

Hedy's corner

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want to say a big "thank you" for our unforgettable sojourn in New Zealand. A big "thank you" goes to Taranaki Swiss Social Club and its president Len Chamberlain for the friendly words of welcome at the parties to which we were invited as guests. Also a big "thank you" for the friendly hours which we enjoyed by the shorter or longer hours with other Swiss people in New Zealand.

We heartily want to reciprocate to all who ever come to Switzerland and visit us.

Margaret, Arnold and Irene Zimmerman.

Christchurch Swiss Club

WINE AND CHEESE EVENING

The stage was set for a wonderful evening and that is what it turned out to be. As one entered the room it was like stepping into another world. Candles everywhere. White ones on the long tables, and bright red ones on the table set, not just with cheese, but with little bits and pieces to nibble. It was a warm evening, so the french doors out to the river where opened and the slight breeze caught the flames of the candles and long shadows wavered across the walls. The record-player was gradually turned up and the dancing began and went on and on . . . Towards the end of the evening, as the wine was taking its course through one's bloodstream, dancing partners were mixed!!

Thanks to the people who helped make the evening so much fun. Special thanks to Mrs Moser, without whose blistered hands we would have had no cheese to taste! —J.F.

HEDY'S CORNER

The following article, which will be presented in two instalments, has specially been written for "Hedy's Corner" by Dr Ruth Speiser, barrister and solicitor, of Basel, Switzerland.

NATIONAL SERVICE FOR SWISS WOMEN ?

Our federal constitution of 1874 guarantees the cantons their territory; to the citizens privileges and freedoms, and independence of the Fatherland. These are not abstract assurances; they are reinforced by the territorial defence, this being the duty of the army. It is well known that Switzerland has no standing army but a militia system which rests on the compulsory military service of all citizens. ("Each Swiss is liable for military Service".) The territorial defence is thus the duty of **all** citizens, i.e. all male citizens. Every fit 20-year-old absolves a training course for recruits for the duration of 17 weeks and has to present himself for a great number of years for further annual military training. With a view that Switzerland is committed to a state of neutrality, an army for defence was adequate until recently. But since the

second world war, when rapid development of airborne and atomic weapons have become evident, the situation has changed radically: it is now not purely a matter of **territorial protection** but equally so requires the protection of the civilian population.

One has coined the words "total territorial defence". In 1962 the Swiss people approved of a law which decrees comprehensive civilian protection. It was realised at the time that the Swiss women, being without voting rights at that stage, could not be made to absolve a compulsory course of training for civilian protection. It was tried to engage the women on a voluntary basis but this did not get the hoped-for response. In 1971 women's vote on federal level has become a fact. Since then the Swiss women have started to recognise that there is a relationship in our democracy between the Right to Vote and a personal involvement as a service to the Fatherland. Discussions stemming from this realisation have now started and are held everywhere. From all sides there come arguments 'for' and 'against'.

The emphasis is on the antithesis: voluntary as against conscriptive service. After the totally unsatisfactory experiences when recruiting volunteers for civil protection and auxiliary military women's service as well as for agricultural service, one has to disregard above solution although, obviously, voluntarily given service tends to produce an elite corps, possessing the will and dedication for such service.

On the other hand there exist decisive considerations for compulsory service. It is a proven fact that disciplined devotion toward a mutual task, as exists in the Swiss army, is of great value to the young. There is great educational potential when youth of equal age from all social strata, from widely differing educational levels and from a variety of localities are living together as a unit — an advantage which our male recruits treasure greatly. Especially today, when so many young people complain of isolation and attempt to find new ways of communal life, such collective service can only be of benefit.

As indicated above, national service for women is visualised as co-ordinated within a frame of "total defence". It is however not to be military but purely civilian and to be organised quite separate from the army. On the other hand it would be quite permissible for women to apply for the army and thus be under the jurisdiction of the federal military department; this would automatically free them from national service.

(To be concluded in the May issue.)

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