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EDITORIAL

At the Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Society on June 6 in Hamilton, your Helvetia magazine suffered a definite setback. Although it was generally agreed that the magazine was of good value, interesting to read and eagerly awaited each month, the delegates voted for its production to be reduced from 12 to 8 issues per year. This paradox is difficult to understand but can best be explained as follows:

The fundamental problem was that until now, the cost of membership to the

Swiss Society, which also includes the subscription to the Helvetia magazine, was, at \$10.00 a year per individual member or per family, totally unrealistic. It should have been adjusted quite some time ago in line with the ever increasing costs of living. As this had not been done, the increase required (from \$10.00 to \$36.00 per individual or family, of which \$12.00 would have been paid by the Clubs and \$24.00 by the subscriber) was deemed to be too high. Fear was expressed by the Clubs that they might lose some of their members. Accordingly the delegates at the AGM voted for a new membership fee to the Swiss Society of \$20.00 only.

Up to that point, your Editor could sympathise with the various Swiss Clubs and accept their views. But from then on, the events became bizarre to say the least. After having repeatedly assured the Swiss Society Committee that everyone enjoyed the Helvetia magazine and looked forward to each new issue, the delegates then decided almost unanimously that they did not want to receive any more than 8 times a year. Some delegates even advocated a reduction to 6 issues a year.

Although the Committee asked the various Clubs for some more active support for the magazine and a few members proposed some good ideas on how to increase the revenue for the magazine through sponsorships from large Swiss firms and through more local advertisers instead of reducing the number of issues, the final decision was simply for a reduction to 8 issues a year.

Now, it is a well known fact in the publishing industry that the surest way to emasculate a publication is to reduce its number of issues. Reduce a weekly publication to a fortnightly one or a monthly magazine to a 2 monthly one and your publication immediately loses most of its appeal. A magazine that appears at irregular intervals or with too much time between issues becomes rapidly ineffective. It loses the attention of its readers, its reports on past events become so old that nobody is interested in them anymore and soon no one cares anymore whether the magazine appears or not. This was one of the problems faced by the previous Helvetia magazine and the new look Helvetia will not escape that trend either.

What the AGM overlooked was the basic aims of the Swiss Society which stipulate amongst others:

- To publish a regular issue of a bulletin of the Society, and

- To support the social and cultural contact among people of Swiss origin.

In a land like New Zealand, where Swiss people are spread far apart all over the country, the only logical means of communication to "support the social and cultural contact among people of Swiss origin" is by a regular newspaper or magazine.

Accordingly your new Swiss Society Committee had given top priority to these two matters. Up to the last AGM, it looked as though the above aims could finally be achieved with the Christchurch Swiss Club also joining the Swiss Society. At long last it seemed that the whole Swiss Community in New Zealand could be united and that the Helvetia magazine would become the vehicle for the social and cultural contact amongst all Clubs and all Swiss people in New Zealand. Unfortunately, the decision taken at the last AGM will undoubtedly set this aim back for one or, more likely, for several years.

Swiss people are not immune against Murphy's law. With only 8 issues a year, the Helvetia magazine will invariably be

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absent the very months when something important should be announced. The individual Clubs will now no longer be able to rely on the monthly Helvetia for their news items and announcements. Reports on events will often now be months old before they are published. Gradually the Clubs will revert back to producing their own newsletters again which will only be read by their own members. The Auckland members will no longer know what is happening in Taranaki, the Wellington members will have no idea what the Hamilton members are doing and the Swiss members who live outside these main Swiss areas will simply be left out in the cold.

The Swiss are a peculiar lot. Let a foreigner say something nasty against them and all Swiss unite to defend their dignity as a united country. But let the Swiss be left by themselves and you would not find a more disunited, fragmented nation in the world. Obviously, it appears that the Swiss living in New Zealand are steadfastly upholding this tradition.

The new Swiss Society Committee had given all Swiss in New Zealand the chance to unite under the same banner, to stand, work and play together as one ethnic group, to have a magazine that is full of news from all NZ Swiss Clubs and which would act as the real link amongst all Swiss in New Zealand. That chance has been lost at the last AGM. It may be a long time before the opportunity arises again to bring a closer affinity into the Swiss Community in New Zealand. Whether your present Editor will still be around to see this happen is very doubtful.

SAD NEWS

This will be your last regular monthly **NEW LOOK HELVETIA** magazine. At the last AGM of the Swiss Society, the



decision was taken by a majority vote to reduce the number of issues from 12 to 8 per year (see Editorial). In line with this decision, the Committee is reluctantly forced to advise that no Helvetia will be printed for the months of August, October, January and March. No doubt, this will upset many members just as much as it upsets us. Sadly this will also mean that some Club news items will no longer appear in your Helvetia because the events they refer to may already have taken place before the date of the next publication and that some Club reports on past events will somewhat be dated and therefore be of little interest.

Unfortunately, this turn of events is totally beyond your Editor's control.

Appeal to all Club Secretaries: Please take good note of the months when no Helvetia will be published as you will then have to send in your notices of coming events two months in advance.

COMMENTS FROM YOUR VICE-PRESIDENT, PETER SCHUEPBACH.

First of all I wish to thank the Hamilton Swiss Club and its members for their great hospitality on the occasion of the Society's recent AGM.

Concerning the AGM itself, I must express my deep disappointment about the decision reached by the delegates to reduce the Helvetia to 8 issues a year. It is a shame that for the sake of a few dollars a year the task that the Society had set itself, in the interest of all Swiss in New Zealand, to bring more unity into the Swiss community has been cut down without due consideration to the future consequences. It appears that some delegates were confused as to the increase of membership to the Society, believing that the proposed fee of \$36.00 per year was per person, whilst this fee would actually have been per family or per single member only. So the increase over the previous year would have been \$26.00 per year per family, a mere 50cts per week.

With this very modest financial support, the Swiss Society could have carried on its aim and continued to produce the monthly Helvetia which seems to be so much appreciated by everyone, particularly by those members living too far away from any Swiss club. I cannot believe that this modest increase would have represented a real hardship to any members, particularly when you look at some of the activities that certain groups of members pursue where money seems to be of no importance at all.

The vote at the AGM was in a way a vote of no confidence in your Committee, a vote where the overall aim of the Society was simply sacrificed for peanuts.

SWISS SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND AGM

Sunday 6 June at 2 pm at the Southern Cross Motor Inn in Hamilton. Attendance: around 70 members from all parts of New Zealand. All the usual reports were read and accepted and Committee, Delegates to the Swiss Abroad and Riflemaster re-elected. The main discussion centred around the Helvetia magazine and the decision was taken to reduce the number of issues per year to eight. It was also agreed to raise the membership fee to the Society from \$10 to \$20 per year. The next AGM will take place in Taranaki, again during Queen's Birthday weekend.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Subscriptions received \$4065.00. Total income \$11693.00. Total expenses \$17684.00. Net deficit \$5991.00. Accumulated funds at end of financial year \$20270.00.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

If you are interested to see the Helvetia magazine increased again to 12 issues a year, give us your support by taking up advertising space. The advertising rates per issue are as follows:

Classified advertisements: \$1.50 per column/cm

Display advertisement: \$3.00 per column/cm, including spot colour or shading.

Full page: \$240.00 including spot colour or shading.

Half page: \$120.00 including spot colour or shading

Back page: 50% surcharge.

NEWS FROM THE SWISS EMBASSY

Results from the federal vote on 6 June 1993 on the following initiatives:

**"40 Waffenplätze sind
genug - Umweltschutz
auch beim Militär"**

NO 1,391,026 55.3%, YES 1,124,144 44.7%

**"Für eine Schweiz ohne neue
Kampfflugzeuge"**

NO 1,435,146 57.1%, YES 1,074,575 42.9%

Both initiatives have therefore been rejected. Total percentage of votes: 54.9%.



WELCOME TO THE CHRISTCHURCH SWISS CLUB

The Committee of the Swiss Society of New Zealand sends the very best wishes to all Members of the Christchurch Swiss Club and welcomes them to the Society. We all feel sure that your joining up with the Swiss Society is of great significance and your decision will no doubt be to everyone's advantage. We wish you all a happy stay within the Swiss Society and we look forward to a long and prosperous association with you to foster the interests of all Swiss living in New Zealand and especially those who are lucky enough to live on the Mainland.

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