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THE SWISS TRANSPORT OMBUDSMAN

The following is a precis of a VöV report. It was translated in full by Michael Wild and cut to ribbons by the Editor. Thanks Michael for a good job.

The two-year trial of a Public Transport Ombudsman has been made permanent. As it happens and as reported in an earlier Swiss Express the current Ombudsman is a woman, Cornelia Füeg. She continues in post and is assisted by two others who deal with Suisse Romande and also the Italian speaking part of Switzerland, which consists mostly of the Ticino and part of Graubünden.

It has to be said that there aren't many complaints, between 5 and 10 a month reflecting the Swiss Transport system which is so admired and carries 5million passengers every day. Not a bad record by anybody's standards. The Ombudsman is also the last port of call, to use a transport metaphor; the overwhelming majority of complaints are handled satisfactorily by the undertakings concerned.

The system is set up to deal with service delivery not timetabling or scheduling difficulties; these are dealt with by respective cantons. It tries to be user friendly and the use of local language is evidence of this. In general the undertakings co-operate fully and accept the office's findings. It is important to retain the confidence of both sides in a dispute and neutrality is assured.

In 2002 there were 105 referrals, roughly 50% each from the German and French areas and only three from Ticino. Roughly 50% of the total were dealt with by letter or telephone and intervention was required in the remainder. Only a very tiny number were not settled to the satisfaction of the complainant. The greatest number of complaints referred to ticket validity of one kind and another, although this number was still only 17 out of 105.

The Office is well aware that its' existence needs to be made better known. Any publicity results in more referrals. One undertaking mentions the Office on its literature and newspapers, consumer organisations and tourist offices have all referred complainants. The Office hopes to become more proactive in this regard.

All in all an example for the UK to follow. Any one taking bets?

FURTHER INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON THE VöV WEBSITE <www.voev.ch>



David Edwards took this picture in June 2003 of the MIB's repainted Be4/4 no.8 at Meiringen. The livery advertises the new station mentioned in Notepad.