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Editorial

Well, it's that time of year again when we are on the eve of celebrating Switzerland's National Day. Over the past week, my mind has been wandering all over the place with a million thoughts, but gradually I began to realise that one word seemed to dominate around which all other thoughts seemed to swirl!

This one word was, 'Culture', national culture, ethnic culture, even regional and tribal culture! The more my thoughts began to focus on this word, the better I began to understand how important culture was to all people of all races and spiritual or religious beliefs! Indeed, religious beliefs were often the main pillars of ancient civilizations and empires and in most cases were a primary stimulus to their cultures as well.

One only needs a minute knowledge of ancient history to realise this. Take, for instance, such great civilizations as the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Egyptians and Romans. They all built great cities and monuments whose ruins are still marvelled at today by modern man! In tandem with their building activities they also built up enormous cultures of which most of them were very proud, according to ancient scrolls. Of course, some of their cultural activities of that time would be roundly condemned by modern man today!!! But that was then! Several Millennia ago!

One thing we can be sure of though. Right down through the ages, Humans have developed cultures to suit their times and been very proud of them!

So it is not surprising that we Humans of more recent centuries and up to present-time are equally proud of our various cultures of our times!

Just look at home, at our own native Maori People. Only two centuries ago they were still living in stone-age conditions, yet had developed already their own unique culture of which they are as proud today as they were two centuries ago. Who of us of all ethnic origins have not enjoyed a Maori Concert with their melodious songs with poi's, and the more vigorous Haka?! Do we not all of us New Zealand citizens look forward every time to the thrill of watching our famous AB's on the rugby field performing their pre-match Haka? This is almost, (but not quite!!!) as important as an AB win!!! We have among us another dozen or so other Polynesian and Melanesian ethnic People-groups whose cultures are similar but not identical to each other.

Then there are our European cultures! One could truly say, 'cheaper by the dozen'!!! Where to start? In the west of course! With the shamrock green of the Irish and their lively songs and music from their fiddles, flutes and accordion and many stories about their Leprechauns?! The Welsh on the other side of the Irish Sea, famous for their choral singing and rugby!! The Scots, famous for their Bagpipes, whiskey, tartan kilts and haggis, in that order!! Then there are the English, with their many cultural variations in different Shires. But to you and me, the most important of all, the Swiss and their beautiful festive costumes (Trachten), each a bit different in each State (Canton). And of course, we are famous for our yodelling, Alphorns, flag-swinging, Swiss-wrestling, cheese and chocolates, Alps and mountains, and precision train and bus services!! And we are surrounded by equally colourful people, the Bavarians, Austrians, Hungarians, Poles and Checks are the first of many who spring to mind!

Yes indeed, we in NZ can also call ourselves the lucky country; we must surely have people from every Nation living happily in our peaceful "Switzerland of the South Seas"!!!

Have a happy Swiss National Day celebration, everyone!

Cheerio

from Paul

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