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# SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

## GOLDEN JUBILEE



A. STEINMANN,

President,

Swiss Mercantile Society.

And more such days as these to us befall!

Shakespeare.

The Golden Jubilee of the Swiss Mercantile Society London, which is a section of the "Société Suisse des Commerçants" in Switzerland was celebrated with great pomp on Friday 14th, Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th of October.

What a week-end it was for all those who had to go through with it, especially for the guests from home who, apart from attending every official function, were taken to a large number of "Sehenswürdigkeiten" which heavily taxed their powers of endurance, and yet, as one of the chief delegates said to me, "it was worth it."

Golden Jubilee's in the Swiss Colony are of a rare occurrence, and therefore when such an important event happens, it should be celebrated with enthusiasm.

Well, the enthusiasm was certainly not lacking and it gave vent on several occasions during the three days. Although it was a purely S.M.S. affair, it was also in a wider sense a great patriotic demonstration and it could be noticed in almost every speech, and they were numerous, that a deep attachment to the land of our birth was manifested.

The festivities started with a Members' Evening, on Friday, the 14th inst, at Pagani's Restaurant, where an excellent dinner was served of which about 120 Members partook, amongst them several Lady members.

Before I relate the proceedings I should like to say that this was one of the most pleasant evenings I have spent at a Swiss function; a congenial and happy atmosphere was prevalent throughout, and even those, who occasionally grumble about long speeches, had to admit that this in no way interfered with their enjoyment.

After the toasts to H.M. the King and "La Patrie" had been proposed, the President, Mr. Steinmann — who has been for the last five years at the head of the Swiss Mercantile Society, — rose amongst great acclamation to address the gathering. As some of the guests were not conversant with the English language, all the speeches were given in the four languages of our country, i.e., German, French, Italian and Romansch.

Mr. Steinmann said:

Ich schätze mich glücklich und fühle mich sehr geehrt, Ihnen im Namen des Vorstandes der S.M.S. den Willkommensgruss zu unserem goldenen Jubiläum zu entbieten.

Durch Ihre Anwesenheit an der hentigen Feier beweisen Sie uns aufs deutlichste Ihre Sympathie, Ihre Freundschaft und Ihre Treue.

Wir würdigen es als ganz besondere Auszeichnung, dass unsere Zentralbehörde unter Führung des hochverdienenden Zentralpräsidenten Herr Gubser den weiten, beschwerlichen Weg nicht gescheut hat, um in unserer Mitte diesen einmaligen Tag festlich zu begehen. Es ist eine höchst willkommene Gelegenheit für viele unserer Mitglieder, zum erstenmale persönlichen Kontakt mit den Leitern der Geschicke unseres Verbandes zu nehmen, und

für uns, die wir die guten Freunde aus der Schweiz bereits das Vergnügen haben zu kennen, die Bande der Freundschaft noch enger zu flechten. Ihr Besuch ist uns erneut ein sichtbarer Beweis des Wohlwollens und ein Zeichen der Anerkennung der von der grössten Ausland-Sektion des K.V. geleisteten Arbeit.

Wir freuen uns aber auch äusserst über die so zahlreich erschienenen Freunde und Mitglieder der S.M.S. An diesem Ehrentag, an dem wir mit berechtigtem Stolz auf eine erspriessliche 50 jährige Tätigkeit zurückblicken können, vergessen wir die Dienste derer nicht, die vor uns in selbstloser Art, zum Wohle der S.M.S. gearbeitet haben.

In einer Festschrift, die wir unserem unermüdbaren Sekretär, Herr J. J. Schneider, verdanken, haben wir die Geschichte des Vereins und die Verdienste der Männer die während einem halben Jahrhundert an der Verwirklichung der Ziele und Ideale der S.M.S. arbeiteten, gewürdigt. Ich werde mich deshalb in meinen weiteren Ausführungen darauf beschränken, einen knappen Umriss der Geschichte und der Bestrebungen des Schweiz. Kaufmännischen Vereins zu geben.

Dieser wurde im März 1861 in Zürich als "Verein junger Kaufleute" mit dem Zweck gegründet, "die Vervollkommnung der dem Kaufmann nötigen Kenntnisse zu fördern." In der Förderung des beruflichen Bildungswesens und der Pflege der kameradschaftlichen Gesinnung unter seinen Mitgliedern, erblickte der K.V. seit jeher seine Hauptaufgabe. Die erste Dekade des 20. Jahrhunderts brachte die ersten kantonalen Lehrlingsgesetze, mit Verpflichtung zum Besuch kaufmännischer Kurse während der Lehrzeit und Berufsexamen am Ende derselben. Der Staat, der zur Durchführung dieser Vorschriften verpflichtet war, fand im S.K.V. die nötigen Schulorganisations bereits vor und ersparte sich durch die Uebertragung der Lehrlingerziehung an den S.K.V., die kostspielige Einrichtung und Schaffung des Verwaltungskörpers. Für die Unterrichtung der Pflichtschüler, erhielten die S.K.V. Schulen vom Staat Subventionen. Dies erlaubte in der Folge die Ertelung weiterer Fächer, wie Organisations-, Speditionskunde, Verkäufer Kurse u.s.w. Ferner wurde unser Verband mit der Durchführung der Eidg. Diplom-Prüfungen für Buchhalter und Korrespondenten betraut; auch erreichte er Auslandstipendien, gründete eine Alters- & Invalidenversicherung, eine Krankenkasse und eine Stellenvermittlung und den Rechtsbeistand. In der Nachkriegszeit gesellte sich zu den übrigen Vereinszielen auch die Vertretung der Angestellten-Interessen, in Bezug auf Saläre, bezahlte Ferien, Arbeitslosen-Unterstützung, Arbeitslager für junge Arbeitslose etc.

Wie Sie sehen, meine verehrten Freunde, in der Tat ein äusserst reichhaltiges Tätigkeitsfeld. Der Hauptzweck jedoch bleibt nach wie vor: kaufmännische Bildung zur Heranziehung eines gutqualifizierten Personals, welches den Namen "Kaufmann" verdient und zur Mitarbeit mit den Leitern der schweizerischen Handelsinteressen in fruchtbringender Weise befähigt ist. Unserer Sektion ist ausserdem die spezielle Aufgabe zugefallen, eine Institution zu schaffen die es den jungen Schweizern ermöglicht, in kürzester Zeit die wichtigste Fremdsprache zu erlernen und mit der Eigenart des englischen Handelwesens vertraut zu werden. Ich glaube stolz behaupten zu dürfen, dass wir im bekannten Colloge der S.M.S. diese Aufgabe befriedigend gelöst haben.

An diesem Jubiläumstage wollen wir uns denn auch geloben, dass geschaffene Werk nach besten Kräften weiterzuführen und dadurch, obwohl fern unserer schönen Heimat, etwas zum Wohle unseres Vaterlandes zu leisten.

Meine Freunde, erheben Sie sich und trinken Sie mit mir auf das Wohlergehen des Schweiz. Kaufm. Vereins und seines verdienten Zentralpräsidenten Herrn Gubser.

Great applause greeted the words of the President.

He was followed by Mr. A. Gubser, Central President of the "Société Suisse des Commerçants," who, on rising received a hearty ovation from the entire company.

He said:

Sie können es kaum ermassen, mit welcher innerer Bewegung ich heute das Wort ergreife und ich weiss die hohe Ehre, die mir zu teil wurde, wohl zu schätzen, Ihnen heute im Namen des S.K.V. die besten Grüsse und die herzlichsten Glückwünsche zu Ihrem "Golden Jubilee" zu überbringen.

Vorerst möchte ich Ihnen aber für Ihre freundliche Einladung, an Ihrem hentigen Feste teilnehmen zu dürfen, recht herzlich danken — nicht nur für mich allein, sondern ich bin beauftragt, dies im Namen meiner Mitdelegierten zu tun: den Kollegen Carl Weigl, Vizepräsident des S.K.V., Nationalrat Ph. Schmid-Ruedin, General Sek. S.K.V. und der beiden Zentralsekretäre und Redakteure: Adolf Galliker und Emile Losey.

Der 26. Sept. 1888 war der Gründungstag der S.M.S. und 13 mutige Kollegen haben das Wagnis unternommen, in der Weltstadt London einen Schweiz. Kaufm. Verein zu gründen. Die Zahl 13 muss für den S.K.V. eine eigentliche Glückszahl sein; denn die Annalen erzählen uns, dass nach drei weitere Sektionen unseres Berufsverbandes — unter diesen die grösste Sektion Zürich — ebenfalls 13 Gründer aufweisen.

Rückblickend erscheint uns die von treuen Kollegen vollbrachte Tat als ein gewaltiges Wagnis und die Tatsache, dass nun die S.M.S. heute den 50-jährigen Bestand feiern kann, bewegt uns innerlich sehr tief. Welches waren wohl die tiefsten Gründe zu diesem Wagnis? Hat nicht vielleicht das so berühmte Schweizer Heimweh den innern Anstoss dazu gegeben? Sicherlich waren es aber auch Bande der Freundschaft, die die ersten Mitglieder zusammenführten und auch die Erkenntnis, dass das kaufmännische Können noch verschiedene Lücken aufwies, die so rasch als möglich aufgefüllt werden mussten, um seinen Arbeits Platz voll ausfüllen zu können.

So ersehen wir aus Ihrer Vereinsgeschichte, dass bald nach der Gründung Ihres Unternehmens der Aus- und Weiterbildung Ihrer Mitglieder die grösste Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt wurde. Diesen Hauptzweck haben Sie all die 50 Jahre hindurch mit grossem Interesse, mit viel Geschick und mit viel selbstloser Arbeit verfolgt. Ja, Sie haben noch mehr getan. Ein Wagnis haben Sie unternommen, das wir Ihnen nie hoch genug anrechnen können: ich meine die vor 15 Jahren erfolgte Gründung einer Tagesschule. Als in den Nachkriegsjahren die Auswanderung junger Leute nach England zufolge staatlicher Massnahmen immer schwieriger wurde, haben Sie mit frischem Mut und eingehender Sachkenntnis einen Weg gesucht, wie man den jungen Kaufleuten den so notwendigen Auslandsaufenthalt ermöglichen könnte. Wir brauchen uns sicherlich nicht darüber zu unterhalten, wie dringend ein solcher Aufenthalt ist. Sie haben sich ausserordentlich hohe Ziele gestellt und rückblickend dürfen wir sagen, dass Sie all das, was Sie wollten, erreichten — ja, Sie haben sich selbst übertroffen.

Ihre Schule geniesst höchstes Ansehen, nicht nur in der Schweiz, sondern überall, wo man von ihr spricht. Sie dürfen mit voller Berechtigung auf das Erreichte stolz sein. Wir sind auch nicht blind, einzusehen, dass das Ansehen, das der S.K.V. in London geniesst, zum grössten Teil ihr Verdienst ist.

Nicht nur Ihre Mitglieder, die ehem. Schüler und der Hauptverein des S.K.V., sondern das ganze Schweizervolk anerkennen all das, was Sie in selbstloser Arbeit getan haben. Tausende und aber Tausende von jungen Kaufleuten haben Ihre Kurse besucht und sind mit reichen Kenntnissen wieder in die Schweiz zurückgekehrt. Sie haben Pionierarbeit im eigentlichsten Sinne des Wortes geleistet. Ja, einzelne Ihrer Mitglieder haben in selbstloser Hingabe auch finanzielle Verpflichtungen übernommen, die weit über das hinausgehen, was man von einem Mitglied

verlangen darf. Sie erachteten es als eine Selbstverständlichkeit und dadurch sind wir nur noch grösser in ihrer Schuld. Wenn vielleicht hin und wieder der Hauptverein und einzelne Mitglieder unserer Zentrale, wie z.B. Herr Nat. Rat Schmid-Ruedin etwas für sie tun konnten, so dürfen sie dies nur als eine ganz kleine Abzahlung an unsere grosse Schuld ihnen gegenüber betrachten. Seien Sie überzeugt, dass wir auch in Zukunft stets bereit sein werden, Ihnen zu helfen und Sie zu unterstützen, soviel als in unsern Kräften steht.

Aber noch einer andern, hervorragenden Institution Ihres Vereins, der Stellenvermittlung des S.K.V. wollen wir heute gedenken. Ihr Büro hat in all den vielen Jahren eine segensreiche Tätigkeit entfaltet. Wie hätten sich diese ehemaligen Pfaltertreter auch in dieser Gross-Stadt zurechtfinden können und wer hätte es ihnen ermöglicht, eine Stelle zu finden? Tausenden von jungen Handelsbessenen haben Sie Arbeit und Brot verschafft. Diese Stellenvermittlung ist ein weiteres Ruhmesblatt in Ihrer Vereinsgeschichte. Sicherlich hatten Sie auch Jahre banger Sorge und mit Ihnen auch der Hauptverein, als es nur mit grossen Opfern Ihrer- und unsererseits möglich war, die Einnahmen mit den Ausgaben in Einklang zu bringen; aber auch in den schwersten Momenten haben wir uns im Zentralkomitee immer gesagt: es wäre eine Pflichtvergessenheit, wenn wir nicht alles tun würden, unsere Auslandsstellenvermittlungen und insbesondere unsere grösste in London zu halten, was auch da kommen möge. Ihr und unser Optimismus haben uns allen recht gegeben. Wir wollen alle hoffen, dass noch bessere Jahre kommen werden als die letzten; aber auch hier möchte ich sagen: zählen Sie unter allen Umständen auf die Unterstützung des Hauptvereins.

Werte Freunde! Sie hatten das seltene Glück an der Spitze Ihres Unternehmens immer Männer zu besitzen, die mit ihrer ganzen Persönlichkeit und unter Hintanzugung ihrer persönlichen Interessen, für ihre gute Sache eingestanden sind. Wir wünschen Ihnen das auch für die fernere Zukunft. Sie werden es mir nicht übel nehmen, wenn ich davon absehe, einzelne Namen zu erwähnen — ich müsste sie alle, alle nennen.

Liebe Londoner Kollegen! Im Namen des S.K.V. und seiner 116 Sektionen entbiete ich Ihnen die allerherzlichsten Glückwünsche zu Ihrem Goldenen Jubiläum.

Danken möchte ich Ihnen für all das, was Sie als Sektion London und viele Ihrer Mitglieder im besondern für den Hauptverein in all den 50 Jahren für uns getan haben. Ich bin mir bewusst, dass alle Worte nur leerer Schall sind, gegenüber dem, was Sie geleistet haben; aber glücklicherweise verlangen grosse Menschen keinen Dank.

Als bescheidenes Zeichen unserer Anerkennung habe ich die Ehre, Ihnen ein Bild eines unserer schönsten Schweizerberge zu überreichen. Empfangen Sie es als Zeichen der Anerkennung und der Freundschaft, und wenn Sie es von Zeit zu Zeit wieder betrachten, erinnern Sie sich daran, dass treue Freunde in unserm lieben Schweizland Ihrer in Hochachtung stets gedenken!

A wonderful oil painting depicting the majestic "Jungfrau" was then presented. Mr. Gubser also presented three Members of the Committee with the Golden Pin of the S.K.V. a much coveted distinction which is only rarely bestowed, the recipients, who richly earned this mark of appreciation are: Mr. W. Meier, Chairman of the Education Committee, O. Grob, Hon. Treasurer, and M. Schneider, Hon. Secretary.

Mr. Gubser then finished his excellent speech by relating a few reminiscences of his stay in London some twenty-five years ago, his humorous anecdotes caused much hilarity and no doubt

evoked memories of similar experiences among those present.

On resuming his seat Mr. Gubser was heartily cheered and everybody sang "For He is a Jolly Good Fellow."

The next toast was the one to "The Swiss Delegation" and was proposed by Mr. A. C. Stahelin, late President and Hon. Member of the S.M.S.

It was one of those delightful speeches to which one could listen for hours, in introducing the official guests Mr. Stahelin gave a few biographical details of each one and although some of these remarks were personal, the refreshing humour which accompanied them ruled out any indiscretion; my only trouble is that such things are better related than written, as on paper they lose their purpose; that everybody, and not least the Gentlemen concerned enjoyed this happy oration was proved by the loud applause which Mr. Stahelin received.

The following official guests of the Evening were "reviewed" by Mr. Stahelin:

M. A. Gubser, Central President S.K.V. since 1932.

M. C. Weigl, Vice-President of the Central Administration since 1933.

Nat. Council Schmid-Ruedin, General Secretary of S.K.V., over 20 years connected with the Administration.

M. E. Losey, Central Secretary S.K.V. Suisse Romande for 18 years.

M. A. Galliker, Central Secretary and Editor "Zentral Blatt" S.K.V.

M. O. Isler, Section Winterthur-S.K.V., President of the "Vereinigung der Zurückgekehrten Auslandschweizer."

Mlle. Spiller, Member of the Section Uri.

The following Gentlemen who were officially invited, were presented at the last moment from attending:

Dr. K. Böschenstein, Mldg. Volkswirtschafts Dept.

Professor Schiess, Eidg. Oberexperte f. Kaufm. Bildungswesen.

M. G. Koerber, Hon. Member S.K.V., rector in Liestal, Oberexperte Lehrlings-Prüfungen.

In order to make a little break in the proceedings it was announced that Mlle. Cattaneo, our charming compatriote, would give us one or two songs; her singing was delightful and everybody was very grateful to this splendid artiste for having so kindly consented to come along.

At this juncture the President informed the gathering that a large number of Telegrams and letters had been received and he proceeded to give the names of all those who had so kindly remembered the Society on its 50th Jubilee.

The next speaker was National Councillor Schmid-Ruedin, he received a reception which is due to an old and trusted friend; it was not the first time that Mr. Schmid-Ruedin had attended a festive gathering of the Society; and to see old friends return always gladdens one's heart.

He expressed his sincere thanks to the members of the Society for the invitation extended to him and his colleagues, he said "no one knows what a fight it was to fix up the members of the Delegation, everybody wanted to come, in fact it was suggested that the Central President should be accompanied with all the 36,000 members of the S.K.V."

M. Schmid-Ruedin expressed his regrets, that Dr. Böschenstein, owing to the special work which the crisis had brought to our Federal Administration, was unable to join the Delegation from our homeland.

His remark, that Federal-Councillor Obrecht, had spoken to him very highly about the College and the work of the Society, was received with great acclamation, and it is indeed gratifying to learn that members of our Federal Government are appreciating the good work that has been accomplished and which so many of us have at heart.

With great emotion he mentioned how proud the Swiss are at home of the "Fünfte Schweiz," which counts amongst one of the Jewels of our Confederation. "You have remained true to your country" he said "and we shall remain true to you." (Loud applause). He also reiterated the great sacrifices Switzerland is at present making for the defense of the country, and amongst deafening applause of the entire company, said, that Switzerland is willing, yea ready to fight for the sacred inheritance of our forefathers who have given their lives for Freedom and Liberty.

After the almost riotous applause which National-Councillor Schmid-Ruedin received, Mr. Mathyer, one of the students of the S.M.S. College, dressed in Swiss National costume, gave us a few "yodels" with accordion accompaniment, and everyone felt, if only for a few fleeting moments back home, it is astounding how some of these simple tunes bring back old forgotten memories.

And then back we went to some more speech-making, this time it was M. E. Losey, "Secrétaire Général de la Suisse Romande," who, in French addressed the company.

He voiced his thanks for the opportunity given to him to be with the S.M.S. on that memorable evening and to meet so many old friends whom he had had the pleasure of greeting in Switzerland on many former occasions.

He said amidst cheers "C'est pour le secrétaire romand de la S. s. d. C. un grand honneur et un vif plaisir de pouvoir apporter à ses chers collègues de la métropole britannique le salut cordial et patriotique des commerçants de Suisse romande." He continued, "Bien que ne possédant pas, hélas! la langue de Shakespeare, je sens mon cœur battre à l'émision du vôtre."

Au cours de 50 ans, vous avez accompli une œuvre extrêmement utile dans tous les domaines intéressant l'employé. Votre activité scolaire, connue et appréciée à sa juste valeur dans toute la Suisse, jette un lustre éclatant sur la Société suisse des commerçants.

Les milliers de collègues qui bénéficièrent de votre excellente organisation comme élèves, comme postulants au service de placement, comme membres de votre section, ont été entourés constamment d'une atmosphère amicale, d'une sympathie agissante. Tous conservent de leur séjour dans la splendide capitale de Grand-Bretagne un souvenir ineffaçable.

These words, so nobly spoken were acknowledged with enthusiasm.

Another pleasant interlude was then announced, Messrs. Veil our compatriots, together with Miss Winifred Benemy played two trios which were much enjoyed.

M. A. Stauffer, a former President and Honorary Member of the S.M.S., then informed the President that he had undertaken to make a small collection amongst former Presidents, Honorary Members and old members with a view to presenting a gift to the S.M.S. in appreciation of their splendid work, and to help them to celebrate the 50th Jubilee in a dignified manner.

"I am happy," he said, "to present you, Mr. President, with a cheque amounting to £55, it is also the wish of the donors, that a "Präsidenten Hammer" should be given to you, to be handed down to each succeeding President, so that at all times the respect of the Chair can be demanded in an audible manner," and amidst laughter Mr. Stauffer said that it could also be

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used to wake up those of the members who occasionally enjoy forty winks during some of the long and lovely speeches.

The President, M. Steinmann, in accepting the birthday presents, thanked in the name of the Society, all the generous subscribers to the Jubilee Fund. "We highly appreciate this fine and generous "geste," he said.

The next speaker was Mr. J. J. Boos, Vice-President of the Council and Chairman of the House Committee.

Mr. Boos referred in his address to the "Festschrift," which was issued on the occasion of the 50th Jubilee, congratulating Mr. J. J. Schneider, the Secretary, for the very efficient way in which he edited this resumé of 50 years achievement.

He gave a short but compact biography of the more important events during the last fifty years.

"It is impossible," Mr. Boos continued, "to mention all those who have during the last fifty years rendered valuable services to the S.M.S., but I would single out a few, who well deserve to be mentioned on this occasion, they are: Messrs. Etterlin, Schöpfer, Chapuis, Phillipi, Ernst, E. Schneider, Gerber, Dannmeyer, Schupbach, Pfaendler, Paschoud, Stauffer, Stahelin, De Brunner, Boehringer, H. Martin, Dr. Rezzonico; and in Switzerland: Messrs. Lutz, Dr. Böschenstein and Mr. Schmid-Ruedin."

The speaker then paid a hearty tribute to Mr. Steinmann, President of the Society, who has for the last five years so ably guided the destiny of the S.M.S.

"There are, of course, many more names I could mention," said Mr. Boos, "especially amongst the veterans who we are honouring to-night, many of them, alas, have left us never to return, some are prevented from being here through illness, I would specially mention our friends Gerig and Meili.

The Society would have wished to present on this occasion all Veterans with a nice and large present, but you know the S.M.S. is not a "Wohlfahrtsverein" and must be economical.

Through the voluntary subscription undertaken by Mr. Stauffer, the Society has been able to entertain our friends from Switzerland and even present the Veterans with a small souvenir."

Mr. Boos finished his speech, which was greatly appreciated, by asking all the Members to drink to the health and prosperity of the Veterans.

I am glad to say that seventeen Veterans, representing altogether 537 years of membership were present. To each a very artistic diploma was handed, together with a silver pencil, engraved "S.M.S. 1888-1938."

Mr. J. J. Schneider, although not yet a Veteran, received a pencil too, for the splendid way in which he had edited the "Festschrift" and he richly deserved this attention.

It was left to Mr. G. E. De Brunner, late President, Hon. Member and Trustee to say "thank you" on behalf of the Veterans, and he did so in a very humorous speech which was greatly appreciated. The speaker related some of his experiences during his membership which extends to over 40 years and some of his personal "Erlebnisse" with old colleagues, happily still amongst us, caused great hilarity.

M. Ch. Chapuis then proposed and Mr. G. E. De Brunner seconded, that Mr. Steinmann, President of the Society, should be nominated an Honorary Member, this proposal was accepted with acclamation and M. Steinmann was unanimously elected Honorary Member of the Swiss Mercantile Society.

Mr. Steinmann thanked in a few words for the honour bestowed on him.

M. Ch. Chapuis, a Member of the Council, then spoke about the services rendered by the Employment Dept., which was founded in 1889: after having given a short *exposé* of the history of this very important branch of the S.K.V., he paid a truly well deserved tribute to Mr. J. Pfaendler, who is in charge of this Dept., since 1910; Mr. Chapuis said: "Vous connaissez tous notre ami dévoué, Jack Pfaendler. Il possède de telles capacités, et il est d'une si grande bonhomie, que, comme on dit en anglais: 'Once seen, never forgotten.' Son dévouement et les services qu'il a rendus au Bureau de Placement et à la Section même rempliraient un volume, sa grande compétence surmonte les difficultés qui s'accroissent d'année en année."

This interesting *exposé* of Mr. Chapuis was listened to with great interest.

Mr. Pfaendler, in reply, thanked all those who for so many years had helped him in his not always easy task, and voiced his regret that his chief in Zurich, M. Baumgartner was not able to be present.

Although the Programme did not mention any more speakers, several Gentlemen still claimed the attention of the company. Mr. Weigl, Vice-President of the Central Administration, said that he was proud to be able to spend a few days amongst his friends in London, and that the evening had made a deep impression on him.

M. Tall, a member of the Society, spoke in Romansch, unfortunately I did not understand a word of his, no doubt, very nice speech, judging from the applause of some of my neighbours, but I will try to learn our fourth National language as soon as some of our Swiss Societies in London will grant me leave to absent myself from attending every single "Käferfest."

Mr. W. R. Krebsler spoke in Dante's beautiful *lingua* and thus all the four national languages were duly honoured.

This happy evening came to an end shortly before 12 o'clock, but I understand, that not everybody went straight home, but this is none of my concern.

On Saturday the Swiss Delegation was entertained to a Luncheon at Simpson's in the Strand, the home of "good old roast beef of England," and I am glad to say that our guests greatly enjoyed the "cut from the joint." May I give a little secret away? Well, we finished up in the cellar of this famous restaurant, after having paid a visit to the various kitchens under the expert guidance of the jolly Manager of Simpson's, Mr. F. W. Heck, but I won't disclose the sort of beverage we consumed but it "grows" in the British Isles, and it was so, as we say in Switzerland, "Süffig" that I saw three buses instead of one when I essayed to go home to dress in a hurry for the Banquet at the Trocadero. —

Whilst so far the arrangements bore a more or less familiar character, the Banquet at the Trocadero Restaurant assumed a more official character, but it was none the less enjoyable for all that.

I have been informed that the Society has beaten every former record as regards attendance at their Banquets, I am told that about 230 people supported the committee, which goes to prove that a birthday party is still the most popular event.

Banquets are nowadays "much of a muchness" so that I am sure my readers will excuse me for once, if I do not repeat every detail, I have in the past described well over 100 Dinners and Banquets in these columns, and I am sure that they are just as tired as I am to hear about them, but, of course, something must be said.

Having, owing to my "débauche" at Simpson's missed the cock-tails to which, I am told, all the guests were treated, I cannot write anything about them, the only thing I was told,

was that one well-known member of the Colony had three "repeats," but as I am not allowed to disclose the name of the culprit I will forget it, but look what the Society gained by my late arrival. (One Aspirin and a glass of water).

Now, we go straight to the Dinner which was, as usual, excellent; we are in safe hands with Mr. Delaloye who has never yet let us down. On looking again at the Menu I now find that I must have missed one course, namely the "Noisette d'Agneau Beaucaire," this undoubtedly passed me by whilst I closed my eyes in meditation; some of my good friends almost opposite, will have it that I went to sleep, which is, of course, absurd, I would never do such a thing in public, in fact I was silently meditating whether some of the speakers would say the same thing as at last year's Banquet, which would save me from taking copious notes, and when I meditate I always close my eyes so as to concentrate. Perhaps my friend Mr. Delaloye will allow me to come in one lunch time to consume my "Noisette d'Agneau Beaucaire" which I missed. — I shall come alone (!).

I noticed that the "hammer" which was presented to the President on Friday, was used for the first time, when the Loyal Toast to H.M. the King and to Switzerland were proposed by the Swiss Minister. —

I have said some very unkind things about this "gadget" in the past, and it is rather ironical that its presentation was entrusted to me, I shall not have the face to insult this mallet in future, I missed one great opportunity to lose it, but I did not have the courage to do it. —

After the "Soufflé Glacé Cinquantenaire" melted in 225 "sweet mouths" the President rose to address the festive gathering.

Mr. Steinmann announced that Monsieur Paravicini, Swiss Minister and Honorary President of the S.M.S. offered the Chair on this occasion to him, a "beau geste" of the Minister which he greatly appreciated.

The President then said:

It is an honour and a pleasure to welcome you all most heartily on behalf of the Swiss Mercantile Society to this our Golden Jubilee Banquet, and I hope most sincerely that this celebration of fifty years of useful activity of our Society will long remain impressed in your memories as one of the red letter days of the Swiss Colony in London. And while we are proud of the achievements of our Society during the last 50 years, we do not forget the part which has always been played by our many supporters and friends outside the actual directing bodies of the S.M.S., for without their continued co-operation and unflinching support our task would have been a much more onerous one. It is therefore with special pleasure that we find ourselves celebrating this outstanding event to-night in the company of so many of our staunch and well tried friends.

I particularly extend a hearty welcome to our Minister, Monsieur Paravicini, who has so consistently shown the greatest interest in our work. Then I would specially mention his Worship the Mayor of St. Pancras and the Lady Mayoress in whose Borough Swiss House is situated and the distinguished Delegation from Switzerland, headed by our Zentralpraesident, Mr. Gubser, whom we are very glad to see to-night. Mr. Gubser paid a visit to our College last year and we hope his visits will become a regular feature. It naturally gives me great pleasure to notice in our midst Mr. De Brunner, one of our Trustees, I must not expand upon this point, however, for it will be the pleasant task of one of my colleagues to propose a toast to all our guests and the ladies.

With your permission I will now briefly review the progress of our Society during 1937. In order to reassure you at once I wish to state

# 1939

# TIONAL EXHIBITION

# RICH



that the financial position of the Society remains satisfactory, which is in no small measure due to the generous help given towards the cost of the College by our Swiss Authorities. To them we are deeply grateful.

The good work of the Employment Dept. has been carried on in its traditionally excellent way by our Mr. Pfändler, who also represented our Society at the Delegates' meeting at Lucerne.

Owing to the improvement of economic activity in Switzerland during 1937 there was a marked increase in the number of students to 509 as compared with 420 in the previous year. The high standard of the College has been maintained and is amply illustrated by the examination successes. Out of 218 candidates 211, or 97%, passed the Diploma Examination. The second Holiday course was a success mainly owing to the efforts of Dr. Rezzonico, Counsellor of Legation, and Mr. Schmid Ruedin, our esteemed Zentral-Sekretär.

380 students, the highest number for the last five years, made use of the exceptional facilities offered them by our Evening Classes and the average attendance was satisfactory at 76.18%.

We continued our practice of providing, in connection with our monthly meetings, a series of lectures by experts in a wide variety of subjects and were fortunate in securing such distinguished speakers as Lord Passfield, Dr. G. P. Gooch, Mr. Shakelton and Mlle. Ella Maillart.

The House Committee continued their useful work and prepared us for the celebration of our Jubilee by redecorating Swiss House and providing us with a more attractive bar.

It may interest you that among the new features of the year has been the foundation of a Philatelic Group, which from all accounts is in a flourishing condition.

We collaborated with other Swiss societies in presenting an illuminated address to their Majesties King George VI. and Queen Elizabeth on the occasion of their Coronation.

It now remains for me to thank all those whose unselfish efforts have contributed to the success of our Society during the year.

We have reached our Jubilee at a critical time in the history of Europe. Only a few weeks ago it seemed unlikely that this function could ever take place. May I conclude by expressing the hope and conviction that the happier turn of events on the political stage will find its echo also in our own affairs and that the next fifty years will see our Society advance to an even stronger position than before.

The oration of Mr. Steinmann was much applauded and was followed by the one of the Swiss Minister, who said:

In the course of the many years I have spent in England and ever since I have had the privilege of collaborating with my countrymen in preserving and furthering the welfare of our Colony, I have taken part in many a jubilee of every kind and description.

There is by now hardly a Swiss institution in this country which is not recorded on my list of jubilee experiences and I have even gone so far as to be something like such an institution myself, namely on the night when hundreds of my Swiss friends gathered round me to record the 10th Anniversary of my office as Swiss Minister in London. On that night, I knew what a lively feeling it is to celebrate amongst Swiss one's own jubilee and I therefore cannot but envy the S.M.S. for the mood which must prevail this evening amongst its members.

I, for one, would certainly have been very sorry to miss to-night's fête and if it were not for the thundery clouds which darkened the political sky during these last weeks, I should probably have missed it. Thus, as every cloud is said to have a silver lining, those particular clouds have had even a golden one for me, for it is thanks to them that my holiday had to be postponed till after this Golden Jubilee.

And a golden jubilee is one of those rare occasions on which we have the opportunity of viewing everything past, present and future in a rosy light. No one thinks of disagreeing with, or is tempted to criticise anything that has ever been done or left undone by the jubilant hero. On the contrary, whoever gets up to speak is infallibly full of admiration for the past and full of confidence for the future.

These are comfortable speeches to make and to listen to and I hear with pleasure that last evening, for instance, there has been a rich crop of these friendly and comforting allocutions which both, orators and listeners, have freely enjoyed till a late hour.

And now I am here to tell you all over again the things you have already heard and probably far more attractively put by those who have spoken before me. Your President for instance, has just sat down after delivering one of his masterful and interesting discourses, and I can see you getting restless at the mere thought that, after all this, I intend to launch out into a long recital of all the splendid things done by the S.M.S. during the last fifty years. It is therefore now the moment for me to remember that I am addressing an institution where deeds have always counted more than words and where long speeches, even eulogies, even jubilee addresses, have never been specially in demand. This scheme having worked well for fifty years, neither you nor I feel inclined to change it to-day.

But please listen to me for just one minute. I want to say this.

The S.M.S. has with the years grown to such a measure as to have become long ago one of the strongest and most solid pillars of the Swiss community in England.

It is to-day perhaps the most valuable link which this Colony possesses with the home country in as much as Swiss House represents a constant, I would say, a daily contact with economic life in Switzerland.

It represents for Swiss industrial and commercial activity an element, which can be regarded as no less than one of the main parts of the Swiss business machinery as a whole.

In business, as in all other spheres of life, you can do very little without proper education and training and in order to be properly educated and trained it is not enough nowadays to stay at home. Business has become so wide and so interdependent all over the globe that without knowing other peoples languages and habits, other nations needs and possibilities, there is little chance of making one's way.

The S.M.S. places at the disposal of the younger generation of business men and means of living in the biggest working centre of the world and of learning things which they will count one day amongst their most valuable experiences in life.

The S.M.S. has done this for half a century already and has successfully withstood all the storms of our time and surmounted all the difficulties from inside and outside. As years went by it has counted amongst its members and pupils many men who have afterwards been spoken of with high respect and admiration in the business world in Switzerland and abroad.

In one word: The S.M.S. has turned out to be the worthy, and perhaps the most successful amongst the daughters of the central institution in Switzerland and if all of us are proud to think that this is the case, the presence here of Herr Gubser, the Central President, Nationalrat Schmid-Ruedin, the Central Secretary, Herr Galliker, the Editor, Monsieur Losey, the Secretary for the Suisse Romande, and all the other guests from at home, is proof enough of what *they* think of us in Switzerland. Would anyone travel from Zurich, Winterthur or Neuchâtel to London for just a dinner during the October storms if he were not prompted by the importance and highly deserving cause of the occasion?

We are delighted to greet our Swiss friends not only because we are honoured to be their hosts, but because we like to take it that their attendance means satisfaction and approval with the work done by their London section. I would like to assure them that we could receive no more encouraging message from our home country than that which they are conveying to us by their personal and most welcome visit.

And as I now join in the general expression of good wishes and congratulations to all of the S.M.S., to you Mr. President, to the Past Presidents, Honorary Members and Veterans, to the Chairmen of the various Committees, the Principal and Masters, the Secretary, the Director of the Employment Agency, the Trustees, the Members and Pupils, in fact to all who are responsible for that splendid spirit and useful work to be found at Swiss House — may I at the same time ask our guests from Switzerland to take home with them for the mother institution the cordial message of our devotion, gratitude and goodwill for now and all times to come.

The Minister also paid a warm tribute to Mr. Spérni, Mayor of the Borough of St. Pancras, who was accompanied by the mayoress and their daughter, to which His Worship replied in an eloquent manner, saying amongst other things that he was proud to have such substantial rate-payers as the S.M.S. in his own Borough, and should they ever "feel inclined" to ask for a

rebate on their assessment he would see "what can be done," he ended with a few sentences in Italian; it was a fine speech and one felt that a good and old friend addressed the company.

I am so impressed with the kindness of the Mayor that I seriously contemplate to change my Borough almost at once, especially as Councillor Spérni said publicly: "If in trouble come and see me," he did not even say "sometimes."

Mr. Meier, Vice-Chairman then extended the greetings of the Society to the numerous guests which included the following:

M. A. Gubser, Zentral Präsident.  
M. C. Weigl, Vize-Präsident S.K.V.  
National-Councillor Ph. Schmid-Ruedin, General Sekretär S.K.V.  
M. E. Losey, Secr. rom. S.S.d.C.  
M. A. Galliker, Zentr. Sekr. S.K.V.  
M. O. Isler, Präsident S.K.V. Winterthur, and Mrs Isler.  
His Worship the Mayor of St. Pancras, Mayoress and Daughter.

M. de Jenner, Councillor of Legation and Mme. de Jenner.

M. Cl. Rezzonico, Councillor of Legation.

M. A. Girardet, Counsellor of Legation.

M. de Rham, Secretary of Legation.

M. P. Hilfiker, Vice-Consul.

M. G. E. De Brunner.

The Rev. C. Th. Hahn and Mrs. Hahn.

The Rev. M. Pradervand and Mrs. Pradervand.

The Rev. Lanfranchi.

Miss H. Simmen,

Mr. and Mrs. Stauffer (Swiss Observer).

Dr. H. W. Egli (Bund).

M. de Cintra (City Swiss Club).

Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Suter (N.S.H.).

Mr. and Mrs. C. Campart, (Soc. de Sec. Mut.).

Mr. and Mrs. De Maria (Unione Ticinese).

Messrs. R. Dupraz and F. M. Gamper (Swiss Benevolent Society).

Messrs. P. Brun and A. Kloetzli (Swiss Club Birmingham).

Messrs. J. Scheuermeier and R. Maurer (Swiss Y.M.C.A.).

Mr. and Mrs. W. Pellet and E. P. Dick (Swiss Orchestral Society).

Mr. A. Indermaur (Union Helvetia).

Mr. and Mrs. Bernhard (Schweizerbund).

Mr. de Cintra, Treasurer of the City Swiss Club thanked in a very witty speech the S.M.S. for their kind invitation wishing them success and prosperity for the future, the guests were then asked to empty their glasses in honour of their host, which was perhaps a little unkind, as the Society pays for the wine, but a command is a command whether you like it or not. M. de Cintra also asked for a "ban de cœur" now I was surprised to notice that various people do not even know on which side of their body this most important organ works, unless it varies with some species of the human race, some looked all over their "figure" to find that most precious spot. A young Lady confided to me afterwards that she really was at a loss to know whether it was left or right, if only she would have come to me in her trouble, I would have gladly "pointed" it out to her.

The last Toast on the Programme was an Appeal for Charity and Mr. R. Dupraz, of the Swiss Benevolent Society asked the participants to help this institution, his appeal was not in vain, an amount of £43 10s. 0d. was collected which beats another record.

The official part of the function then came to an end, but not before Mr. Delaloye, the Banqueting Manager thanked all and sundry for having come to his 50th birthday party; some people will claim *all* the credit, but nevertheless I too wish him many happy returns of the day, I can see that "Noisette d'Ageau Beaucaire" will yet have to be "washed down."

Dancing then started with a vengeance, and balloons were flying everywhere. Paul Jones and the Lambeth Walk were favourites; shortly after midnight another happy evening came to a close.

The next scene of the "Drama" started at the Headquarters of the S.M.S. at 34/35, Fitzroy Square, where some thirty members met at noon on Sunday to accompany our Swiss friends to Windsor.

Before we set out, one of my good and old friends, supplied several members of the party

with white tablets out of a medicine bottle, it was very kind of him to be so helpful to others, although I saw him swallowing some himself, when nobody was looking. I took two myself just for curiosity sake and lo and behold — "it went."

Luncheon was taken at the Myllet Arms, Great Western Road, where our compatriot Mr. Widmer, who is the proprietor, supplied us with an excellent Luncheon.

Then onwards in pouring rain to Windsor, during a short lull we were able to visit the castle grounds and St. George's Chapel. Tea was taken at the White Heart Hotel and then a string of cars went back to Fitzroy Square, where a glass of Sherry was offered, thanks to this generosity of the Society, I was able to make up for what I had missed the previous evening.

Mr. Isler, a member of the Swiss Delegation, then thanked in perfect English, the Society once again for the great hospitality which had been extended to them, a hospitality which will linger for many days in grateful memory.

Mr. Steinmann subsequently officially closed the Golden Jubilee festivities.

In concluding this lengthy report, I would like to heartily congratulate everyone who helped to make this Jubilee Festival a success, first of all the members of the Jubilee committee, who saw that everything went according to plan, and it is greatly due to their efforts that no hitch occurred; but two members I would like to single out, who have done more than anybody else to make a success of it, namely Mr. J. J. Boos, who throughout acted as a most efficient aide-de-camp to the Swiss Delegation and Mr. J. J. Schneider who unsparingly put his services at the disposal of everyone connected with the arrangements, and last but not least, all those who attended the various functions are to be thanked for their support.

And now I wish the Swiss Mercantile Society, on behalf of all the readers,

A Happy and Prosperous Future.

ST.

## SWISS LETTER.

### The Tendency of Swiss Economics.

Many economic problems have been discussed in Switzerland of late, for example, the price of bread, the milk problem, etc. In reference to the latter, a solution has been found which consists of reducing the price paid to suppliers by one centime, while increasing by one centime the price asked from the consumer. The Milk Producers Association, which has to guarantee the price of milk to the peasants no matter what the price of dairy products may be in foreign countries, thus benefits by a supplementary margin of two centimes per litre which, it is hoped, will save the Confederation the necessity of important new subsidies in this direction.

Another problem is increasingly occupying the attention of the public. It is the question of the big government programme for the strengthening of national defence and the creation of possibilities for work, for which measures, a sum of more than 400 million francs is estimated. A parliamentary commission is at the present time putting the final touches to the project and above all examining the financial aspect. Critics there are: some maintaining that a more important sum should be earmarked for commercial expansion in foreign countries, others criticising the fact that, in the same project, two entirely different matters are dealt with: national defence and the question of political economy; and again there are those who attack the financing of part of the suggested measures by a tax on the turnover of the big shops during a period of 16 years and propose the contribution of the profits realised by the Swiss National Bank at the time of the devaluation of the franc. This latter point does not fail to excite public opinion as it touches a question of principle in Swiss monetary politics. Thus, the National Bank will prepare a report on the problem which will enable the Federal Council to decide this matter. In order to prevent the very urgent works for the strengthening of national defence from being delayed by the discussion of the complete problem the Federal Council has proposed a partial programme for the most urgent work; one which could be adopted by an urgency vote, without being submitted to the vote of the people.

This programme will include the spending of 70.3 million francs, of which 15.3 million francs will be for military measures, 10 million francs for economic preparation in case of war, and 45 million francs for the creation of work, which will be in addition to the measures already taken. The full programme of 400 million francs could then be studied at ease and submitted to the popular vote next Spring.

In the meantime, it may be stated that the position of Swiss economy is not too serious, taking into account the depression which weighs heavily over many countries. For the month of August exports were maintained at the same level as during the corresponding month of the preceding year. Unemployment also remains practically stationary; at the present time there are 50,000 persons seeking employment, which is 2,500 less than a year ago, and 30,000 less than at the same period in 1936. There remains, as a sign of the depression which menaces the country, a marked reduction in transport receipts, and the increase in the Confederation's budget deficit which is foreseen for next year.

A considerable liquidity is still the prominent feature of the Swiss money market and private banks have not had need to seek credits from the emission bank. The capital market has of late been under the influence of the political situation in Europe. Considerable sales of paper-values have taken place, probably for reasons of ready-cash, and this has not failed to influence the values of different shares and bonds.

## THE LUCERNE PASSION-PLAY.

There is nothing grandiose about the Lucerne Passion-Drama; the production is of the simplest, and the players — men, women and children — chosen from every class of the population of Lucerne.

A brief history of the Lucerne Passion-Plays is interesting. The clergy used to play them in the Cathedral from about 1450 to 1470, when the Brotherhood of the Crown of Thorns was founded. (Incidentally the oldest amateur dramatic society in Europe.) From that later date they were played by the people on the "Weinmarkt," which is still almost untouched to this day. Thanks to the manuscripts which were kept, largely the work of the clergy, a complete record is available of those early productions, and contains the minutest details: sketches, notes, actors, costumes, which have been preserved in the city's archives.

For the production, large stands were erected round the "Weinmarkt" with seating accommodation for some 3,000 people. The performance generally lasted for two days — sometimes longer! Altogether, about 350 people took part (in keeping with the times men took women's parts) and the audience included the Papal Nuncios, Dukes of Savoy, and other equivalents of our present-day "diplomatic corps."

Renwart Cysat (1545-1614) is the most famous figure connected with the Lucerne Passion-Plays of the Middle Ages. He is regarded by many as the father of Swiss folklore and Folk Drama. Employed as an archivist in the town, he was in an excellent position for furthering his studies, and it is due largely to him that the records have been preserved in the archives. He was stage-manager for the productions in 1571, 1583, and 1597, and also prepared the play of 1616, but unfortunately died before the performance. His writings include a play "Discover of the Cross" and a Carnival. Undoubtedly the Lucerne Passion-Dramas reached a higher standard under the guidance of Renwart Cysat than at any time previously.

The man responsible for the Passion-Plays of 1934 and 1938 is Dr. Oskar Eberle, the reviver of the Swiss Folk Theatre. For from the time of Cysat, the "Volkstheater" gradually declined. It is difficult to find an adequate explanation, and is not satisfactory to attribute this decline to one of the periodical cycles of depression which seem to steal over a nation's Folk Drama. A more likely and sensible reason is that the rival cantons in Switzerland, through their warring instincts, tended to disrupt all form of Art, and that once the magnetic influence of Cysat had gone, there remained no one capable of holding together the tradition and custom connected with a Passion-Play.

Dr. Eberle is certainly the most famous stage-manager since Cysat. His efforts and work have resulted in a remarkable growth of public interest towards the hitherto latent Folk Drama, and his "History of the Theatre in Central Switzerland" proves him an able and capable exponent of the peculiar conditions governing the Swiss "Volkstheater," and of European Drama as a whole. Admitted by all students in Central Europe as an acknowledged authority, he became an international figure when he stage-managed the unique festival of Calderon's "World Theatre" which was played before the pilgrims' Church of the 1000-year-old monastery of Einsiedeln.

To meet him is an unforgettable experience. Tall and commanding, he is possessed of terrific energy and zest for his subject, and is undeniably "a man of the theatre." It is his belief that a general revival of world interest in Folk Drama is necessary before the standard of the popular

play can be raised; better the simple than the elaborate; the natural to the sophisticated; the simple beauty which is born of the Folk Theatre, the poetry of the people, is the material at hand for the would-be dramatist.

The performance of the Passion-Drama in front of Lucerne Cathedral was an experience which I am never likely to forget. Tiny lights glittered high up over the players; the famous organ of the Cathedral, constructed by the Salzburger Master Hans Geissler during the eleven years 1640-1651, accompanied the bells, and the choirs of angels and people. These were the stage-effects; for the rest, the University professor acted side by side with the accountant or book-keeper or factory worker; a typist played Mary — a shop girl Magdalene. This was the real Folk Drama of which I had dreamed; beauty, simplicity, tragedy, and the hope in the resurrection possessed a new meaning.

The text was by Dr. Eberle, and the music by Von J. B. Hilber. The latter aided greatly the general performance, but what impressed me most of all was the grouping. I noticed that it followed the Greek tradition of being well in the wings. At the trial scene they were well able to move forward and thus complete the picture, allowing the stage from back to front (centre) to remain perfectly clear for Jesus, with soldiers (a colourful display) up stage left and right.

This production definitely stamps Dr. Eberle as a leading man in the contemporary world theatre.

J.R.

(Drama.)

## LA POLITIQUE

### Un programme irréalisable.

L'Assemblée fédérale aura une nouvelle session qui s'ouvrira le 7 novembre. Le choix de cette date a donné lieu à une longue discussion, car le Conseil des Etats, où siègent de nombreux magistrats cantonaux, objectait qu'en novembre se réunissent plusieurs Grands Conseils. Mais le 24 octobre était considéré, par le bureau du Conseil national, comme une date trop rapprochée de la session régulière d'automne, et qui ne permettrait pas aux commissions d'avancer suffisamment leur travail. Quant au premier mardi de novembre, il avait l'inconvénient pour les députés catholiques, de coïncider avec la fête de la Toussaint. Durant plusieurs jours, M. de Weck et M. Hauser se lancèrent et se relancèrent la balle sans résultat. Finalement, les sénateurs cédèrent. La session extraordinaire durera une semaine. Mais mérite-t-elle encore ce qualificatif? De plus en plus fréquemment, les députés reviennent à Berne dans l'intervalle des quatre sessions habituelles, dont deux sont déjà surajoutées.

Puisse l'été de la Saint-Martin inspirer utilement les législateurs! Ils vont se trouver en présence d'une situation vraiment paradoxale. Car, en septembre, le Conseil national a voté les 70 millions qu'on lui demandait à titre provisoire sur le programme des grands travaux; et ce projet va passer maintenant devant les Etats, dont la commission doit se prononcer mercredi. Mais tandis que les représentants des cantons examineront l'espèce d'acompte réclamé par le Conseil fédéral et déjà accordé par le Conseil national, celui-ci a l'intention de s'attaquer au morceau de résistance, c'est-à-dire au projet d'ensemble. Il y a là quelque chose d'un peu bizarre: car si l'un des conseils délibère déjà sur le plan général, l'autre aura l'impression de la carte forcée en discutant le programme réduit.

Le plus curieux de l'histoire, c'est que l'on n'est pas plus avancé aujourd'hui qu'en été en ce qui touche à la couverture financière des "grands travaux." Après la consultation de la Banque nationale et des directeurs cantonaux des finances, l'idée d'un prélèvement sur le bénéfice de dévaluation doit être abandonnée. Il était du reste bien clair, depuis qu'on en parle, qu'elle ne serait jamais admise par les esprits réfléchis. La sauvegarde du crédit national passe avant les fantaisies de ces messieurs des Lignes directrices; et ce n'est certes pas au moment où l'Europe vit dans l'instabilité et l'incertitude que l'on peut s'exposer à des aventures où le franc suisse risquerait de chavirer. Mais l'impôt sur le chiffre d'affaires des grands magasins n'apparaît pas non plus comme un moyen acceptable de couvrir les énormes dépenses proposées. Dans toute la Suisse, il a soulevé de vives protestations, émanant des milieux les plus divers, et non pas seulement de ceux qui semblent directement intéressés. On s'est fort bien rendu compte qu'en définitive cette taxe démagogique, que ses protagonistes espéraient mettre au bénéfice de l'axiome "Ce sont les autres qui paient," serait profondément préjudiciable à l'économie nationale et aurait pour effet immédiat le renchérissement de quantité de marchandises.

On est donc dans la plus complète incertitude, du moins pour ce qui concerne les travaux