

The swiss political system through english eyes

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MANCHESTER SAYS GOODBYE TO CONSUL AND AMBASSADOR



*In the Chair :
Mr. B. SIMON*

The traditional gaiety of Manchester Swiss Club's annual banquet and ball was tinged with sadness this year when members paid their formal farewells to Ambassador and Madame Daeniker and Consul and Madame Rosset.

Both Ambassador and consul were retiring from the Swiss foreign service at the same time, having reached the age limit. And, for both of them, this was their last official function in Manchester before leaving for holidays in the sun and then returning to settle down in the homeland and enjoy a well-earned retirement.

Mr. B. Simon, the President of Manchester Swiss Club, expressed the thoughts of everyone when he thanked Monsieur Rosset for all the kindness and consideration he had shown in tackling problems facing the Colony. These were not just empty words. Monsieur Rosset, in his four years in Manchester, had made a very deep impression on the life of the Colony, and in his own quiet way had many many friends who would sadly miss him.

He presented the Consul with a very handsome self-winding clock, contributions for which had come from members of the Club, from the staff of the Consulate, and from the Yorkshire Swiss Club.

Mr. Simon also presented the Ambassador with a silver dish to mark the occasion of his visit. (In addition, the Club has contributed to the national Armin Daeniker Fund.)

There were bouquets, too, for Madame Daeniker and Madame Rosset.

In his speech he warmly welcomed the guests of honour, one of whom was a welcome visitor from across the Pennines, Mr. R. Muller, the President of the Yorkshire Swiss Club.

To the Ambassador he said: "At one time we thought we were not seeing enough of you in Manchester. But on counting the number of your visits we find, in fact, that you have been with us more often than any of your predecessors. We do very much appreciate all the interest you have taken in our activities."

Then came another presentation to Monsieur Rosset, this time the gift of a silver tankard from Manchester Rifle Club. It was handed over by Mr. R. Dobson, who thanked Monsieur Rosset for his support of the Manchester Rifle Club and the Swiss Rifle Association during his stay in Manchester.

Finally, there were presentations to the Club's top

marksmen. Dr. H. R. Bolliger received from Madame Rosset the Challenge Cup for the highest score. And the Swissair Handicap Trophy, which has a strange habit of returning to where it came from, was presented by Madame Daeniker to Mr. Hans Mettler — the North of England manager of Swissair! (One of its previous holders was a predecessor of Mr. Mettler's at Swissair, Mr. August Weber.)

During the evening, messages of best wishes were sent to two popular and long-standing members of the Club who were prevented from attending because of ill-health, Mr. Henri Monney and Mr. Henri Corrodi.

(Helvetic News Service.)

THE SWISS POLITICAL SYSTEM THROUGH ENGLISH EYES

A year ago the Hansard Society published a disturbing book on "The Parliament of Switzerland" by C. J. Hughes, Professor of Political Science at the University of Leicester. Disturbing because it tended to destroy the happy illusion amongst most Swiss that our Federal Constitution represents despite all blemishes of endless amendments the most democratic regime in the world. Not surprisingly therefore, it had a mixed reception in Switzerland, outraged comments from those to whom any criticism is sacrilegious, interested approval from those willing to face reality.

So, the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique had the bright idea of inviting Prof. Hughes to talk to us about the results of his extensive studies of our political System, its "Good and less Good Aspects" as the invitation to the last Open Meeting indicated. The upshot was a most stimulating discourse on the political realities in our homeland. They are, in the speaker's view, very different from our democratic ideals, but nevertheless they work as well as, and perhaps better than, the British parliamentary system. Prof. Hughes approached his subject-matter rather critically in the first place, as he said. His studies confirmed many shortcomings in our democratic image, but they led him in the end to the firm conclusion that our sensible rules and traditions evolved outside the Constitution ensure its working well enough to commend it as a model alternative to new countries of mixed composition in danger of turning towards dictatorship. He praised especially the delicate balance observed in the representation of all popular elements in the Federal Council, as well as the discreet ways in which disappointing members of the Government are induced to retire to other honourable posts. Contrary to common belief, Prof. Hughes is convinced that even Switzerland is ruled not by the electorate or its chosen representatives in Parliament, or even by pressure groups as such, but by a fairly narrow ruling class of a few hundred prominent citizens, mostly of old families, in interaction with the Establishment. And he is equally convinced that this is, by and large, a good thing, because all countries need a ruling class for good Government.

No doubt, many of Prof. Hughes's observations call for careful examination and some might even be justifiably contradicted, a task which we hope to undertake in a later review of his book which makes fascinating reading to everyone interested in the working of our system whether we agree with the conclusions or not. On the strength of concrete examples and minute description of the intricate process of consultations leading to the final shape of legislation we gain an insight such as no other book has ever attempted to give.

E.