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EDITORIAL

At the Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Society on June 6 in Hamilton, your Helvetia magazine suffered a definite setback. Although it was generally agreed that the magazine was of good value, interesting to read and eagerly awaited each month, the delegates voted for its production to be reduced from 12 to 8 issues per year. This paradox is difficult to understand but can best be explained as follows:

The fundamental problem was that until now, the cost of membership to the

Swiss Society, which also includes the subscription to the Helvetia magazine, was, at \$10.00 a year per individual member or per family, totally unrealistic. It should have been adjusted quite some time ago in line with the ever increasing costs of living. As this had not been done, the increase required (from \$10.00 to \$36.00 per individual or family, of which \$12.00 would have been paid by the Clubs and \$24.00 by the subscriber) was deemed to be too high. Fear was expressed by the Clubs that they might lose some of their members. Accordingly the delegates at the AGM voted for a new membership fee to the Swiss Society of \$20.00 only.

Up to that point, your Editor could sympathise with the various Swiss Clubs and accept their views. But from then on, the events became bizarre to say the least. After having repeatedly assured the Swiss Society Committee that everyone enjoyed the Helvetia magazine and looked forward to each new issue, the delegates then decided almost unanimously that they did not want to receive any more than 8 times a year. Some delegates even advocated a reduction to 6 issues a year.

Although the Committee asked the various Clubs for some more active support for the magazine and a few members proposed some good ideas on how to increase the revenue for the magazine through sponsorships from large Swiss firms and through more local advertisers instead of reducing the number of issues, the final decision was simply for a reduction to 8 issues a year.

Now, it is a well known fact in the publishing industry that the surest way to emasculate a publication is to reduce its number of issues. Reduce a weekly publication to a fortnightly one or a monthly magazine to a 2 monthly one and your publication immediately loses most of its appeal. A magazine that appears at irregular intervals or with too much time between issues becomes rapidly ineffective. It loses the attention of its readers, its reports on past events become so old that nobody is interested in them anymore and soon no one cares anymore whether the magazine appears or not. This was one of the problems faced by the previous Helvetia magazine and the new look Helvetia will not escape that trend either.

What the AGM overlooked was the basic aims of the Swiss Society which stipulate amongst others:

- To publish a regular issue of a bulletin of the Society, and

- To support the social and cultural contact among people of Swiss origin.

In a land like New Zealand, where Swiss people are spread far apart all over the country, the only logical means of communication to "support the social and cultural contact among people of Swiss origin" is by a regular newspaper or magazine.

Accordingly your new Swiss Society Committee had given top priority to these two matters. Up to the last AGM, it looked as though the above aims could finally be achieved with the Christchurch Swiss Club also joining the Swiss Society. At long last it seemed that the whole Swiss Community in New Zealand could be united and that the Helvetia magazine would become the vehicle for the social and cultural contact amongst all Clubs and all Swiss people in New Zealand. Unfortunately, the decision taken at the last AGM will undoubtedly set this aim back for one or, more likely, for several years.

Swiss people are not immune against Murphy's law. With only 8 issues a year, the Helvetia magazine will invariably be

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