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SWISS CHURCH ASSEMBLY

The Swiss Protestant parish in London held its Annual Assembly on 4th June. This year the "Journée d'Eglise" broke with tradition. After a masterly sermon to the united French- and German-speaking parishes delivered by Pastor Claude Reverdin, former Minister in London, the congregation remained in the church to carry out its Annual Assembly. It was over in about half an hour, a record in the annals of the Swiss Church. The two linguistic parishes hadn't assembled beforehand, as in previous years, because they had held their respective parish assemblies after service the previous week.

There was remarkably little discussion and the parishioners present did not appear particularly excited by the developments of their church. But the atmosphere livened up during the lunch, which was held afterwards. There were so many people of both languages and every generation that part of the attendance had to take lunch in the church.

The previous evening, the French-Swiss parish had invited its German-speaking brethren to a dinner and a talk on the "life of the Swiss churches at home" given by Pastor Reverdin, who is currently Moderator of the pastors of Geneva. In a long and

detailed exposé he touched on nearly all the spiritual, sociological and political aspects of church life in Switzerland. The most striking feature that emerged from his description was the novel work achieved in many parishes with old people. Also interesting was the speaker's account of the impact of broadcasted religious services. A discussion followed in which the position of the churches regarding the various anti-Militarist declarations voiced recently in ecclesiastical and university circles was brought up by many parishioners.

On Saturday, 10th June, the "Doyens" of the French-speaking parish went out on their Annual Outing. There were enough of them to fill the coach which drove down to the castle of Polesden Lacey, and then to Leith Hill, where they had tea. The outing was a most successful one with plenty of laughing and singing. As usual it was made possible by the selfless co-operation of Mr. Gabriel Godet.

SWISS MACHINE-TOOL FIRM HOLDS EXHIBITION IN SUSSEX

The opening of a three week machine-tool exhibition in the showrooms of *Matchless Machines Limited*, Horsham, Sussex, was a marking Swiss and technological event. On 9th June, this Swiss-founded firm organised a Press preview, a tour of its premises and a cheese and wine party in a specially erected tent to mark the opening of the exhibition.

The British technical press was well represented. Principals of the firm, which has several prestigious agencies, had sent their engineers from Switzerland and Dr. J. A. Iselin, Plenipotentiary Minister at the Embassy had come from London to make the opening speech. Also from London were Dr. Carlo Jagmetti and Mr. R. M. Suess.

The visitors were guided through the showrooms to admire an array of glistening and expensive machine-tools, many of which were exhibited for the first time in this country. They were shown the workshops where machines, some of them actually sent in from abroad, are reconditioned and given a new lease of life, and were guided to the "job shop" where the firm carries out profiling and machining work for customers.

This workshop has highly sophisticated "electrical discharge" (or spark erosion) machines. These are some of the main items sold by the firm. Leaders in spark erosion machines are Agietronic, a Tessin-based company for which *Matchless Machines* act as U.K. sales and servicing agents. The firm has already sold over 500 in this country and controls about 50 per cent of the market for this category of machine. The only other Swiss firm making comparable ones, but on a much smaller scale, is Charmilles, of Geneva.

Instead of using a metallic cutting tool, a spark erosion machine cuts the workpiece to the desired shape by chipping its particles away by electric discharge. The guests at the Press review saw the principle explained by TV personality, Raymond Baxter, in a BBC film shown last January in the "Tomorrow's World" programme. Explaining the working of an entirely new Swiss computer controlled machine-tool to fifty million viewers, Mr. Baxter had to make a few "simplifying floaters" such as saying that "electric discharge" was the same thing as "heat generation". An engineer at the preview told me that Raymond Baxter required a prolonged briefing session before learning his lecture by heart. The film had been made in London where the machine had been specially transported from Horsham. Mr. Baxter also said that the model had been "conceived in Britain". But this misplaced patriotic assertion didn't appear to offend the wife of the inventor of the device as she stood proudly watching the film.

Founded in 1954 and launching its production by producing curtain-like objects, *Matchless Machines* has grown into a highly specialised and compact firm employing 85 technicians. It was started by Mr. J. A. Seiffert, who has now retired but remains Chairman, and is currently managed by his son, John P. Seiffert, an HTL graduate from Winterthur and a deep lover of machines. *Matchless* have the U.K. agency of a number of Swiss companies, in particular, *Studer*, *Wahli*, *Agathon* and *Ewag*. Besides spark erosion machines, much of its sales business is concentrated on a variety of most elaborate and ingenious grinding machines costing £8,000 or more. The firms represented by *Matchless* are all individually the Rolls Royces' of grinding machines.

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The reconditioning service (or "rebuilding" service, as the firm prefers to call it) is an equally important line of business. In a relatively small workshop, highly specialised British craftsmen, with a special training in Switzerland behind them, take old machine-tools to pieces, re-machine the used components and put them together again so that the refurbished machines are in a practically brand new condition. Mr. J. P. Seiffert told me that machines were being sent from the continent, and even Switzerland for rebuilding because of lower costs and the Matchless standards of workmanship. Reconditioning may require three months' work and cost up to £3,500, but this outlay may prove preferable to spending twice that amount on a new machine.

Most of the customers of the firm are in the high technology branch of industry, particularly the aerospace industry. Matchless have sold several spark erosion machines to Rolls Royce, where they are used for the machining of turbine blades.

Mr. Seiffert said that the Swiss still had a clear lead in expensive and highly precise machine-tools.

"The British have made tremendous progress in the past", he said, "but Swiss machine-tool makers are still ahead. Fortunately".

(PMB)

WHY A FIRST OF AUGUST DAY?

Is a National Day Celebration desirable?

It has become fashionable to subject Swiss National Day Celebrations to derogatory criticism. Some people even ridicule them and point out the typical *Festredner* who insists on talking patriotism with great pathos and misplaced sentimentalism. Anybody who visits a 1st August Celebration in Switzerland realises that this caricature of a speaker belongs to the past; yet the idea persists that the majority of the Swiss people are against celebrating the anniversary of the birth of Switzerland. But that does not correspond to the truth.

The *Schweizerische Bundesfeier-spende*, the Swiss National Day Collection, asked the Swiss Association for Practical Social Research to carry out an extensive public opinion poll, and the answer has been astonishing. 90% of all those consulted in the German-speaking part and 95% in the *Suisse Romande* objected vehemently to the proposal to scrap all National Day Celebrations. Even of the young people consulted, 83% were in favour. Quite a few would prefer popular jollification to rather solemn festivities,

but whatever opinions are as to the character of a National Day commemoration, it has been shown conclusively that the Swiss want it, and that once again a few opponents to a certain cause get far more publicity than the silent majority of loyal supporters.

62 years of Swiss National Day Collection

Nearly 700 years ago, the first Confederates rallied and promised one another help and assistance in danger and need. By that act of solidarity they attained their aim: independence and freedom. With it they created the basis of the Swiss state of today.

This thought of mutual aid motivated Albert Schuster of St. Gall to bring into being the *Schweizerische Bundesspende* 62 years ago. He was convinced that the Swiss people would be not only willing but even anxious to put their hands into their pockets to help good cause. From 1910 to 1960, special cards were sold, since 1923 the 1st August badges and since 1938 "Pro Patria" postage stamps have been sold each year, and so far, 68 million Swiss francs have been donated to special social and cultural causes, 31 million alone during the last ten years.

During the questioning, people were asked their opinion as to the desirability of the Collection. 80% consider it as "necessary and useful even today".

The purpose of this year's collection

Two years ago, the money collected was in aid of women's organisations in the service of the people, and last year to help the health of the nation. This year, the collection will be in aid of *the Swiss Abroad*. Every six or seven years (since 1924), institutions supported by and for Swiss living outside their homeland have received considerable contributions from the *Bundesfeier-spende*. The last time was in 1965 when 2,395,000 Swiss francs were distributed.

Three main groups will benefit this year: the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad with their Secretariat in Berne, the Swiss schools and the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad. Much has been said in "The Swiss Observer" about the work of these organisations, and there is no need to stress that they could not exist without the help of the National Day Collection every few years. For they are private organisations and their activities are increasing all the time.

The 50th National Day Badge

In the course of half a century, these badges have provided welcome work to needy industries and large groups of disabled people, so for instance embroidery, straw plaiting and woodcarving industries. This year, the badge has been made by invalids,



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