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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.

Canion 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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English in Swiss schools.

In the light of these developments the question of which language will be used in the longterm future, (let's say about 30 years hence) among different speaking parts of Switzerland, is a valid one. The director of education of the Canton of Zürich thinks that all 3 major languages, German, French and English will be used, that a typical Swiss culture will remain, but he also thinks that Switzerland will be part of a global world and therefore English will be used as a global language. Time will tell !!

President's Message

On seeing the cover of this year's first issue of the HELVETIA, it was delightful to see that stunning, full colour picture of the Zytglocke and Marktgasse in Bern, one of my most favourite sights in, for me, the most beautiful city in Switzerland. I say this with more than a little bias however (although the choice of picture was coincidental!), as I spent several years working in Bern during the time I lived in Switzerland. I don't think I ever tired of walking around the "Altstadt" (old part) of the city, with its worn cobbled streets, the buzz of the open market place on a Saturday morning, or a relaxed and peaceful stroll under the lovely old archways on a Sunday afternoon (minus any Sunday trading!!), trying

to imagine the many previous generations over the centuries who had walked those same worn paths. I'm sure many of you feel the same about your "own" local towns or cities with the same sort of sentiment!

But now, back to the cover picture. It was correctly identified by all entrants (but I am hoping for a few more responses from this month's issue!), and no doubt the addition of colour helped. This came about because the Printing firm we use now has a colour printer, and to trial this, we were given a special, heavily reduced price. However, we're now back to black and white, at least until a final decision is reached, as although the colour pictures are very eye-catching, the cost increase would involve at least \$1,000 extra annually. Therefore, your thoughts and input would be most welcome. Another change on our front page is that our Society is now in its 64th year, making next year our 65th anniversary, a milestone which I feel should be commemorated or celebrated in some way. For this, any ideas would also be much appreciated and perhaps then discussed at our upcoming AGM.

I hope everyone has coped well with the extreme heat that this summer has brought us, and that all Clubs had enjoyable and successful annual picnics during February. I wish you all my best wishes for the coming month.

with kind regards

Beatrice.

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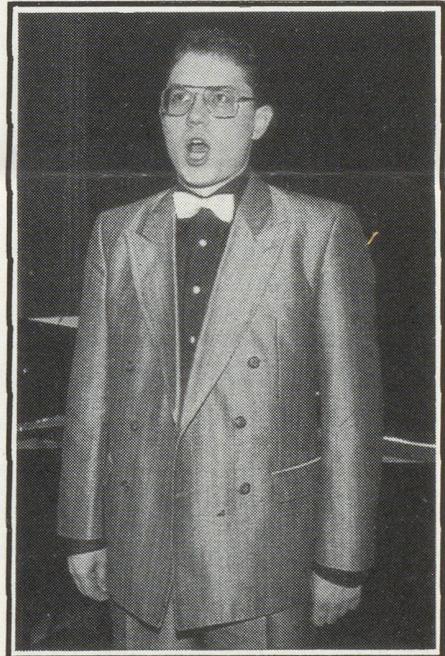
A World Record

On 16. January this year a young lawyer, Michael Sauser, from Zürich in Switzerland had his name included in the Guiness book of records. This young man found a challenge in learning and singing most of the worlds national anthems. At the Olympic museum in Lausanne he sang his way through 188 anthems in their original language in just 6 hours.

In answer to the question how it was possible to learn so many songs he said that he contacted all embassies around the world and asked for text, phonetic transcriptions and tapes of the respective anthems. Only 3 or 4 countries have not answered his appeal. Mr. Sauser says that he found 6 different types of anthems:

1. in honor of a ruler
 - God save the King..
2. historic development
 - the Marsaillaise
3. beautiful landscape
 - Norway, Sweden, Canada
4. revolutionary songs
 - South America
5. Propagandist anthems
 - Communist Countries
6. Proclamatic
 - proclaiming the country's policies in the anthem.

Mr. Sauser offers his singing services at patriotic functions and hopes for a job at the 2000 Olympiad in Sydney.



Michael Sauser in action.