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WELFARE OFFICE FOR SWISS GIRLS IN GT. BRITAIN

The Annual General Meeting of the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls in Gt. Britain was held on the 16th March, 1964 at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9 Belsize Grove, London N.W.3.

In opening the meeting the President extended a cordial welcome to Madame de Fischer who was visiting the Welfare Office for the first time, Madame de Stoutz, Madame Heimo, Consul Tosio, and Mrs. Meier, Editor of the "Swiss Observer", who had kindly accepted an invitation to the meeting, and was pleased to announce that Madame de Fischer had consented to become Honorary President of the Committee.

The annual report of the Committee was presented and read by the Honorary Secretary. Reference was made to the constant Staff changes in the Welfare Office, both members of the Staff having tendered their resignation since the previous Annual General Meeting. In May 1963, Miss Dora Schneider, a fully qualified welfare worker from Zurich, had been appointed Welfare Officer and until the middle of January 1964, had worked efficiently and harmoniously with Miss Sieber, who had been Secretary at the Welfare Office for four years. In January of this year Miss Sieber had decided, for personal reasons, to return to Switzerland. A temporary Secretary to assist Miss Schneider had been found with the co-operation of the Swiss Mercantile Society.

Throughout the year the Committee had made every effort to improve the conditions of work in the Welfare Office in order to attract Swiss Welfare workers to London. These endeavours were somewhat hampered by the restricted funds at their disposal. Thanks to the support given by the Embassy the annual subsidy from Berne had been maintained, as well as the annual contributions of the two Swiss associations: Amies de la Jeune Fille and the Katholischer Mädchenschutzverein, and the Swiss Benevolent Society. It was becoming evident that the work of the Welfare Office was being recognised abroad as donations had been received from various sections of the Schweiz. Verband Evangelische Frauenhilfe, to whom the President was well known. These contributions though small were encouraging. Nevertheless the Committee would have to make every effort to raise funds to meet the ever rising expenses of the Welfare Office, where, as would be seen from the Report of Activity which was to follow, there was ample scope for two fully qualified welfare workers.

Reference was made to the work which was being carried out at the Channel ports Dover and Folkestone, which had grown out of help given to Swiss girls since the war and which had now been officially recognised. A committee had been formed with statutory and voluntary representatives and had been affiliated to the Kent Council of Social Service. The President, Mrs. Ellis, remained the Honorary Organiser.

The report acknowledged the active support given to the Committee by the former Ambassador and Madame Daeniker who had always taken such a keen interest in the Welfare Office. Fortunately the Committee could continue to rely on the assistance of the Embassy. Monsieur Ansermoz, a member of the Committee, and Consul Tosio were always particularly helpful. The Swiss Clergy in London formed a valuable link with the Welfare Office, and the Committee were grateful for their guidance. A tribute was also paid to Mr. J. Zimmermann, representing the Swiss Benevolent Society, and Vice-President of the

Committee, for his unfailing help to the Hon. Treasurer and his advice on all matters, to the Auditors and to Miss Preiswerk for placing accommodation at the disposal of the Committee and her kindness to the Staff of the Welfare Office.

In conclusion the Honorary Secretary expressed, on behalf of the Committee, her appreciation to the Staff for their excellent work, in particular to Miss Schneider, who had shown real devotion to her task, and a special word of thanks to the President, not only for her untiring efforts at Folkestone, but for the countless services she rendered the Welfare Office behind the scenes.

The Report of Activity for the year 1963 was presented and read by Miss D. R. Schneider, who took over as Welfare Officer, from Miss E. Zimmermann in May 1963.

The work of the Welfare Office could be classified under three main headings: General Information and Advice, Advice and Help, and Welfare Cases.

Much of the Staff's time was lost because so many people in Switzerland, as well as in England, appeared to think that the Welfare Office was an employment agency. Many of these enquiries were referred to the British Vigilance Association, who carried out investigations and reported to the Welfare Office.

With such a restricted Staff it was of course not possible to meet all Swiss girls arriving in London. In 1963 more than eighty girls had been met and if necessary escorted to another London terminus. In this connection the co-operation of the International Travellers' Aid and the British Vigilance Association had proved invaluable. Thanks to the work of the President at Folkestone the Staff had not had to concern themselves with Swiss nationals who had been refused permission to land at Dover or Folkestone but had had only to help those Swiss girls who had not been allowed to land at London Airport. Throughout the past year more than one hundred letters of welcome had been written to Swiss girls on their arrival, and experience had shown that this gesture not only gave pleasure to those finding themselves away from home for the first time in their lives but comfort to the homesick.

Inability to adapt themselves to the conditions and customs of a foreign country, misunderstandings with employers owing to a poor knowledge of the English language, financial embarrassment, undesirable friendships with men and homesickness accounted for many Swiss girls wishing to change their jobs and seeking the advice of the Welfare Officer. These difficulties sometimes resulted in serious cases. Swiss parents occasionally demanded too much of the Welfare Office expecting the Staff to supervise their daughters and even to meet their boy friends. In coping with the more difficult cases the Staff gratefully acknowledged the helpful attitude of the English authorities.

Much of the Staff's time was taken up in visiting girls in and outside London and sometimes further afield. "Girls in danger" invariably proved to be young and immature. Other problems arose out of girls arriving in this country in poor health. It cannot be sufficiently emphasised that agencies in Switzerland should check the medical history of girls before sending them to England, both for the Employers' and Employees' sake. Many difficulties could also be avoided if girls were given firmly to understand that they were infringing the Aliens Regulations by not registering a change of address, and by working without the necessary permit.

The Welfare Office acknowledged with gratitude the assistance given to the Welfare Office by the Swiss Embassy, the Warden of the Swiss Hostel for Girls, the

Ministers of the Swiss Churches in London, the Swiss Benevolent Society, the Home Office, the Aliens Department, the International Social Services in Great Britain and Switzerland and various other bodies and institutions without whose co-operation the work of the Welfare Office would be practically impossible.

E.K.

* * *

The Committee of the Welfare Office for 1964 consists of the following members:

Hon. President: Madame B. de Fischer;

President: Mrs. M. H. Ellis;

Vice-Presidents: Mrs. A. Zumstein (representing Katholischer Mädchenschutzverein);

Mr. J. Zimmermann (representing Swiss Benevolent Society);

Hon. Secretary: Mrs. H. Knoll;

Hon. Treasurer: Mrs. R. Thomas;

Members: Mrs. A. Woods (representing Amies de la Jeune Fille);

Miss R. Preiswerk (Swiss Hostel for Girls);

Monsieur F. Ansermoz (Swiss Embassy);

The Rev. Father J. Scherer (Swiss Catholic Mission);

Pasteur F. Jacot (Swiss Church);

Pfarrer R. Kaegi (Swiss Church).

SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER

A report on the "Landsgemeinde" unfortunately arrived too late for this issue. It will appear next time.

NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION IN MANCHESTER

The Midland National Day Celebration will take place (as in the last three years) at the Cottons Hotel, Knutsford, on Friday, 31st July, from 8.30 to 11 p.m. The Hotel is situated one mile north of Knutsford on the A 50, between Mere Corner and Knutsford.

There will be "Schüblig" and "Härdöpfelsalat", followed by cakes and coffee. Refreshments can be obtained from the bar. After the meal, the official part of the evening will include an address by the Swiss Consul and the President of the Manchester Swiss Club. The celebrations will be concluded by having fireworks and lighting a bonfire.

A coach will leave Manchester, Aytoun Street (opposite the Grand Hotel), at 7.15 p.m., stopping to pick up passengers outside Altrincham Station at 8 p.m., if requested. All inclusive cost: 12/- per person.

Please apply to Mrs. I. G. Monney, 327 Wellington Road North, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Cheshire, *immediately*.

CITY SWISS CLUB

Will Members please note that
NO MONTHLY MEETINGS
will be held until 8th September

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Every Sunday 8 to 11 p.m. — The Swiss Catholic Youth Club — Social at Westminster Ball Room, 30 Strutton Ground, S.W.1.

Every Thursday, from 6 to 7.30 p.m. — Discussion Circle in English — Young men specially invited. Tea from 6 to 6.15 p.m. Swiss Y.M.C.A., London Central Y.M.C.A. Building, Great Russell Street, W.C.1.

Every Thursday from 7.30 p.m. to 10 p.m. — Unione Ticinese — meets at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9 Belsize Grove, N.W.3. All Ticinesi welcome. The "Corale" rehearses from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Every 1st Wednesday in the month — Secours Mutuels des Suisses à Londres — meeting at Swiss House, 35 Fitzroy Square, W.1, at 7 p.m.

Every last Thursday of the Month — Swiss Club Manchester — Ordinary Monthly Meeting from 6 p.m. at the Midland Hotel, Manchester.

Thursday, 30th July — Swiss Club Manchester — MONTHLY MEETING.

Friday, 31st July — Swiss Club Manchester — NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION.

Saturday, 1st August — SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION — Wimbledon Town Hall.

Thursday, 27th August — Swiss Club Manchester — MONTHLY MEETING.

28th to 30th August — ASSEMBLY OF THE SWISS ABROAD — Lausanne.

Tuesday, 8th September — City Swiss Club — MONTHLY MEETING.

Wednesday, 9th September, 7 p.m. — Swiss Mercantile Society — MONTHLY MEETING (Holiday Reminiscences) — Swiss House, 35 Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Thursday, 10th September — Swiss Club Manchester — SLIDE SHOW — Rotary Club, Accrington.

Sunday, 20th September — Swiss Rifle Association — SHOOTING — Bisley (Siberia Range).

Thursday, 24th September — Swiss Club Manchester — MONTHLY MEETING.

Sunday, 4th October — Swiss Rifle Association — SHOOTING (Handicap Competition and "Grümpel-schiessen" — Bisley (Siberia Range).

Thursday, 8th October — Swiss Club Manchester — LECTURE — Mr. Müller.

Thursday, 29th October — Swiss Club Manchester — MONTHLY MEETING.

Saturday, 31st October — Swiss Church — BAZAAR — Central Hall, Westminster.

Saturday, 14th November — Swiss Club Manchester — ANNUAL BANQUET AND BALL.

Thursday, 26th November — Swiss Club Manchester — MONTHLY MEETING.