

Society and social scene

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SOCIETY AND SOCIAL SCENE

WHILE the size of the congregations at Sunday services has remained fairly constant, the trend is inexorably towards diminishing numbers, says Mrs E.D. Crack, president of the Consistoire of the Swiss Church in London, in her annual report.

Writes Mrs Crack: "Death and the return to Switzerland are the main causes, but the rising cost of transport will be increasingly felt.

"Home visits by the pastors are therefore an important part of their duties, and the local community meetings are also well established and supported, the number of their participants sometimes surpassing the church congregation.

"The ladies' circles and the Swiss-German mothers' group are additionally well supported. The latter especially fulfills a very important and much needed role in our colony".

But she warns: "Bearing in mind the development of the Swiss Church and the vast empty space of the church building with its difficulties of heating and maintaining, we may be forced to contemplate far-reaching changes in the future, unless increased and continued support of the Sunday services is forthcoming".

Annual report of the Swiss Welfare Office for Young People

IN December, 1979, the Swiss Welfare Office celebrated its 30th anniversary. It was on December 15, 1949, that the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Henri de Torrenté, opened what was then called the "Welfare Office for Swiss Girls" at the premises of the Swiss Benevolent Society, 31 Conway Street, London W1, at which address it can still be found today.

It is thanks to the determination and sincere wish to make a success of the Welfare Office of all those who helped to lay the foundation stone and the many new benefactors who have since taken an interest in our case that our institution was able to survive and develop into



RANGE officer Armin Loetscher with Roger Zubler and Dutch champion N. Van der Caaij, pictured when members of the Swiss Rifle Association took part in the "Pistol '80" meeting at Bisley over the spring bank holiday. More than 800 competitors, many of them Olympic shooters, attended, including a team from Sion in the Valais.

Below, Trudi Tresch, Augustine Kett and Molli Zubler with their home cooking, which was much appreciated by the competitors and the organisers.



the very useful and lively body it is today.

In the long run we must continue to be outward looking, inventive and modern to attract the young Swiss to come to us with their problems.

In looking at the accounts for 1979 it is gratifying to see that the financial situation has been allayed but by no means overcome, with the understanding and help of our contributors.

Our Federal subsidy for the year was Sfr. 18,000, and we received the contributions from both Freundinnen junger Mädchen and Pro Filia of Sfr. 3,000, with a most welcome extra Sfr. 3,000 from Pro Filia.

At the annual meeting of the VEGSIL (Vereinigung ehema-

liger Glieder der Schweizerkirche in London) in Switzerland we were allocated Sfr. 1,000 and from the Evangelischer Kirchenbund we received Sfr. 1,500.

We are most grateful for all these unexpected contributions as well as to our regular supporters on whose help we depend so much.

We hope that in spite of our healthy end of year credit balance of £11,569 we can continue to count on their generous support in the coming years.

The organisation still faces in a fairly acute form the problems familiar to many self-governed charities in the UK, inasmuch as we have to find increasing sums of money to keep pace with

inflation to an extent which is not easily matched by increases in our income.

As in previous years our administration costs have been minimal, but with a substantial salary rise for our social worker and the ever rising post and telephone charges these costs will inevitably increase considerably in the coming year.

In November the committee was sorry to bid farewell to our honorary president, Mme. E. Thalmann, who has returned to Switzerland on the retirement of her husband. We are very grateful to her for all the support she has given the Welfare Office, and we wish both her and the Ambassador a happy retirement.

We were also sad to lose our secretary, Mrs Marietta Lee, at the end of September when her husband started a one-year course at Lancaster University before moving to Switzerland. We have lost in Marietta Lee not only a competent secretary but also a close friend and colleague. We were glad to find a new secretary quite quickly — Mrs Maria Fraser, who we share with the Swiss Benevolent Society and to whom we are grateful for all she does.

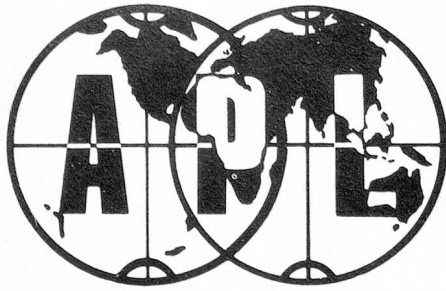
According to Home Office immigration statistics just over 2,100 Swiss au pair girls and some 6,500 language students came to England in 1978 and we were contacted by 280 young people during 1979.

Though we do not think that all these Swiss visitors should come to the Welfare Office, it would be encouraging to know that the majority of them at least knew of its existence. Sadly, however, it remains a fact that a large number of agencies still do not pass on the Welfare Office's address to their au pair girls.

We were particularly glad when three foreign correspondents of Swiss newspapers wrote articles on the activities of the Welfare Office in the 'Tages Anzeiger', 'Der Bund' and 'Luzerner Nachrichten'. The women's magazine 'Brigitte' also published an article on our work.

We have sent a copy of our annual report for 1978 to all the Berufsberatungsstellen in Switzerland in the hope of establishing further contacts, but it still remains one of our

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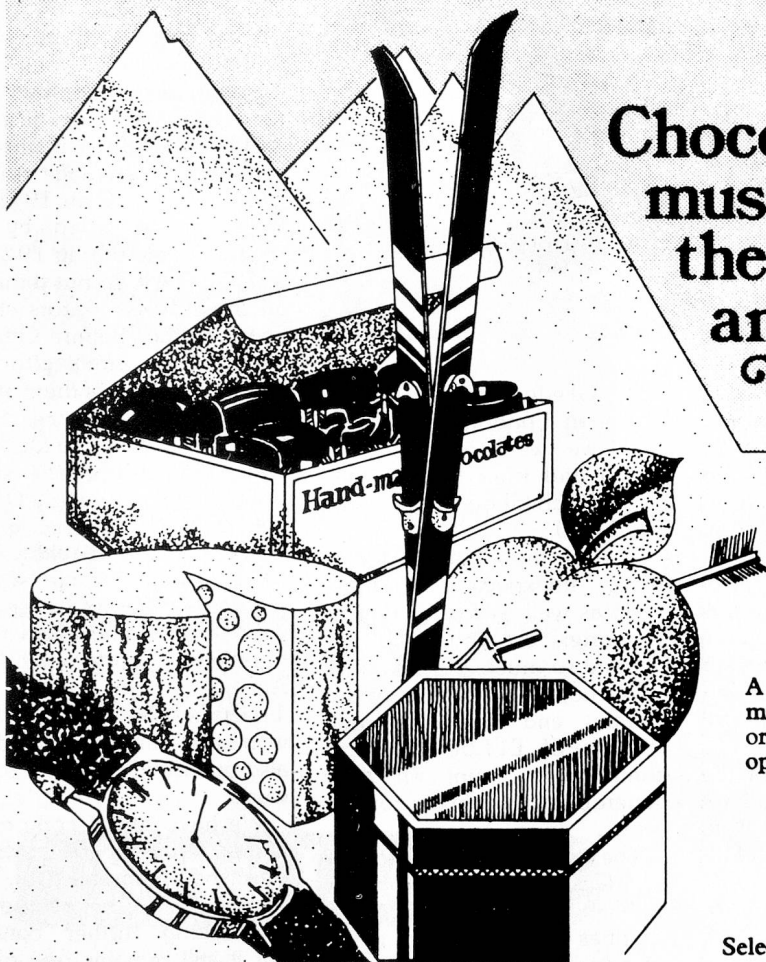
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most urgent tasks to publicise our existence wherever possible.

Of the 280 new cases, of which 30 were young men, 246 were German and 34 French speaking.

Problems with employers, agencies, landlords and jobs accounted for 116 cases. Ninety cases were for advice on schools, clubs, leisure activities and accommodation.

There were 60 cases concerning medical and psychological problems, illness, pregnancy, drugs, rape, matrimonial and boy-friend problems and home sickness, and a further 14 were for legal, financial and immigration problems.

The various organisations concerned with the problems of au pairs in England are watching the situation with some concern.

The maximum age for an au pair to come to England has been reduced to 27 (the minimum age remaining 17). The fee for registration with the aliens' police has been raised to £19, and the number of English classes available for young students is being reduced, and fees increased threefold.

This, together with the rapidly rising cost of living in England, will make an au pair stay very much more expensive and require the girl to have substantial financial means.

The committee wishes to record with gratitude the efficient and professional way in which our social worker, Mrs M. Lyster, deals with all the problems which face her at the office, many of which are problematic and tricky to handle. Her alert and spontaneous attitude towards helping the young Swiss in distress is certainly of great value and appreciated by all.

Our small organisation once more could not have achieved its aims without the help and assistance of a great number of people. Our thanks go to our regular contributors, the Swiss federal authorities, the Swiss Benevolent Society, the Federation of Swiss Churches, Pro Filia, Freundinnen junger Mädchen, and our many loyal friends. We are grateful to Mrs A.R. Sharp of the Swiss Benevolent Society for her generous



WINNER of the Swissair trophy at Manchester Swiss Club's annual treasure hunt last month was Mr Bernard Simon, his wife Joan, children Julie and Nicola and their friend Jackie Slinger. Mr Simon is president of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom. With the Simon team in our picture are (on the right) Swissair's North of England manager Fritz Rufer and his wife Jean.

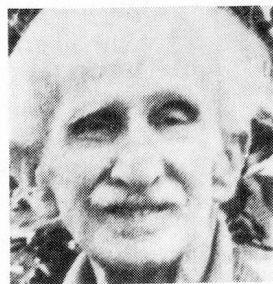
help and invaluable advice.

Once again we have enjoyed the support and help of the Swiss Embassy, the ministers of the Swiss Church in London, the Swiss Catholic Mission and the helpers at the Swiss Youth Club. We would at this point also like to thank the many au pair agencies with whom we enjoy a good rapport.

With the help and encouragement of our many friends here and in Switzerland we are looking forward to fulfilling our task of helping and advising the young Swiss in the coming year.

— Mrs R. Rast, President.

Patriarch's birthday



A FORMER chairman of the Yorkshire Swiss Club who for very many years was one of the most colourful — and controversial — members of the Swiss community in Britain, celebrates his 90th birthday this month.

It was in 1948 that Professor Jean Inebnit and his late wife, Lucile (née Kiener), initiated the first "Landsgemeinde" in Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire, fashioned on the pattern of the founding-cantons of Switzerland, where everyone who had

something to say spoke up at the public meeting. The event is still held in June each year.

Professor Inebnit was born on July 5, 1890, in the Canton of Neuchâtel, of farming stock. In 1920 he and his wife came to England for a year or two to learn the language and widen their outlook. He obtained a post teaching French history at Leeds University, and liked Yorkshire so much they decided to make their home there.

Over the years Professor Inebnit has met many world leaders. If only he could find the necessary time to sift through the heaps of correspondence in the railway carriage at the bottom of his garden, his memoirs could prove very interesting.

In his long life Jean Inebnit has known many disappointments. His strong christian belief has also helped him face the loss of his beloved wife and partner in all his undertakings and the

tragic death of his grandson last year.

He may sometimes feel tired to battle on for the cause of his "Swiss Action Group", which champions the rights of women, particularly Swiss women who marry non-Swiss husbands. But he is far from giving up.

The Inebnit family are celebrating their patriarch's 90th birthday at their annual reunion in Château-d'Oex this month. Along with all other well-wishers, the Swiss Observer hopes that the future holds much happiness for Jean Inebnit.

Meeting planned

AFTER our attendance at the Landsgemeinde at Hebden Bridge on June 15 and meeting there a charming section of Swiss - orientated folk, we thought it would be nice to keep the ball rolling and have a get-together before the 1981 Landsgemeinde.

We have some Swiss recorded music and films taken on various holidays in Switzerland, and perhaps others could contribute to what might turn out to be a pleasant Anglo-Swiss evening.

The date we have in mind is Sunday, September 7, and as we are situated about half-way between Leeds and Manchester we feel this would be convenient to both Yorkshire and Lancashire Swiss folk.

Perhaps anyone interested would contact us at The Gables, Norland, Sowerby Bridge, HX6 3RN (tel: 0422 31409).

Peter and Olga Selby-Huber

Unione Ticinese Londra

MEMBERS are reminded about the UTL social calendar for 1980, although detailed information will be sent to everyone before each event.

Sunday, September 14: Autumn outing to Knoll Park, Sevenoaks.

Sunday, November 9: Castagnata in Richmond.

Saturday, December 13: Christmas dinner.

In the past similar outings turned out to be a great success and genuine enjoyment and social interaction took place among those members who wisely booked early for themselves and their families. So please register your interest for the above events as soon as possible with the secretary, Frank Allegranza, 41 Hare Lane, Claygate, Esher, Surrey.