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Editorial

Not an 'ordinary Sunday'.....

Since everything in our human life span has a beginning and an end it is obvious that our weekly, monthly or yearly calendar is as old as time itself.

For some of us it is Sunday that marks the end of a week, while for others Sunday (or "the Lord's day", as it is called in the Christian context), is looked upon as the beginning of the new week.

- Did you know that for 150 years the Swiss have marked the third Sunday in September as a special Sunday? It might surprise many non-Swiss to learn that the Swiss have traditionally (and by federal consent) re-

served this Sunday for the specific purpose of 'prayer and penance'. And now in our 'modern times' this tradition is becoming more and more of a problem for our country of origin.

- With the decline of the acceptance and practice of Christian spirituality this 'Sunday of prayer and penance' has lost its meaning in the mostly affluent life style of most Swiss in recent years. As I and maybe you can remember it was no trouble to observe the "Eidgenössische Buss- und Bet-tag" in traditional ways during the time of the second world war. But now, in affluent times, what should the Swiss pray for, why do penance, such an ancient practice? Why forgo some sporting event on the third Sunday in September as

decreed by some Cantonal authorities? Why celebrate this so-called "Bettag" as a "car-less" Sunday?

- Well a lot of Swiss may be relieved to know that for the past few years the term 'penance' has been dropped from the requirements of the third Sunday in September and now it is simply called the 'federal day of prayer', or 'Eidgenössischer Bettag'.

Prayer comes in differing forms and you may know it as 'prayer of petition' (asking for something), or 'prayer of praise' (to give glory to God), or 'prayer of thanksgiving', the prayer most suited to the third Sunday of September in Switzerland.

- Prayer in whatever form stems from 'man's recognition' that we all are 'fallible' and that we recognise a higher and supreme being called God.

- Even if some people in modern Switzerland can find no sense in a country wide 'Sunday of prayer' it is still a reminder that 'times' have been different, that maybe a 'Thanksgiving Sunday' is still appropriate in our day. This year's celebration of 150 years of the modern Swiss state alone provides reason for thanksgiving prayer. To live in peace with fellow citizens of differing ethnic origin, language and culture, and to be able to live in a country with the purest of democratic principles is surely reason for thanksgiving prayers. Swiss people with religious convictions will thankfully remember the historic peace maker 'Bruder Klaus von Flüe', while most Swiss would gratefully acknowledge the memory of the wartime General Guisan or the provider of the 'plan of survival', federal Councillor, Professor Wahlen.

- Modern achievements in science and technology have the ability to blind us to the need for God and of prayer in our lives. So it is understandable that the Swiss are struggling with the 'demands of the third Sunday in September'. But let us remember that the human characteristics of 'modern man' have not kept pace with all the 'progress of our times' and that human interaction is much the same as it was when the 'Bettag' was first introduced. The difficulties of 'living together' of differing ethnic peoples are manifest in many countries around the world,

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while we in New Zealand and in Switzerland encounter more and more difficulties in relationships between individuals.

- Hopefully lots of Swiss were able to say or sing the following words on the recent 'Bettag':

I thank my God each time I think of you and when I pray for you I pray with joy.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Two months have passed since our last issue - and although Winter actually seems to have passed us by this year, it's still nice to be heading towards the warm, summer months.

I'd like to thank the many Society members who have sent us their 1998 subscriptions - however, there are still a number outstanding.

I was really pleased to receive many positive comments, both about the *Helvetia* and the Society, accompanying the payments, and wish to say a special thank you for some very useful suggestions received from a few people. Several of these ideas are currently being looked at, and I'm sure will prove beneficial for all Society members. Of course, any further comments will always be gratefully appreciated.

Unfortunately though, two of our members from the South Island felt that they were not involved enough with a local Club to belong to the Society - a situation which concerns me, as I'd like to see the Society, and the *Helvetia*, to be here for the benefit of all members, no matter where they live, or their Club affiliation I am hoping though, that these people may yet reconsider.

And finally, we have some members whom we must farewell from New Zealand over the coming months. Jean-Luc Bulliard, of Dunedin, will permanently be heading home to Switzerland shortly, as will Werner and Vreni Stebler, of Waiheke Island. Christine Thompson, of Auckland, will also soon be leaving to travel overseas for an extended period. To all of you I send my very best wishes - both for the future, and for safe and happy travelling. We look forward to hearing from all of you again sometime, whenever you return to New Zealand.

My greetings to everyone, Beatrice.

SCHWING- AND ÄLPERFEST

Werner Vitali, who was placed 4th at the 1997 Eidg. Schwingfest, will shortly be accompanying an organised group-tour of about 25 Swiss visitors to New Zealand.

Following their arrival on 9 November, they will be visiting a variety of locations in and around Auckland, including a Deer Farm, a local Brewery, and the central city.

The tour then proceeds to the Coromandel area and Mt. Maunganui; as well as through the Waikato and on to Rotorua, where a traditional Hangi is also on the menu. After sightseeing around these wonderful regions, they will head towards Taupo and continue through Tongariro National Park as far as Hawera, with a visit to a local dairy factory on Saturday, 14 November. Here, the group will spend two days in real "farm-stay" style at the homes of several members of the Taranaki Swiss Club.

On **Sunday, 15 November**, the Taranaki Club will host a Schwing- and Älperfest, with the renowned Werner Vitali as a special guest. (See Club News for further details...) Following this exclusive weekend of "Schwingen" demonstrations and friendly competition, travel continues south to Wellington, across Cook Strait, and on to Nelson, with a visits to a local vineyard and through the beautiful native forests to Farewell Spit on the agenda. After taking in such enchanting scenery, and to conclude the tour, the group will continue on to Christchurch, where they will spend their last night in New Zealand before travelling back to Switzerland, together with the many unforgettable memories they will have of our lovely country.

The planning and organising of this tour already began early this year, with thanks to the Taranaki Swiss Club Committee and Members; our Swiss Abroad Delegate, Heinz Leuenberger, aided by the Sekretariat in Berne; and Dolphin Travel who, when preparing the group's travel itinerary, made every effort to support and involve a number of Swiss businesses, and the Swiss community, wherever possible.

Obituary



Death of Federal councillor Delamuraz
Swiss Politicians and media have been paying tribute to the former Swiss President Delamuraz who died on Sunday 5th October 1998 at the age of 62.

Mr. Delamuraz was a cabinet minister for 14 years and was suffering from liver cancer.

According to a spokesperson, Mr. Delamuraz was one of the most popular cabinet ministers ever in Switzerland, especially in the French speaking part. He served as Swiss President twice during his 14 years in the federal Government. The current President Mr. Flavio Cotti said of his colleague that he loved life as much as politics. Apparently he loved the Swiss people as much as he loved Switzerland as a country and he loved Europe. In 1995 he underwent open heart-surgery, but last year he was admitted with liver cancer. Due to the resulting ill-health he left the Government in March this year.

Mr. Delamuraz leaves a Wife and two children.

Are you celebrating a special event or occasion - maybe a birthday, or an anniversary?

Has there been a recent wedding, or a birth, in your family?

Perhaps you know of someone who deserves a special mention?

If so, **let us know** - include a few details, maybe even a photo, and send it to us (President or Editor) and we'll announce it!