

Presentation of 100 sets of furniture as a gift from the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

Autor(en): [s.n.]

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - (1946)

Heft 1049

PDF erstellt am: **12.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689563>

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**PRESENTATION OF 100 SETS OF FURNITURE
AS A GIFT FROM THE
SWISS COLONY IN GREAT BRITAIN.**

In one of the recent numbers of the "Swiss Observer" we informed our readers, that the Swiss Colony, as a contribution towards the efforts to rehabilitate British families, who have severely suffered through the war, had offered a gift of 100 suites of furniture.

These were officially handed over to the Women's Voluntary Service, who had been asked by the Ministry of Health to distribute them, at a ceremony which took place on Friday, May 31st, 1946, at the Ministry of Health, Whitehall, S.W.1.

In the absence, caused through illness, of the Rt. Hon. Aneurin Bevan, H.M. Minister of Health, Alderman Charles Key, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health, took the Chair.

Amongst the numerous audience were the Swiss Minister, accompanied by Madame Ruegger, Lady Hillingdon, Vice-Chairman, W.V.S., Dame Beryl Oliver, British Red Cross, Emergency Help Committee, Mrs. Dunbar, Mrs. Houghton, Mrs. Murphy, Miss Halpin, W.V.S. Headquarters, Lord Latham, Leader of the L.C.C., Mr. Frank Rye, Deputy Chairman, L.C.C., Mr. T. G. Randall, as well as a number of Mayors and Town Clerks from the several Metropolitan Boroughs.

From the Swiss Legation and the Swiss Colony were present: Monsieur Escher, Monsieur Aubaret, Monsieur Rappard, Monsieur Caillat, Mr. Bon, Colonel de Watteville, Repres. International Red Cross Committee, Mr. Steiner, Mr. Boos, Mr. F. G. Sommer, Mr. G. E. Suter, Mr. Campart, Mr. Oboussier, Pasteur Pradervand, Pastor Blum, Father Lanfranchi, Dr. Egli, Dr. Kessler, Mr. Schutz, Mr. Stauffer, Mr. Menesier, Mr. Marfurt, etc., etc.

The Chairman, Mr. Charles Key, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health, in addressing the gathering expressed his regrets for the unavoidable absence of Mr. Aneurin Bevan. In his name, and also on behalf of the Metropolitan Boroughs, he thanked the Swiss Minister for this most generous gift which he said was deeply appreciated as a token of fellowship between the two countries.

The speaker also mentioned the further contributions which will be forthcoming by our country, such as another 550 sets of furniture, the invitation of some hundreds of English children, ex-Service men and students suffering from tuberculosis, saying that such proofs of friendship will never be forgotten by his countrymen.

Mr. Key then called on the Swiss Minister, Mon-

sieur Paul Ruegger, who addressed the company as follows:

Let me, first of all, tell you, quite simply but most sincerely, how deeply appreciative I am of the very kind words of Alderman Key, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health, and, particularly, of the so friendly feelings towards my country which his words conveyed to us. I am sure that all my compatriots present at this gathering will remember gratefully what he has said with such true and most kindly understanding of Switzerland's endeavours.

The Swiss Legation in Great Britain and myself, as well as the various associations of Swiss in the United Kingdom were extremely happy to hear that the modest offering made on behalf of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain has been found acceptable by the Ministry of Health. And I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to ask Mr. Key to convey also to the Minister, the Rt. Hon. Aneurin Bevan, my sincere thanks for his so valuable advice and personal counsel in helping to realise an earnest desire of the Swiss communities in this great country.

The Swiss in Great Britain have shared, side by side with their English friends, the sorrows and troubles of war-time. Their admiration for the quiet courage, the undaunted steadfastness of the English people, which was always deeply anchored amidst our own people, has become, if possible, yet more deeply rooted during the trials of the last war.

It was only too natural, therefore, that the wish sprang up to give a tangible, outward form to their gratitude, and to do this in a way which might, we hoped, prove helpful — even though on a very slight scale — in the efforts of all towards the solution of the housing problem.

The hundred sets of furniture which have been offered on behalf of the Swiss Colony and which you were good enough to accept, are extremely simple and, I am afraid to say, more than in keeping with the austerity of the times. They have been devised, by the sheer necessity of considering the enormous transportation difficulties yet existing on the Continent, so as to take, ingeniously packed, the smallest space. They may, we hope, nevertheless prove useful to one hundred couples in this country.

And may I, here, say how very grateful we are to that admirable organisation, the Women's Voluntary Services, and to its great and able president and to her so experienced assistants. It is thanks to this organisation, ever closely in touch with the needs of the moment, that immediately and without the slightest delay, the method of distribution of this

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first set of furniture has been so efficiently worked out. Having myself, during some years of the war, had the great privilege of being a Red Cross worker on the International Committee of Geneva, I had the opportunity of witnessing part of the wonderful efforts of the Women's Voluntary Services, and I should like, respectfully, to ask Lady Hillingdon to convey, once again, my sincere gratitude to her president, the Marchioness of Reading.

This small offering on behalf of the Swiss Colony will be followed shortly by another, somewhat larger one, of five-hundred sets of furniture. This latter offering comes from Switzerland herself, or rather from the organisation of the "Don Suisse" which sprung up spontaneously in my country towards the end of the war and which, with the help of our Parliament and the people themselves, readily absorbed about 2% of our national income.

But, as Mr. Key has kindly mentioned, the Swiss people hope to show their feelings of solidarity in other fields and perhaps more usefully. I take it

that the already realised scheme of inviting 250 delicate children to the mountain air of Adelboden during six months will be followed by others. From the childrens Section of the Swiss Red Cross, I have received the suggestion that, during the period of say, one year, about two hundred children and more might be taken over in turn, for periods of two months, to be placed with Swiss families; I venture to hope that, thereby, say one thousand English children might, by and by, be invited, as welcome guests, to my country. May I say, in this connection, how grateful I am to the Rt. Hon. Miss Ellen Wilkinson, Minister of Education, for her unfailing help and wise suggestions in helping to realise what corresponds to the sincere wishes not only of the Swiss organisations of the Red Cross and others, but of all classes of the Swiss people. During recent trips to my country, I was happy to see how spontaneously these feelings spring up everywhere.

As to the help we may have the privilege, in virtue of our climate, to give to the treatment of tubercular diseases, I may mention the decision of the above-named organisation of the "Don Suisse" to offer our hospitality during one year, to one-hundred tubercular invalids. We hope that, thereby, health may be restored to one hundred gallant ex-service men who have made to their country the sacrifice of their physical well-being. Furthermore, we are inviting a score of English students, suffering from tuberculosis, to our "Sanatorium universitaire" at Leysin. In the carrying out of these plans, I am most beholden to the unfailing help of the Rt. Hon. Aneurin Bevan and his able assistants at the Health Ministry.

We full well realise that all these efforts put together are yet on a small scale. And we shall never forget that the efforts of the English people to help others everywhere are proportionally so much greater. All the more do we appreciate your readiness to accept, as a token of our feelings of solidarity, that what we can offer to do. Two feelings are akin, I believe, in your great country and in mine: steadfastness and fundamental loyalties. And, deeply attached as we are to our traditions of liberty and solidarity, we will not forget what the world owes to England.

Madame Ruegger was requested by the Chairman to draw the names from a box, of those who were lucky enough to receive the present.


In conclusion, Lord Latham, Lady Hillingdon, Vice-Chairman, W.V.S., and Dame Beryl Oliver, British Red Cross, expressed their deep gratitude, on behalf of their respective organisations for all the help the Swiss Colony and our country has so generously given.

The simple but impressive ceremony left a deep impression on all those who were privileged to be present, and we feel sure, that the contributions both by the Swiss Colony and by Switzerland have been highly appreciated, and will still further cement the friendship between the two countries. *ST.*

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will, *D.V.*, be published on Friday, July 26th. We regret that owing to shortage of paper several articles have had to be cut and some held over for a future issue, and we wish to apologise to the contributors concerned.

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