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Editorial

The Koromatua CWI (country woman's institute), Switzerland and myself.....

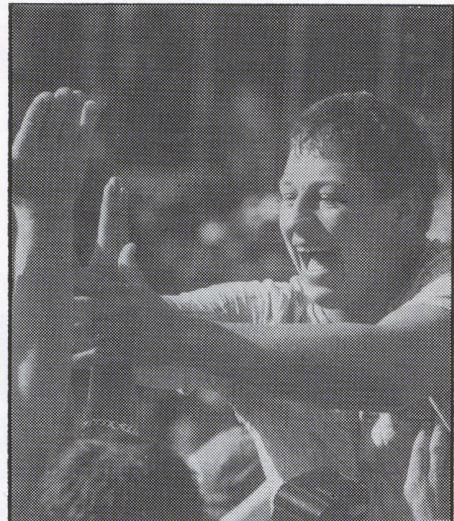
There it was on the calendar, staring me in the face day after day, for more than a month, the appointment to be 'guest-speaker on Switzerland' for the AGM of the CWI hosted by the Koromatua branch in our neighbourhood.

With due date approaching I couldn't help myself feeling trapped by my willingness to have accepted the challenge of 'guest-speaker'. However, as I started to gather some topics about our home country Switzerland on paper, I felt a sense of privilege taking hold of my attitude. And just as well, since I asked

myself anxiously how qualified I was to describe a country I had only lived in for a third of my life span.

Equipped with supporting artefacts like cowbells of various sizes, a Swiss flag, 2 large ceramic dolls in Swiss national dress, several carved wooden figurines from Bernese Oberland and some Swiss chocolate saved from some recent parcel from Switzerland, I entered the packed Koromatua country hall with patriotic pride and a good deal of apprehension.

- Now, what topics would you have tackled in front of approx. 100 mainly grey-haired Ladies politely 'lending their ears'? Perhaps you would have started, as I did, introducing the Swiss flag and explaining the connection and difference with



1998 federal 'Schwingerkönig' of Switzerland, Jörg Abderhalden from Toggenburg

the origin of the Red-cross-flag! How easily I remembered the name of the Swiss founder of the Red cross, Henry Dunant, but no way could I remember the year of the founding of this humanitarian institution! Could you have helped me?

- Hopefully I did somewhat better explaining the crossbow of our mythical Swiss Hero, William Tell on Swiss products, signifying Swiss quality. I even remembered that approx. 1500 Swiss companies are entitled to use this emblem since its inception in 1932.

Yes, you would probably have told my audience that Switzerland has the most democratic form of Government in the world. So did I and I even tried to explain the subtle difference between an initiative and a referendum (without mentioning the exact number of signatures needed, since I keep forgetting anyway!)

My very attentive audience was informed that the Swiss do not recognise a 'King-on-a-throne', but do recognise a 'King-of-the-sawdust', the "Schwingerkönig" or king of Swiss wrestling. I explained with much pride that the 'latest' king of the sawdust had only just been selected by merit points at the federal Swiss wrestling championship in Bern. (Eidg. Schwingfest). His name is 'Jörg Abderhalden', I said, a nineteen year old and he measures 1.9 metres in height and weighs 120 kilos. I couldn't help myself adding that the new Schwingerkönig is a 'product' of the Toggenburg region which was my place of origin and which I had left to emigrate to New Zealand in 1956.

- Perhaps you would have done bet-

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