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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

Visit of Mr. Richard Maier-Neff, General Secretary of the SKV

Although no special arrangements had been made to celebrate the Society's 80th anniversary, it was fitting that the event did not go entirely unnoticed. Among its members, the SMS is fortunate in having many who have supported its activities ever since they first came to these shores before and after the first world war. Six of these, Messrs. O. Gasser, W. Jent, F. Streit, H. Truninger, J. C. Wetter and J.J. Wetter had been awarded a "Wappenscheibe" by the SKV in recognition of 50 years' membership but had been unable to attend the special meetings in Switzerland when these mementos were presented.

To the delight of the members assembled at the Monthly Meeting, held at Swiss House on Friday, 15th November, Mr. R. Maier-Neff, General Secretary of the SKV, here on a short visit following an international conference in Amsterdam, had brought these special awards with him. He was extended a cordial welcome by the Chairman, Mr. A. Jaccard, who also expressed his pleasure at seeing among those present Monsieur R. Gächter, Secretary of Embassy, and many of the "older Brigade" who had come along specially for the occasion.

Unfortunately, for health and other unavoidable reasons, several of the veterans had conveyed their regrets at being unable to receive the "Wappenscheibe" in person. On their behalf, Mr. F. Streit, one of the recipients, expressed thanks to Mr. Maier-Neff and recalled with pleasure some of his early associations with the SKV in his professional education in Switzerland.

Following the official proceedings, Mr. Maier-Neff addressed the meeting on: "Aus der Arbeit des Schweizerischen Kaufmännischen Vereins". In a very interesting talk, he gave members an insight into some of the problems connected particularly with mechanisation, automation, mergers etc., and the difficulties of assisting older employees to adapt themselves to the ever changing business methods and processes.

He said that the many institutions which had been set up by the association over nearly a century for the furtherance of the members' aims and aspirations had served them well. Among them he instanced the College in London which was performing a very useful function in training our young compatriots for the future needs and demands of the Swiss economy and also encouraged many of them to follow courses for higher professional education on their return to Switzerland.

The General Secretary further gave a brief report on the 7th revision of the Swiss Old Age and Dependents' Insurance which is due to come into force on 1st January, 1969. He answered various questions in connection with this scheme and promised to put forward to the appropriate authorities certain suggestions regarding Swiss residing abroad which were made by members present.

Finally, the Chairman thanked Mr. Maier-Neff for a most interesting address, and also for having spared the time earlier in the day to discuss matters of mutual interest with some of the Society's executives.

W.B.

MANCHESTER SWISS CLUB

For many of us here in the North, 9th November 1968 started as an ordinary Saturday, something apart from the hustle and worries of the week, the day when we escape from the ordinary and sometimes dreary routine of our daily occupations, when we can help our wives, if we feel so, when we can do our weekend and at this time of the year, our Christmas shopping, when many of us are looking forward to sports and other hobbies. This particular Saturday was for us Swiss and many of our friends different from others, because it was the day of our Annual Banquet and Ball, by now a tradition dating back more than one hundred years, an occasion no one likes to miss. The keen interest in the event was proved by the fact, that this year many of us had to travel very long distances and gladly took the risk of frozen roads and fog to be present.

As usual, we assembled in the elegant foyer of the Midland Hotel to meet many good old and also young friends. We were all pleased to have the opportunity of meeting our new Ambassador and Madame Keller who in the afternoon had been entertained by the Lord Mayor at a football game, despite atrociously cold and unfriendly weather, and this shows again how our country's representatives abroad do not fear discomfort and ever hardship if it can help to uphold the image of Switzerland. Dr. René Keller, our new Ambassador, is an old friend and his wife's family resided in Manchester in the 1880's. She has been told by her mother about the grime, soot, squalor and poverty she had witnessed in her youth so that both were most agreeably surprised by what this proud City has to offer nowadays. Dr. Keller is well known to our Colony and the writer remembers introducing him to us as long ago as 1951 when he had the pleasure of listening to one of his clear and interesting talks in his then capacity of first assistant to Dr. Umbricht, at that time the Commercial Attaché to our Legation in London.

We were pleased to welcome in our midst the President of the Yorkshire Swiss Club and Madame Inebnit along with some members of the newly formed Liverpool Swiss Club, all helping to consolidate the friendly ties already existing between these neighbouring clubs. For Major Nicholson, well liked by us all, we have great feelings of friendship, knowing how much he has done in creating the Swiss Section of the Manchester Rifle Club, and how closely this important organisation is connected with a similar one in Geneva. Every year, our guests include some executives of the Swiss Chemical Industry, and foremost of all I would like to mention Mr. and Mrs. Banderet who rarely miss any of our functions and social get-together. This year we were also pleased to welcome Mr. J. Rodgers of "Geigy" and Mr. Grant of "Ciba Clayton Limited" and many other British friends who honour us with their support.

After the *apéritifs* we adjourned to the banquet-hall to partake of an excellent meal well supported by good vintage wine, the enjoyment of which was greatly enhanced by the presence of our ladies who usually add a special charm and elegance. Our President, Dr. Jaggi, said grace and the dinner over, invited us to drink the loyal toast, after which our good friend Mr. Fattorini rose to give the one to Switzerland. This he did in a very