

# Swiss Mercantile Society

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Mr. Baumgartner gave vent to his pleasure at having been afforded an opportunity of being for the first time in the midst of the members of the City Swiss Club.

This finished the official part of the evening, and was followed by community singing. Mr. Gandon with his accordeon started playing a medley of Swiss melodies in which everybody lustily joined in, songs in French, Italian, English and Schwyzerdütsch were sung with much gusto, perhaps not always quite in tune, but the spirit was willing — and working. From martial tunes like "Lasst hören aus alter Zeiten", "Roulez Tambours" and "Adio la caserma" the singers switched over, most appropriately, to a number of Christmas songs like "Silent Night, Holy Night", "O Tannenbaum", etc., etc., finishing up with some of the old folklore "Lieder", such as "Teure Heimat", "O Blüemli mi" and the "Ranz des vaches", which in many hearts evoked nostalgic memories, of times when we sang them in that land, which we call so affectionately "La Patrie". It was a real orgy of songs and laughter, in short, what one may call a happy and carefree evening.

Before the President closed the proceedings, he wished all the members and their families a happy Christmas, and a prosperous New Year, not forgetting to thank Mr. J. A. Ronus, the Manager of The Dorchester, for the excellent fare provided, and Mr. A. Gandon for his lively playing, which added to the success of a really fine and enjoyable evening.

ST.

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## SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

### Annual Dinner and Dance.

We wish to direct the attention of our readers to the forthcoming Annual Dinner and Dance of the Swiss Mercantile Society, which will take place on Saturday, January 28th, 1956, at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

This Society, which is one of the most active ones in the London Colony, does not often indulge in festivities, being too busy otherwise, but once a year they wish to summon their members, old and young, to spend an evening together *en famille*.

In the past this annual festival has always been a most enjoyable affair, and we have no doubt, that the coming dinner and dance will be as happy as ever. The Swiss Minister, and Madame Daeniker have kindly promised to be present.

We warmly recommend our readers, and especially the members of the Society, to support this gathering, and by their attendance show their appreciation for the good work the Society is doing in our colony.

Accommodation is somewhat limited, and applications may have to be cut. The committee has decided, in order to avoid overcrowding, to allot tickets to applicants as they come in, in other words "first come, first served", it is, therefore, advisable to order tickets as early as possible.

We have not the slightest doubt that the evening on the 28th of this month will be a jolly one, and we hope that the Swiss Mercantile Society will get the support they so richly deserve.

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## SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

The weather, combined with travel difficulties, probably accounted for a rather small attendance at the December meeting.

Mr. W. Meier welcomed, among others, Mr. Huber, Swiss Consul, Mr. Faessler of the Legation, and Dr. Egli of the N.S.H. He then wished success to Miss Erard, who had very ably assisted Mr. Hauser, our secretary, for nearly three years, and was now returning to Switzerland. The news that Mr. H. Knöll has been promoted to the position of Manager of the London Office of the Swiss Bank Corporation was received with acclamation.

Our President then referred to the passing, on 11th November, of our outstanding and well loved member, Mr. G. Jenne. He had been a member of the S.K.V. for over 50 years, a member of the Council since 1931, chairman of the House Committee before the war and since 1953 a trustee of our Society. We also learnt of the death of Mr. A. Rechsteiner. The meeting stood in silence in tribute to our late members.

Mr. R. Pfenninger, Manager of the Swiss Bank Corporation, is going to Basle as General Manager at the end of the year and Mr. W. R. Gamper is returning to Switzerland on his retirement. We are thus losing almost at the same time three of our trustees. It is proposed to elect Messrs. J. J. Boos and L. W. Krucker as trustees at our next Annual General Meeting. Mr. Krucker will resign as chairman of the House Committee.

Mr. Ph. Schmid-Rudin, our General Secretary, has been re-elected as National Councillor.

Particulars of our Annual Dinner and Ball will be circulated soon.

Mr. Boos reported that our next Delegate Meeting will be held in Basle on 4/5th May, 1956, and he assured any member willing to attend of a very warm welcome.

Mr. W. Baumgartner, Chief of the Employment Dept. of the S.K.V. in Zurich, author of the "Handbuch fuer Ueberseer", and organiser of special courses for young Swiss going abroad, then conveyed to us the greetings of our chief officials at home. He had come to London on the sad errand of winding up the Employment Dept. which looked back on 67 years of activity in London, securing employment for 25,300 persons during that period. Since the outbreak of the second world war conditions for the employment of

young Swiss in London have steadily worsened. Vacancies there are in plenty, but there is a lack of qualified applicants. Mr. Baumgartner thanked all those who had so gallantly carried on till now, in particular Mr. C. Chapuis, Willy Deutsch, J. J. Boos, and J. Zimmermann.

He paid the S.M.S. College a handsome compliment. Since its foundation 11,000 students had attended our College, many of whom had found excellent positions in Switzerland and all over the world. It was not only what the students learn at our College which was of importance. Of equal value was it to become acquainted with the English way of life in office and home. The teaching of English to girls in domestic situations was of the greatest significance, too. In 95 to 98% of commercial positions in Switzerland and abroad, even in Latin America, a good knowledge of English was an absolute necessity.

Speaking of the "Boom of Employment in Switzerland" Mr. Baumgartner said we looked back on 16 fat years. Still there was no sign of a change. There was a very marked shortage of labour, skilled and unskilled. Foreign trade is still increasing, so is the Confederation's income from taxes and customs duties. There were 1,080 totally unemployed last October, against 80,000 in 1936. Switzerland employed 271,000 foreign workers in October, 1955. In 1954, Swiss imports amounted to 11,000 million Swiss francs, against 3,180 million in 1939. The Confederation's accounts for 1955 were expected to show a surplus of 361 million Swiss francs, so that it was intended to reduce taxation for next year. Prospects

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for the export industries were good, except in textiles. Orders for Brown, Boveri, the Swiss Locomotive Works, and Sulzers stipulated delivery periods of 12 and 24 months. Competition in world markets is keen, our costs are high, and selling prices tend to fall. Our answer must be more research and improved efficiency. Plans are in existence to meet a possible change in our fortunes. Projects have been worked out for the building of new roads, new railway stations for Zurich, Berne, etc., hydro-electric plants, and funds and credits are ready for these undertakings.

Coming to commercial employment, there were only 248 fully unemployed clerks in October, 1955. The Employment Department in Zurich placed: 1,590 clerks in 1936, 2,220 in 1938, 3,600 in 1954. Young employees can find positions in a few days. Apprentices are difficult to come by. At present Zurich has 150 vacancies for boy apprentices, but only 10 applicants. Girls are increasingly replacing boys. Capable shorthand typists are very much in demand, and in their early years are earning more than boys of the same age.

What are the drawbacks of this situation? Young employees tend to change their jobs too often for small monetary gains. They refuse to go to small villages and towns. They will not serve apprenticeships. They neglect to broaden their professional skill and linguistic knowledge. They do not abide by contractual notices and obligations. They are no longer anxious to go abroad and overseas for further training, because living conditions at home are easier. In short, there is a danger of the younger generation going soft

and averse from taking risks. The spirit of adventure is dying out.

A statement circulated by Mr. Baumgartner brought out the interesting fact that from 1945 to the end of November last, the Employment Department in Zurich placed 574 employees in 44 overseas countries, while 1,538 persons were placed in European countries.

Searching questions were asked and very thoroughly and ably answered by Mr. Baumgartner, and would have gone on even longer had not the President wisely called a halt.

The vote of thanks proposed by Mr. Willy Deutsch was carried with prolonged acclamation, and concluded a very instructive evening at 9.15 p.m.

*E.H.S.*

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to our Patrons in 1955*

*Best Wishes to all in 1956*

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