

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 70 (2004)
Heft: [10]

Rubrik: [Impressum]

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Editorial

"Have you registered to vote in (Swiss) Federal Elections?" This headline in the October "Helvetia" caught my attention! It was followed by a personal message from our Ambassador which was surely aimed at each and every one of us who still hold Swiss Citizenship but have as yet never bothered to register as a "Swiss" voter, for various reasons, or, should I say, excuses?!!! Oops!!! Oh yes, I have to confess, yours truly is one of the many "excusers"!!! I had thought about registering on several occasions but "never got around to it"!!!

My what seemed to me perfectly logical reasons for this were many! After all, what did I know about Swiss politics? I left the old Homeland as a nine-year-

old 65 years ago from a very different Switzerland of today. If I had to vote in the many Referendums, could I make the right choice for the "good of the Nation"? Ifs, buts, could I? Sound familiar to most of you???

I read Mrs Matteucci-Kellers' letter again, twice!! Then I began to change my negative lateral thinking to a positive angle! Our Ambassadors' gentle chiding is well deserved! Only 10% of "Swiss" residents in NZ on the Embassys' voting list? Good grief!! Surely we can do much better!! Starting with myself!! The strongest excuse all NZ born Swiss have, or those who arrived from Switzerland under eight years of age, does not apply to me, as I am still quite familiar with the

German language, thanks to a very strict mother who was determined that I not forget the language in which I had just "graduated" as a mighty "Zweitklaessler" before we left in 1939! I must have read, out loud to her, of course, almost every German-language book that existed in Taranaki in those first five years, twice over!!!

So you see the dilemma our aforementioned compatriots are in, who are completely unfamiliar with any of the three primary national languages the voting documents are printed in. However, I think we could assume that most of them would have friends who are fluent in one of these languages and who would readily translate the "gist of the matter", into english, for them!

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So, chewing over the Ambassadors' message got me thinking on a completely new lateral, as I said. Why should we not vote on Swiss laws and affairs? After all, we are still Swiss Citizens as well, or most of us! But here again, I should turn this around and say, we should vote in Federal Referendums or any other votes allowed to us members of the fifth Switzerland. Why? Because it's our democratic right, won for us by many hardworking and sincere men and women beavering on for us all, especially over the last fifty years, to finally win these valuable voting rights for us Swiss-Abroad. A famous quote comes to mind, but I can't remember the name of the author just now. "Many freedoms have been lost because good men and women chose to do nothing until too late"! (Was it Benjamin Franklin?)

So please, I beg you all who still hold Swiss citizenship, register yourselves for voting-rights with the Embassy if you have not done so!!! The Ambassadors modest hope of doubling our miserable 10% should easily be trumped by 200%!!! In fact, if we are serious about valuing our democratic freedoms, we should easily achieve a 75% registration rate!!! So come on folk, lets do it for 2005! And give our Ambassador something to smile about in the coming New Year!!!

On behalf of all our Editing Team and regular "monthly Packers", I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year!

Cheerio until February, Paul