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Editorial..

What is globalisation, one of my Grandchildren asked the other day. Look it up in my dictionary, was my reply. But it proved a fruitless search as this word was obviously not needed some 20 years ago when I purchased my International Webster New Encyclopedic Dictionary.

So begs the question ; what brought globalisation about in our time and is it really as modern as we think it is. I think Globalisation has been with us in many forms for a long time, if we think of the World Postal Union with it's headquarters in Switzerland, or the World Radio Short-wave Service with Swiss Radio International being part thereof. A more recent and more obvious-Globalisation has occurred in recent times with the information technology of the World Wide Web called Internet.

World wide transport by intercontinental shipping with containers suitable for steamship, lorry and railway wagons brought about true commercial globalisation. Most of us of the older generation of Swiss immigrants to New Zealand can remember watching the tedious and time consuming loading and unloading of large ships on our journey from Europe. I well remember watching with trepidation the way our humble belongings packed in wooden crates and cabin trunks were loaded on the wharf of Naples in 1956. A lot of today's consumer goods from abroad have seen the inside of a container on the way to us in New Zealand.

According to information available it was the American *Malcom McLean* (the owner of a transport business) who had the idea of shipping goods in containers, as he was about to buy a packet of cigarettes from a

vending machine. It was him who started the US interstate trafficking of goods by containers.

During the late 60's and early 70's containerisation as we know it today began on a world wide scale and ever since that time the transport of goods of all manner around the world (globally) has become faster and cheaper.

Thankfully the world's Transport Union has managed to standardise the humble steel container with a width of 8 feet or 2,438 meters.

Today's trend is for ever larger (longer) containers. Modern ships can travel so much faster.

The Swiss newspaper 'Tagesanzeiger' tells it's readers, that the Swiss commercial shipping company 'Norasia' is planning to increase their ships potential speed from 24 knots (45 km/h) to 30 knots (55 km/h). The idea of larger and faster ships is of course a commercial consideration due to a healthy competition among shipping companies. Importantly it is the refrigerated container that allows goods from New Zealand to be transported all over the world.

According to statistics the use of containers worldwide has grown ten-fold since 1974 and it is envisaged that the same will happen again within the next ten years. As this trend comes about, the global transport of seasonal goods becomes so fast and relatively cheap that we can eat most specialities all year round. Appealing as this may be, it is a 'two-edged-sword', since we deny ourselves the pleasure of anticipation to receive goods in 'due time'.

Let's hope that globalisation and containerisation in today's world of liberalised trade will bring a better and fairer distribution of goods to and from the world's poorer nations, so that the trend of 'the richer getting richer' and 'the poorer getting poorer' has an end.

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