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Editorial..

Editing the Editorials...

Editorials are written, read and soon forgotten. Controversial issues are often welcome material for editors. They present the editor with an opportunity to state his or her personal opinion and can motivate readers to disseminate the subject matter at length. Editorials often move readers to put pen to paper and so fill the column reserved for "Letters to the Editor".

The time is near (July) when a new editor of HELVETIA will make his mark on our publication.

You may have noticed that in the past I endeavored to give emphasis to mostly positive aspects to various subjects of editorials. Today's editorial may well be the exception!

Whenever possible I tried to write about parallel happenings in Switzerland our 'country of origin' and in New Zealand, our 'adoptive country'!

As Swiss/Kiwis most of us have the welfare of both these countries close at heart. How would you then define the happiness of our two countries in general? Would you agree with my thinking, that the happiness of the country's population in general is steadily diminishing?

Statistics would certainly agree! We can read headlines stating: Society is not what it used to be! We know of a steady break-down of family values. Lack of discipline among School children. The high suicide rate among young people. Low self-esteem to the point of self hatred.

- Recently I found an article in a Swiss paper, describing a new trend of self destruction among young

Swiss girls. Inflicting superficial wounds on themselves they are apparently desperate to draw attention to themselves and with such mutilations they express total lack of self-esteem.

Where is it all to end, we may ask? Here in New Zealand we are confronted with an increasing lack of respect for the sanctity of human life resulting in violent home invasions, rape and murder. Government spending or lack thereof is blamed for most shortcomings affecting the welfare state.

- In most Christian Churches the message of Lent, the need to confront personal sin and the failure of a moral society at large is being preached about at this time. But who is willing to listen in a post-Christian society as ours?

Let the Government print more money I heard someone say!

It might help for a short time to live with a false economy and the super rich would probably increase their wealth while the working poor would pay later...!

I'm sure that you have your own opinion on the ills of today's loss of values and morals with inherent costly results to society. Who is speaking out to us all about the need for self-discipline?

The need to remind us all that irresponsible living is costly and that the welfare state is under threat. I believe there are now approx. one million 'Kiwis' dependent or partially dependent on the Government for their necessary income to survive.

We hear of the huge debt incurred by Government's borrowing abroad during the past decades.

Aware of such calamities which can steal the country's happiness some of us 'oldies' will be forgiven when we talk of the 'good old days' when expectations were few, self-discipline incorporating responsibility was common, standards of behavior were wholesome and we could enjoy most entertainment without being warned of 'offensive language, drug use, violence, sexual references and horror scenes'.

Have we as part of 'western society' ever been encouraged to ask "what can I do for my country", rather than what can my country do for me'? Or has that only ever happened in America?

I would love to see and hear on a regular basis a panel of leaders of

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sport's organisations, leaders of Government, church leaders with a cross-section of ordinary people, appearing in a weekly TV-show to evaluate everyday happenings according to moral values and 'cost to the country' as a whole.

Hopefully such an early evening debate would show the nation the need for a return to 'old' values, such as keeping God's commandments. If that would become possible, I believe that we could regain some of the country's happiness lost because of our 'modern ways'.

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President's Message

The following article was in the February newsletter of the Swiss Abroad Organisation (ASO), and although not directly applicable to us here in New Zealand (not that I'm aware of, anyway), but I did find it of interest to print for everyone to read:

Delight and Relief

In 1996, the subsidy to Swiss schools abroad was drastically cut. Short-term savings were achieved through management of class sizes, teachers' wages and reduced investment. But this was not enough, and altogether, the schools revealed a combined loss of over Fr.2m.

Now, based on expert financial analysis, reports detailing crisis the situation being faced by the schools, the State Council recently approved a state subsidy increase of Fr.18.5m. This success was described as both a delight and a relief for the Committee of Swiss Schools Abroad (KSA). The extra funds will ensure that the schools will continue to provide high standards of education.

Currently, there are 17 Swiss schools abroad in 10 countries, giving 6000 pupil and educational foundation of Swiss standards. But this network of schools could be widened, and a committee is currently investigating the way ahead. An initial report is due shortly. More schools could increasingly offer a first class education in major business centers, such as Shanghai, Mumbai and Moscow. Besides accommodating Swiss children, the schools could be attended by children of other nationalities. The possibilities and the potential exist to offer and provide an excellent Swiss education around the world, thereby strengthening the reputation and the presence of Switzerland worldwide.

Future issues being investigated by the KSA are the networking with educational institutions in Switzerland and a more uniform structure of schooling. Recognised national and international certifications should enable graduates of Swiss schools to go on to further learning institutions or universities worldwide. Course structures should allow for more simplified international school transfers and therefore promote Expat movements. Pupils attending Swiss schools abroad, both

of Swiss or other nationalities, are all potential 'consumers' of Swiss universities.

The networking possibilities of the Swiss schools, both amongst themselves, as well as with other international schools, should become better utilised to secure a high quality education. An 'umbrella' organisation should further act as a link between the Swiss schools abroad and all levels of learning institutions in Switzerland. To increase cost efficiency, individual school's management should be assisted with improved business support systems.

(translated from the article by Irène Spicher, KSA)

Summer camps for Swiss children abroad are on offer once again - this year all in the Neuenburg area and focussing on Expo.02, with each camp setting aside three full days set aside to visit the exhibition.

1. Chaumont

14 - 27.7 and 28.7 - 10.8
ages 14-17 yrs, Cost Fr.800

2. Ins -

14-27.7 and 28.7-10.8
ages 16-25 yrs, Cost Fr.850

3. 'Switzerland in five worlds'

touring around all five Expo stages, 17-24.8,
ages 18-35, Cost Fr.850

4. Family Stays

27 May - 13 October,
for 1-6 weeks in homes
throughout Switzerland, ages
15-25 yrs, Cost Fr.100/week

Please contact me for further information and application forms. As always, some financial assistance may be available. It would be great for a young person from New Zealand to be able to take part in one of these well organised visits to Switzerland.

As we head towards the end of daylight saving and the early signs of autumn, I wish you all a happy month. Kind regards,

Beatrice.

I LONG TO ACCOMPLISH
A GREAT AND NOBLE
TASK, BUT IT IS MY CHIEF
DUTY TO ACCOMPLISH
SMALL TASKS AS IF THEY
WERE GREAT AND NOBLE

Helen Keller
(1860 - 1968)