

Editorial

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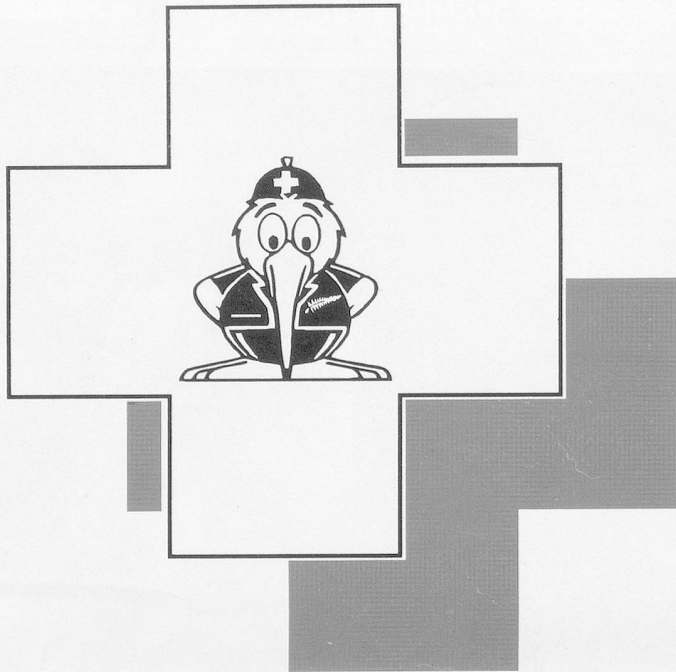
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ALPHA



EDITORIAL

Somehow, today's education system does not seem to prepare the new generations very well for the complexity of life. Today the schooling system allows students to graduate in only 2 or 3 subjects of their own choice whilst in the old days, the rules required you to work yourself through at least 10 different subjects whether you liked them or not.

Today you can move up from one class to another whether you learnt anything or not whilst previously you had to prove that you had mastered the various subjects before you were allowed to pass up to the next level. If your results during the year were below a certain minimum, you had to do the class again, a situation which many students, and their parents, considered as very shameful. So students had a moral incentive, often with the assistance of their parents, to study in order to avoid having to do the same class twice.

Nowadays, it seems that students can get up to university level without being able to read or write properly, a situation which would have been unthinkable and almost impossible in the past.

Admittedly, quite a few subjects we were forced to learn in the old days such as Greek mythology, Latin, the history of the Roman Empire, trigonometry, algebra, etc., were of little use to us in the course of our lives, but at least they forced and thought us to work hard, to concentrate on our studies, to use our brains and to think the problems through in a logical way.

Today, it seems that the thinking has largely gone out of the modern education system. Whilst the kids have become wizards in manipulating computers, calculators and any other type of electronic equipment, they have largely lost the faculty of assessing a problem and to think it through in all its details.

Phonetic reading was meant to al-

low today's students, in theory at least, to read much faster, but this was achieved at the expense of the orthography. As a result, few students are able to write any text without spelling mistakes. Many cannot put together sentences that make sense and which are grammatically correct. And the situation will get worse since their teachers, having gone through the same schooling process, find themselves in the same predicament. They cannot teach their students what they have not learnt themselves. And so, from generation to generation, the standard of education will drop.

In New Zealand the schooling system is failing the students in many respects. Apart from reading and writing, geography and history are another two subjects which remain almost totally foreign to most students. Whilst we knew at least where most countries were situated in the world and what their capitals were, many New Zealand

students do not even know their own country, let alone the whereabouts and history of other countries. Blatant examples are New Zealand TV quiz shows containing questions on geography. Such questions are met more often than not by a blank stare on the part of the contestants. Ask any Kiwi what the capital city of California is, where Helsinki is situated or what the word "Andorra" means to them and you will receive the most amazing answers. But do not blame your Kiwi friends, it is the modern education system that is at fault.

Teachers have reported that some students are totally incapable of multiplying or dividing even the simplest figures without the use of a calculator. Worse, they are incapable of assessing whether the result appearing on the calculator is correct or false, whether it is plausible or totally off the mark. If, through them punching in a wrong number, the calculator produces a result with two or three zeroes too many, an amazing number of students would not even spot the error or realise that the result is totally illogical.

Blind faith in the wizardry of the electronics results in the brain switching itself off. Gradually people become unable to add up figures or write a letter without the help of a computer. Thinking seems to be no longer necessary as long as you have fingers to punch a keyboard.

HORSES IN RETIREMENT



The quaint horse carriages carting the old beer barrels from the breweries to the hotels and restaurants are no more. The last 7 of the famous Hürlimann beer horses have now been put into well deserved retirement on a specialised farm in St Gallen where they will be allowed to finish their lives in a quiet and tranquil setting, far away from the hustle and bustle of Zurich.

Will the horses miss their city life and the attention they used to get from passers-by and tourists? Nobody has

bothered to ask the horses' views on this matter.

From the day the Hürlimann firm was created, it had used horses for its beer deliveries and during its heydays, Hürlimann "employed" up to 78 horses in Zurich alone.

Over the past few years, the horses were no longer used for distributing beer, but only to pull a Hürlimann cart around the city streets as an advertising and promotional stunt. Banned from the main city streets, the horses could only be walked in the side streets, but as these streets also became increasingly clogged with cars, the Hürlimann horse carts too became more and more a traffic hindrance to other road users which was contrary to the aim of creating good will amongst the motorists towards the Hürlimann brand name.

So eventually the horses had to go and another chapter of the past has gone forever.

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