

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 60 (1994)
Heft: [7]

Artikel: Car no longer a mobile office
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-945567>

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FIRST OF AUGUST, PAID HOLIDAY?

The battle is on. Unions and Employers are at one another's throat over the question as to whether the First of August, which for the first time in Switzerland's history, is now a full holiday, should be a paid holiday or not. The Unions claim that, last Autumn, when 84% of the population voted for the First of August to become a holiday, the understanding was that it would be a paid holiday. The Employers, of course, deny this entirely and it is now up to the Federal Council to decide on the matter. In the meantime, the hotel and restaurant personnel, for whom the First of August is of course a very busy working day, demand a free day in compensation. The general euphoria over the Swiss National Day becoming at last a true holiday, is turning into a battle royal, as anyone could have predicted.

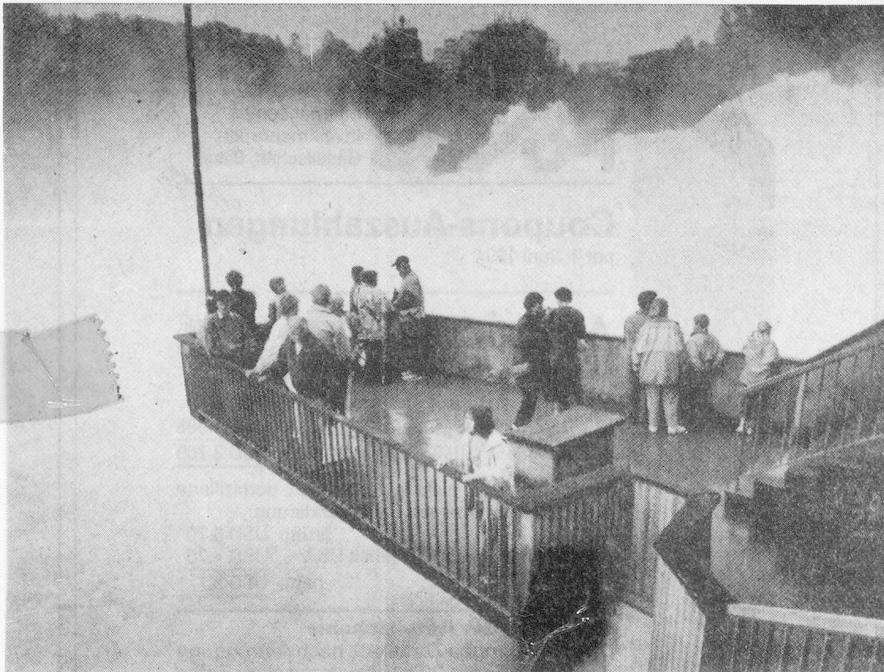
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Monthly Publication of the Swiss Society of New Zealand (Inc.)
Group New Zealand of the Helvetic Society



RHINE FALL

The famous waterfall by Schaffhausen, 150 metres wide and 25 metres high, has always captivated tourists and locals alike. Here the falls are viewed by onlookers from a daring platform built right over the water on the Zurich side of the river.

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CAR NO LONGER A MOBILE OFFICE

Like New Zealand, Switzerland has also experienced a tremendous upsurge in cordless telephones. According to a decision by the Swiss Federal Court, holding a telephone conversation on your cordless phone while driving your car is now an offense. Your car is not a mobile office, the Judges decided.

Studies have clearly shown that during the dialing procedure, the attention of the driver is totally diverted from the traffic ahead, that during the conversation the rear mirror is badly neglected and that in case of emergency, one hand on the wheel is insufficient to avoid a possible accident.

CHOCOLATE KING GONE

Rudolph SPRÜNGLI (74) has retired from his position as president of the giant chocolate company Lindt & Sprüngli. His departure puts an end to the Sprüngli dynasty which had been at the helm of this important Swiss company for the past 150 years. As a sign of things to come, the famous Lindt & Sprüngli chocolates "made in Switzerland" could soon be made "out of Switzerland" as the new management plans to transfer some of its production to foreign countries where costs are lower than in Switzerland. How about some Lindt & Sprüngli chocolates "made in New Zealand"?

Talking about Swiss chocolate, a survey has shown that more and more Swiss people get a taste for foreign chocolates. For generations, the Swiss chocolate bastion had been unassailable. Swiss chocolate makers have remained self-assured that their product was the best in the world and thus could not be threatened by anyone. This is no longer the case. New brands from Germany and Italy are fighting for a part in the lucrative Swiss market. After all, the Swiss, with 11 kgs per person per year, are still the biggest chocolate eaters in the world. The new brands are far more aggressive than the old established Swiss chocolate cartel and therefore are getting an increased share of the market, especially with the younger generation of Swiss chocolate eaters.

So from now on, if you want to use your cordless phone in your car, you have to find a place to park first, which is certainly not easy in Switzerland's congested cities. Maybe local authorities should consider providing 5 minute parking bays throughout the cities where motorists could quickly pull in to make or receive a phone call.