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Here we are, in the middle of winter. When does winter start? In New Zealand, it starts on 1<sup>st</sup> June, while Switzerland applies the celestial or astronomical calendar and lets the seasons start on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 21<sup>st</sup> June, 23<sup>rd</sup> September and 22<sup>nd</sup> December. I used to argue that winter would be both sides of the shortest day - which would make it last from about 5<sup>th</sup> May to 5<sup>th</sup> August. Whichever way you look at it: Winter will be with us for a while yet. But I take great comfort from the fact that the days are getting longer again, even if there isn't much evidence yet and cold days will still be ahead of us.

Winter isn't my favourite season, but it is inevitable - unless you emigrate to the tropics. Darwin would be lovely, but then, there are crocodiles there; the world is nowhere perfect, it seems. So I better stop complaining and settle down in front of the fire and listen to the radio. And what do I hear? Earthquakes, again and again, frazzling the nerves of our compatriots in Christchurch, and destructive twisters out of the blue (or grey, rather), and deadly landslides, and floods, and more rain. Does it ever stop? Is that what scientists call climate change, and some deny?

Well, earthquakes don't belong to 'climate'; they are independent disasters. We might know where they are more likely to happen and might choose not to live there or take extra precautions, but as to when an earthquake is likely to happen - that is everybody's guess. I strongly resent the scaremongers who 'predict' disasters; all they achieve is panic. The news about good people from near and far who lend a helping hand, shovelling other people's silt, welcoming flooded neighbours and strangers, is uplifting - and I'm relieved (and proud) that the Swiss who came to the AGM voted for a contribution from the Swiss Society to the Red Cross Christchurch Earthquake Relief Fund.

*Trudi*

## Corrigendum and Apology

Have you read my story about the cowbell on page 2 in last month's *Helvetia*? Well, it is incorrect, and I'm very sorry about it and would like to apologize to Heidi Müller - and to all the readers, too. The big, heavy, beautiful cowbell that had place of pride in the Wellington Swiss Club for a year and will no doubt be equally cherished by the Hamilton Club for this year was not donated by Swissair but by Mr Arthur and Mrs Heidi Müller, Auckland. Mr Müller was an active member of the Auckland shooters, and he was riflemaster for 11 years. But shooting wasn't enough for him; he wanted to get more New Zea-

land Swiss involved in sport. So he initiated an interclub competition in the present disciplines of Kegeln, Steinstossen, Jassen and Shooting, and he and his wife donated the cowbell to the Swiss Society as prize of this competition - so it became the Cowbell Competition. Swissair then donated a smaller bell as consolation prize for the runner-up; that's the bell the Aucklanders 'forgot' to take with them to hand over to the Taranaki Club, this year's runner-up.

The rest of last month's article on the Cowbell Competition still stands; let's hope there are young Swiss in the clubs with equal community spirit to keep the Cowbell Competition alive and vibrant. *Trudi Brühlmann*

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