

Brain drain in Switzerland

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cussion followed which clearly showed the divergence of opinions and ideas. Obviously, it is impossible to bring to the same common denominator the wishes of the man who has been in San Francisco for 61 years, the young technician who has only just arrived in North Africa and the man who lives just outside Switzerland's boundaries and runs his Swiss society with the same efficiency as his business. Some of the delegates told of their difficulties and/or successes with their own bulletins or periodicals. A representative of the Church in Switzerland expressed his appreciation of any Swiss Church news published. The delegate for Great Britain made two suggestions, one was to study the idea of creating panels of speakers in the colonies, available to talk about Switzerland to Swiss and above all to foreign groups. The second plea was for handy and concise booklets on specific subjects, police, local government, status of women, etc. (similar to those issued by H.M. Stationery Office), rather than academic essays which are used at the moment.

There is a saying that the mills of Berne grind slowly, and one, much older and perhaps much more apt, that all good things take time to grow. We cannot expect to get the perfect solution to this complex problem. But the work already done at the Secretariat in Berne shows that they are wide awake and will study the many suggestions and wishes most carefully.

As a first step, a working party has been set up by the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, consisting mainly of experts on information (Press and Radio, etc.), who are to study all aspects of the whole matter.

But in order to have a lively two-way traffic of information, we Swiss abroad must play our part, too. As a first effort in this country, we should like to suggest that any information and news of general interest to the Swiss community should be sent to the "Swiss Observer". Furthermore, that material of interest to the Swiss at home, for instance important achievements of Swiss individuals or undertakings, the way certain happenings or measures taken in Switzerland affect Swiss citizens in this country or the Swiss image, certain reactions and considered opinions expressed by nationals of the hostess country, etc., should be made known to the delegates on the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, who are the Colony's representatives, (c/o Embassy, Consulate, "Swiss Observer" or c/o the nearest Swiss society). Maybe there will be a press service or some other clearing house for information one day, but this, at least, would be a beginning.

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BRAIN DRAIN IN SWITZERLAND

**ETH's President with the Anglo-Swiss Society
Dorchester Hotel, W.1, 16th October 1967**

The Committee of the Anglo-Swiss Society have made a point of securing interesting speakers, and this practice has been continued this season. After having had such eminent speakers last year as Dr. Victor Umbricht, Dr. Michael Ward, the former Swiss Ambassador Monsieur de Fischer (who spoke on "The Swiss in Great Britain throughout the Ages"), and Prof. Alexander von Muralt, President of the Swiss National Research Council, the speaker at the first Dinner this autumn was the President of the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Dr. Jakob Burckhardt. The President of the Society, the Earl of Selkirk, was in the chair. At the same time, it was also an opportunity for the Society to welcome the new Swiss Ambassador and Madame Olivier Long. Other guests included the Countess of Selkirk and Madame Burckhardt,

the Earl and Countess of Bessborough, Viscount and Viscountess Caldecote, Lord and Lady Jackson of Burnley, Sir Arnold and Lady Lunn, Mr. Gerard Fowler, M.P., Prof. and Mrs. P. M. S. Blackett and Dr. and Mrs. F. E. Jones.

The speaker said that the total number of Swiss engineers and scientists living in the United States was about 2,500. Estimates were that 20% of the young elite from Switzerland's qualified manpower joined the brain drain. Before the Jones Report was published the previous week, Dr. Burckhardt had been under the impression that Switzerland was the greatest exporter of qualified manpower to America.

He compared the brain drain of 1967 with the blood drain of the Middle Ages when the sons of Swiss peasants and squires would go abroad as foreign mercenaries. They were hired by the Bourbons, the Hapsburgs, the Prussians and English Kings. The export of blood was now prohibited by law, but not so the drain of brains.

Dr. Burckhardt said that the Swiss machinery, chemical and building industries were having tremendous difficulty in finding new engineers. In some cases, over 50% of engineering staffs were composed of foreign nationals.

The reasons Dr. Burckhardt gave for the migration of talented men to the United States was the attraction and astonishing sweep of American Science and Development. He demonstrated this by a limerick:

"There were 50 scholars from Berne
Whose rather peculiar concern
Was learning to fly by balloon
Via Florida right to the moon.
Do you think they will ever return?"

He suggested that some of the angry young scientists wanted to free themselves from a university system inspired by the German Humboldt, in which they suffered under suffocating tyranny of the head of their institute, who they were inclined to consider jealous of their brilliance.

They were also attracted by the generosity in financing and procuring of research facilities and equipment, and by personal advantages such as pleasant and cheap housing, an easy-going social life, and an enhanced sense of status.

Dr. Burckhardt said that the big science projects such as the European Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva were examples of cooperation that could keep brilliant men in Europe, and he called for cooperation in more big science projects of that kind.

This was endorsed by Prof. Blackett, President of the Royal Society. He thought that cooperation of this nature was part of the solution of the problem. Up to the 'thirties, Europe was the home of pure science, and 90% of the Nobel prize winners came from Europe. As an aside he gave the definition of pure science, viz. to satisfy one's natural curiosity at the expense of the Government (a definition which came from an East German radio station).

Prof. Blackett expressed hope that it would be possible to recreate a nucleus of talent as before 1930, but that it hinged on Government expenditure, all said and done.

(We are indebted to "The Times" for the resumé of Dr. Burckhardt's address.)

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Membership to the Anglo-Swiss Society is open to all friends of Switzerland. Application for membership should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Anglo-Swiss Society, 77 Gloucester Place, London W.1. (£1 per annum.)