

Bilingual schools

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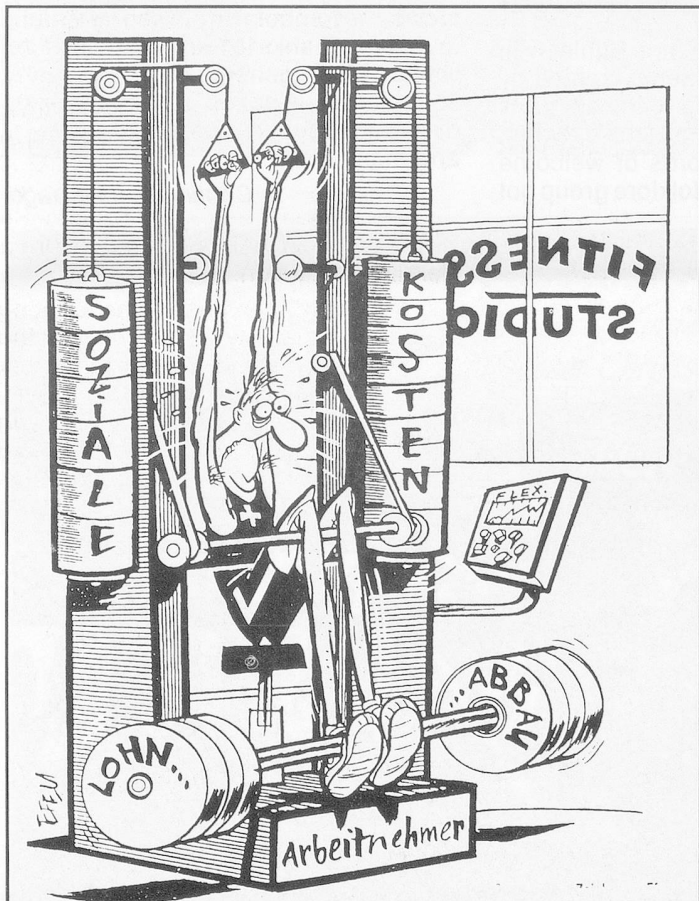
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TOO MUCH STRESS

If you feel that you are stressed out here in New Zealand, look at the poor Swiss employee. As the cartoon shows, the poor guy has to lift an ever increasing social security burden while at the same time every effort is being made to reduce his pay packet. It looks as though you really have to be a fitness fanatic to survive in Switzerland. Mind you, like most cartoons, this one too exaggerates a tiny little bit the real situation.



BILINGUAL SCHOOLS

Goethe once said: He who knows no other language, knows not his own. (This motto should be put above the entrance of every school in New Zealand). Taking heed of this warning, a new league of schools is cropping up in Switzerland. Bilingual primary schools, with English as one of the languages, are attracting the attention of Swiss nationals and international families alike.

Admittedly, traditional private international schools, where classes are taught in languages other than that of the region, abound in Switzerland. However, there is another niche which is currently being explored by Swiss teachers - that of offering a truly bilingual education starting in the pre-kindergarten grades. While foreign-language classes are integrated in public and private schools throughout the country, truly "bilingual" schools are rare, especially at the primary level. Furthermore, private schools often lack conformity with the Swiss educational and examination system. This ultimately prohibits many or most of these young students from attending a Swiss-based institution of higher learning. For bi-cultural families planning to stay in Switzerland this has always been an issue.

How does a bilingual school function? Topics will be instructed in either one or the other language at a time. For example, if the subject is "water", the children study the principles of water in English and at a later date go through the same material in German. There is no jumping around from one language to the next when learning about a particular subject. It is also foreseen that

mathematics will be taught in the students' mother tongue, at least in the lower grades.

There will be close monitoring of the younger children to ensure they are acquiring a strong grasp of the languages and if there are problems, to focus more on one for as long as it takes. Language learning is an extremely important part of the educational process and has a profound impact on how each of us views the world. It will be up to the teachers to keep a good eye on the language development of their pupils and give special attention to those who need more help attaining a strong language base.

SWISS FARMERS ACCIDENT PRONE

According to Swiss insurance companies, farming in Switzerland is a very dangerous occupation. Each year the farming sector registers some 50,000 accidents. The insurance companies estimate that each year one in every four persons working in the farming industry meets with an accident. Average costs to the insurances per accident is around 3000 SFR. Of course most accidents occur through handling machinery, equipment and animals.

SWISS POPULATION

The population of Switzerland has now passed the 7 million mark. However, the rate of increase in population has shown a net drop compared to previous years. This is mainly due to the reduced number of arrivals of foreign workers.

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