

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 83 (2017)
Heft: [2]

Vorwort: Words from president and editor
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Words from President and Editor

Hello Readers,

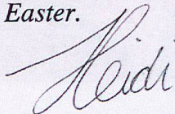
As we go to print Autumn will already have commenced and Easter is just around the corner. I hope you all had a wonderful summer - if not weather wise then experience wise.

Our holiday in Cuba once again confirms for us that we are living in Godzone. The gentle people of Cuba spend hours lining up for food, subsidised ice-cream, entry to banks, Wi-fi Cards that they can only use in specific areas. All this while crowds of us tourists ogle the endless old cars that can be seen in daily use, the amazing art that occurs randomly on walls, buildings and, of-course, in galleries. Cuba was truly a conundrum... most families in the country areas travel in horse drawn carts while we pass them in our ultra modern Chinese made tourist buses. It was a fascinatingly different holiday for us.

Wherever one goes there are things that need attending to and this Helvetia issue has a few things you, the reader, are encouraged to read and attend to: Swiss Society Letter to Swiss Government and it's English summation in the President's report, Swiss Society's AGM minutes, agenda and the call for nominations.

Pleureuses von Romont on the front page remind us where Easter stemmed from and once again we present an interesting Life Story and invite you to learn more about the Tunnels of Switzerland. I wish you all a fabulous Easter.

On behalf of the team,
Happy Reading.



Dear friends

This month I have a totally different but very important message for you.

In this edition you will find a letter addressed to the Swiss Bundesrat. A copy was sent to each Bundesrat as well as to the leaders of most political parties in Switzerland. The letter serves to show Swiss Politicians our total disapproval to the proposed introduction of the Automatic Information Exchange between the two countries (Automatischer Informations Austausch AIA). For more information on AIA please just google it and it will pop up. Not only do we disapprove of the information exchange on the basis of there being no need to do so in the first place, we also see it as an intrusion of our privacy but more importantly, we urge the Swiss Government to abandon this agreement seeing that the New Zealand Government has not made any efforts at all to rectify the injustice handed down to AHV recipients and this has been going on for decades. Those of us who have worked in Switzerland know that we should receive our share of AHV but the New Zealand government chooses to deduct our AHV entitlement from our NZ pension.

A message for the young Swiss Citizens in NZ: you will be affected just like I am. This issue started back when I was in my 30's and I never gave retirement a second thought!!! Well it has caught up with me now.

I urge you to read Peter Ehrler's reports in the last Helvetia again and please, have a look again at publications on these issues in Helvetia's dated January 16, April 16 and June 16.

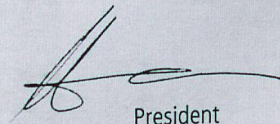
To make submissions easier, Peter Ehrler has drafted up a letter for you and I have sent this to all club presidents to be passed on to members. You will only have to make changes where indicated and the letter is ready to be sent out.

I would further like you to keep your ears and eyes open over the next months leading up to our local election. It is very likely that there will be proposals made to change our new Zealand pension system (section 70) and this could work in our favour. Please look out for this and consider supporting the party pushing for change to this legislation.

I didn't really want to use this column for such topics but felt it was appropriate to remind you all that **this will be the last chance** we have to apply some pressure for justice and I hope you agree with this.

If there is anything I can do to help you with this topic in any way at all, please just call or email me.

Enjoy the late summer and autumn and I look forward to seeing you at the AGM in Hamilton



President

They rejected that?

Swiss voters have had the final say on national issues more than 600 times, since the Swiss Constitution was written in 1848 – on average three to four times per year. These national votes are a mixture of people's initiatives and referendums – and neither has a particularly high success rate. Only about 10% of initiatives, which allow citizens to propose changes to the constitution by collecting at least 100,000 valid signatures within 18 months, have been accepted since 1893. Initiatives put forward by the political left, generally fare particularly badly. For example, the recent initiative to give everyone an unconditional basic income, appealed to less than a quarter of the electorate.

Below are a dozen examples of voters snubbing an idea that one might think would generate little resistance – the list could certainly have been longer. In

practice, of course, there are at least two sides to every argument, with many voters eventually thinking, "that's all very nice, but who's going to pay for it?" One notable example of what most people would consider arguing, if not voting against their own interests, are the women who didn't support female suffrage, thinking politics was best left to men. On February 7, 1971, two-thirds of Swiss men eventually voted in favour of allowing women to have their say at a nationwide level.

June 3, 1894

"Guarantee of the right to work" 80.2%

May 24, 1925 – "Disability, old age, widows and orphans insurance" 58% (extensions and updates to this law have been rejected several times since)

April 15, 1951 – "Guarantee of purchasing power and full employment" 87.6%

December 5, 1976 – "Reduction of the working week to 40 hours" 78%

February 26, 1978

"Lowering retirement age" 79.4%

March 10, 1985

"Extending paid holidays" 65.2%

June 12, 1988

"Lowering retirement age to 62 for men and 60 for women" 64.9%

December 4, 1988

"Reduction of working hours" 65.7%

March 4, 2001

"For lower-priced medication" 69.9%

March 11, 2012

"Six weeks holiday for all" 66.5% (Note, however, that on September 26, 1993, 83.8% of voters gave the thumbs up to a "Work-free national day on August 1")

September 23, 2012

"Protection from exposure to tobacco smoke" 66%

June 5, 2016

"Unconditional basic income" 76.9%

by Thomas Stephens for swissinfo.ch