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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

THE INSTITUTE FOR SWISS TRADE PROMOTION

Under this name the much talked-of commercial information office was at long last opened at the Swiss Centre in London on 22nd October. It is on the first floor comprising two modest rooms, entrance through 10 Wardour Street. It was inaugurated by a cocktail reception at the Centre and a dinner at the Dorchester Hotel in the presence of our Ambassador Monsieur René Keller, the Minister of State at the Board of Trade, Edmond Dell, and the President of the "Union Schweizerischer Handelskammern im Ausland", Dr. Rolf Bühler, as well as numerous personalities of the Swiss Colony, including also Mr. Peter Christen, the former President of the Swiss Economic Council, who came over specially from Basle to witness the materialisation of its long-standing project.

The Institute is the crowning achievement of the Swiss Economic Council in London which, incidentally, is also celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Although most big Swiss firms interested in the British market have their own representations here, the Council has long held the view that the creation of a permanent centre of information and advice on sources of Swiss products to British enquirers and on customs and trade regulations to the Swiss exporter would be of great use to other Swiss firms and our country as a whole.

The establishment of the SWISS CENTRE by the initiative of the Swiss Bank Corporation with the co-operation of the Swiss National Tourist Office and Swissair made its completion — at least on the commercial side — doubly urgent. This was planned from the start when the Swiss Economic Council joined with Swiss Fair Ltd. and the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom in the appeal for funds launched three years ago in Berne under the chairmanship of Federal Councillor Wahlen. The result, unfortunately, was rather limited both here and in Switzerland. Even the purely commercial aspects of the Centre, the restaurants and the shopping gallery, could only be brought to fruition thanks to a heavy extra-engagement by the initiators financially, while the cultural and social "FORUM OF SWITZERLAND" is still not definitely assured.

For the project of the Information Centre the appeal yielded no more than a starting sum for an initial period of perhaps two years. It should, however, enable the Centre to mobilise enough members here and in Switzerland, each contributing £25 per annum, to carry on successfully and, if necessary, to enlarge its services. The Council is confident to be able to enrol some 200 members in the first year and bring the number up to 500 within three years to make it self-supporting. In the meantime, further donations would be a great help.

The Institute has been established as a non-profit-making body in the legal form of a company limited by guarantee. Until the first Annual General Meeting, when the members of the Institute are called upon to elect its Committee and officers, it is being run under the supervision of the Swiss Economic Council by its President Mr. R. M. Suess and executive committee. As Secretary-General for the Institute, an experienced businessman, Mr. A. Schalch, has been engaged, who for many years has been active in the pharmaceutical trade in England and elsewhere.

The Institute has set itself the following tasks as Main Objectives: Introductions to potential customers; assistance in promotion campaigns through organisation of exhibitions and Swiss Weeks; information on customs and import regulations; market research; advisory service to U.K. companies seeking Swiss products; regular Information Bulletins; any other step to assist trade relations.

Exhibition space will be available on the third floor of the Swiss Centre from Autumn 1969 offering an excellent opportunity of displaying Swiss products in the heart of London, but the Institute will be prepared to arrange such exhibitions in any part of the country. The Institute will maintain close contact with both British and Swiss authorities and trade associations with a view to providing Members with precise and up-to-date information.

No charge will be made to Members for normal trade enquiries. Special projects will be subject to a fee in relation to the amount of work involved.

After dinner and after welcoming the guests and expressing thanks to all those who have helped to bring about the establishment of the Institute, Mr. Suess called upon Dr. Bühler to make a speech. He declared that the Institute filled a long-felt gap facilitating the necessary close contact between producers and clients, exporters and importers from country to country. He congratulated the Council on its achievement which he felt would contribute much to the good name and image of Switzerland in the United Kingdom. Finally, Mr. O. Rohn recalled how much the late Mr. Alfred Renou as well as Dr. Knuchel and Mr. Christen had worked for the realisation of the Institute. He concluded with a strong plea for the active co-operation of all well-wishers of the Institute to make it the great success it deserves to achieve.

E.

LIVERPOOL SWISS CLUB

As part of the functions arranged for the coming season, a get-together of the Club took place on 21st September. Mr. H. O. Vollers, our Hon. Treasurer, was pleased to receive us at his handsome and spacious residence at Neston, Wirral. The rooms were tastefully decorated with the Swiss flag, bunting and flowers.

Extending a warm welcome to the forty compatriots and friends assembled, the President, Mr. Théodore Erb, introduced Mr. Zellweger, Vice-Consul from Manchester. He said how pleased we all were at his visit.

We then were invited to partake of *Schübli*g with Swiss potato salad, *Zwetschgenkuchen*, *Gâteau aux pommes*, accompanied by a white wine of "La Côte" and followed by a cup of good coffee.

It was nice to meet and renew acquaintances, and everyone had a lot to say, so much so that the record player could not be heard. Mr. Moor, Hon. Secretary, distributed a questionnaire, hoping for good replies. A grand time was had by all, and only too soon did we have to part. We sincerely thanked our gracious hostess, who was in national costume, and our host Mr. Vollers for a lovely and pleasant evening to remember.

T.E.