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in duration from 15 to 25 years. Throughout the time back to the middle ages there are 'clusters of cold winters' and 'clusters of warm winters' grouped in a certain pattern, but unfortunately not a very regular one. Between now and the months of May and June the Swiss will keep their fingers crossed hoping that the fatal combination of heavy rain periods with periods of melt down of alpine snow will not occur as it did in 1566. Besides the tragic loss of lives in snow avalanches this year, the Swiss tourist industry claims to have suffered a loss of income of approx. 600 million Franks. On top of all this the big question remains unanswered for the Swiss and all mankind; namely, have the extreme conditions just experienced on both sides of the globe been partly caused by environmental pollution or the so called 'green house effect'?! What do you think?

President's Message

In my message last month, I summarised the results of the first section (Statistics) of a questionnaire, responded to by Swiss abroad organisations from around the world. Following are some further results which were collated from the other sections dealt with in the questionnaire:

2. Problems

Basically, three main areas exist where it was found that many clubs had the same problems in common. Firstly, the older age of the majority of club and committee members, especially because few successive members are joining, and there is sometimes a reluctance to 'hand-over' long held positions to others. As a result, several negative impacts have been created: restricted mobility (especially evenings) of older people; lack of motivation and energy to generate new members or activities etc; diminishing funds, resulting in 'cheap' functions less attractive to younger people; and a lack of motivated people for administrative jobs, such as organising functions or newsletters.

Secondly, often a lack of administrative records was found, which could cause the eventual downfall of a club. Many lack satisfactory membership lists, resulting in a lack of

communication (eg newsletters) with members, and non-payment of renewal subscriptions, causing loss of members. Several clubs have no official rules, and others do not establish or foster any contact at all with their embassy.

The third problem area is a lack of interest from 2nd or 3rd generation 'Swiss', who are, after all, fully integrated in the 'foreign' country, so are not motivated to take part in Swiss Club activities, let alone play an active part in running their Club.

3. Ideas and Recommendations

Swiss organisations from around the world also provided a lot of suggestions for Clubs to use:

Membership - increase and renew subs using personal contact. Include young people (members' children), by giving them some responsibilities, and try to establish a 'Youth Section'.

Rules - Redefine the goals of the Club through consultation, changing and updating rules to reflect today's society, conditions and members.

Subscriptions - Should be affordable and appropriate for members, instead encourage voluntary donations.

Club Bulletin - Create a logo, as a symbol to identify with. Produce a regular newsletter/bulletin, and encourage members to participate in it.

Advertising - Publish articles about Clubs in local papers; include club events in community flyers; invite 'public figures' to important functions; and make functions open to local non-Swiss, making them welcome!

Club Activities - I will talk about this large section next time

4. Clubs into the Future

The Swiss Abroad Council finally dismissed the report. They concluded that no two clubs were the same and it was not possible to 'describe' a typical Swiss Club, so were not able to deliver any broad solutions for improvements. It was then decided that where possible, parent organisations (which is the NZ Swiss Society in our case) choose/elect one person to be responsible for liaising between the Secretariat and local clubs. This person should have good knowledge of current events in Switzerland and issues affecting Swiss abroad, and be able to inform clubs

and members.

My conclusion:

It seems that after the questionnaire results were collated, the report was put into the 'too hard basket'! By being dismissed, the conclusion of the Council was simply that we now have a list of ideas to implement.

However, we can see that although we do share some of the problems clubs in other countries have, our Society and Clubs are very healthy and secure, and in good hands.

Many fundraising and function suggestions were put forward from other countries, and I will tell you about these next time. In the meantime, I wish everyone a safe and happy Easter. Have a good month everyone,

With kindest regards, Beatrice

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