

Keynote on the Conference* Theme

*10th Conference of Presidents of Swiss Organisations in Western Canada"
at University of Victoria, BC, Canada, Sunday, May 6th, 2007

by Rolf A. Brühlhart, Delegate to the Council of Swiss Abroad of the OSA

Chair of the Conference, Dr. Hausi Müller - President of the Swiss Society of Victoria and Host organisation of the 10th Conference, Mr. Ric Fischer - Consul General of Switzerland in Vancouver, Mr. Walter Deplazes and Mrs. Siegrid Deplazes - Honourable Consul of Switzerland in Seattle, Mr. Philippe Goetschel - Director of the Organization of Swiss Abroad, Dr. Rudolf Wyder from Bern - SwissInfo/SRI, Ms. Patrizia Franza and Mr. Jakob Tschanz from Bern - Delegates of Swiss Organizations in Western Canada

The Theme of our 10th Conference of Presidents of Swiss Organizations in Switzerland in Western Canada is
"Integration of 2nd and 3rd Generation Swiss-Canadians AND Newcomers from Switzerland into local Swiss Organizations"

Allow me to begin in citing one of our young participant yesterday's remarque: "Basically if you don't speak swiss German, French, Italian or Romantch, or if both of your Parents are not Swiss, it does not mean that you are less interested in or unwilling to participate in activities and programmes of Swiss Clubs."

I responded by asking the engaging person what the meaning of "less interested..." means, less than...who?

Her answer was straight forward: "Less than the 'real Swiss', meaning who speaks one of the languages of the Homeland and whose both parents are Swiss born."

My assignment for this morning is to provide a framework for the the entire day. It must not be the purpose of our Conference to dwell on the many known problems and challenges related to intergenerational and intercultural "coming together". The goal of our Conference is to work towards concrete solutions and benefits of including **2nd and 3rd Generation Youth and Swiss-Canadians in general**. Benefits should arise for "both" sides.

Integrating the younger generations comes equally important with insuring that **Newcomers** from Switzerland feel welcome, but also comfortable with what they find here offered by us. They must feel comfortable of what they feel represents the culture and society of Switzerland today. Richard Bassy who participates in our Conference for the Swiss Society of Victoria was so kind and gave me permission to tell his experience in meeting the local Swiss-Canadians as a Newcomer to Canada in 1951, when he went to a Swiss Society monthly gathering of mostly Swiss-Germans. Here his perception of the first Swiss Club he met in Canada, in his own words: "I was not comfortable, and did not go again until in 1974, when I joined the Swiss Society of Victoria."

It is through Newcomers and the Integration of 2nd and 3rd generation Swiss-Canadians that the established Swiss organisations will continue to thrive. But we from the 'establishment' should always be aware: We need them more then they need us.

Our three **Workshops** are planned towards this goal. We all shall work hard to come up with concrete and workable ideas to take home.

Workshop #1:

Programmes, activities and services/support groups for Youth 13-30 years of age and Newcomers. Moderators and recorder are Valentina Bernardis, Karen Brühlhart and Peter Schaele.

It may be of importance in keeping in mind whether or not Swiss youth will feel comfortable to bring their non-Swiss friends to such innovations.

Workshop #2:

Programmes, activities and services/support groups for Families with Children between age 1-12. Moderator and recorder are Hausi Müller and Karin Rüger.

Children's memory run deep and are formed early in life. As young adolescence they may therefore return to events engraved in their emotional memories.

Workshop #3:

Programmes, activities and services for the Sandwich Generation age 45-65+ and Seniors age 65 and older. Moderator and recorder are Werner Rutishauser and Renie Warburton.

Maintaining and expanding the present arrangements and trying the transition and fusion of their immeasurable life experience with the interests, needs and wants of the younger generations.

Logistics of the three Workshops:

Immediately after my outline all of us shall join the Workshop of her/his choice following the designated moderators and recorders. Each workshop will have maximum 100 minutes to discuss and decide on their recommendation presented in writing to the **Plenary Session** chaired by myself at 2pm.

Last but not least, the **Closing Session** chaired by Hausi Müller will shot to identify two specific programs, activities, services/support groups which shall be adopted by this 10th Presidents Conference for execution over the next two years.

Please, let me close with a specific thanks to Patrizia Franza and Jakob Tschanz who are here to represent **Swissinfo/SRI**. Patrizia Franza shall address the Conference in a short while, however, both of them will be open for any one-to-one meeting until the end of the Conference.

I wish you all a productive day of cameradery. Thank you very much.
Rolf A. Brülhart