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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

Annual General Meeting held on 9th February, 1955.

Among the very good attendance Mr. W. Meier, our President, welcomed in particular our trustees, Messrs. F. G. Sommer and C. Voegeli, as well as Mr. Thevenaz of the Commercial Division of the Swiss Legation, our former secretary Mr. J. J. Schneider, and Mr. A. Stauffer of the Swiss Observer, who celebrated 40 years membership of our Society. We were happy to learn that Mr. G. Jenne, another of our trustees, who sent us a telegram of good wishes, was making steady though slow progress towards recovery at the Buergerspital in Basle.

Dealing with the accounts, our President explained that the federal subsidy now covered 37½% of the teacher's salaries and some equipment used in the school. In 1954 deficit of £3,114.17.4. was within this limit and had been received since the balance sheet was drawn up. The accounts were accepted unanimously, and Mr. R. P. Huxley was re-elected auditor for 1955.

The President then read the annual report, Messrs. W. Burren and L. W. Krucker dealing with the sections concerning the College and Swiss House respectively. The following are the salient points from the report:—

The steady expansion of industry and trade which marked 1954 resulted in a full complement of Swiss students attending our College.

In response to several invitations to the "Bundesamt fuer Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit" (BIGA) in Berne delegated Mr. A. Schwander, "Chef der Sektion für berufliche Ausbildung", to visit the College in September. Mr. Schwander was favourably impressed by the work done at Swiss House. The BIGA which is the authority responsible for the granting of the federal subsidy to the College has now put the subsidy on a clearly defined basis, and the financing of the running of Swiss House as a Swiss education centre will in future be carefully studied with the Swiss authorities.

The Society maintained a full programme of lectures on commercial subjects and of social evenings.

There has been no significant change in membership which is now composed as follows:—

- 17 Honorary members
- 239 active members
- 22 corresponding members
- 57 contributing members.

After more than 30 years of work on various committees, including several years as President, and as Council member since 1931, Mr. A. C. Stähelin retired from active executive participation in the work of the Society and the College. So has Mr. A. Steinmann, another past president, who has gone to an appointment in Basle.

In 1954 we lost seven members through death. In appreciation of the continued interest in the Society and the College, Mr. H. de Torrenté, now Swiss Minister in Washington, was elected an Honorary Member in December.

College.

During 1954 full advantage was taken of the additional accommodation which became available in 1953. Last year students numbered 272 men, and 145 women, 417 in all, as compared with 276 men and 137

women, total 413 the year before. Seasonal fluctuations were less marked than in the past, the highest number of students being 214 in June, the lowest 143 in November, when the attendance normally tapers off.

School fees remained £18 per term for subsidised students, holding the Faehigkeitszeugnis für Kaufleute und Verkaeuerinnen, and £22 for those not so qualified. In view of the increased cost of running the College the Committee raised the fees to £21 and £25 respectively from 1st January, 1955. The subsidy directly benefits the students whose fees are fixed at a level which takes the federal grant fully into account.

The number of candidates for the diploma examinations increased from 227 in 1953 to 265 in 1954, and the percentage of passes from 74 to 78%.

Three full day excursions per term to places of interest (Canterbury, Oxford, Cambridge, Southampton, etc.) were arranged, and visits to Ford Motor Works, Guinness Brewery, Peek Frean's, etc. The Saturday morning outings to places in and around London continue to be well patronised.

Dances, social evenings, visits to theatres, as well as football and tennis formed a welcome change from strenuous studies. At the Swiss Sports the College were awarded the George Dimier and the Relay cups.

Teachers. We were sorry to lose at the end of summer Mr. T. R. Gibson, B.A., who was replaced by Mr. S. Richardson, M.A., Oxford. He had for several years taught English in Swiss schools. The College now employs 11 teachers.

Evening classes also showed a slight increase in attendance from 550 in 1953 to 565 in 1954 (144 men, 422 women). A large proportion of evening class students possess good professional qualifications.



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These courses are now being subsidised by the Swiss Government on lines similar to the day classes.

A special evening course of 30 lessons (Commerce and General English) was held to enable students to sit for the certificate of Proficiency in English (Cambridge University), eight of whom sat for the final examinations. A number of students from the advanced English evening classes sat for the Cambridge Lower Certificate in English.

Employment Dept. Full employment in 1954 meant fewer applicants for posts, but more vacancies on the books of the Employment Dept. Placements as a whole fell again but it is noted with satisfaction that 28 against 22 Swiss nationals were placed last year.

Swiss House. The renovation at 34, Fitzroy Square was completed by the beginning of 1954. We now have a members room redecorated during the summer, where members can enjoy a Jass and have a drink after meetings. It is also used by the Council and Committees.

The College Canteen continues to provide light meals and refreshments at moderate prices to students. It was also open before several monthly meetings for the members with whom this arrangement proved popular.

A contribution of 10,000.—frs. was received during 1954 from the Bundesfeierkomitee in Switzerland from the collection made on 1st August 1953 for Swiss Schools abroad. This amount has been added to reserves.

Upon the proposal of Mr. Beckmann, seconded by Mr. Stettbacher, the report was adopted for printing and circulation.

Messrs. Chas. Vögeli, Manager of Messrs. Volkart Brothers, and Rudolf Pfenninger, Manager of the Swiss Bank Corporation, were unanimously elected Honorary Members in recognition of their services as trustees of our Society.

Mr. A. C. Stähelin, acting as temporary chairman, the election of President, Council and Committee members was proceeded with expeditiously, all positions being filled by their former holders.

Mr. Guy de Rham, Managing Director of Bally Shoe Co., was elected a member of our section and Messrs. Bonjour, Burren and Grob appointed as our delegates to the Swiss Sports Committee.

Thus a well attended and superbly conducted meeting came to close well before 9 o'clock.

E.H.S.

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