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President's Message

There is currently much debate in Switzerland about the choice of languages being taught in schools.

In Kanton Zurich, school officials believe English to be so important, they now want children to learn this first, ahead of French, an official Swiss language.

Here in New Zealand, we hold the advantage, in a global sense, as English is already our first language. However, when it comes to learning a second language - we fall behind.

But many of us, who are now second or even third generation Swiss, have a great opportunity to learn a second language - and we should all encourage the use Swiss or German (or in some cases French / Italian) in our homes as much as possible.

Taking my own case as an example, during our childhood, Swiss dialect was usually spoken by our parents. This made for some very fascinating dialogue, as we (my brother, sister and I) responded in English, resulting in single conversations using two completely different languages !!

Although this sounded rather odd to 'outsiders', such a situation was quite common for us, along with many other families.

The main advantage for us was, that although we often felt a little awkward speaking Swiss, preferring to use English, we did understand all of what was being said in Swiss.

For me, my knowledge of the Swiss language became a great asset when I went to spend a year (which turned into eight!) in Switzerland.

I was in what was then for me a foreign country, but at least I was able to understand the language - because I had always heard it.

My speaking skills needed to be 'developed' a little, but improvement was speedy - afterall, nobody really spoke English where I was, and I had little choice but to use Swiss to communicate with those around me.

So, for anyone who is able, why not give your children, or your grandchildren, the opportunity to learn some Swiss? By passing this unique and diverse language to the next generation, they will then also have the ability to communicate with the peo-

visit Switzerland one day.

I hope everyone had a happy festive season, and send you all my best wishes for 2001.

And for February, the month of Club picnics, I hope you all have great weather, and very enjoyable and successful days.

Best Regards, Beatrice.

Book Project on Emigration Can anyone help ??

Nicola Capoferri is a member of the 'Swiss Kiwi Club' - a New Zealander now living in Switzerland.

She is currently working on writing a book, largely about her experiences as a New Zealander emigrating to Switzerland, and what life is like there as a 'foreigner' in that country. But, to give the book some balance, it will also include some general aspects of emigration and life in a new country. In particular, Nicola would like to hear about the experiences - both good and not so good - of Swiss citizens who have settled in New Zealand, based on the following situations:

- your reception in the new country?
 - your reasons for leaving?
 - advantages of each country?
 - general attitudes of New Zealanders/Swiss towards foreigners.
- Are there any differences between the two and, if so, why?
- do you regard yourself as being New Zealander or Swiss? How do your children see themselves?
 - do you feel you have changed?
 - have you ever felt discriminated against, directly or indirectly?
 - does New Zealand have a problem with racism (towards immigrants)? If so, who are the victims?

Nicole would be delighted for anyone who may be interested in sharing some of their experiences for this book to contact her, either by e-mail: capoferri@swissonline.ch or write to:

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New Web Page for Swiss Abroad

Thanks to the sponsorship of the Insurance company *Helvetia Patria Versicherung*, the Swiss Abroad Organisation (ASO) now is its very own web site: www.swissfocus.ch.

Information available includes:

- events calendar
- monthly competition
- product information
- links to other important web sites and much more...

Our Swiss Society has also been offered the opportunity to be seen on this site - at no cost. The information about us will basically consist of name and contact details, and should appear shortly and will give us increased publicity worldwide.

The site has also been created to give all Swiss Abroad a "virtual window to Switzerland". Information packages about the site are available on order. If anyone is interested in receiving this, please contact me (ph 07 843 7971) by 15th February and I will send a bulk order.

(Beatrice)



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