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Editorial

Have you heard the expression the "new poor" of today!? A couple of months ago this was the topic of discussion in Switzerland, while we in New Zealand were confronted with lively discussions on "a code of social responsibility". Here and over there it pertained to families, the backbone of any country as we have always been told. However in Switzerland the discussions revolved not so much around the responsibilities of parents or caregivers, as much as about the responsibilities of society at large towards modern-day Swiss families. Statistics, according to a study by the federal office of social security, in our country of origin show that a lot of Swiss families have become the "new poor", living below the poverty line. A study based upon such statistics has shown that it costs a staggering 800,000 Francs

to raise child Nr. 1 in a Swiss family up to the age of twenty. For a 2-child family this amount climbs to over a million Francs and for 3 children one and a half million Francs to raise them to maturity. If you think these are just exaggerated statistics, then your reaction is the same as mine. However by studying the subject a little closer it is interesting to note that the statistics include a very important modern-day component (representing approx. 70 % of total) called "lost earning-potential of the Mother"! With loss of earnings of this magnitude, to achieve the ideal of a Mother staying home to raise the children, it is proposed, that society (taxpayer and husband's employer?) contribute a monthly family-subsidy of 600 Francs for the first child and 300 Francs for each additional child. This would rectify the situation, as Switzerland is spending only a bit more than 7 billion Francs annually on child sup-

port. This is calculated at only 1/6 of total family subsidies needed according to this exercise. Apparently there is no official maternity insurance in Switzerland and only a very low level of regulated childcare. It is estimated that a so-called working mother (or working father, as the case may be), staying home with one child, loses 7 full-time working-years, with 2 children approx. 10 such years and with 3 children 11 years.

- What are all these calculations about, our grandparents would probably ask? They would say; we used to get married to have children, Mothers took it as their vocation to stay home and raise the children to the best of their ability. Not always, but in most cases parents were rewarded for their sacrifices by seeing the children grow into decent citizens. Parenthood in most cases created a bond and respect between Mother and Father and the state had it's healthy foundation with the motto "Im Hause muss beginnen was leuchten soll im Vaterland" (the state's foundation are being laid inside the family home).

We all know that in most families throughout history there were difficulties to be overcome, quite often specific difficulties due to financial constraints. Therefore discipline on personal as well as on family level became necessary and was practiced in schools, work environment society at large, as well as in local,

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