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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In early June, at Queen's Birthday Weekend, many of our members from throughout New Zealand (sadly however, only from the North Island), once again came together for the traditional occasion of our Society AGM. A whole range of events and activities made up the full agenda for this weekend, which can be seen in this issue by the variety of descriptive articles provided by all the Clubs. On behalf of the Swiss Society Committee and all members, I would like to congratulate and thank the Wellington Swiss Club President, Roland Schütz, along with his dedicated Committee and Members, for all the planning, organising, hard work and excellent catering, all of which led to a most successful and enjoyable long weekend.

At 2pm on the Sunday afternoon, following a morning of sports' events, and then a delicious lunch, the Wellington Clubhouse was swiftly transformed into an excellent forum for the actual Annual General Meeting, which lasted two hours and boasted a record attendance of 80 members. For the benefit of members who were not able to attend the meeting, I have prepared the following report on the key issues discussed this year:

- Our guest speaker, Patron of the Society and Chargé d'Affaires at the Swiss Embassy, Mr Walter Simmen, addressed the meeting and explained some of the details regarding the new Constitution for the Swiss Abroad, and the improved emergency assistance available to all Swiss citizens, whether residents or tourists abroad. Mr Simmen also encouraged members to visit the various cultural displays around New Zealand (details in the Helvetia). These are well worth visiting, and come here at great expense to the Swiss Government so we should make use of the opportunity to view these Swiss exhibits.

- Regarding the Helvetia, the Editor explained that although the "clues" to the competition seemed very easy for some - they are also there to help our younger members learn a little about Switzerland. He commented that the appearance of the Helvetia had been enhanced by the colour photo on the cover. The cost was queried and calculated to be approx. \$1 annually per household.

- Financially, the Society ended the year with an after tax profit of \$2400 (see Balance Sheet, pg 4), in line with last year, and total cash assets at \$26,500. With the Society being a benevolent organisation, it was queried whether this amount was sufficient, especially if say political or civil strife broke out. However, such incidents would be extremely unlikely; as well, all citizens are protected by the NZ and/or Swiss Governments. Our Society's objects are to offer more practical assistance, (as outlined in Rule 2.c) "To provide for the moral and financial support of Swiss Citizens living in New Zealand in urgent or deserving cases, in particular to provide for the needy families of living members of deceased Swiss citizens, provide a decent burial and resting place for those who die without adequate means, and generally provide financial, moral, or social assistance in any case in which the Committee thinks fit.... Financial support in the terms of this paragraph shall only be given in cases where Social Security benefits prove insufficient." Mr Simmen suggested joining the Solidarity Fund for extra protection (Clubs can join as a group).

A question was asked as to whether a Club could apply for funds from the Society if required. The reply: application in writing can be made to the Society Committee for consideration, but the decision would ultimately be left to either the next AGM, or a Special meeting if urgent.

- Subscriptions: Firstly, a big thank you to all advertisers, both regular and casual, who supported the Society in this way throughout the year. Advertising revenue keeps subscriptions to a minimum, and equated to approx. 200 subscriptions this year! Without advertising in the Helvetia, our subs would increase by at least \$10, so please, if possible, support these businesses which are supporting our Society so generously. The fee for 1999/2000 will once again remain at \$25 per couple/household / family. (Adult children are required to become individual members to receive all Society benefits and take part in medal and interclub sport competitions).

- The Swiss Abroad delegate informed of his not so successful efforts in encouraging an exchange programme with Australia, and once again reminded us of the regular (although costly) Youth Exchange Programmes taking place in Switzerland. Contact

details for further information are on page 2 of the Helvetia.

- Each Club President gave a brief report on their Club's activities, each with many ideas for others to follow.

- Rule Change, 4.c) - a new rule outlining deadlines and minimum amounts Clubs must forward to the Society regarding the \$25 Society subscriptions collected on behalf of the Society from members. This rule was initially proposed to ensure improved cashflow of Society funds, and after some questions, explanations, and discussion, was passed without dissent.

- The meeting formally approved that the Society may appear on the Internet, with the main purpose of providing current information about Club and Society contacts and activities as well as gaining new members as people visit the site. Thanks to Edi Brändli, Auckland, who is providing Clubs and the Society with this site at no cost. The web site address is in the Club News heading panel.

- Election of Officers: all positions remain unchanged. My thanks to the whole committee for the support I have received over the past year.

- A fax had recently been received from Ozeania Reisen in Switzerland sending their greetings to everyone, and asking that an Ozeania 10 Year Jubilee Aperó be organised on their behalf to participants at the AGM. They also sent their best wishes for our meeting in Wellington. Thanks to Bruno and Ursula Böckli for this kind gesture.

- Next year's AGM has been set to be held on Queen's Birthday weekend, 2000, in Auckland, where I hope it will be possible to welcome some South Island members.

My thanks to all those who attended the AGM and for contributing to a most successful and constructive meeting. Anyone wanting further information about any of the issues discussed at the meeting are most welcome to contact either myself or the person who was reporting. Full copies of Society Rules are available upon request (\$5 to cover expenses would be most appreciated).

I have once again received a newsletter from the Secretariat for Swiss Abroad, and will fill you in on the latest news from them next month. Until then, my best wishes to all members throughout New Zealand, **Beatrice.**

End of Millennium Celebration Wellington, 6.6.99

We would like to thank and congratulate Roland for an excellent evening, for his organizing skills and all the work he and his friend put into it.

- *We thank the Auckland Yodeling Club for the fabulous program and we wish them well at Frauenfeld.*

- *A big thankyou to the Taranaki Singers and Yodelers for their input, as well as the Maori group, they all made it the fantastic evening it was.*

- *We would also like to thank the Swiss Club Committee for all the work in making it a very successful weekend.*

M & R.