

Nouvelle société helvétique : thirtieth annual general meeting

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Sir WILLIAM BEVERIDGE (Lib.) said there were three arguments in favour of the transferable vote. It would:

Foster oppositions, without which one-party government was not British and was not good government.

Increase the power and interest of the voter.
Improve the quality of the candidates.

Mr. KENNETH LINDSAY (Ind. Nat.) suggested a local option on this matter, and demanded, 'Are we to be completely regimented in this country?'

The Solicitor-General, Sir DAVID MAXWELL FYFE, replying to these points, said that there was an ever-increasing area of local government into which party was coming more and more strongly.

He was entirely unconvinced by the argument that they were going to get better candidates and that those candidates were going to have a better chance of getting in if they had proportional representation.

He deprecated the suggestion that party loyalty and party work were something derogatory in the equipment of the politician, national or local. In his view the main requirements were a burning interest in politics and an ability to work if necessary 18 hours a day."

"If a burning interest in politics is one of the main requirements," we certainly believe that P.R. will formulate and ascertain the political alignment in any electoral community, but will not produce "an ability to work if necessary 18 hours a day."



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NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE.

Thirtieth Annual General Meeting.

The Nouvelle Société Helvétique (London Group) held their thirtieth Annual General Meeting, on Saturday, January 20th, at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

In view of the fact, that the Society had reached the age of thirty, the Council decided to celebrate this event by a Luncheon party to which a number of guests were invited.

Ten years ago, on the occasion of the Society's twentieth anniversary, I wrote in this paper "The twentieth anniversary is not only an eventful happening in a man or woman's life, but equally so with a Society. The twentieth year is often a critical age, especially with young people; it is then that they start to become 'saucy' and tell their parents that they must now take a back seat, in every domain barring 'forking out' with the money. I hope the young 'N.S.H. Lady' will not step from the path of maidenly virtue, which she has trodden during the last twenty years."

Well I am glad to say, that at the age of thirty, the now not so young "Lady" has kept an unblemished record, she is still very respectable, yet full of youthful vigour.

Approximately eighty members and guests assembled for the birthday Luncheon. The seat of honour was occupied by the Swiss Minister, who was accompanied by Madame Ruegger.

Mr. A. F. Suter, President of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, was heartily cheered on rising from his "Fauteuil Présidentiel"; and I am glad to report that in spite of the tragic ordeal which he had experienced twelve months ago, he looked fit and well and as energetic as of old.

In extending a hearty welcome to Monsieur and Madame Ruegger, he said:

"We look to you, Monsieur le Ministre, for direction, for sympathy and for inspiration, the short months that you have been in our midst have shown us clearly that we shall not look in vain for your support and active co-operation; besides, we had every reason to expect these favours from you since the Secrétariat Suisses Etranger in Berne, on the occasion of their 25th anniversary in August of last year cabled to the London Group as follows: "Le S.S.E. se réjouit de l'appui amical et éclairé que la N.S.H. trouvera auprès du Ministre Ruegger qui fut partout le soutien de nos efforts."

An equally cordial welcome was extended to the Minister's collaborators present, namely, Messieurs Girardet, de Rham and de Graffenried and the following Guests: Mr. A. Bon, President City Swiss Club, Mr. J. Boos, President Swiss Mercantile Society, Mr. C. Campart, President Secours Mutuels, Mr. J. Ellenberger, President Swiss Club (Schweizerbund), Mr. F. G. Sommer, President Swiss Choral Society, Mr. E. P. Dick, Conductor Swiss Orchestral Society, Mr. Streit, President Swiss Philatelic Society, Mme. Bolla, President Rutli's Ladies' Club, Mr. Berti, Unione Ticinese, Mr. Th. Ritter, Swiss Benevolent Society, Pasteur M. Pradervand, Father A. Lanfranchi, Mr. A. Stauffer and Mr. A. Bossert. Colonel de Watteville, Delegate of the International Red Cross, who was invited as a guest was unfortunately prevented from attending.

Amidst great applause the President then announced that the Swiss Minister wished to address the company, he said:—

I am most grateful for this occasion to establish a direct contact, which I have been looking forward to since months, not only with the individual members of the London branch of the N.S.H. — many of whom I and my wife had already the pleasure to meet — but with the association as a whole. You very kindly had asked me to join you, already two months ago, in November. Circumstances which were not to be gainsaid had prevented me, then, from being back from our country, as I had anticipated and hoped. All the more do I appreciate this welcome opportunity, afforded me by your annual luncheon, of feeling and probing — and enjoying — the atmosphere of the London Swiss Helvetic Society.

Amongst the groups and associations formed in the midst of our Swiss Colonies abroad — and chiefly of the larger and time-honoured Colonies, like the Swiss community in the capital of the British Empire — the local branch of the "Nouvelle Société Helvétique" has, of course, a task of its own to fulfil. A task of special import, as laid down in the statutes of the splendid Central Organisation which is so efficiently working and serving in our own country, but a task also which must be lived up to, month by month, in a spirit which is deeply rooted in our national tradition.

In normal and peaceful times, your association has, more than any other Swiss Societies, one great privilege. That of being able to drain, through the

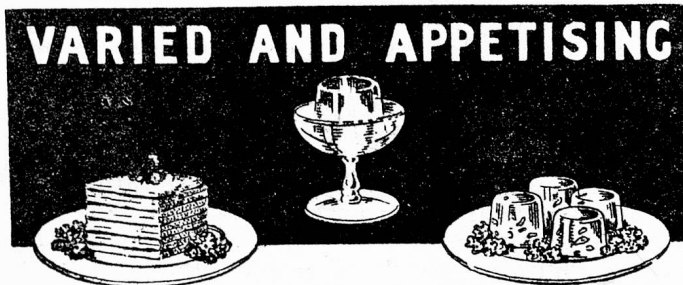
"Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger", on the live resources of our country. Lecturers coming from Switzerland are encouraged to speak to our colonies abroad — and chiefly through the cooperation of the local branches of the N.S.H. on subjects of cultural, scientific and artistic interest, as well as of national and political importance. And I remember, as no doubt some of you remember too, the steady and comforting flow of expression of Swiss thoughts and outlooks which came from our small, but great motherland, to capitals and other cities abroad, strengthening the back-bone of our colonies and helping to maintain — which is so vital — among our young people born and reared abroad, the fundamental loyalties to their own country. We shall I trust and hope, see these times again and in a near future. The Swiss Legation in Great Britain and I personally will, I need hardly assure you, do all that can be done in order to re-establish this current of thought and of achievement by the means of Swiss lectures and, when the day comes, of Swiss exhibitions, as we likewise always welcome similar initiatives coming from the great country which offers us its hospitality and which may tend to bring nearer to our people the creative thoughts and efforts of Great-Britain.

But, in the meantime, during all these hard years of pressure and endeavour we have passed, communications were more and more scarce and many of our colonies abroad had to become spiritually self-supporting. In one foreign country at least, which harbours a large Swiss Colony, the "Echo Suisse", journal of the "Nouvelle Société Helvétique" was the only available means for our compatriots of having any news about the developments in our country.

The freedom of the press, so happily maintained in England, never brought our own colony to such straightened circumstances. However, the forced interruption of communications with our land-locked country has, in fact, also made your association almost entirely self-supporting during this difficult period. As a matter of fact, our London colony had to form, to use a familiar expression, a small "réduit national" of its own. All the more, I should like to thank you for having carried on, undauntedly and steadily. And I should like to express a word of special thanks to M. Gottfried Keller for having, in his regular talks on "current events" given the members of your association the benefit of his always so keen outlook, of his inside information and, above all, of his patriotic thoughts.

The splendid motto of the "Nouvelle Société Helvétique" throughout the world is couched in the words "Pro Helvetica Securitate at Dignitate". Not security only — though this security sought with trust in international agreements, rests mainly on the strength of our people in arms; but also dignity. The conception of the dignity of the citizen who, perhaps in the small and truly democratic state only, can give the full measure of his duties towards the community and reap also to the full the benefits of his responsible action. Our citizens abroad, inspired by this motto, must and can be trustworthy and loyal messengers of their country.

Our to-days gathering brings to my mind the last General meeting, organised by the N.S.H., which



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I was able to attend with my wife. This memorable Journée des Suisses à l'étranger was held in Neuchâtel in 1942. Called upon to address the delegates of those groups of Swiss citizens abroad which, then, could reach our motherland, I remember having tried to enlarge upon the constant elements of Swiss policy, or rather of the action of Switzerland abroad. Those words were said in a moment of greater danger for our country than, fortunately is the case to-day.

The constant elements guiding our people's life are the active neutrality of the country, the action of charity, in the largest sense of the word and which can be exercised only on the basis of our perennial neutrality and finally the loyalty of the Swiss people towards their history and the heritage of their ancestors.

In this loyalty towards the country Swiss citizens abroad will always find not only the necessary inspiration for acting in the midst of a world in evolution, but also the interior force which must strengthen, day by day, their cherished convictions.

Many of you may remember, from the days of our National Exhibition in Zurich, one most striking feature: the "Höheweg". It is along the lines of this "Höheweg" that the life of Swiss citizens abroad should progress. That the London Group of the "N.S.H." may, in future, take its due share of responsibility and of success along these same lines, this is one of our fervent hopes, a hope which is harboured especially by the Swiss Legation in Great Britain.

The oration of Monsieur Ruegger was heartily cheered.

Mr. A. Bon, President of the City Swiss Club, on behalf of the guests, expressed his thanks for the invitation, congratulating the Society on having reached their 30th Anniversary, and the President for having resumed his duties. He paid a touching tribute to the late Mrs. Suter, who, for many years had graced the meetings with her presence.

Madame Ruegger was then presented with a beautiful bouquet of flowers in the Swiss national colours.

The unofficial part thus came to its close, and after a short interval the General Meeting was declared open. Mr. C. Campart, Hon. Secretary of the Society read out the minutes of the last Annual Meeting, which was unanimously agreed to. This was followed by the Presidential Annual Report, in which Mr. Suter made a concise and interesting resumé of the activities and aims of the Society (see report in this number), which was acknowledged with thanks to the President.

Mr. W. Renz, the Hon. Treasurer explained in a most efficient manner, the balance sheet, which shows that the financial status of the Society is very satisfactory.

Before the elections for a new Council took place, Mr. Suter, asked Mr. A. Bon to take the Chair *pro temp.* In doing so Mr. Bon thanked the outgoing members for their work rendered during the last financial year and announced that all the members agreed to carry on for another year. He also complimented Mr. Gottfried Keller on his lectures given throughout the last year. Whilst awaiting the result of the elections the President *pro temp.* informed the meeting that the 1st of August committee is anxious to know the opinion of the Society with regard to

holding this year again the usual patriotic celebration. After a short discussion it was decided that the N.S.H. is in favour of such a celebration to be held on the Sunday, before the 1st of August. (July 29th.)

Mr. Suter expounded his views as to the future activity of the Society. He was followed by the Swiss Minister who paid a tribute to the President, for his untiring work, to the Secretary, Mr. Campart, for the masterful and amusing way in which he writes the minutes and to Mr. Renz for the efficient way in which the accounts are kept, wishing the Society a prosperous future.

The results of the elections were then announced, according to which the following members were elected:

Messrs. E. J. Bachofen, C. A. Baumann, Wm. Beckmann, C. Campart, W. Gamper, G. Keller, W. Renz, Th. Ritter, M. Rothlisberger, W. Schedler, Wm. B. Sigerist, A. F. Suter, J. Weber, W. C. Weilenmann, Mlle. G. Zingg.

Auditors: J. Weber, C. A. Baumann.

Mr. A. F. Suter then resumed the Chair amidst acclamation.

He informed the Meeting that the following cable was received by the S.S.E. from Berne:

"Latt et Secrétariat envoient voeux occasion Assemblée Générale et félicitations pour activité accomplie. Souhaite reprise prochain contact plus étroit. Briod."

to which the following reply was sent:

"London Group assembled General Meeting Dorchester Hotel with Minister and Madame Ruegger guests of honour reciprocate most heartily your good wishes. Au revoir this year our hope. Suter."

It was decided that the annual subscription, in view of the satisfactory financial position of the Society should remain as hitherto 10/- per annum. A collection made for the Securities Fund reached the sum of nearly £20.

The Meeting then was declared as closed. Taking advantage of the privilege as reporter, I heartily congratulate the Society on the way this Meeting was conducted, wishing the Society every success in their patriotic endeavours.

Tea was then served, during which an entertainment by some of the members was given, and before leaving the Dorchester Hotel, the President addressed the gathering as follows:

"The time has come for us to disperse and reach our homes before dark sets in. It has been a very happy afternoon for all of us; this intimate contact has given us new courage, new hope and zest to carry on our work, knowing that it has the sympathy and approval of our exalted guests, our friends and our members. As the war progresses and draws towards the end, our tasks are not becoming lighter, rather the reverse, together with the worries about the health and welfare of our own immediate circles. But what will lighten our burden is the duty of sticking together; helping each other, retaining faith and hope and charity, or, as it is expressed in the watchword of the old Swiss regiments:—Honneur et Fidélité.

I thank our guests for their presence, and our artists for their fine performances, and we will close the proceedings by singing our National Anthem."

ST.