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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Often, when I, and others, meet or approach someone interested in becoming involved with the Society or a local Swiss Club, the one question usually asked is, "What do we get for our \$25 membership fee?" Of course, the first and most logical answer is to say that all members annually receive ten copies of the *Helvetia* magazine. This is then followed up with an explanation of the magazine's contents - local Club news and events, short articles about Switzerland, sports results, useful advertisements of Swiss services and specialities, and several other items of interest.

The publication of the *Helvetia* is our main means of communication with all our members, as well as for the four Clubs, and is therefore an excellent tool for regular contact with a widespread membership. And yes, its production and postage costs do also use up the bulk of the annual subscription fee. Very little is left over to cover other expenses, however the fee is kept down to a minimum to make it affordable for everyone.

But I believe that membership goes beyond just the 'material' gain. The Swiss Society and the regional Clubs were originally established to assist new immigrants as they settled into their new lives in a new and strange country; and to bring these people together so that they could

both foster new friendships with compatriots, and celebrate and enjoy their common Swiss culture and traditions.

Of course, times have changed considerably since the Society was founded in 1934. Many of us now were born and have grown up here in New Zealand, but we still wish to retain the basic traditions and celebrations of our country of origin, enabling us to identify with our heritage. And the Society is still also here to assist any members, however possible, in times of any sort of need or difficulty.

Membership, therefore, cannot simply and solely be measured in monetary terms, but also as a valuable

personal resource. It allows us the opportunity to come together with others of the same common background; to enjoy taking part in a wide variety of gatherings and functions celebrating Swiss tradition, and to support and help each other if the need arises.

So when both are put together - the communication channel of the *Helvetia*, and that special and unique bond we all share through the tenets of our Swiss origin - we get a great deal of value for our annual \$25 Society subscription.

My best wishes for a happy Easter to you all.

Beatrice.

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