

# "A Swiss looks at New Zealand"

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a firmer footing. The workers will, with the assistance of the trade-union and of the instrument they have within the factory - the workers' committee - succeed in attaining, as an economical element, such importance and approval by the enterprise as they have so far only enjoyed as citizens in politics. We have a great evolution before us. Here, there is a new democracy in the making."

### "A SWISS LOOKS AT NEW ZEALAND".

The New Zealanders, as the Swiss, are prepared to defend their country. You know the New Zealand soldiers' songs, this is the choir of a Swiss regiment singing - (Yodel) - the joy of the sun rising, the light, the warmth.

Every Swiss loves his country, his homeland. The New Zealanders, I found, love their homeland very much too, very, very much. You are lucky to have only one national language, not four as in Switzerland; but I was just wondering how many of you realise that there are four different New Zealands within your one country. Eh - you don't believe me? Well, there is the North Island with its variations; there is the West Coast of the South Island; there is the East Coast of the South Island; and then there is Stewart Island.

I almost feel inclined to think when our wise Lord created the world He worked four days of the week making New Zealand, on the fifth He made the rain and wind and sunshine and then rested for two days and enjoyed New Zealand. It is a little bit different in Switzerland: the legend says: "When our wise Lord had made the world He had a tremendous lot of dirt left over. He found an empty little space right in the midst of Europe, so he worked hard for five days and on Saturday morning He cleaned the country and then took a day and a half rest." That is the reason, concludes the legend, why Switzerland is so beautiful.

I have seen both countries now and if it were possible I would like to live with one foot in New Zealand and with the other in Switzerland. Seriously, you can not compare the two countries - they are, in spite of being one country with four different characters each, very different. Of course you are inclined to seek in another country what you find in your own land. Put an Australian on a boat at Patterson Inlet of Stewart Island you will hear him say: "That's like Whitsunday Passage of the Great Barrier Reef." I thought so too till I looked instinctively for corals and didn't find them; and gum trees, and didn't find them; and when I fished I landed a blue cod, not a parrot fish; and when I went into the forest I didn't find Koala bears but Penguins; and no Kookaburra laughed when the sun went down, but the Tui sang in the flowering rata and the mutton birds flopped into their holes and chatted. How many cultivated fields or paddocks or villages do you find in Eglinton Valley, or shall we say, how many chalet do you find round Lake Taupo? Where do you find in Switzerland a MacKenzie country and where do you find Alps with so much snow and ice and so little rock as in New Zealand? The Swiss Alps are quite different - there they are rocks with ice and snow and the snow is different and the ice is different. In Switzerland the perpetual snow boundary in midsummer is at between 8,000 and 9,000 feet, and the mountains go up to 15,000 feet - here in New Zealand it's between 5,000 and 6,000 feet and Mt. Cook reaches 12,000 feet. It's 300 miles to the sea in Switzerland - how far away from the sea are the New Zealand Alps on either side? The Swiss Alps are the roof of a whole continent, of Europe - its rivers reach four different seas. The New Zealand Alps form the spine of the South Island.

You do not have to take your cattle and sheep indoors in winter time - you have to in Switzerland. It's useless to look in Switzerland for active or extinct volcanoes. You never will find in Switzerland such a beautiful chaotic green scenery as you see between Kaikohe and Oponini. You can search the whole world and you won't find a Kauri Forest such as you have - so don't cut them down, not even bit by bit, not unless you wish to annoy scientists and tourists and all those who love unique beauty.

New Zealand and Switzerland are not competitors - not even in regard to tourism, and therefore we can work together, as there is no need to be jealous. Now, there are very few really good hotels in New Zealand. Personally I struck only one really first class hotel for instance, in the South Island - but mind you, I have not been everywhere! How that standard compares to Swiss hotel

classification is not for me to judge as I am not an expert, but I do enjoy a nice reception, a beautiful view, a good meal, not to speak of a good bed and other comforts. Now you know what I expect of a hotel - you can understand my saying most hotels don't think about the view. I dare say you can build 10 hotels in Queenstown. Now build one more hotel further up the Lake on the other side from where you see the Alps - and this one hotel will take away all tourists from Queenstown which owes its origin to mining. Miners stick their nose in the ground, not in the air as tourists do. And the good class tourist loves his stomach and so the present unattractive bars will have to disappear, whether the owners like it or not, and be replaced by a comfortable restaurant. Have a look at a Swiss hotel where you say: "Eat well, drink well," not where you drink the rest is unimportant. Mind you the Swiss hotels have competition and look back upon an old tradition, and one day the New Zealand schoolchildren might also sing a song similar in character to this one "Up there in the mountains, I have my old chalet..."

I love children, and I was greatly impressed with your open air schools. And I watched in Wellington how a policeman taught patiently and friendly some children who wanted to cross the road wrongly. You should have seen the proud and happy faces of those children when they know how to cross the road correctly. All Swiss children receive their education in public schools and the Government spends lavishly on schooling, and for once the taxpayer does not grumble. The New Zealanders, as the Swiss, like to grumble, specially about the Government. But where on earth do you find a nation without grumblers. And the Government is like the radio - it always should do something else at the time which suits you to listen in. Radio is constantly on the move - not stable. That is very healthy. One day soon you also will be able to send your waves round the world, shortwave. I will be listening in, and so will, I am sure, a good many New Zealanders living or travelling abroad. I have met New Zealanders all round the world. They are good mixers abroad and some are engaged - well, listen to one of Mendelssohn's "Song Without Words", Op. 38, No. 2.

It was some time ago when I saw a dance to this music. A New Zealand girl, a wonderful dancer, was its originator, the choreographer. And how could I forget her "Joan of Arc" dance - all expression - and when the agony of being burnt alive is greatest, there is no more music - all expression.

I have met thousands of you - farmers, intellectuals, factory workers, bosses and employees - but I met only two men who were not out to help me. That friendliness is an asset of the country which cannot be valued in money like the great work of your Red Cross Societies. Don't relax as the war is over, the Red Cross in peacetime is important and needs you. Though you are islanders, you are not isolated, and your contribution to preserve a world worth living in is necessary. Fortunately you have not and do not cultivate the spirit of isolation. Live and let live and exchange and absorb what is good in this world, that is the allround spirit and goodwill I found in New Zealand and the same spirit you will find in Switzerland. This is perhaps an answer to the question why New Zealanders and Swiss citizens do not quarrel but are friends, and why Swiss people love this country - and why Swiss people wish to know more about it. They are eager to learn and many have the wish to come and settle here. You see Switzerland is not quite one-third the size of New Zealand but has a population three times larger. I met a good many Swiss and descendants of Swiss in New Zealand. They are happy here, love their work and have become New Zealanders. Personally I don't like at all leaving your country - I wish I could stay here, and so I hope one day I can return, as New Zealand has a wonderful future, great possibilities and so much to offer.

In my Diary, I wrote: "Waikarameana, 24th December, 1946. It is Christmas Eve today and I had to remind myself of it as one loses in this peaceful wilderness all sense of time and day and year. I remembered that a fortnight ago I left Australia and flew above the clouds - to this paradise - and I wondered why I ever lived in other countries."

That night I heard over the Swiss Shortwave Station the greetings of a brother of mine. Before and after the greeting, I heard the bells of my home town. It was Christmas Eve and I was far away from home. It rained, it did not snow. But rain is lovely too - the song of rain means life. That was my Christmas Eve.



And then I had a true New Zealand Christmas. I read you a part of my Diary:

"The sunset was a dream, the Lake changed colours all the time till it ended to be a silver plate which slowly dimmed and the mountain ranges grew dark to silhouettes and then they grew into the night sky. And this whole beauty was accompanied by the evening song of the birds. I stood on a clearance overlooking the forest on one side, and the Lake on the other - and the forest became a fantastic mystery. There was no wind, nothing moved, and yet the forest was full of music, so clear as if it came from Heaven. The Tui sang his call and the Bellbirds sang but distant. I thought there must be somewhere a herd of cattle with bells. The amazing Bellbird call has 6 notes and a shake at the end and the effect of a few hundreds or thousands singing is just too much for the imagination. The harmony became perfection - that was absolute music. Everything lost its significance except beauty - and that beauty was a creation. As the colours faded so did this evensong and the mystery of the forest grew. A few Bellbirds still called - and then the Tui - and then it was quiet and the giant trees emerged into the forests as one great dignity which became one with the night."

Well, my dear listeners, I learned a lot in your country - and could go on talking about your scientists, in whom I have faith - about your Universities - of your cities and towns and villages, State Houses and tents - your white coal which is the only power and raw material Switzerland possesses, and then about the great and all important backbone of New Zealand - the farmer, the agricultural industry. Good things and not so good things - butter yields and Corriedales - soil erosion - that is a very serious problem which however can and must be stopped by this very backbone - by the farmers themselves.

So a good many New Zealanders helped me, and I wish to thank you all and I wish to thank New Zealand for its hospitality. Some of you, after escaping from prisoner-of-war camps, have experienced recently Swiss hospitality. If your impression of Switzerland is as good as mine is of New Zealand, I can be thankful and proud of my country. Perhaps you have noticed how my people love their country and when you heard our Swiss Psalm, our National Anthem, perhaps you felt how deep a love can root.

This is Lucas Staehelin thanking you for having me in your country.

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"SOCIAL CLUB AUCKLAND".

The Annual Meeting of the Swiss Social Club, Auckland, was held on December 17th, 1946, and on reviewing our year's activities we again had pleasure in noticing how popular the social gatherings were becoming. Our Picnic alas is still a thorn in our pride and this year, 1947, sees us without our annual picnic.

The new Committee for the year 1946-47 is as follows:

President:	Mr. A. Peyer.
Secretary:	Miss B. Haltmeyer.
Treasurer:	Mrs. G. Kerler.
Committee Members:	Mr. Camenzind, Mr. Kerler, Mrs. Peyer, Mr. and Mrs. Moosberger, Mr. and Mrs. Stoyer.

The past Committee wishes to express its thanks to all friends who have so ably assisted in helping to make our entertainments a success - a special word of thanks to Mr. P. Bouchler for all his help and we regret that he is not on our new Committee, but Switzerland called and he heard!! We wish him God speed and the best of luck - auf wieder sehen Peter.

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