

# Society and social scene

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# A nest-egg as well as an unusual insurance

IN 1981 the Solidarity Fund for Swiss Abroad demonstrated once again its usefulness and efficiency. The amount paid out in lump sum compensation totalled Sfr. 230,000, an increase of 12 per cent. Five Swiss in El Salvador received benefits and one in Iran, both countries which are still suffering from the results of earlier conflicts. In addition, one Swiss in Ethiopia and one in Zimbabwe were paid lump sum compensation.

In spite of such payments, the financial position of the fund improved further. The total of repayable deposits by the 10,587 members reached Sfr. 32 million. The Confederation has guaranteed a lump sum compensation amount of Sfr. 123.3 million.

The generally still satisfactory economic climate in Switzerland as well as the ever more difficult conditions of immigration into other countries has resulted in lower emigration figures from Switzerland. At the same time the period abroad of employees of Swiss firms is getting shorter and shorter. The Solidarity Fund took this into consideration by increasing publicity in Switzerland to recruit members, specially also with regard to sponsorship and collective membership.

As a sponsor, the Swiss at home pays for somebody abroad, but while his protégé abroad remains insured against loss of livelihood due to political events, the sponsor keeps the right to receive back his deposits with interest. With collective agreements where a firm insures several of its employees abroad against loss of

livelihood, the company renounces the savings aspect and simply pays a non-returnable risk premium.

Last year 273 new members were accepted, committing themselves to annual deposits of Sfr. 60,000 and made single deposits amounting to Sfr. 2 million.

The manager of the fund was in London and the North West in spring and addressed the Nouvelle Société Helvétique and the Swiss Club Manchester respectively.

He stressed the importance of this great institution also for compatriots living in so-called "safe" countries. Firstly because one never knew when political events could undermine one's existence, and that it might suddenly be too late - one couldn't insure a house once it had begun to burn.

And secondly a Swiss should join out of solidarity, even if one did not feel the necessity of an insurance of this kind. In any case, one would get the premiums paid back to a large extent if not all, and the interest in Switzerland on an absolutely safe savings deposit was free from withholding tax.

The total membership in Great Britain is deplorably low - only just over 260 compatriots have joined. It is hoped that these numbers will improve. Please get in touch with the Swiss Embassy in London or your nearest Consulate or with the Solidarity Fund for Swiss Abroad, Gutenbergstrasse 6, 3011 Berne,

Switzerland. Specify whether you would like the information in English, German, French or Italian.

MM

## Dunfermline's coming events

"WE are always delighted to entertain visitors," says Dr Ursula Ditchburn, president of the Dunfermline Swiss Club. And to encourage those visitors she has sent a list of the society's forthcoming events.

On September 16 there will be the pastoral visit of Pfauer Steiner from London and the weekend of October 9 and 10 promises to be very entertaining with an outing to the Highlands.

The society's annual general meeting will be held on November 17 and will be followed by quiz games. As a rule, the Dunfermline Swiss Club holds its meetings in the evenings and these usually start off with dinner provided by the members.

## Banking in Switzerland

TWO important visitors from Switzerland were welcomed to the June meeting of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique London Group. One was the treasurer of the Organisation of Swiss Abroad, Dr David von Wyss, a banker from Zurich, the other the director of the Secretariat of Swiss

Abroad in Berne, Mr Marcel Ney.

The meeting, held at the Lecture Hall of the Swiss Embassy, was chaired by the Society's president, Mrs Mariann Meier, who gave a warm welcome to the Minister at the Swiss Embassy, Monsieur Claudio Caratsch, and other members of the Embassy, as well as to Dr and Mrs von Wyss and Mr Ney.

Dr von Wyss addressed the meeting, held in conjunction with the Swiss Mercantile Society, on Swiss banking. A resumé of his interesting talk will appear in the next issue.

Mr Ney then addressed the meeting. He brought greetings from the Organisation in Berne and then answered questions on citizenship and other matters important for Swiss Abroad. He also reminded the gathering of the 60th Assembly of Swiss Abroad to be held in Sierre in the Valais from August 20-22. The theme would be "The Swiss Woman Abroad".

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### NEWS AND VIEWS

Swiss society news is welcomed by the Swiss Observer at 68 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 5NY.

Your views about the magazine itself should be passed to Mrs Mariann Meier, 53 Priory Road, London NW6 3NE. Her telephone number is 01-624 5360.

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# Jean Philipe Inebnit

THE LIFE of the Swiss community in the North will never be quite the same again without "Professor" Jean Philippe Inebnit, one of the driving forces of the Yorkshire Swiss Club.

Jean Philippe Inebnit died on March 6 at the age of nearly 92, and we have only recently learnt of the disappearance of a man who will be missed by many of those who shared his beliefs and idealism.

Born in 1890 at Les Brenets, Mr Inebnit went to secondary school at Le Locle and studied literature at Neuchâtel University.

During the First World War he was jailed for refusing to perform his military service. He was at that time an admirer and follower of the Swiss intellectual and pacifist, Pierre Cérésolle.

He married in 1917 and then taught in various institutes before leaving for England, where he was offered a post as French teacher in a Leeds school in 1920. Eighteen months after having settled in the city he was offered the post of assistant lecturer in French literature at Leeds University.

This is where he remained for the rest of his career, eventually becoming senior lecturer in French history. But Mr Inebnit always claimed that his academic interests were secondary to his dreams for a better world and his personal endeavours to foster that dream. Indeed, he espoused

several causes with utter dedication until the end.

His most abiding concern was that of disarmament and of diverting the energies expended on armies and on teaching young men to kill towards constructive and peaceful purposes.

Well before conscientious objectors could opt for a non-military service rather than being sent to jail, Mr Inebnit campaigned hard for such a system. In doing so, as in waging his other campaigns, he kept in touch with many historical figures such as Max Petitpierre, Lord Caradon, Mrs Roosevelt and even Mr Nehru. He also corresponded with former Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, with whom he shared ideas about the American Peace Corps.

As a dedicated internationalist, Jean Philippe Inebnit was an active member of the United Nations Association and was a stalwart of the International Voluntary Service. He worked with the Abbé Pierre, a well known French humanitarian of the post-war years, in building homes for refugees and orphans.

It is naturally difficult to assess his impact, but perhaps what is more important than a person's historical mark is his total participation in mankind's fight

for a better world. And this adequately describes Jean Philippe Inebnit, whom many people remember in Switzerland for his inspiring conferences.

He was known to several federal councillors to whom he tried to preach his firm beliefs concerning the evils of military service. On several occasions he travelled all the way from the North of England to Switzerland to defend conscientious objectors before military courts.

In his 80s he was still harbouring great plans. He was campaigning for the planting of trees in the Sahara desert and set up an organisation to this end. He took up the cause of Swiss women who marry foreigners and whose children lose the privilege of Swiss citizenship. He corresponded with these women, 1,000 of whom sent him letters expressing their grievances.

But the Swiss of the North will also remember Jean Philippe Inebnit as the main founder of the Landsgemeinde at Hebden Bridge. For many years, he conducted this event stirringly, lending to this gathering of Swiss people from all over the North some of his patriotic fervour.

Mr Inebnit was, indeed, a strong patriot and never became a British citizen. But he was first

and foremost a citizen of the world and lived up to this ideal completely.

**PMB**

*THE following incident, which happened to me some 20 years ago, showed the concern, appreciation and happiness Professor Inebnit had for his fellow human beings.*

*I was a bus driver at the time. One evening I noticed this white haired man running down the lane towards the bus with a massive bunch of flowers in his arms. Realizing that he would never make the bus stop in time, I pulled up and waited a couple of minutes allowing him to board.*

*By the time I had reached the bus station in Leeds the incident had gone from my mind, but not from Jean Inebnit. There was a tap on the driving cab door and there stood this gentleman, thanking me for waiting for him as he had a very important meeting to attend and would I accept this large bunch of flowers as a token on his gratitude. It was typical of the man - always thoughtful, always concerned for others. I have often wondered who really should have had those flowers. Now, I shall never know. - P. Selby-Huber, Leeds.*

## Time for an appraisal of the nation

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particular the chemical industry which is one of the country's larger earners of foreign currency.

The disaster at the Italian chemical works, the questionable marketing methods used in the Third World and the affair of the Briton who reported his company to the EEC have all helped to give the impression that the making of profits takes precedence over the welfare of their fellow men and the observance of international law.

It is all too easily forgotten that these same organisations have been responsible for many thousands, if not millions, of people being alive who would otherwise have died. This is not to say that there are not people and organisations unworthy of the Swiss people, but they are not the norm.

The country's financial institutions have always been fair game for the ignorant and

envious, but again the events of recent years have caused serious concern. The Swiss banks have never had London's reputation for investments but they have been considered safe.

It will take some time to restore confidence after the scandal involving dishonest employees which caused one bank to suffer considerable losses.

Other problems, like the non-membership of the UN, contribute to the misunderstanding of Swiss motives and actions by the international community, and the nation is not very good at blowing its own trumpet. Much more could be done to tell the world about Switzerland.

Naturally, the foreign media concentrate on events which are not particularly favourable to her since these are news. Information to the contrary is available but one has to ask for it.

All this would appear to give the Swiss

little reason to celebrate but that would be to forget that Swiss hard work and common sense, together with their uncommon humanity, have seen them through far worse troubles.

The Swiss are still largely contented with their lot; the constitution is being revised to take account of modern conditions; educational standards are being unified; women's rights are being recognised. It is all excruciatingly slow, but progress is being made.

Switzerland is not a nation that is given to making hurried decisions and then having to mend the damage caused as a consequence. The Swiss prefer to think things through to their logical conclusion.

So the celebrations are justified. The Swiss know their problems and are doing something about them. "Vive la Suisse!"

I only wish I were there to join them in their celebrations.