

# Swiss Mercantile Society

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# NEWS FROM THE COLONY

## SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

The Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society was held at Swiss House on 14th February and was honoured by the presence of Monsieur R. Gaechter, Secretary of Embassy.

In opening the proceedings, the Chairman, Mr. A. Jaccard, with deep regret reported the death of Mr. Walter Lehmann, who had been an active member of the Society since 1935.

Reviewing the accounts for 1967, which had been circulated, the Chairman stated that, despite the ever increasing expenditure, the Society could look back on a year of satisfactory and steady progress and expressed thanks to all who had contributed towards another successful period.

In the opening remarks of his report on the Society's activities during the past year, the Chairman referred to the economic difficulties which this country had been experiencing and the adverse effects of devaluation on many of our members whose livelihood was mainly derived from the import trade.

Referring to the arrival early in February of a new Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Olivier Long, formerly permanent Swiss representative on the Council of EFTA countries, the Chairman recalled with pleasure that Monsieur Long had accepted the Honorary Presidency of the Society in September and subsequently visited the College, together with Madame Long. The announcement towards the end of the year that Monsieur Long had been appointed Director General of GATT and the consequent curtailment of his mission here had, therefore, generally been received with mixed feelings. Whilst the honour of Switzerland having one of its nationals occupying the highest executive position in this world-wide organisation was a source of pleasure to his compatriots, the impending departure of the Ambassador was regretted by all who had come into contact with him.

Another highlight in the annals of the Society had been the first visit to London in March of Mr. Richard Maier-Neff, General Secretary of the SKV since 1965. Apart from contacts with our delegates at the annual meetings in Switzerland, this was Mr. Maier's first opportunity of making the acquaintance of the Council and the Education Committee in general and of visiting the College, where he addressed the students, after having met the teaching staff and seen the classes at work. Mr. Maier-Neff subsequently expressed his pleasure and satisfaction with all he had seen and heard in London.

Dealing with the membership, the Chairman stated that the gradual decline due to departures, retirement and deaths was causing concern to all connected with the conduct of the Society's affairs. Arrangements were, however, in hand for an intensified recruiting campaign and it was hoped that, with the response and assistance of those approached, new members willing to take an active part in the Society and the Committees would be found, thus ensuring the continuity in the important role the S.M.S. was playing in the educational sphere.

At the end of the year, the Society was composed of 215 (217) Active Members, 22 (21) Honorary Members, 14 (14) Corresponding Members and 36 (37) contributing

firms and subscribing members. (The figures in parenthesis denote the previous year's membership.)

## College

In his report on the activities of the College, the Chairman, Mr. J. F. Carlen, stated that the Committee's long cherished aim of having a full attendance throughout the year had not only been reached, but that the problem was now no longer one of students, but of a limitation of intake imposed by the size of the building. Due to an ever growing waiting list, the time had been reached when students unable to defer their stay had to seek tuition elsewhere.

A total of 685 new students were admitted during 1967, compared with 633 in the previous year, the average attendance being 277 and 264 respectively. Of these, 458 presented themselves for the diploma examination, 433 (95%) being successful, as against 450 and 420 (93%) in 1966.

The curriculum and the scholastic programme followed traditional lines. Visits to undertakings such as the Stock Exchange, Lloyd's, Wool Exchange, Tea Auction, G.P.O., Hudson's Bay Co., London Docks, etc., proved of particular interest. Saturday morning outings, under the guidance of teachers, to places of interest in and around London, were equally popular.

The programme of studies was enriched by lectures and film shows by representatives of the British Iron and Steel Federation, the National Coal Board, British Transport, North Sea Gas, Swissair and other well known bodies. These were supplemented by talks by the teaching staff on a wide range of subjects of interest to the students. In many of these, the Society's own Cinex sound projector again proved to be a valuable asset.

As customary, full-day excursions to Oxford and Cambridge Universities, Portsmouth (Naval Dockyard), Coventry and Warwick Castle and to other places of commercial and cultural interest were arranged and found great and enthusiastic support.

The College Magazine, "The SMS Student", edited by Mr. G. Tier, Dr. Phil., who himself contributes many learned articles to this periodical, was again published twice a term and proved a valuable link between College and students, in particular former ones.

In the field of sports, the College football team achieved a notable success during the 1966/67 season, finishing second in the West End (London) AFA Intermediate League and being promoted to the Senior League for the 1967/68 season. Congratulations on this success were extended to Mr. R. Signore, a member of the London Section, who had been looking after the team. During the summer months, tennis was started again by a new teacher, Mr. R. Symes, who organised a tournament with students and staff participating. This sport, which had at one time been a popular feature of the College programme, was for a time in "cold storage" due to the departure of the master-in-charge and its revival was welcomed by students and staff alike.

There was a decline in the enrolments for evening classes, noticeably in the number of female students, 495 of whom attended these courses, compared with 533 and 582 for 1966 and 1965 respectively. This was no doubt due to the fact that fewer girls were coming over from Switzerland to take up "au pair" positions. Furthermore, many who did come attended local

evening institutes to avoid the relatively high travelling expenses to town, or preferred full-time tuition, hence the corresponding increase in the number of female students attending the day classes, e.g. 255 in 1967 as against 237 in 1966. The same number of evening classes, i.e. 45, were held last year as in 1966, the total number of enrolments being 877, as against 909 in the preceding year.

The external examination held by Cambridge University for the Certificate of Proficiency and the Lower Certificate in English were as popular as ever with SMS students of both day and evening classes. Last year 60 candidates presented themselves for the former and 291 for the latter. Of these 34 and 187 were successful, a result well above the average for the whole of England.

The teaching staff of the College last year comprised 15 full-time teachers of British nationality, mostly University graduates or with high professional qualifications, some of whom also teach in the evenings.

Concluding his report, the Chairman stated that the very satisfactory results and the ever increasing demand for tuition at the SMS College were surely proof, if such proof were needed, of the soundness of the teaching methods and the competence of the teaching staff. He expressed thanks to the Principal and his staff for their devotion to their work and to the Secretary and his staff for the cheerful and efficient way in which they had discharged their exacting duties.

#### Employment Advisory Service

Due to the introduction of the Selective Employment Tax as well as to other economic factors, the demand for temporary staff had slackened off considerably in the early part of 1967. However, despite this handicap, it was still possible to assist 61 of our young compatriots in finding commercial employment in this country during the year, which did not compare unfavourably with the record figure of 70 for the preceding year.

#### Swiss House

Reporting on the activities of the House Committee, Mr. Jaccard stated that the number of class rooms had been increased from 14 to 15 during the summer term, an additional classroom having become available through the conversion of a room previously occupied by the Caretaker. This had enabled the College to accommodate a maximum of some 300 students at any one time.

A number of rooms had been redecorated during the spring and autumn holidays. The painting of the whole of the exterior having been carried out during the autumn, Swiss House was now again looking at its best.

Apart from the Society's own meetings and educational activities, the premises had continued to provide accommodation in the evenings to various other Swiss societies and institutions for their meetings and served as an examination centre for the Cambridge University Local Examinations Syndicate.

In conclusion, Mr. Jaccard thanked the Swiss Ambassador and his staff for their constant support. He acknowledged with gratitude the financial assistance received from BIGA in Berne and expressed appreciation to the subscribing firms and donors for their contributions. He stated that the report would not be complete without mention of the debt of gratitude owed to the officials of all ranks at the Headquarters of the Association in Zurich, as well as the Manager of the Employment Department of the SKSA, for their invaluable assistance in making the

College known in the widest possible circles in Switzerland. Their contributions towards the success attained last year had been of inestimable value to the Society.

Finally, he thanked the Trustees, the Members of the Council and the Committees for their wholehearted co-operation and all the members of the Society for their continued confidence in their elected representatives.

#### Elections

Proceeding with the election, the meeting then appointed Mr. O. Grob, Hon. Member and past President, as Chairman *pro tem*. He thanked the out-going Committees for their devoted services during another very successful year. He paid a special tribute to the Chairman, Mr. A. Jaccard, whom he congratulated on the excellent manner in which he conducted the Society's affairs. He then proposed the re-election of Mr. Jaccard as President and Chairman of the Council, which was carried with acclamation.

All members of the Council and the Committees having declared their willingness to serve for another term of office, and Messrs. F. O. Hausermann and F. Vaterlaus having been nominated as additional members of the Council and the General Purposes and House Committee respectively, they were declared duly elected as follows:—

*Council:* Chairman: Mr. A. Jaccard; Trustees: Messrs. J. J. Boos, H. Knoll, L. W. Krucker, F. G. Sommer; Members: Messrs. J. W. Bonjour, F. Burri, J. F. Carlen, R. Chappuis, O. Grob, F. O. Hausermann, E. M. Huber, J. E. Schneider, R. Senn, F. Streit.

*General Purposes and House Committee:* Chairman: Mr. A. Jaccard; Vice-Chairman: Mr. J. F. Carlen; Hon. Secretary: Mr. J. E. Schneider; Hon. Treasurer: Mr. R. Senn; Members: Mrs. M. Meier and Messrs. H. Andrea, J. Frei, W. Schedler, F. Vaterlaus, J. Weibel, E. Zwicky.

*Education Committee:* Chairman: Mr. J. F. Carlen; Vice-Chairman: Mr. F. O. Hausermann; Members: Messrs. J. W. Bonjour, F. Burri, G. Hediger, O. Luterbacher, M. Schneebeli, L. A. Simon.

*Press Reporter:* Mr. W. Burren.

*Delegate to the N.S.H.:* Mrs. M. Meier.

W.B.

#### NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE

##### Prof. Hans Zbinden on Switzerland's Future

One of the foremost Swiss thinkers, philosophers and writers, Prof. Dr. Hans Zbinden of Berne, will give a talk in English at the next N.S.H. Open Meeting on 14th March at the Swiss Hostel for Girls. His subject-matter will be "Switzerland's Present Role and Future Tasks" — the gist of a much applauded essay of his recently published in the Review of the Swiss Red Cross. Prof. Zbinden holds an eminent place amongst Switzerland's political and sociological authors combining ideological comprehension with a sense of realism to a remarkable degree. His voice has often helped to guide Swiss thinking in difficult times and maintain its self-confidence. He is paying our Colony a great compliment in formulating his views in English on this occasion.

##### A YOUNG SWISS PAINTER IN LONDON

In a small Club-Restaurant in Hampstead, a young Swiss lady painter, Beatrice LYSSY, from Zurich reveals her considerable talent in collages and oils. Her work is appealing by an exquisite delicacy of colour and abstract form. The exhibition is open till March 16th at the Isobar, Lawn Road Flats, near Belsize Park Station, N.W.3.

E.