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Words from President

Dear Members

Summer has certainly arrived with a bang and much earlier than anticipated. Us non farmers are probably enjoying the nice sunny weather more than our farming friends. I had my first swim in the sea on the 16th December and this is early for me and it was very nice indeed.

Christmas is knocking at our doors as I write this report and I just hope by the time you will read this you would have enjoyed the festive season, 2018 kicked off well for you, and you had a bit of time out plus a bit of moisture on the ground to keep the grass green.

Our plans for the summer took a bit of a turn but we will still have a couple of weeks at the beach before Vreni, at pretty short notice, will go into Hospital for a hip operation, so we will be house-bound for a while with me being in charge at home! How good will that be?

Of course we had a few changes on the political front since my last report with the general election. The outcome was a bit of a surprise, I suppose, but regardless of one's political belief it might have been time for some change, watch this space.

Will this affect us at all? Well, for us Swiss Citizens it's certainly an opportunity to make some progress to retain the Swiss AHV entitlements. Winston Peters announced before the election that he would promote a change to section 70 of the Social Services Act and Labour is not opposed to this either so we do have a better chance under this regime than under National who had no interest to look at this at all. I do also believe that David and Peter are looking at meeting the appropriate Ministers here to keep on pushing for changes.

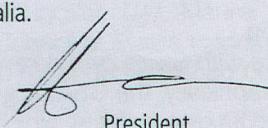
Our battle on this topic in Switzerland has taken a bit of a dive with the rejection of our proposal. It would appear that the AIA agreement will be implemented with New Zealand without any discussions on the AHV payments.

As you can see one door closes and another one opens and as long as we have people dedicated to chase our beliefs, there is still light at the end of the tunnel.

On another topic I would like to make you aware of the article about the CSA Oceania (Council of Swiss Abroad). Please have a very good look at this. I do believe there are benefits for us to be more aware of this organisation. Don't forget our representatives for the OSA (Organisation of Swiss Abroad) are part of the CSA, we just never promoted this well enough. It is these representatives, who push our cases and concerns at the OSA meetings in Switzerland and our delegates do work with their counterparts in Australia.

That's it for this time

All the very best from your Helvetia team



President



Does Valentine's Day put a smile on your face?

Valentine's Day has a long tradition in England and North America. However, it took a long time until the custom took root in Switzerland. However eventually the gift industry got wind of the custom and recognized the potential of it. After all, according to the myth the custom has some roots in Switzerland. It dates back to the Saints Valentine of Terni and Rome and the martyr legend mingles with yet another Valentine, this one Bishop of Raetia (now Graubünden, Switzerland) who lived in the 5th century and whose mortal remains were transferred to Passau (Germany) in the year 764 by the Bavarian Duke Tassilo.

Valentine is considered the patron saint of travellers, the beekeepers, the youth, and he ensures happiness to the married.

The gift most often given is a bouquet of red roses, and of course – chocolate. But according to a survey, the majority of Swiss women (66%) would actually prefer to be invited for a romantic night out.

According to statistics, only 29% of the population in Switzerland celebrate Valentine's Day and 38% don't care about it. More than 50% of people living in Eastern Switzerland replied that this custom is not exactly their cup of tea.

People living in Western Switzerland though are way more romantic. 41% celebrate the day and spend more money on presents than the rest of us. The day of love is also a day of friendship.

Happy Valentine's Day!

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