

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1953)

Heft: 1198

Rubrik: City Swiss Club : an interesting Lecture

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CITY SWISS CLUB. AN INTERESTING LECTURE.

An epidemic of influenza, which is at present prevalent in this country, has had its repercussions on the attendance of the Monthly Meeting of the City Swiss Club, which took place on Tuesday, February 3rd, at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane W.1., only about 50 members being present.

Those, who owing to illness or other reasons were prevented from attending, missed a most enjoyable evening, firstly an excellent dinner, and secondly a most interesting talk given by Mr. Francis, W. Gysin, M.A., on the subject "Films outside the Cinema" illustrated on the screen by factual and instructional pictures.

The President, Mr. Ch. Seinet, in opening the meeting extended a hearty welcome to the following members of the Swiss Legation: Monsieur R. Keller, Dr. G. Lepori and Dr. E. Bircher, he also expressed his appreciation to the lecturer, Mr. F. W. Gysin, the son of the Hon. Secretary of the Club, for having consented to address the members on a topical subject.

The lecturer in his introduction said that he wished to talk about the kind of films that are rarely seen in the public cinemas, perhaps because the way the industry has grown up there's alleged to be no place for this sort of thing in the entertainment programmes. "About 25 million people a year in the British Isles", he said "are getting together to see specialised films on the special subjects that interest them; such as industrial films, labour relation films, religious and cultural films, medical films, etc." Mr. Gysin mentioned, that what we call the documentary film movement first saw the light of day in 1928 in this country. Explaining the word "documentary" he said the standard definition is, that documentary means "the creative interpretation of reality". "A good documentary film", he continued "has got to have imagination, its technique should be appreciate to its subject, in a word, the film must have a creative spark."

Then followed a survey of the work accomplished by the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit, which turned out over a hundred films between 1930 and 1933, and which was dissolved in 1933, the General Post Office unit taking its place, and thus the scope of British production began to broaden, and to stretch out overseas.

At this stage, the lecturer showed a film made in 1937 by the G.P.O. unit in collaboration with the Swiss organisation Pro Telefon, Called WE LIVE IN TWO WORLDS, taking Switzerland as an example of the interrelation of national frontiers and international communications, which was most interesting.


Mr. Gysin said, that at the outbreak of the last war, the G.P.O. unit changed its name again, and became the Crown Film Unit which carried on until last year, when it was summarily shut down by the government to the tune of a great deal of public and political outcry. In 1939, an era of war propaganda films started, these films, the lecturer said, weren't supposed to say "how wonderful the British are", they were simply made as records of achievement, from which other countries might benefit, other countries had the same problems and they were interested to see how the British were getting on.

To illustrate one of these war propoganda films, a film called LISTEN TO BRITAIN was thrown on the screen, which awakened in many present less amusing experiences during the "Blitz" period.

The lecturer then dealt with the financial aspect of documentary films, saying that a 20 minute documentary film costs today, if it's made for the theatres, somewhere around £5,000. Mr. Gysin said, that one often hears the question, "Why don't we see more films like f.i. TARGET FOR TONIGHT, a war documentary film, which was, what is called, a smash hit at the box office. His answer would be, that it is impossible, under the present state of affairs, to count on getting back the cost of the film. "People", he said, "who've tried to make documentary films for the commercial market have nearly all come a cropper, the odds are against them."

As an example of a typical straightforward reporting film, a film REPORT ON STEEL was shown, which, although highly technical, was very interesting. Another film showed was called MINING REVIEW dealing with the mining industry.

The lecturer then dealt at some length with the future prospects concerning factual films, saying that the whole problem of world film use is closely tied up with the functions of the international organisations such as the United Nations, the International Labour Office, Unesco, and the Food and Agricultural Organisations. "The main obstacles", he said, "are



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the obstacles which prevent the free interchange of films or information and filming ideas between nations; these artificial barriers can be broken down, and they are being broken down."

The last film shown was made over here by Signal Films for the Rolex Watch Company, and was called THE STORY OF TIME.

When the lights were switched on again, Mr. Seinet thanked the lecturer very sincerely for the very interesting talk and film show, and the gathering showed their appreciation by loud applause. It is a pity that the Ladies had not been asked to be present, I am sure they would have enjoyed it. After a short discussion, the President closed the meeting at 10.30.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

We wish to direct the attention of our readers to the Annual Luncheon and Tea Dance at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1, on Saturday, February 21st, 1953.

This Luncheon and Tea Dance promises to be a very pleasurable affair; older members of the Society are specially welcome, as this will be a splendid opportunity to re-new old friendships, but the invitation is also extended to all members of the Swiss Colony and their friends.

The Swiss Minister and Madame de Torrenté will be the principal guests of the Society and we sincerely hope, that a great number of our compatriots will attend this function, we are convinced that they will not regret it.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

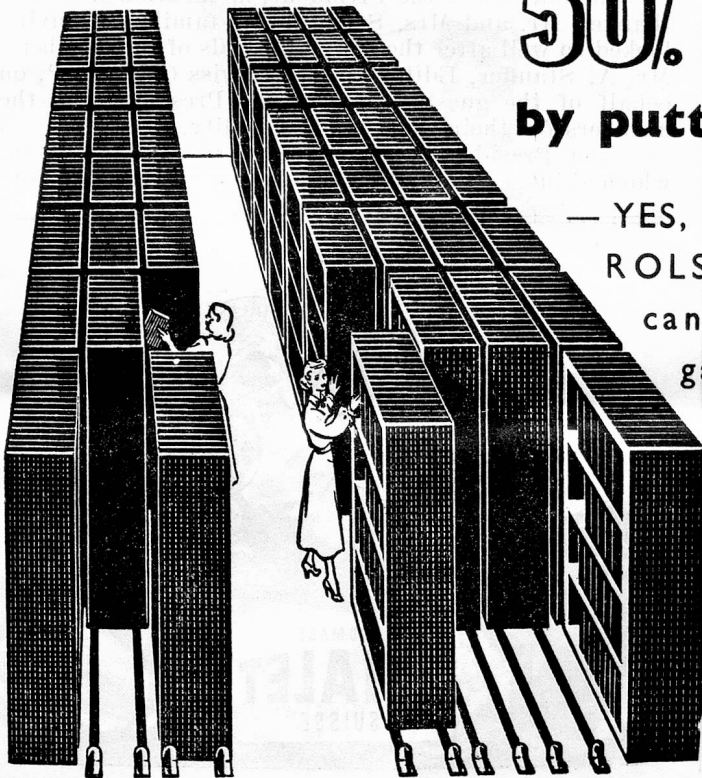
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will take place at
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on
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