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Literature - Language - Culture !

I think you would agree that common sense would have it that these three components can be found in the make-up of every country of the civilised world to a greater or lesser degree. - In my dictionary I found the following definition of the word literature; *"it is the collective writings of a country or period"* !

Not too bad a description I said to myself as I followed the invitation to attend an evening lecture entitled *"The Contemporary Literary Scene in Switzerland"* by Professor Romey Sabalius (German born, Head of the German Program at San Jose State

University and currently Visiting Professor at Monash University in Melbourne) at the University of Waikato in Hamilton. A most interesting discourse presented in layman's language was enjoyed by a good representation of Waikato's Swiss/Kiwis and Hamilton/Kiwis alike. Concluding his address with some condensed statements, Professor Sabalius had to admit that there is no real contemporary Swiss literature as such, due to the four language fragmentation in Swiss/German, Swiss/French, Swiss/Italian and Romanch (mainly published in German).

- So the 'moral of the story' is obvious; that literature and language go together like horse and cart. This statement in turn leads me to think

about controversial happenings in New Zealand as well as in Switzerland. While one of our Maori-Leaders here in our adoptive country is calling for compulsory studies in the Maori language, the Parents of Primary School children in Switzerland (in Canton Zürich) are demanding English-language lessons be implemented presently.

- Would you agree that there is little chance of Maori language proficiency ever bearing any 'commercial advantage' to the general population? If so, it is understandable that the average New Zealander is loath to embark on Maori language studies on a compulsory level. In our country of origin, Switzerland, the commercial value of English has been recognised for some time and the authorities in the field of education are at this time under great pressure to introduce lessons in an orderly fashion. However some important questions need an answer first. For example; is it reasonable to burden a Primary School pupil with another language course right at the beginning of its schooling career? By doing so, will the study of the other language requirements - French or Italian - suffer disproportionately? Should English study lessons become integrated into the State School education system at all, or should such studies remain available on a voluntary basis paid for by the Parents, as is the case now? Are there enough Swiss Primary School teachers available qualified to teach the English language?

- According to an article I found in a Swiss newspaper sent to me by the Swiss Embassy, there is confusion in Canton Zürich (usually the forerunner of such 'innovations'). For example; The School authorities in Dielsdorf were happy so far with a voluntary offer of English lessons for its Primary School pupils, but want to make it obligatory now. In Dübendorf however they found such a great demand for voluntary lessons (at Fr. 190.- annually per pupil), that they think it would be impossible to change to a compulsory and integrated system of 'English for Primary School children'. Again some different approach is evident in Herrliberg where the introduction of English lessons has been somewhat slower and voluntary lessons are scheduled to begin next year, but only

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