

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 64 (1998)
Heft: [2]

Rubrik: [Impressum]

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Editorial

Most of us Swiss Kiwis are aware that there are two opposing forces at work in Switzerland; one for integration with Europe including membership and the other a desperate desire to stay unattached, free of bondage, especially political bondage. Wouldn't it be interesting to take a survey in regard to differing views among us Swiss Kiwis?! Would you expect, as I do, that the greater majority of us is in favour of an unattached, unbonded Switzerland? The result of such a survey might well show up the somewhat hypocritical relationship with our "old Country", since we, as emigrants to New Zealand, have certainly opened up ourselves to the world, while perhaps hoping at the same time that our Country of origin Switzerland, would keep itself firmly unattached, totally neutral and self motivated forever!

- What do you think? What about expressing **your thoughts** through the column of "Letter to the editor"!

- The following news (Feb.1998) from the Zürich education department is "food for thought" and could well hasten the integration of Switzerland into Europe and the "global world"!

Controversy over language preference in Switzerland:

The Swiss Canton of Zürich has just announced (February 98) an ambitious language teaching project for primary schools. the Canton's education department wants children to learn foreign languages early and well. But the plan looks set to cause tension between Switzerland's German speaking majority and it's French speaking minority.

Canton Zürich's department of education has agreed the project which will ensure the children will begin learning a foreign language the mo-

ment they start School at age 7. What a wonderful idea you might think. But the project has been greeted with less than enthusiasm by Switzerland's French speaking community. The language these Swiss German children will learn is English. The director of education of the Canton of Zürich says English is preferred to French because English is the first world language and almost everybody will have to learn it in the future, therefore children should learn English at an early age. The problem arises when we consider that Switzerland has actually four national languages, German, French, Italian and Romanch. Switzerland has in the past taken a lot of pride in the fact that it has managed to unify a country with such a diverse language culture. The question arises shouldn't the children living in German speaking Switzerland be learning first one of the other national languages such as French or Italian, rather than English.?? . The Cantonal education Department maintains that it has the same language targets for English and for French. It's thought that the children are better motivated to learn English first and by the time they reach the age of eleven they will be equally motivated to learn French, but on a more intensive learning scale. The Schools will be under an obligation to reach the same targets for both languages by the age 15 of the pupils. The project will begin in August this year in about 20 Schools. It is planned to use the immersion method of language teaching so that some normal lessons will actually be taught in the English language. It's an ambitious project and one that has the support of many Zürich parents. Nevertheless the fact remains that these children will not begin to learn French until they are 11 or 12. The director of education of the Canton of Zürich says he can understand the doubts of his French colleagues in French speaking Switzerland. They, the French speaking teachers think that the children will be less willing to learn French after they have learned English in the first place. In answer to the critics the director of education of the Canton of Zürich says that this is only a pilot project with relative few Schools and the experience gained will decide the future of the new idea on teaching

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