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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

A very full house gathered on the 15th February at Swiss House for this important meeting which under the able chairmanship of Mr. W. Meier proceeded smoothly and efficiently to deal with various items on the agenda.

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted without comment. The accounts both of the Society and of the Section were fully explained by our auditor Mr. Robert Huxley, F.C.A. The total funds per 31.12.1949 were £3,756.— as against £4,501.—, the deficit having risen from £882.— to £1,714.—. This was entirely due to the smaller number of students who attended the college in 1949. The Council had deliberately curtailed the number of students to avoid a certain amount of overcrowding and inconvenience experienced the year before. All the funds are held in a very liquid form. The accounts of the Society were passed without dissent. The deficit will, as in the past, be made good by a grant from the Federal Authorities in Berne, who like the S.K.V. wish the students to have the benefit of low fees.

Mr. W. Meier in his presidential report referred to poor results of the efforts made during 1949 to remove or curtail, internationally, the restrictions against the movement of goods and persons. As a consequence, our membership is static with all the inherent weakness of such a condition. The few young Swiss who work in offices under Ministry of Labour permit have to return when the permits expire. We have lost some outstanding members in 1949. Mr. H. Marfurt, *chef de cours* since May 1946, returned to Lucerne in September to take up the position of English master at the Kantonsschule. In the last three years the Society lost three very able Chairmen of the Education Committee: Mr. O. Roethlisberger (now at Nyon), Mr. K. E. Ammann (now at Basle), Mr. E. A. Hueni, who took up an important post at Zurich last January.

The fullest use has been made to the facilities which our school can offer. The subjects taught cover English and Commerce and the curriculum provides our students with an insight into the social and commercial life and the civic institutions of this country. Three courses of 15-16 weeks duration were held. They were attended by 342 students (against 431 in 1948). 157 students sat for the diploma examinations of whom 116 (or 74%) passed successfully.

As already mentioned, Mr. Marfurt left last September. His functions were placed in the hands of Mr. C. Slade, M.A., who was on our staff before the war. We now have 6 teachers, of whom two are M.A.'s, three B.A.'s, and one a Fellow of the Institute of Linguists.

Regular excursions took place to universities, cathedral towns and other places of interest and students' dances and social events of pre-war days have been revived and are much appreciated.

There is an increasing demand for our evening classes from young Swiss girls working in London and young men employed on short permits with firms in the City.

In regard to membership, we registered 14 new members, 12 resignations (of whom 6 transfers to Switzerland), and we struck off six members. We lost M. R. Aeschlimann, J. C. Nuessle, and H. Senn through

death, all of whom had been members for many years. We also suffered the loss through death of W. Eichenberger, an outstanding figure in the life of our Society, who was made an Honorary Member in 1928, and later became a trustee.

We now have 22 Honorary Members, 279 Active Members of whom 16 ladies, 70 Contributory Members, 23 Corresponding Members.

In the course of 1949 we held a searching enquiry into the Swiss Old Age and Invalidity Insurance and submitted our findings and suggestions to Mr. Ph. Schmid-Ruedin, General Secretary of S.K.V. and to the Swiss Legation, London, for transmission to Berne.

The Annual Dinner and Dance was held at the Trocadero Restaurant on the 27th January, 1950, and proved a success.

Last summer our Ladies' Group arranged an outing to Kenwood and another to Richmond Park.

Mr. J. J. Pfaendler, who has managed our Employment Dept. for forty years, placed 38 Swiss employees besides many others.

Mr. Robert P. Huxley was unanimously re-elected as auditor. For the purpose of electing the new Committee Mr. W. Deutsch acted as Chairman pro tem. Mr. W. Meier our very able, active and ever popular President was unanimously confirmed in his position while the rest of the Council and Committee Members were elected *en bloc*.

Mr. Boos then moved, and it was agreed, that we convey our best wishes for a speedy recovery to Mr. De Brunner who is seriously ill in Switzerland.

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To test the feeling of the meeting, Mr. Burren introduced the subject of the contributions which the London Section makes to the S.K.V. Funds in Zurich in respect of the Society's Old Age and Invalidity Insurance to which 190 of our members belong. Members over 45 years of age cannot join the insurance, those between 35-45 have the option of joining, whereas those below 35 must join. The Zentralblatt is compulsory for Switzerland, but not for the foreign sections. The devaluation of the £Sterling makes some adjustment necessary. The voting favoured an unchanged payment of 10/- for the Zentralblatt to which figure it was raised in 1949 and an increase of the insurance contribution from 4/- to 6/- per annum.

In the special General Meeting which was called to appoint a new trustee in place of the late Mr. W. Eichenberger, Mr. W. R. Gamper, 2, Bishopsgate, E.C.2, was unanimously elected.

Business having proceeded very smoothly, we disposed of certain items concerning the ordinary February meeting.

Mr. Meier reported the death of Mr. H. Buser, who joined our society over fifty years ago and who had retired to the South Coast some time ago.

Mr. Boos then referred to an article in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of the 4th February, 1950, reporting that 20,624 Swiss abroad have joined the Swiss Old Age and Dependents Insurance. Sterling area countries do not yet permit transfers of premiums to Switzerland. When such transfers become possible, the Federal Council have agreed that payment will be effected at the pre-devaluation rate of 17.25. Further,

the Federal Council would not entertain assessment on net incomes, i.e. after deduction of tax in the countries of residence. Conversations between the British and Swiss authorities for reciprocity in the matter of National Old Age Insurance were taking place.

Thus ended a most enjoyable and instructive meeting at 9 p.m.

E.H.S.

WATERCOLOURS EXHIBITION.

By RICHARD WEISBROD

at The Leger Galleries, 13, Old Bond Street, W.1.
(Open from March 2nd — March 25th, 1950, 10-6 p.m., Saturdays 10-1.)

The private view of the above-mentioned exhibition of watercolours by our compatriot Richard Weisbrod, took place on Wednesday, March 1st, at the Leger Galleries, 13, Old Bond Street, W.1. Amongst the numerous visitors, who attended the opening, followed by a reception at Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, W.1, was the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté.

Richard Weisbrod was born in 1906, at Affolten-am Albis near Zurich, and came to live in Blackburn in 1932. He is a member of the Manchester Group, the Manchester Graphic Club and the Blackburn Artists' Society.

The industrial gloom of Lancashire, the sordid rows of back-streets, the gaunt silhouette of a Pendleton pit-head provide the artist with inspiration for one third of the exhibits numbering about 50 paintings.

When business-trips take him to London, Paris or Switzerland he never travels without his painting equipment and the results are to be seen in such diverse titles as "Kensington High Street"; "Pont St. Michel"; "Along the Rhône", etc. The versatility of this wide range of subjects is one of the most striking features of the show, which combined with his lively, virile drawing and clear, vibrant colour make him a most original and individual artist.

A first one-man show is an important event in an artists' career, especially if it is in a Bond Street Gallery. He has had two provincial one-man-shows, one in the Blackburn City Art Gallery and one in the Mid Day Studios, Manchester.

We heartily invite our readers to visit this interesting exhibition.

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