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THE PRESIDENT AND THE COMMITTEE OF
THE SWISS SOCIETY
EXTEND TO ALL MEMBERS AND THEIR
FAMILIES A MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

I was privileged to spend July and August in Europe, the largest part of it in Switzerland. It was my fourth "Nine-Year-Heimweh-Interval". The highlight of my Swiss stay was the first of August. On that bright sunny morning I went to the Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich and watched the "Umzug". It consisted of a military band, Fahnen-schwinger, Trachtengruppen, Zunftgruppen and marching girls. Their disciplined marching could easily compete with the army! They made their way to the Festplatz near the lake. In front of the largest Swiss flag I have ever seen was the podium for the "Festredner", Prof. Dr. H.C. Peyer who delivered a very patriotic speech. I was fascinated by the huge crowd that listened attentively to the lengthy oration and was surprised at myself that I had absolutely no problem to stand still and listen to every word of a down-to-earth speech. What surprised me was that the people were all well dressed and in a serious but festive mood and a great feeling of patriotism overcame me. I had thought patriotism was long dead in Switzerland but I can assure you it is very much alive and healthy. I came to the conclusion that despite the many problems Switzerland has, it is still a very coherent country and people still "belong" and I myself felt still part of it even though this was my first 1. August in Switzerland for 35 years. Later I made a trip to Brunnen and had a look at the piece of land that, hopefully, will be the Auslandschweizerplatz.

It is a beautiful section - a prime site in the cradle of Swiss history. Our founding fathers walked here on this earth and I thought that the Swiss abroad were privileged to have it offered to them - albeit not Gratis!

On my return to New Zealand I received a letter from the Organising Committee for the Swiss abroad. It acknowledged the efforts so far made by individual people, institutions and Embassies. Unfortunately, the amount collected so far is still far short of the required sum. The Committee appealed to us to make a concentrated effort and step up the action.

As far as the Swiss community in New Zealand is concerned we have not done too badly. On analysing the result however it is easy to see that the message has not got through to the "rank and file" members. The Swiss society sent a cheque for 2500 Dollars to the secretariat in September, representing the bulk of the money so far collected. Quite nice, really. But it was made up of the following donations: 1000 Dollars from the Chemical Concern Sandoz,

300 Dollars from Hamilton (Private Donations), 50 Dollars from Auckland (Private Donation), 100 Dollars from the Neuchatel Insurance. Eight individual people in Wellington donated 100 Dollars each, a Wellington couple donated 300 Dollars. A musical evening held at the residence of the Charge d'Affairs brought in 260 Dollars and a musical afternoon held at the Wellington Club house reaped 80 Dollars, plus a number of smaller amounts donated by kind-hearted people. Many thanks to all of you.

I would have liked however that this campaign involved all the clubs. The idea was that special programmes would be organised to get into the spirit of the cause. So it was disappointing to learn that not all the clubs have, as yet, taken the opportunity to participate. I wondered if the feeling of patriotism is dead among the Swiss in New Zealand? I hope not - and like to believe that it is still there - perhaps just dormant! I appeal especially to the club committees to try and rally their members to this worth-while cause. Christmas is here again - the perfect time to involve everyone in the spirit of giving. I know the Swiss can be generous, they just may need a bit of encouragement.

Anyone who visits Brunnen and sees this piece of land would regret the day they failed to put their hand into the pocket to secure OUR little bit of Switzerland.

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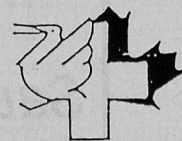
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