

Say it with a letter

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Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi

Have you ever heard somebody say "I bi doch nöd de Pestalozzi!" or maybe used the phrase yourself? Who exactly was Pestalozzi?

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi was born on 12th January 1746. His father died when he was young, and he was brought up by his mother. This early experience of the life of degradation of the poor developed in him an acute sense of justice and a determination to help the underprivileged.

He studied theology at the university of Zurich for a while and got involved in reformist politics. When he got married at the age of 23, he abandoned his studies and bought a piece of waste land at Neuhaus AG, where he attempted farming. In 1775 he turned his farm into an orphanage, and in the following years he wrote "Lienhard und Gertrud", an idealistic account of the gradual reformation, first of a household, and then of a whole village, by the efforts of a good and devoted woman. The farm was a financial failure, but his book and his orphanage became quite famous. After the French invasion of Switzerland in 1798, a number of

children were left in Nidwalden without parents, home, food or shelter. Pestalozzi collected many of them into a deserted convent and spent his energies in reclaiming them, by offering them an emotionally secure setting. During the winter he personally tended them with the utmost devotion, but in June 1799 the building was required by the French for a hospital, and his charges were dispersed.

From 1800 – 1804 he ran a boarding school for boys. In this time he published "Wie Gertrud ihre Kinder lehrt", where he developed his ideas about education.

In 1805 he moved to Yverdon and for 20 years ran a boarding school for boys of many nationalities. It was here that he developed his educational theories further.

To Pestalozzi, the individuality of each child was paramount. He opposed the prevailing system of memorisation learning and strict discipline and sought to replace it with a system based on love and understanding of the child's world.

Maybe it wouldn't be such a bad thing after all to be a bit more like Pestalozzi.. *tb*

Alinghi - the Wellington Swiss way

It was on the day the seventh race should have taken place, a grey, cold, unfriendly winter day. I was at home, busy sewing when the telephone

"Here is TV one. You are the secretary of the Swiss Club. We would like..."

"No, I'm not the secretary anymore, the new secretary .."

"Never mind - could you tell us please what the Wellington Swiss Club has planned for this night? We'd like ..."

"The Wellington Swiss Club has planned nothing - why? Oh yes, you mean about the America's Cup... No. The Swiss Club hasn't planned anything."

"The Wellington Swiss Club hasn't planned anything? Nothing?"

"No, nothing."

"Thank you."

End of conversation. I didn't have time (nor the presence of mind) to explain to the astonished lady that:

1. We are not so keen on sports as to give up sleep.
2. Some of us have divided loyalties.
3. Even if we are enthusiastic we'd rather watch at home.

It wouldn't have occurred to me that any of the Swiss Clubs should have organised a gathering in the middle of the night – which shows that I'm still very Swiss, in spite of my NZ passport, I suppose. *tb*

It's long been said that email has been the death of the letter – but when it comes to sharing heartfelt feelings, nothing beats a handwritten letter, say the Swiss. The volume of letters posted in Switzerland continues to slowly dwindle compared with the millions of emails sent every day, but despite this the future of the letter seems secure.

According to a recent survey by Swiss Post, three-quarters of those questioned said that letters were more personal and pleasant than emails. A letter's value seems to lie in its personal aspect. When it comes to sending a wedding invitation or declaration of love, for example, only one to two per cent of people would use email. There is also widespread distrust of the use of email for sending information such as bank account and salary statements.

In the business world, small and medium sized businesses still prefer licking stamps and envelopes, while larger companies seem to have definitely opted in favour of email. Swiss Post also found that 81 per cent of all companies prefer to receive CVs by post.

SWISS POST

PostMail delivers 15 million letters a day, from greeting cards and love letters to business correspondence, direct marketing letters and newspapers.

PostFinance is a retail financial institution that has a market share of 60%, making it the undisputed leader in the Swiss payments market.

PostBus has a network covering 12'268 kilometres and carries more than 106 million passengers a year.

There are 2'493 post offices in Switzerland, down from 2'531 at the end of 2005. It is still one of the densest networks in the world.

The Philately unit issues about 40 new stamps a year.

from swissinfo