

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 66 (2000)
Heft: [1]

Rubrik: News and reviews from your Delegate for the Swiss Abroad

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New Year Message from our Chargé d'Affaires

The new millennium is now just few days old with the transition from the last one being spectacularly uneventful - the only spectacles appeared to be at the bigger, brighter New Year's Eve celebrations both in New Zealand and around the world. The much talked about Y2K Problem was almost no problem at all; the lights did not go out, the sun still rose on January 1st, and the phone continues to ring more than ever...

With the festivities now over, it is perhaps time to reflect on the fact that it was in fact only another new year which began. If we had problems at the end of last year, chances are, that the same problems are still with us. I would like to encourage us all to try and solve our problems with imagination, determination, and by preserving a good sense of humour.

I wish all of you and your families a very positive Year 2000, good health and happiness.

Walter Simmen.

News and Reviews
from your Delegate
for the Swiss Abroad
Heinz Leuenberger

Swiss Abroad Congress 2000

The 78th Congress, the first of the new Millennium will take place in Zug, from the 17th to the 20th August.

The theme will be "Education and knowledge in the Future", supply, development and strength of Switzerland as a place of education. More information will be published in the next 'Swiss Revue'.

Congress Minutes 1999

The minutes of last year's congress held in Lausanne are obtainable from me, as is any other information

regarding the Swiss Abroad Organisation's activities or those of the Secretariat.

Recent Parliamentary Elections in Switzerland

The 24th Oct. 1999 marked only the second time that the Swiss Abroad could take part in electing a new Federal Parliament. - The results showed the "Fifth Switzerland" is more interested in Referenda than elections. Two reasons point to the rather 'feeble' participation.

1) the complexity of the election procedure, and (2) the lack of information on Candidates. I would add a third reason: inadequate time to absorb the information received! (Heinz). - Further to that, under the present election system, Swiss Abroad Candidates have a less than minimal chance of electoral success. The questions we must ask ourselves is: what can we Swiss Abroad do to improve the situation? National Council member - Rosmarie Zapfl, on the 5. October 1999, presented the Federal Council with the motion: To take steps to optimise the electoral system and participation of the Swiss Abroad on the election lists. Of the 570,000 plus people registered abroad, 70,000 exercise their political rights. With the expanding participation in Swiss politics, it's important that the right to participate is made as optimal as possible. In view of the rapid advance of information technologies, it's possible to buy or visit almost anything on the Web - so why not make it possible to vote via the Internet?

Review of a "Swiss-Night" at Putaruru

On the 23. November 1999, the Putaruru Rotary Club organised a "Swiss Night". Close to 40 "Swissies" from as far away as Hamilton and Pirongia attended this function. Even a couple of visitors from Switzerland found their way to the South Waikato.

The centre of attention was Mr. **Walter Simmen, Swiss Chargé d'Affaires**, who travelled especially up from Wellington. In his speech he addressed the Transit Transport Problems faced by Switzerland and indeed by the rest of Europe.

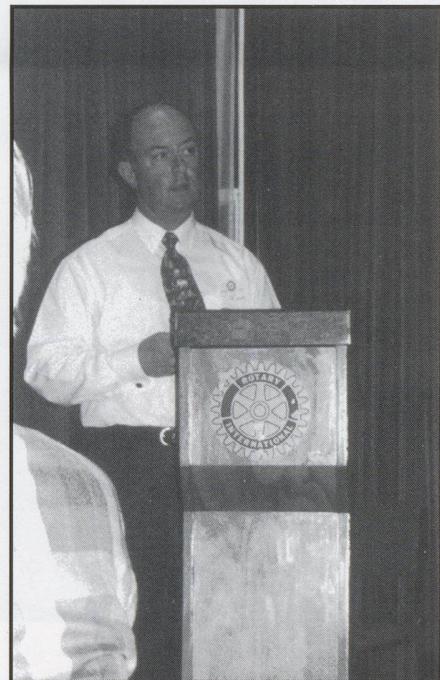
- Judging by the many questions put

to Mr. Simmen, his address was very well received and appreciated.

- Visitors will remember, that as part of the Rotary Club's 50. Anniversary Celebrations, Raffle tickets for a painting created by a local Artist were sold. It's my pleasure to inform you that the winner was non-other than the 'man of the night', Walter Simmen !

- Club President, Yvonne Sycamore and members, once more would like to thank our visitors for their attendance and wish them all the best for the new Year and new Century, with special thanks to Rotarian, Walter Simmen.

Yours; H.Leuenberger.



The Chargé d'Affaires
Walter Simmen, delivering
his address at Putaruru.

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