

# City Swiss Club

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## CITY SWISS CLUB. AN INTERESTING EVENING.

It was a great pity that so few members — there were only about fifty present — attended the dinner, followed by a talk given by Mr. P. A. Macrory, on the world-wide activities of Messrs. Unilever Ltd., and a film entitled "A Story of Achievement", at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1, on Tuesday, September 13th, 1955.

The small attendance might perhaps be explained by the fact that still a number of members are on holiday, though this should, at a rough guess, not concern more than about thirty to forty. It is, therefore regrettable that a large number of members show such little interest in the activities of the Club. As mentioned previously in one of my reports, the City Swiss Club has — without justification — been termed a "Yass Club" by certain misinformed people; in order to give the lie to this *renommé*, the committee has introduced from time to time lectures and film shows by well-known personalities, in the hope that this would kindle an interest amongst the members who are not interested in occasional cards meetings. These commendable endeavours have unfortunately not been very encouraging. It is indeed a pity, and goes to prove how difficult it is to please everybody — this applies not only to the City Swiss Club, but also to other Swiss Societies in the colony — and it is sincerely hoped that in future members will show a greater interest in the efforts which the respective Societies and Committees are making in order to bring their members in close contact with each other.

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After an excellent dinner, which by now is a special feature and also an attraction at the Club's meetings, the President Mr. Charles Gysin welcomed the guests, amongst them, Monsieur E. Bernath, Swiss Chargé d'Affaires, Monsieur A. Albertini of the Swiss Legation, and Mr. Guy Chipperfield, Chairman of the British Oil & Cake Mills Ltd., and introduced the speaker Mr. P. A. Macrory, of Messrs. Unilever, Ltd. He referred to the untimely passing away of Mr. P. A. Moehr, a former President of the City Swiss Club, and the members present paid a silent tribute to the departed.

Mr. Macrory, who received a very cordial reception from the company, in an easy and witty manner,

introduced his subject by giving a few figures of the gigantic Unilever concern, which comprises over 500 companies, operating in more than 40 countries. He said that the fixed assets in 1954 amounted to £180 million, with a capital employed of £380 million (plus) and a turnover of over £1,400 million. The trading profit in that year was £70 million. He remarked that the pension scheme covers over 100,000 employees.

According to the lecturer amongst the products manufactured by the Unilever companies are:

1. Soap and detergent powers. Toilet preparations (Toothpaste, Shaving Cream, Shampoos, Home Perms, etc.).
2. Margarine and edible fats.
3. Oil milling and ancillary industries. Animal feeding stuffs.
4. Foods (canned fruit and vegetables) (frozen fruit and vegetables). Fish, Ice Cream and Sausages.

The speaker then dealt with the present structure of Unilevers, saying that all manufacturing and selling companies are ultimately owned by two Parent Companies, one British and one Dutch. These two Parent Companies are linked by a series of agreements, namely:

- a. Identical Boards;
- b. Pooling of patents, research and technical skill;
- c. Equivalent dividends on ordinary capital;
- d. Lever Limited owns the companies in U.K. and the British Empire, Lever, N.V. takes the rest. (Sorting out process not yet being complete.)

Mr. Macrory then dealt with the chain of command, saying that Parent Boards delegate powers of day-to-day running to a *special committee*.

About how the present position has been reached, the speaker said it represents the confluence of two great rivers, one British (Lever) one Dutch (Margarine Union). The Dutch river itself is composed of two streams (Van den Bergh's and Jurgens) which had come together only a few years before finally joining up with the British river. The Lever side was primarily interested in soap whilst the Dutch line was principally concerned with margarine, but they were on common ground in their raw materials, namely vegetable oils and fats. Mr. Macrory in his

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talk dealt mainly with Lever side of the business, whilst the Van den Bergh and Jurgens aspect was dealt with in the film subsequently shown. He concluded by giving a few biographical particulars. The firm was founded by William Lever (b. 1851), wholesale grocer, and proved at once successful, so much so that he could have comfortably retired at the early age of 33, instead of doing so he started to produce soap, making two innovations, namely: branded soap (Sunlight) wrapped separately instead of long bars hitherto cut up by grocers, and by intensely advertising his goods.

These innovations were accompanied by quick success, and he started at once to build his own factory at Port Sunlight (plus model village for employees) exporting his goods to foreign countries. When these countries raised tariff walls against soap from England, Lever "jumped the wall" and built factories in these countries. The first one was started at Olten, Switzerland, then followed factories in Canada, U.S.A., Australia, Germany, France, India, etc.

Lever went into Margarine in the first world war at the request of the British Government. In 1917, he bought an estate in the Hebrides, where he started Mac Fisheries in order to help the local fishermen. These fish shops wanted to sell, as a side line, sausages, so he promptly acquired Walls, this concern having found sausages unpopular in summer had already started making ice-cream as a second line.

Just after the war was over, Lever acquired the Niger Company, then ten very difficult years followed, when he merged with "African & Eastern" to form the U.A.C. which in 1954 showed a turnover of £271 million.

Lever died in 1925 after a very autocratic rule, in this period fell the purchase of the Unilever site. He was succeeded by Mr. D'Arcy Cooper.

The Van den Bergh and Jurgens concerns merged together in 1927 and formed the "Margarine Union" (England), and "Margarine Unie" (Holland), the latter merging in 1929 with Lever Brothers. In 1937, there occurred a final merger so that the old Lever Brothers became Unilever Limited, and the old Margarine Unie, N.V. became Unilever, N.V.

The lecturer then showed a very interesting talky film, dealing with the discovery of Margarine, and the fight for supremacy of the Dutch rival concerns of Van den Bergh and Jurgens, which later merged with Lever Brothers ultimately becoming Unilever N.V.

This talk and film dealing with one of the biggest and most important concerns in the world was very interesting and at its conclusion, Mr. Macrory was loudly cheered. The President of the City Swiss Club, Mr. Ch. Gysin, warmly thanked the speaker for having in the short time at his disposal dealt in such a masterly manner with such a vast subject.

Close of the Meeting, 10.30 p.m.

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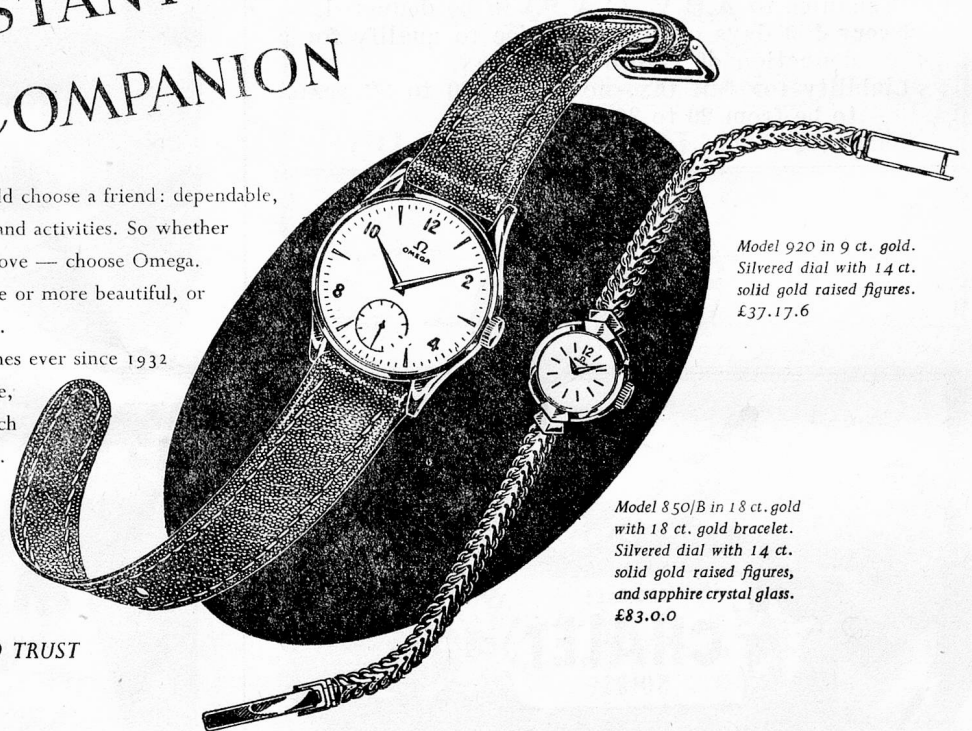
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