

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 73 (2007)
Heft: [6]

Artikel: Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Society of NZ 2007, Wellington Swiss Club, June 3 2007 : Ambassador's speech
Autor: Nobs, Beat
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-944328>

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Ambassador's speech

1. Welcome

Dear Fellow citizens

As the patron of the Swiss Society of New Zealand, it is indeed my great pleasure to be here with you today. My special welcome goes to all you who have travelled all the way from Auckland, Hamilton and Taranaki to be with our club members of the Wellington club.

2. Thanks to the Swiss Clubs in New Zealand

A speech would not be right if I did not use the opportunity to thank on the outset the President of the Wellington Club, Roland Schütz and the committee of the Wellington club for the great work they put in to have us over at their club house last night for a great evening with good food and some great cultural performance. Neither would I want to miss this occasion to thank all the clubs that I have had the privilege to visit over the period of the past year. Be that the Taranaki club, whose great AGM in June 2006 my family and I keep in very good memory, as well as the splendid 50th anniversary event with the Swiss Club in Auckland and last but not least the very friendly Hamilton Swiss club's AGM in Herbert's Workshop.

3. The past year

The past year has been a very busy one for the embassy and for myself. As you know, it is my duty but also my pleasure to do my utmost to improve and intensify our bilateral relationship with the Government and the people of New Zealand. The visit of Federal Councillor Pascal Couchepin in Wellington, Rotorua and Auckland in October of course was a highlight, it being the first visit ever of a Swiss Federal Councillor in this country. Vice versa, the first official visit of a Kiwi Minister of Foreign Affairs in Bern was carried out by Hon Winston Peters end of June of 2006. In that regard, I am very pleased to tell you, the Madame President of the Confederation, our MFA Micheline Calmy-

Rey has accepted an invitation for an official visit to New Zealand in the not too distant future.

In addition to that, other important visitors have come to this country from Bern: A delegation has been here in the field of climate change, another one to negotiate the import of cheese made of unpasteurised milk and only recently a delegation from the Federal Department of the Economic Affairs has travelled to Wellington and Auckland to discuss a wide range of aspect of our economic cooperation. In the coming months, another delegation from Switzerland, this time from the Department of the Environment, Traffic, Energy and Communication will most probably travel to this country and a visit of the New Zealand Minister of the Environment is in the early stages of planning in order to intensify the relationship of our two even further.

4. Issues of Interest

Let me now turn to some more specific aspects, that might be of direct interest to you.

4a) The upcoming elections in Switzerland.

The ones in Swiss community with residence in New Zealand, that are not registered as voters in Switzerland and are over than 18 years of age have recently received a letter from me encouraging them to register as voters. The background of that initiative of mine was the fact, that until now registration numbers of New Zealand Swiss were particularly low compared to other Swiss communities abroad. As of December 31, 2006 there were 654 878 Swiss living abroad. Of those, 113 644 are registered as voters, that is about 17,5%. While this does not seem to be very much, the upward trend is staggering however: Since 1993 the numbers have gone up from 33460, that is no less than 240%. In NZ the situation was different: Of a total 4824 Swiss citizens with the right to vote, only 669 have actually exercised that

right, this equals 13,9%. After our voting drive, we now have 876 registered as voters, that is 18,2% and the numbers keep increasing! I can only tell you: In a democracy, every vote counts, including the ones of all of you living in New Zealand.

In the past, when people came out here to the Antipodes on a very long journey on boats and, for the lack of readily available means of communication, it might have been a thing bordering on the impossible to remain really connected with back home. A new country meant a new life altogether.

Nowadays, communication is easy. I met an elderly gentleman up in Hamilton just a few weeks ago who told me how he was watching the news on Swiss TV every night over the internet and is even keeping abreast on local affairs by reading his local paper on the net as well everyday! The world is growing ever smaller, lives are changing at a higher speed than ever. By the same token, it becomes much more frequent, that people emigrate for a while and then return home or at least go for a visit much more frequently. In Switzerland, as in any other country, the legal framework increasingly incorporates matters pertinent to citizens living abroad as much as to the ones living within our borders. Let me give you an example: A change to the Federal Law on Foreigner in September 2006 or the various Bilateral Agreements with the European Union, which for example render it possible for all Swiss to live and work in the countries of the European Union, such as the UK.

While today, voters abroad still have to vote by post mail, there is no doubt in my mind, that the voting process as such will be much easier in the future: A number of cantons, like Zurich, Geneva and Neuchatel are already engaged in trials of systems to enable voters to use the internet to cast their ballots.

In Switzerland itself, the whole issue of voting of the Swiss abroad is looked upon very positively: The people, the government and the political parties are keen on you Swiss abroad to vote. There is even talk in



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Switzerland of looking at ways to grant you a chance to vote for your own representatives in the Federal Parliament!

So all of you, who still haven't decided: I do have some registration documents right here with me. Fill them in, return them to the embassy and we will forward them to your community of choice in Switzerland. There is no real reason to abstain any longer! And all you who did register now or in the past: congratulations! You did the right thing!

4b: Swiss Solidarityfoundation

As you know, there is the "Ausland-Schweizerorganisation", providing a great number of interesting services to all of you, it edits the "Swiss Revue" and also is responsible for Soliswiss, the Cooperative Society Solidarity Fund for Swiss Nationals Abroad. You can become a member for a small amount, and they offer you insurance in a many fields and now also an investment fund run by Raiffeisen Bank in St. Gallen. So if any of you would like to get more information, please contact us at the embassy or visit their homepage www.soliswiss.ch

4c Annual Congress of the Swiss Abroad

Every year the Congress of the Swiss Abroad takes place some time in the European summer. This year it will take place in Geneva from August 17 to 19. This is a great opportunity for the Swiss abroad to make their voice heard and it is taken very seriously

by our government. It goes without saying, that there is always a Swiss Federal Councillor addressing the conference with a speech and the Swiss media always report on it quite extensively. New Zealand was very lucky to be represented there for many years by Heinz Leuenberger from Hamilton, who did great honour to all of you. I think it is only fair to use this opportunity and express our thanks to Heinz for his engagement and also to hope that he will be able to carry out that role for many years to come. Thank you very much Heinz!

However, this year unfortunately, Heinz told me that he will not be able to travel to Switzerland, neither will be his two deputies. That is most unfortunate, since such a large and proud community of Swiss such as the one from NZ will not be represented. For that reason I think it to be in your interest to be represented regularly in the future, even if Heinz can not make it. I would therefore suggest, that the committees would turn their attention to this situation and nominate members of their clubs from which then people could be chosen, that are willing and able to participate if Heinz can not be there. I leave that proposal with the presidency to find a viable solution quickly, hopefully for this year, if not for the years to come.

4d) Superannuation

Now, Ladies and Gentleman, I know of course that the issue of the NZ-Superannuation fund

and its relationship with the Swiss AHV is at an unsatisfactory stage for many of you. I can only tell you, that the problem has been recognised as far as we are concerned and we will try to do as much as we can to remedy the situation. Once again, as I said last year: The legal situation is clear, under NZ-law as it stands all the beneficiaries of all countries are in the same situation, there is no discrimination against the Swiss. But we do think that your grievances do merit our attention and consequently we are willing to talk to the NZ authorities to see how that situation can be improved.

4e) Christchurch

Last but not least: When I paid my visit to the Swiss Club in Christchurch, I told them that I would very much like to see them back in the fold of the Swiss Association of NZ as soon as possible. In the ensuing discussion there were a lot of positive noises. They then decided, that they needed to discuss this in the committee and among themselves and would come back to me later on. I am hopeful, that in the not too distant future, I will be able to welcome our fellow citizens from the Canterbury area to our AGMs and our get-togethers among friends!

Thank you very much for your attention

Beat Nobs
Ambassador of Switzerland

Methamphetamine

I destroy homes, I tear families apart
I take your children, and that's just the start.
I'm more costly than diamonds, more precious
than gold;
The sorrow I bring is a sight to behold.

If you need me, remember, I'm easily found,
I live all round you, in schools and in town.
I live with the rich, I live with the poor,
I live down the street, I may be next door.

I'm made in a lab, but not like you think,
I can be made under the kitchen sink,
In your child's closet, and even in the woods.
If this scares you to death, it certainly should.

I have many names, but there's one you know
best
I'm sure you've heard of me, my name is Crystal
Meth.
My power is awesome, try me, you'll see;
But if you do, you'll never be free.

Just try me once, and I might let you go,
But try me twice, and I'll own your soul.
When I possess you, you'll steal and you'll lie;
You do what you have to, just to get high.

The crimes you'll commit, for my narcotic charms
Will be worth the pleasure you'll feel in my arms.
You'll lie to your mother, you'll steal from your dad;
When you see their tears, you should feel sad.

But you'll forget your morals, and how you were
raised;
I'll be your conscience, I'll teach you my ways.
I take kids from parents, and parents from kids;
I turn people from God, and separate friends.

I'll take everything from you, your looks and your
pride.
I'll be with you always, right by your side.
You'll give up everything, your family, your home,
your friends, your money, and then you'll be alone.

I'll take and I'll take until you have nothing to give;
When I've finished with you, you'll be lucky to be
alive.
If you try me, be warned, this is no game;
If given the chance, I'll drive you insane.

I'll ravish your body, I'll control your mind;
I'll own you completely, your soul will bind.
The nightmares I'll give you, while you're lying in
bed,
The voices you'll hear, from inside your head.

The sweats, the shakes, and the visions you'll
see;
I want you to know, these are all gifts from me.
By then it's too late, and you'll know in your heart,
That you are mine, and we shall not part.
You'll regret that you tried me, they always do;
But you came to me, not I to you.
You knew this would happen, many times you
were told,
But you challenged my power, I chose to be
bold.

You could have said no, and just walked away,
If you could live that day over, now what would
you say?
I'll be your master, you will be my slave,
I'll even be with you, when you go to your grave.

Now that you have met me, what will you do?
Will you try me or not? It's all up to you;
I can bring you more misery, than words can tell,
Come, take my hand, let me lead you to hell.

-Anon

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