

Report on the "Soirée parlementaire"

Autor(en): **Latt, A.**

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REPORT ON THE 'SOIREE PARLEMENTAIRE' of Wednesday, 7th December, 1921.

To the President of the London Group of the N.S.H.

Dear Mr. Baer,—The meeting of the 7th inst. once more illustrated the advantages of a more practical and more visible activity of the S.S.E. This first appearance in public and before the authorities has done a lot to make our aims more popular among the politicians. Representatives of all the national parties were present—in very small numbers; it is true, but of the best of qualities.

The President of the C.S.E., Redakteur SCHUERCH (of the "Bund") welcomed the visitors, and then read out about 20 telegrams from foreign groups of the N.S.H., including London. They were all to one tune: good wishes for the success of the evening, for the future activities of the "groupe parlementaire," and patriotic greetings.

Monsieur DE TRAZ then read out a short account of the activities of the S.S.E.

Dr. NADIG's (Milan) eloquent plea for the Swiss schools abroad was the most direct move towards one of the objects in view, the subsidy of 10,000 frs. It ought to be definitely secured.

Professor PAILLARD of Athens gave a lively picture of the activities (mostly social) of a small Group, and of Swiss influence in the Hellenic Kingdom.

YOUR REPRESENTATIVE spoke of the origin of the London Group, its organisation, its sub-committees and their achievements (lectures, discussions, visitors, press, informations, Swiss propaganda, publications, lecturing tours, universities, entraide, art exhibition, free Rhine propaganda, foundation of new Groups). I concluded with an appeal to the authorities to help us in the sense of the proposals which the C.S.E. would, no doubt, put before them.

Mr. MOTTA said he felt rather humble in front of so much ardent patriotism which he knew was alive in our colonies. They were thinking of the country much more passionately than those at home. The country had so far almost completely neglected its exiles; it was high time to alter this state of affairs. The country owed a great debt of gratitude to its colonies for their disinterested efforts.

Turning to Dr. Nadig, he said the Milan Colony had well merited for Switzerland on account of its perseverance in working for Italo-Swiss friendship. Indeed, there was no nobler example of what a single man could do to make his country loved and honoured abroad than the work of Ulrico Hoeppli. He had, for instance, done more for the glory of the Divine Poet than any of Dante's own countrymen. We were all proud of Hoeppli, and he knew there were many more like him among the Swiss abroad.

Messrs. Rickli and Moser, he continued, had brought him news from Athens. He was glad to say the efforts of the Group had been crowned with success; they would now get a Consul de carrière. It was one of the tasks of the colonies to enlighten us on foreign countries and to tell us at home how the Swiss interests could best be served there.

Turning to our representative, he said: "*Quant à l'effort de Londres, Messieurs, il est tout simplement admirable. Dites au groupe, dites à toutes nos colonies, le respect et la reconnaissance que le Conseil Fédéral et le pays sentent pour eux et assurez-les de notre sincère sollicitude à l'avenir.*"

Ständerat WERTSTEIN, who had brought in the motion in favour of a subsidy last year, said how surprised he was to have struck on such a hornets' nest as it proved for him.

He, the most scrupulous defender of the Constitution, was accused of a breach of that fundamental law. He failed because the understanding was not general enough. This was a hint to the C.S.E. to make their aims more generally known throughout the country. He well remembered the loyalty of the Swiss abroad in 1914. They were pioneers of economic and intellectual Switzerland. The colonies were living links with the outer world, guarantees of friendship and peace.

Nationalrat BURREN, speaking for the Bernese Government, said he had much to do with working people returning from abroad, brave men who had often been cruelly thrown about. They all spoke highly of the work of *Swiss benevolent societies* all over the world. As Bernese Armen-direktor he wished to thank them all from the bottom of his heart. Feeling that he ought to do something in return, he had taken poor Auslandschweizer children into his house, and he knew no higher pleasure than to make them love the country of their fathers. In conclusion he begged to thank the N.S.H. for so valiantly strengthening the old Swiss spirit in the first, the second, the third, and the fourth Switzerland.

President Schürch regretted the absence of Nationalrat Meyer ("Neue Zürcher Zeitung") who was to have proposed the foundation of the Groupe Parlementaire. He did not wish to exert any pressure, but hoped the groupment would be formed all the same on Dr. Meyer's return from Paris, where he represented Switzerland at the conference of the Latin Monetary Union.

When the meeting broke up, Mr. Motta came straight up to me and said he wished to congratulate me on the successes of the Group, which he knew was the working model for the rest. He had long been aware of its excellent spirit. Then he inquired about the London Swiss Colony and especially about its Ticinese element. I said that abroad as at home the Ticinesi were the best of us all. He smiled and said: "*Veillez transmettre à la Colonie suisse de Londres mes hommages respectueux et une pensée tout spécialement affectueuse aux Tessinois de Londres.*"

Several other persons came to shake hands and to ask questions about the London Group and its President (Federal Councillor Chuard, Dr. Benziger, Ministers Junod and Dinickert, Direktor Schnyder von Wartensee). Nationalrat Lohner told me he thought the Canton of Berne would willingly put at the disposal of the colonies the school books, maps and other material supplied to Bernese public schools. He also thinks the University of Berne might avail itself of the offer of exchange of professors with Cambridge. He had read my letters on this subject.

Mr. Micheli, Con. Nat., said he was probably going to England next spring. I seconded Dr. Lang's proposition to secure him for a lecture at the London Group.

With all good wishes for Christmas and New Year to all the members of the Council,

I remain, dear Mr. Baer,

Yours very sincerely,

Zurich, 11th December, 1921.

A. LATT.

VERITABLES
LECKERLIS DE BALE (Singer)
 Gros et Détail.
C. A. BLANCHET, 168, Regent Street, W.1