

Paddle steamer's second maiden voyage

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advance and consequently lost much of their news value. We also felt it more important to retain our own independence and concentrate on the Helvetia as our only medium of communication. In this respect I have, however, to say that in my opinion the clubs are not making the best use of the Helvetia and our editor can vouch for the frustrations experienced when waiting for contributions. At the last moment we always had to find "fillers" and some members are quick to criticise but do nothing to bring about improvements. I thank all our faithful advertisers and Stephen Coleman from the Stratford Press for their support and co-operation.

Financial

I am pleased to report that the finances are on a sound basis. When we took over from the Taranaki Club five years ago, we inherited a healthy balance sheet and it was my ambition to pass on to the new committee an equally rosy balance of accounts. We have built up the account by a few thousand dollars and I feel that the benevolent obligations of the Society could now be fulfilled as it is now in a position to render modest assistance if required.

Membership

A slight improvement has occurred and up to 31 March we have received 438 subscriptions in total - 20 more than for the previous year. I recently visited the Christchurch Club and took part in one of their functions - as luck would have it: a wine trail. They had a busload of fifty members and friends and I had the opportunity to talk to many of them. I recommended to the committee to consider a formal joining of the Society. The response was positive and hopefully an increased

membership from the South Island will result. They have a very devoted committee and are upholding Swiss traditions - but of course we have a sharp dividing line in the form of Cook Strait.

Future Outlook

I like to finish my term of office with a few personal thoughts:

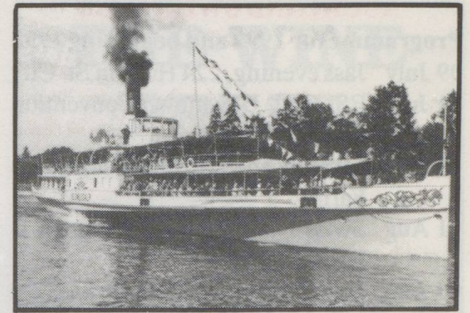
1) The Swiss Society is now in its 58th year. I believe that it has fulfilled an important role and followed the rules laid down in our statutes. Considering the wide geographical spread of our membership this is quite an achievement.

2) Although the Society had few cases when financial assistance was needed, it now becomes apparent that times are changing. Impoverished Governments are unable to adequately fund benefits, pensions and health services for a population that took it for granted that "Father State" is obliged to look after them from the cradle to the grave. It is obvious that fundamental changes are needed and this will ultimately put more responsibilities on the individual. The Swiss, by nature eager to provide and save for the future, may also get involved in this process, especially since the retired people are singled out for extra punishment because they live too long.

3) In Switzerland important decisions are also facing the voters regarding integration with the European Community. With the right to vote for the Swiss abroad, we may ourselves be involved in this decision making. My personal view of such a union is one of slight suspicion. The Roman Empire once encompassed all of Europe, including Asia Minor and Northern Africa. But eventually it came tumbling down. The Soviet Union stood as a fortress for over 70 years and crumbled overnight. How strong will the bonds of the Community be? To be kept informed of the latest development, it is important to maintain a friendly and constructive relationship with the Embassy - it is the lifeline between the Swiss Government and the Swiss abroad, not only in New Zealand but in many countries around the globe, wherever Swiss people have settled.

In conclusion I thank all other members of my committee for their support and hard work. Also thanks to those members of the Wellington Club that lent a hand with despatching the Helvetia when some of us went on holiday. Sincere thanks also to the Embassy for their support to the whole Swiss community. I have enjoyed my term as President of the Society and always tried to give it my best shot. I wish the new committee all the best in their quest to guide the Society through the next five years.

Andre Schleicher



PADDLE STEAMER'S SECOND MAIDEN VOYAGE

The DS "Blümlisalp" was built in 1906 and plied the tranquil water of Lake Thun faithfully until 1971, when old age forced the proud steamer into a well-deserved retirement. Fortunately, a group of steamboat fans prevented the faded vessel from complete destruction. Instead she underwent a time-consuming and costly overhaul and complete restoration. On May 22, the old lady left on her second maiden voyage. To the delight of steamboat romantics and nostalgia lovers alike, the "Blümlisalp" with her authentically restored nouveau art salons will resume her scheduled cruises and can be chartered for special occasions.



SERVICE

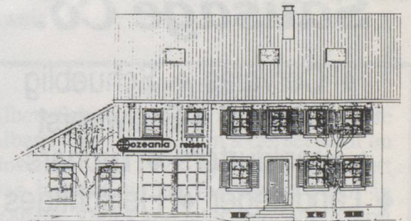
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