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NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE.

Address by Monsieur E. de Graffenried, Counsellor of Legation, on "The Marshall Plan and Switzerland."

More than a hundred members and friends attended the "Open Meeting" of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, at the Vienna Café, Berkeley Arcade, W.1, on Tuesday, October 21st, 1947, to listen to a very interesting talk on "The Marshall Plan and Switzerland." Dr. H. W. Egli, President of the Society, was in the Chair.

The speaker first gave a review of the situation which led to the Marshall proposals, referring in detail to the present economic disruption of Europe. There had been a remarkable start in reconstruction, but the winter 1946/47 with its unprecedented cold, followed by an equally unusual dry summer, brought "a most serious setback as a result of the continued shortage of coal, the increased cost of primary products and the prolonged world shortage of food and other essential commodities" (Paris Report). Thus, Europe was forced to import at great cost considerable quantities of U.S.A. coal, iron and steel, as well as large quantities of wheat and other cereals to cover the considerable deficits even of countries who used to be largely self-supporting. A number of international agencies and conferences had been set up since the end of the war to deal with specific problems and to ensure fair and equitable distribution of commodities in short supply, as well as with the various dollar loans obtained by certain countries under existing international arrangements. This, however, proved insufficient in view of the large additional dependence on imports from overseas, and of the extent of Europe's plight as it gradually emerged. The speaker then related in detail the events following the proposals made by the U.S. Secretary of State, General Marshall, in his speech at Harvard on June 5th, 1947, in which he called upon the Governments of Europe to join in common action to draw up a concerted programme for European economic recovery, mentioning also the attitude taken by various countries, and the ultimate meeting of 16 countries for the "Conference of European Economic Co-operation" which met at Paris from July 12th to September 22nd. The setting up of various Committees to deal with specific questions was then outlined, as well as their method of work and their recommendations in various fields, as embodied in the Paris Report (now available at H.M. Stationery Office) which after ratification by the General Assembly was transmitted to the U.S.A. on September 22nd. Reference was also made to the work of various Study Groups now in progress, in particular with regard to a proposal providing for a wider transferability of European currencies, as well as with plans for an ultimate European Customs Union. Mr. de Graffenried then dealt with the examination taking place at present in the United States, as well as on the problem relating to further American action.

Turning to Switzerland, the speaker then gave a comprehensive picture of Switzerland's attitude towards the Marshall Plan, of the numerous problems it entails for our country, quoting extensively the statement made by Federal Councillor M. Petitpierre before the "Ständerat" on October 7th. Readers are indeed referred to this masterly statement dealing with this important problem in all its aspects. In the course of this *exposé*, the head of Switzerland's foreign affairs

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said: "Nous devons souhaiter ardemment dans l'intérêt de l'Europe qu'un accord satisfaisant puisse être réalisé entre les U.S.A. et les Etats dont l'économie ne pourrait être restauré sans l'aide américaine," and again "Nous sommes convaincus que l'intérêt suisse est conforme à l'intérêt général de l'Europe et qu'il exige l'effort de tous dans la recherche des solutions qui permettront la reconstruction économique du Continent." As to the political consequences, Switzerland could, of course, not be indifferent, the political situation in general no doubt was grave, but M. Petitpierre stressed that any idea of a new war being inevitable, must be opposed as sterile and dangerous. There had been no indication as to any political stipulations, the Marshall offer had not been made to certain countries only, but to all and the door was being kept open for countries absent to-day. M. Petitpierre also referred to the Federal Council's note of reply to the Paris invitation, in which Switzerland's fundamental and permanent principles, neutrality coupled with solidarity, were embodied. Whilst Switzerland knew her obligations as a neutral and would remain faithful to them, he continued "Nous avons aussi conscience de ce qu'aujourd'hui, l'Europe, dont nous sommes une petite partie, ne peut sortir de la misère profonde dans laquelle la guerre l'a fait tomber sans un effort collectif, sans une volonté commune de mettre de l'ordre dans son économie." And so to the practical means: "Les problèmes économiques en face desquels nous sommes placés aujourd'hui ne peuvent pas se résoudre pour nous par l'abstention, mais par la présence et l'action; une action, raisonnable, ordonnée, fondée sur l'expérience plus que sur l'illusion."

The speaker concluded by saying that the Federal Council's policy had met with unanimous approval at home, as well as with a large measure of understanding abroad, which in view of Switzerland's special position, was no easy matter. It was realistic in its whole approach, at the same time giving further proof of Switzerland's wholehearted co-operation in a common attempt to pave the way for the recovery of all. The President, expressed, on behalf of the Meeting, thanks to the speaker for his very able *exposé*. The address was followed by a lively discussion in which a number of members took part and in which a wide range of problems were raised amongst others as to the interdependence with already existing international organisations, the problem of internal recovery in various countries, the possibility of practical steps, problems relating to the shape American aid might take, and on their possible repercussions to our country.