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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The main theme of last month's *Helvetia* was definitely about the recent AGM in Taranaki, which is, of course, also a very enjoyable social occasion, and a chance to catch up with long-time friends from other regions. However, on the Sunday afternoon, a few hours are always put aside for the more serious task of dealing with the formal business of the Society. So, following a brief description of the meeting last month, I would now like to give an account on the remaining reports and issues which arose.

Our Delegate for Swiss Abroad, Heinz Leuenberger, told us about how the 1997 Lugano Conference was organised from a practical and administrative point of view. (much information on business dealt with has appeared in recent issues). We discovered that it was indeed a very expensive function to attend, and after some discussion and clarification, it was formally decided that the Society cover the registration fee for the one Delegate officially attending to represent New Zealand.

A motion for rule changes was already on the agenda - this dealt specifically with amending one, and adding another, to conform with current Inland Revenue requirements and remain exempt from paying Withholding Tax. Following a brief explanation the motion was passed unanimously. The rules have now been rewritten and will be made available shortly, complete with the amendments and additions. My apologies for the delay in making these available.

The Society Riflemaster, Peter Rust, reported on annual sports events. Participation levels have remained consistent, even given the increase from \$3 to \$4. This now just suffices to cover the importing of the medals, about Sfr.11.70 each, plus expenses, but the exchange rate also plays a role in final costs.

The Society Committee / Editing Team spent their first year very conscious of expenditure levels, which resulted in a reasonable excess of income. Therefore, it was recommended that, without any justification for change, the Society subscription charge for 1998 remain at the current \$25.

After completing all items on the

agenda, several issues were raised in General Business.

For the long term success and survival of our Society, it is imperative that we find ways of catering for our "younger" members. This broad description includes all age groups - children, teenagers, and young adults. What can Clubs do, and what role must the Society (and *Helvetia*) play? My personal thoughts are that we ask them what they want, and what is important to them regarding their Swiss heritage. My plea to all Clubs and individual members - find out what your "next generation" wants from us, let us know, and help give the Society, and the Clubs, a base upon which to work from.

As I've mentioned before, the Swiss Society will next year be 65 years old, a milestone worthy of commemoration. One idea was a medal (similar to the 700 years Switzerland) or other "memento", for each family. Costs, as well as membership criteria (eg, since say 1998), must be considered, along with ample time for preparation and finding possible sponsorship sources. So please, think seriously about this, discuss it at your next Club committee meetings, and send us any and all ideas and suggestions you come up with as soon as possible.

In discussing these various issues, which are basically what our Society stands for, and why it was originally established back in 1934, it became my impression that much could be gained through input and communication from members. Very little can be achieved when "committees" decide what members need, want, or should have! That is not our role - we are only here to listen, help, and serve.

If anyone would like any further information at all on what was discussed at what was a very constructive meeting, please feel free to contact me. I also look forward to hearing from many of you with lots of ideas on the various issues raised!

Over the past year, we have received much appreciated and valuable support from businesses advertising in the *Helvetia*. Once again, I encourage members to in turn support these very reputable advertisers whenever possible. They are offering us all some very high quality goods and services - so pass their names on to your friends whenever

you can, and to relatives in Switzerland where applicable.

I am delighted to welcome all recent new Society members, but most especially those from the Christchurch Swiss Club. The new Club committee recently produced their first newsletter, and in it they encouraged their members to join the Society, which of course I fully endorse, and I hope to see more new members yet. The Committee has organised several events for the upcoming few months, and their newsletter will be published quarterly. Our Society members in the South Island especially may want to become part of the Christchurch Club, to be in touch with local events and receive their very informative newsletter. For any further information, all contact details are on the back page of our July issue.

My thanks to all members who have sent in their subscription payments during the past month - but many are still outstanding, so I look forward to receiving your \$25 cheque shortly!

Switzerland is now 707 years old - I wish everyone a memorable First of August celebration.

With kindest regards, Beatrice

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