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Autor: Frei, Hansrudolf
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Tips For Our Swiss Clubs

Our N.Z. Swiss Clubs have by no means a unique problem if they are concerned about attendances at meetings, or that the younger generation is not interested in joining. The same problem exists in clubs and societies in Switzerland itself too. "Specials" of any kind don't draw the young generation to any extent and so the question is how to avoid clubs becoming old folks' gatherings. The Finnish Swiss Club in Helsinki does not believe in only considering the "Heimwehsschweizer", but has found effective means of real service to the new immigrants, which they cannot obtain to the same degree anywhere else. And what spells success in Helsinki will just as much have a chance of spelling success here.

For example: Someone wants to spend a few weeks in N.Z. What are the most worthwhile things to do and see? How precisely informative has been the literature a prospective immigrant has read at home? On the spot he can get it at first hand, and having probably still language problems, he will get it in his own mother-tongue. Many new arrivals would like to make early contact with New Zealanders. To help with this social achievement we can be of service. Someone has come for a short term to New Zealand, likes it very much and would like to stay for an extended period. We can assist and/or seek advice from our Embassy. Thus one could extend this list ad libitum.

For example: Who better could give advice than an old settler member of a Swiss Club? Here is the excellent chance to informally discuss problems which the immigrants are wishing to solve. How could this be arranged? Here are a few suggestions: A Swiss arrived here umpteen years ago, started as a farmhand in a small way, now is a prosperous owner of a well kept and run farm. He could tell a lot in an informal talk about his experiences and how things stand today. Another long-established Swiss is manager of a large business concern. Think what very valuable tips he could pass on how business is conducted in New Zealand, how to get on with New Zealanders, their particular likes and dislikes. And so one could enumerate at length on possible talks and discussions at Swiss Club evenings. Such informal talks could also be cyclostyled for the benefit of others. We must bear in mind that the young Swiss do not come here to learn about Switzerland, to have a 'Stammtisch with Jassen' and suchlike. What would be of importance is a projector with dias illustrating points of the talk in progress; the immigrants want to learn about New Zealand.

That a Swiss Club must, as part of its function, cater for the "Heimweh Swiss" is quite right, but it must also cater for the newcomer who has a vital interest to become informed at first hand about his chosen "Wahlheimat".

[Condensed version of an article by Hansrudolf Frei,
written for the Tagesanzeiger, 3.12.68]