

From the editor's workshop

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FROM THE EDITOR'S WORKSHOP

Dear Readers,

At the time of going to press, there are practically 100 subscriptions overdue, some by several months, and another 40 odd are due with this issue. We have refrained from sending reminders with our double Christmas number — they were all sent out with the *last* issue. But over Christmas you will, perhaps, have time to read the S.O. in greater leisure and will also read through this. I have several ardent wishes concerned with the well-being of the "Swiss Observer", but one which *all* of you can fulfill at no extra cost or effort, is *always to pay up promptly*. How my anxieties would be lessened if all subscribers now in arrears paid up before the end of the year! Every time I have to send somebody a reminder, it takes me between 3 and 5 minutes of my time, not counting the extra effort wasted in writing letters and the unnecessary postage involved when subscribers who have been in arrears pay up a few months late, then write an often indignant letter when they are reminded again, what they consider, "soon afterwards". Nine such letters did I receive after the last issue, nine times did I have to write back and explain, and nine times 4d. wasted, all because some people couldn't be bothered.

And there is an even bigger waste, that of conscientiously sending the S.O. for a few issues in the hope that a renewal remittance would be sent, only to be greeted one morning by a returned copy marked "gone away" or by a curt note "do not wish to subscribe any more". Is it asking too much of any subscriber to send a note giving a change of address or communicating the wish to cancel the subscription immediately?

Why don't I stop sending the S.O. if people have not paid up within a month or so? Because very often, they are loyal old subscribers who would miss the regular appearance of the paper and who, I know very well, *will* pay up. And there are genuine cases of illness and absence abroad, etc., which cause a legitimate delay in remitting. Strange to say, it is usually the same readers who fall behind again and again, and most of these not for economic reasons, either! I do hope that our old-age pensioners' gift scheme has been advertised sufficiently for anyone who finds it too difficult to pay a full subscription to inform the Editor in confidence, so that one of the generous donors will take it over.

But now, before I am accused of being harsh, I should like to praise the many subscribers who pay up by return, some even in advance, and who by their prompt settlement and courtesy make my job easier.

To pay one's subscription the moment a renewal form is enclosed with the S.O. will save time, effort and money, time to be spent on improving the paper, money on keeping alive. For printing costs are going up all the time, and the publishers already carry a burden by allowing the S.O. free office, lighting, heating and telephone, as well as help with accountancy and invoicing, etc. When I took over this work five years ago last May, the subscription rates stood at today's level. We have not increased them, although costs of printing, paper, postage and almost everything except my salary have gone up. I am gratefully aware that many of you send donations, take out gift subscriptions and support advertising. Quite understandably, a number of readers are against paying more than the fixed rate on principle. But they, too, can help by inducing friends to take out subscriptions. Personal canvassing is still the best method and costs nothing in hard cash. There is also a considerable number of readers who get their

"free look" at the S.O. regularly at work where either a colleague or the boss subscribe. Have they ever thought of doing something about it? A New Year's Resolution perhaps?

I am still looking for one or several readers willing to give me a hand by reading some news, information and reports and then make a résumé for publication. It is interesting work (if one does not have to do too much of it). And perhaps there is a young mother somewhere who would have time to do some office work a few hours regularly or once in a while. This would help the paper a great deal, for it lessens the danger of my productive efforts getting stale for lack of time.

I am grateful for the support I have from my subscribers in many lands, and I intend to go on doing my best, but even all that may not be good enough to keep going. I shall fight any increase in subscription rates as long as I can. But the day may come soon when we have to take another look.

Your Editor,

MM

P.S. Have you paid up?

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We wish to thank the following subscribers for sending donations over and above their subscriptions, or the cost of Christmas Greetings and/or for taking out gift subscriptions to friends or old-age pensioners:

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