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Editorial

A world-wide challenge

Some time ago, and in view of rising unemployment figures, the Swiss Government proposed to lower the unemployment benefit by 3 %.

- A group of unemployed Swiss people then demanded to have the proposal submitted to the voting public by way of a referendum.

- On 28th Sept. the Swiss voters rejected the Swiss Government's proposal, albeit only by a small margin.

For Switzerland it is a relatively new task to come to terms with the problem of unemployment. I remember at the time of our emigration in the 50's, it was thought that the federal unemployment fund would never be in question in the future. During the "booming 80's." some people demanded that the premiums towards

be lowered, as no need for Pay-out was foreseeable for a long time to come. And now, in Switzerland, just as in other countries, there is talk of permanent unemployment. Technology, Computers, globalisation of economies are part of modern living and are destroying workplaces. Lucky are the employees with secure jobs in industries that are able to "cream-off the top"! But how just is this towards the legitimate and perhaps permanently unemployed? - It would appear that one of the most pressing tasks the "political and economic world" is facing today, is to devise a system of sharing the available work more evenly with a more even distribution of salaries and wages. At this very time Italy is planning to reduce a 39 hour working week to a 35 hour working week. It remains to be seen if this will lower the unemployment rate of the country.

- It is thought that failure to find a

solution for this problem could lead to the destruction of family, state, and democracy in many countries. What is your opinion?

President's Message

Spring has now well and truly arrived, with trees blossoming and flowers blooming - a time for new beginnings.....

For me, also, there will soon be a new beginning. By the time this edition of the HELVETIA reaches you, I will have been in hospital for the amputation of my right leg.

So my new beginning will hopefully mean increased mobility, a chance to walk again, and with any luck, less pain. Although there are no guarantees of the outcome, I'm sure it will still be an improvement to my current situation - here's hoping!

In the meantime though, I have to make good use of the limited time I have between hospitalisations (I have already spent over two weeks "inside" for other surgery prior to the upcoming operation), to catch up with my various jobs. One priority is of course the Swiss Society, and I would like to thank all those who recently sent their annual subscriptions in response to the reminder letter.

Only a small number are now still outstanding, and I hope to receive these payments shortly, so that I don't have to delete any names from the mailing list! I would also like to thank all our advertisers for their continued support. Advertising income enables us to keep the costs of the HELVETIA affordable and to a minimum for all members, so I therefore urge you all to support these businesses wherever possible.

Our Delegate for the Swiss Abroad will shortly be returning to New Zealand, after having attended the annual conference which was held in Lugano this year. No doubt, there will be a full report in the December edition.

And now some food for thought - on the front page it is noted that the Society is in its 63rd year, which means that 1999 will be our 65th anniversary. Any ideas would be welcome.....?

My best wishes for a good month, Beatrice.

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