

Editor's postbag

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EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

15, The Drive, Adel,
Leeds 6.

31st October, 1950.

To the Editor,

"Swiss Observer,"

23, Leonard Street, E.C.3.

Dear Sir,

As my name has been mentioned in the correspondence in your last two issues concerning the "Journées des Suisses à l'Étranger," I feel compelled to attempt to draw, from this rather heated exchange of views, some conclusions which may be useful for our future "Landsgemeinde."

(1) Quoting from Dr. Egli's report (S.O. Sept. 29th, page 5653): "The views of the Assembly of Presidents of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom were communicated officially to the Secretariat at Berne and represented at the "Journée" by Dr. Egli." This was, I think, bound to convey the impression that Dr. Egli was expressing the agreed views of all the British organisations whose presidents are members of the "Assembly." This interpretation was accentuated by the Summary in French given by the president of the Lausanne meeting when he said repeatedly: "Le Dr. Egli nous rapporte que *les Suisses d'Angleterre*, etc." It was that unjustified generalisation which, in all fairness to the members of our Yorkshire Club, compelled me to express another view. — When Dr. Egli adds in the same report: "Unfortunately neither Prof. Inebnit nor Mr. Renou had attended the President's meeting or informed themselves of its decisions", I am surprised to find that I was expected to attend a meeting in London when no attempt had been made to discover whether I would be free on that date. May I remind my London friends that to participate at such a meeting I have to travel 200 miles each way. As for the last suggestion that I should have informed myself of the "decisions" of the meeting, in my experience the normal procedure is to send the minutes of the meeting to the members and not to expect them to take individual steps to gather information.

(2) The report, in the Swiss Observer, of the proceedings at Lausanne, where divergent views had been expressed, might have created in your readers' minds a feeling of greater objectivity, had not Dr. Egli been

compelled by circumstances to write it himself. There were other British delegates who might have taken this burden off his shoulders, especially in consideration of his many important activities.

(3) It may prove desirable in the future for our delegation to meet for a few minutes before each session in order to coordinate our various contributions and to share the responsibility of addressing the meeting. In that way, an impression of disunity may be avoided, whilst preserving for each individual the right to express his own views.

(4) Finally, our paper, whilst welcoming constructive criticisms, should never become a means of personal attacks which can only weaken our Colony by leaving a feeling of bitterness and resentment.

We, in the North, in spite of the distance, have good reasons to appreciate what both Dr. Egli and Mr. Renou have done and are doing, in their different ways, to uphold the high reputation of our country. Had they been passive and indifferent like too many of our compatriots, they would not have been exposed to such misunderstandings; and so, one should be very reluctant to pass judgment on any mistake which may have been made. Dr. Egli has paid, in the past, a friendly visit to our Yorkshire Club in Leeds, giving us a very interesting and informative address, and leaving amongst our members a feeling of confidence and gratitude. As for Mr. Renou, his unbounded energy, his resourcefulness and his devotion to our common cause are probably better known to me than to most. I am not likely to forget that, in the tragic days of French liberation, it is largely due to him that so many of our compatriots in internment camps and in prisons, often found encouragement and sometimes freedom. Such memories made it impossible for me to keep out of this correspondence, however reluctant I was to intervene.

I apologise to you for having taken so much of your space, and hope that, having benefitted from this year's experience, we shall in the future, work more effectively for that harmony in diversity for which our country is held in such high esteem.

Yours sincerely,

J. P. INEBNIT.

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(We do not intend to publish any further correspondence in this matter, as there are other channels where this controversy can be, if necessary, followed up. Ed.)

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