to receive these Groups, adding: "He engaged this year not only the Chanson de Lausanne for the third time.....but also a "Bauernkapelle from Vevey".

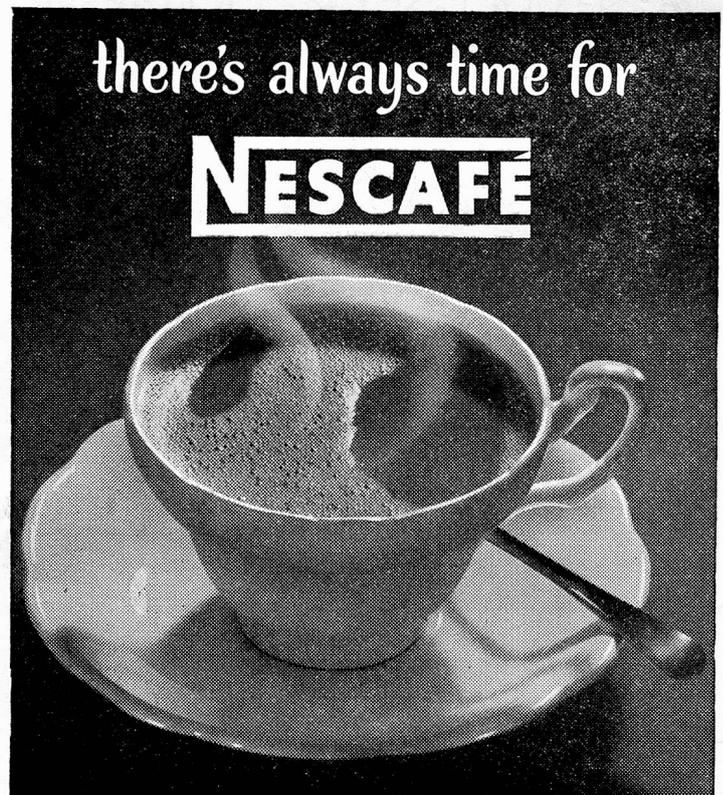
At a meeting of the General Committee many months back at which the writer of the article was present the whole position was reviewed and the problems clearly put before the Members. The replies of 3 or 4 Groups who might have come and which had been approached by various Members of the Committee had been received. We were certainly worried to find that none could fill the Bill, either that the date was not suitable or that the "Finances" were the great obstacle. It was in these circumstances that the suggestion was made to ask again the ever pleasant and successful Chanson de Lausanne. I, as a Vaudois, almost objected and stated clearly that if this was done no doubt unfair criticism would follow and the accusation made that we favoured the Romands.

This was dismissed by the Members and particularly those who are not Welsche, showed themselves—in a very nice spirit—the partisans of inviting the Chanson if they could come. It was by a unanimous decision of the Committee that I was entrusted with the task of approaching them, and also of finding the means for such a journey. The Musique du Folly was invited because for the last three years they have worked with the Chanson and also as a compliment to the coming Fête des Vignerons which, as you know,

takes place only every 35 years or so. That also was agreed by the Committee.

We feel that although we have never given any hint as to how we work a few facts should be known. The difficulty of obtaining worthy Performers is very great because of the cost involved. We have of course various offers but it is always on the condition that all Expenses are paid, indeed some Groups suggested a "reduced Fee" of £100 to perform. It should be known that as far as the Chanson is concerned all Members not only take a week's holiday for this purpose, give their services entirely free of charge, including their Director Frank Guibat, but they go even further. Each one of them has paid Frs. 175.—from his or her own pocket. Many are married couples and this weighs heavily on the budget of families of ordinary workers or employees amongst whom the Members of the Chanson are recruited. The same did apply to the Members of the Folly. And these good, smiling and ordinary people did all this just to give all of us the pleasure we had.

We have never appealed to the London Colony for Funds and yet we are entrusted with the organization of the greatest manifestation with long and proud traditions. It was my task therefore to move heaven and earth to obtain the participation of our people at home. It was far from easy because in the end the sum to be obtained ran into several hundreds of pounds which were, I must say, given with a very nice gesture by the town of Lausanne and the State of Vaud. This could only be done by organizing something which went a little beyond the scope of the



ANOTHER OF NESTLÉ'S GOOD THINGS

Fête suisse, hence the visit to Manchester where the Swiss Colony were splendid; there they opened their own homes to receive our Friends and there also a lot of good was done for Swiss prestige through the official concert and reception, the 30 minutes on the B.B.C. (for which the Chanson forfeited their fee) not speaking of the joy given to a Colony which has not been very spoiled in the past. These are the facts and it must be admitted that the visit of our friends from Lausanne, even if it was the third one or because it was the third, should particularly be admired knowing what it costs each Member.

We state all this because we feel it only right that the truth should be known. We welcome suggestions, we accept gladly constructive and fair criticism because our endeavour is to maintain a proud tradition, yet improving all the time if we can. We have year after year to try and fill Central Hall with its 2,500 seats. This can *not* be done, as much as we would like it, (our task would be so much easier!) by only using local talents which are getting fewer. We have to think of the 1st of August Manifestation and already as a gesture of friendliness we have altered our date from June to April to avoid clashing of too near dates. This year through the most regretted death of Monsieur De Maria, to whom I paid a well earned high tribute at the Fête Suisse, our Friends from the Ticino could not sing. We pressed them very hard but they explained their difficulties and we had to accept it.

The Comité de la Fête suisse does a great job but it does it as a very happy team of men and women

who give a great deal of time, of their own efforts and even some of their money with no other aim but to bring happiness to hundreds of Swiss, many of them elderly, who cannot afford a holiday in Switzerland, to enhance the prestige of Switzerland and its culture, to make young people of the second generation feel proud of their parents Land, to touch also the hearts and perhaps the consciences of these young Swiss who are here for only a short while and who realize—perhaps for the first time—what a great Heritage ours is and who feel like this young man who wrote to us “Je ne savais pas quelle belle chose le patriotisme peut être”. I am sure that few occasions as the closing scenes of the Fête suisse in the last five or six years have moved so many people, you and I saw many tears in the eyes of our compatriots.

May I just add that the Committee of the Tir Fédéral have been particularly happy to receive gifts from London. In spite of the appeal by the Presidents Assembly not a single contribution came but beside the silver casket offered by the Confrérie vaudoise the traditional most wonderful gift offered by the Swiss Rifle Club created a great impression not only in Lausanne but before that at the Swiss Customs where at least three Officers decided there and then to compete! The charming smiles of the Ladies of the Chanson de Lausanne who took these gifts with them ensured a...duty free entry.

“Il y a plus de plaisir à donner qu'à recevoir!”

Yours very truly,

Alfred Renou.

Président du Comité de la Fête suisse.



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