

Binn in search of children

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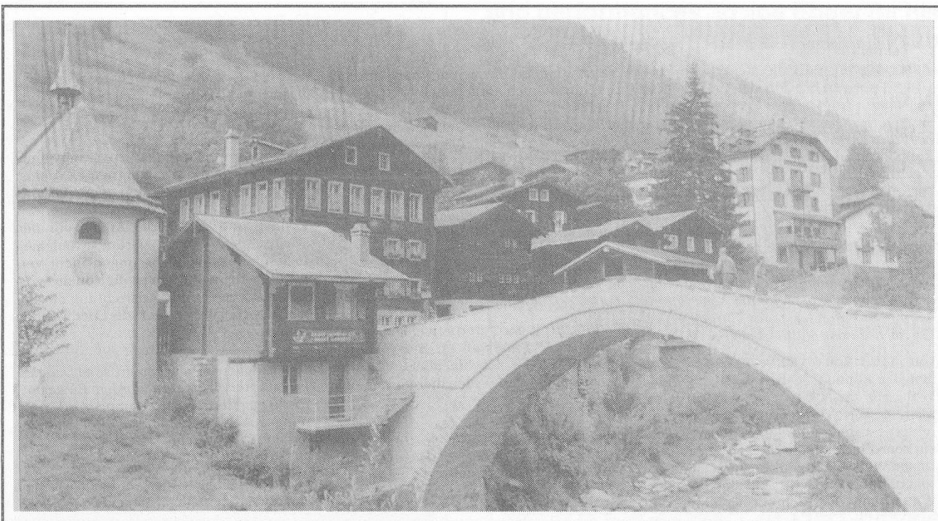
We are two young Swiss people interested in an employment around Auckland.

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Binn, the picturesque village in the "Ober-Wallis".

BINN IN SEARCH OF CHILDREN

The picturesque village of Binn (Ober Wallis) is desperately in need of more children. More and more people are leaving the village which saw its population shrink from 203 five years ago to 163 today. In five years, it has lost a fifth of its population.

And yet Binn is situated in a magnificent side valley of the Rhone, the famous Binntal, which, since 1964, has become a national park where all fauna and flora is strictly protected. It is a paradise for nature loving wanderers, hikers and explorers. For its effort to protect its environment, Binn even received a "Heimatschutz" prize in 1991.

But because Binntal is a nature reserve, no modern development is allowed to take place: no cable cars, no mountain railways, no large hotel construction, no industry. So Binn remains cut off from the money and job producing tourist trade and commerce and, unfortunately, because of this Binn is slowly dying.

There are only 8 children left at

school with two of them leaving to attend high school in Fiesch, the main township in the area. With only 3 more children below school age left in the village, the future of the school looks dim. If it has to close down, then Binn may well see a further decrease in its population as the affected families will have to move down the valley to Ernen or Fiesch as it would be impossible for the children to make daily return trips to these schools, particularly during the winter months when the road is often very treacherous if not totally impassable.

So Binn is trying to attract more families with young children. Several jobs are being advertised in the newspapers: a manager for the "Tourist Office", another for the camping ground and a third to take charge of the "soft and nature friendly" development of the valley. Additionally there are jobs for a chef and a waitress. For city standards, this is not much, but for Binn, this could mean a new life for the village.

Although these jobs will not command high salaries, they may appeal to people who want to get away from it all, to get back to nature and who want to live a simple life-style. Another inducement might be the very cheap rentals for accommodation as many houses stand empty in Binn

Rather than on skill, the advertisements put the accent more on age, family and young children as this is the type of people Binn really wants (we wonder how they would get away with NZ's Equal Opportunity Laws which strictly forbid the mention of age, sex and family status in "situation vacant" advertisements. (Fortunately the Swiss have still kept some common sense in this matter rather than go totally mad as some bureaucrats have done here in NZ).

Binn does not want temporary workers who come and leave with the seasons. It wants families who come and settle in the valley for good so that the village and its school can continue to live.



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