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THE QUALITY OF LIFE

Why did the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in Switzerland give its year book 1975 this title? A former president, Théo Chopard, says in his preface to the book: "Cet ouvrage paraît alors que la qualité de la vie a cessé en un temps très court, d'être une aspiration." He goes on to say that there had been great changes which have overthrown certainties and preconceived ideas. This change has increased and will increase further still the various difficulties and so will be the risks imposed on the community.

Others have tried to find a solution, and the NSH year book represents just one attempt to "civilise our civilisation"; the authors have no aspiration to be pioneers of a new arcady.

The former Federal Councillor Dr. Nello Celio, wrote an introduction in Italian (the contributions are in three languages), followed by Robert Schnyder von Wartensee's question "Quality of Life: Myth or Chance?" He mentions the classical case of myth, that of the human relations movement of the 'fifties of which one expected so much towards improvement of relationships between human beings and which ended rather rapidly in a fiasco. After all, fundamentally there must be a revaluation of life's values.

The next two chapters are written by a neurobiologist and a sociologist. "Quality of life as a population problem" is the title by the Director of the Institute of Mathematics of Zürich University. He looks at every aspect from material affluence, social insurance, self-sufficiency to defence, emigration and immigration, culture and ecology.

Human behaviour, economics and quality of life, school and life, are covered in the three following chapters. A Zürich lawyer then writes on strategies to improve the factors of the quality of life. Two psychiatrists contemplate the child's development and its influence on life's quality, and psychiatric institutions.

The quality of life and permanent education is the title of the next chapter, followed by the quality of environment and habitat. A psychologist deals with stress and the quality of life and how

events in life cause stress from the death of a spouse (100 mean value) to minor violations of the law (11). A theologian speaks next, followed by a lecturer on philosophy with philosophical and anthropological thoughts. The next contributor talks of progress, quality versus quantity, freedom of choice and necessity of change.

An industrialist and an architect put their points of view (with pictures). And a professor of medicine gives health as a prerequisite for a good quality of life. More environment and ecology next, and the problem of improving urban surroundings. Then follow the findings of a commission for study reform in Zürich and a contribution by a professor of ethnic studies on human communication. An engineer describes the formation of personality in industrial work, and one chapter is devoted to structural questions and evaluation of civilising activities. A consultant writes on information and communication, and a professor of work psychology goes into the question of improving the quality of the working life. Two Zürich sociologists deal with measuring the quality of life in Switzerland and the problems of social indications.

It is a book designed to make the reader think and take position. It is full of interesting data and stimulating thought. Perhaps the dilemma in which we find ourselves is best summed up by a poem by Roger Nordmann, which is quoted in the book. It has been freely translated.

*Once humanity has mastered advanced technology,
Once everything is automatised,
Once the computer has taken on the role of our conscience, of our accountant, our father confessor and our doctor,
Once we have visited the moon, and the infinity vastness of Cosmos no longer fills us with anxiety,
Once one half of the town has been turned into parks and the other into motorways,
Once one can learn languages by sleeping on cassettes in the shape of a pillow,*

*Once one can buy sausages in powder form and lyophilised Beaujolais,
Once at last the federal finance reform has been achieved and Europe is united into a Common Market from the Urals to the Atlantic,
Once 4-year-old children know everything about sexuality,
Then, I shall, politely but tenaciously, appeal to those in power and in authority, even the government, to introduce an interval of several days, which would allow us to learn to live again the daily life:
Friendship,
Affection and the friendly gesture,
The rose one gives,
The hand one takes in one's own hand,
And generally the return of spring.
For everything else is useless, and I am gradually getting sick and tired of it.*

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