

President's report

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President's Report

Well, here is the first issue that the Taranaki Swiss Club is compiling ... what a hard act we have to follow!!! Here we thought we had a month to plan this issue ... and where has the time gone????!! Thank you, Beatrice, for coming down to Taranaki with all the documents and information that we will require. We are very fortunate to have a wonderful team of workers, especially having the expert services of Liz, our editor. We are certain that we will enjoy a great partnership with the Stratford Press, our local printers. We will endeavour to do our best, for you, our readers. We certainly hope that you will give us some feedback, as to what you enjoy reading, or perhaps what you don't enjoy reading as much.

Like most of the country, rainfall isn't in short supply!!! We should have sufficient in our tanks for the odd coffee schnaps!!! ... how far the water lasts, I guess that depends on whether you put more schnaps or water in your coffee cup!!!

For me this month has been hectic ... we have shifted into a new house ... we had

hoped to get the footpaths down before we shifted in ... but in the end decided that we might only be shifting in December if we waited for the weather to clear to enable the concrete paths to be set down!!! So we shifted on one of the most glorious days in the past few weeks ... what a mission ... but we were lucky to have so many good friends to help us. I have changed my occupation from bank officer to farm assistant ... oh if only the shed was gas heated!!! ... oh if only I didn't have to put on wet weather gear to go to work!!! ... oh my hands didn't have cracks and were smooth, and I wore rings on my fingers in the bank!!! ... I even got a fortnightly salary!!! ... No really early mornings for this kid at the bank!!! ... every weekend off!!! ... no washing of really dirty, grubby clothes!!! ... what have I done????!! Well, to be perfectly honest, I am really LOVING it!!! I am enjoying the outdoors and working with my husband ... how long will this last??? ... very long I hope, for I have always longed to work outdoors ... I guess the telling time will come in the

spring when the cows start calving and the REAL work starts!!! With a positive attitude and determination I am sure that I will be a farmer for a long time (not that I didn't enjoy banking, because I loved it and will certainly miss it ... especially the people contact!!!). I'll keep you posted with proceedings ... will I stay in farming or will I return to banking!!!!????!!

On a more serious note, we would enjoy and appreciate any material of interest that you may have, to publish in the *Helvetia*. Would all club secretaries please ensure that any items and their clubs' forthcoming events are in the hands of the editor by the 15th of each month. This will make our job much easier, and will avoid any items not being published on time. Please note that this issue is for August/September and that the December/January issue is also combined.

We hope that you will appreciate this issue of the *Helvetia*, and we look forward to publishing the next issue in October.

Wishing you all the best, Marianne.

Address by Kaspar Villiger, President of the Confederation, on the occasion of the Swiss National Day

Dear Swiss Abroad!

On behalf of the Federal Council, I would like to transmit to you the best wishes and warmest greetings from your home country. You are among our most important ambassadors. You support this country. You help to foster understanding for Switzerland within your chosen country of residence. Your example serves to influence the way in which we are perceived. A small country such as ours, which trades on a global scale, depends on such ambassadors. I thank you for all that you do for your homeland!

I know that you follow events in Switzerland with great interest. One thing or another may have irritated you in recent years. There was the long recession in the 90s. Unemployment rose and federal finances ran out of control. Progress in the bilateral negotiations with the European Union was slow and Switzerland's behaviour during the Second World War faced mounting criticism. Switzerland was struck by self-doubt, one could even say a form of identity crisis. It reached such an extent that one artist in the Swiss pavilion at the World Exhibition in Seville coined the disheartening motto 'la Suiza no existe'.

Last year, too, saw a series of

events, which caused insecurity. I'm thinking of the murderous attack at the parliament in Zug, of the collapse of Switzerland's national symbol of quality - *Swissair*, of the lack of moderation and the failure of several top managers, of the discussions surrounding the financing of the Expo 02, or of the week-long closure of the most important trans-alpine route through the Gotthard.

All of that though must be seen in the context of the difficult environment in which our country has to cope. The consequences of globalisation are that capital and jobs can be transferred to other countries and continents within the blink of an eye. As a result there is fierce competition between countries to attract business. This leads to continual pressure on the structures of the State and the economy to adjust and adapt in Switzerland as well. This pressure can continue to increase.

So just how do the chances look for a prosperous future for a small trading nation such as our own?

First of all, I would ask you not to allow yourselves to be too distracted by the notoriously critical voices in Switzerland itself. Switzerland still has plenty of strength. Once again, we are in a phase in which we feel worse off than we really are. Switzerland is

basically in good shape. If one were to make an international comparison, one could even say in excellent shape. There is far more to consider than the unsettling facts mentioned earlier. There is in fact a second reality, one which gives me cause for confidence.

The recession of the 90s mobilised new forces. The world of politics and business used the crisis as an opportunity. Structural problems were addressed. Economic growth returned. Unemployment fell rapidly to an international low. Large areas of the economy got themselves in shape for the future. The state of federal finances improved significantly. The bilateral treaties with the EU were successfully concluded. The people of Zug overcame their terrible tragedy with great dignity. A new inter-

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