

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

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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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Excellent work continues to be done by managers up and down the country. The Gotthard Tunnel was reopened surprisingly quickly. A majority of the people and the cantons voted in favour of UN membership, thereby opening new possibilities for ensuring our foreign policy interests. Following the allegations made against Switzerland, a great deal of effort has been made to process the difficult history of the war years revealing the shady side of that period. This was a painful process, but ultimately it has strengthened us. No other country has conducted such thorough studies of a comparable nature. The Expo 02 will, I'm sure, be a great national event with the power to shine at home and abroad. In countless ballots, the Swiss people have repeatedly demonstrated their far-sightedness and sense of proportion.

However, one might try to twist it, 'la Suiza existe'. Of course, there are still unresolved problems, but these are no greater than those faced by other countries of a comparable size. Naturally, in the age of globalisation and even more rapid change, Switzerland will continue to face challenges. But we have the strength to overcome these challenges and to ensure ourselves a successful future. Of course, with fierce global competition to attract businesses to locate, Switzerland will not have an easy ride. We will repeatedly have to reassess our relationship with the European Union, which is rapidly expanding both in depth and width. Above all, however, we will have to make sure our own house is in order, politically, economically, and socially. Only then will we be able to hold our ground in the face of global competition, even as a small country.

Nevertheless, we also wish to stand in solidarity as a member of the family of nations. Through our accession

to the UN, we are sending an important signal. Also this year, you will be able to vote on the creation of the Swiss Solidarity Foundation. With this large humanitarian project, Switzerland would send a further strong signal of solidarity both at home and abroad.

I wish you the best of luck, success and good health in your chosen homeland. I encourage you to take part in ballots and elections in Switzerland. We very much appreciate the contributions made by the so-called Fifth Switzerland!

## Proud to be Swiss:

Walter Seifert:

I would like to introduce myself to the members of the Swiss Society. My name is Walter Seifert. I was born and grew up in the Canton of St Gallen, in Azmoos, which is in St Gallen-Oberland. After nine years of schooling, I started a two year course in welding and general engineering.

At the age of 17 I started an apprenticeship as a baker. After qualifying, I worked in my trade for the next three years, during which time I met my future wife Myrtha. In 1971 we got married and I chose a career as a truck driver, driving heavy trucks all over Switzerland and Western Europe.

In 1973 we decided to immigrate to New Zealand. We arrived in Taranaki in January 1974 and started working on a dairy farm. After one season, we progressed to 39 per cent sharemilking. Four years later we purchased a dairy herd and went 50/50 sharemilking. Several years later we bought our first farm, near Eltham. We have always lived in Taranki and are still in farming! At present we own a small dairy farm at Midhirst.

We became involved with the Taranki Swiss Club and the Swiss Society shortly after our arrival in New Zealand. We have two grown children, Gabriela and Robert. Our family has always shown a keen interest in everything Swiss! I have served the club as Riflemaster and Vice-President for a number of years and for the past seven years as Club President.

I like our Swiss traditions and I am proud to be involved as a team member in the running of the Swiss Society affairs.



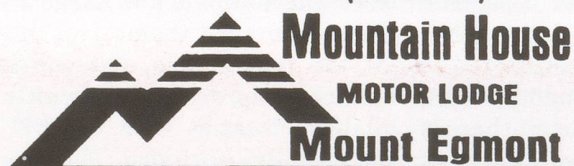
Taranaki Swiss Club President Walter Seifert has been a proud member for many years and is the new Vice-President and Treasurer for the Helvetia magazine.

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