

AHV v NZ Superannuation

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the 6th December, usually a cold winter night. To me the fear of this man was so deeply engrained that..... no, this information is not to be printed, it may disturb the young mind.

For the new year we have the picnic coming up on Sunday 13 February 2005. Details to follow.

Preceded by:

Working Bee – Saturday 29 January 2005. (Anniversary Weekend)

The Wandertag – Club Walk

Sunday 27 March 05 – Details to follow.

The AGM is scheduled for Saturday 30 April 2005. Details to follow.

Here is the latest news on Pascal: Go Getem! **Pascal Sigrist – update 15 October 2004**

In August, Pascal had an accident when he collided with one of a group of steers wandering on a country road late one night. Since the accident Pascal has been making great progress. There is no obvious break, but there is bruising, swelling and an incomplete injury of the spinal cord at C6 (the sixth cerebral vertebra). Below that level his body is

weak and he has little, but improving, movement in his legs. He is presently wearing a hard collar for support.

Pascal is committed to walking again and is participating in physiotherapy towards that goal. He is working on strengthening the muscles in his arms and hands and on moving himself from bed to chair and from wheelchair to car using a sliding board. His broken jaw has been wired but the wiring has been loosened and should be completely removed soon. His diet has been sloppy food and juices through a straw, but he is now able to enjoy some more 'adult' food. Between them, Pascal, his Doctors and the physiotherapy staff have set a goal for his coming home as 19 January 2005.

Pascal has been organising visits home to Silverdale and to his and Edith's chocolate factory in Waitoki – luckily chocolate can be broken into very small pieces and 'posted' through the gap between his teeth. These visits are exciting, emotional and very positive outings.

Pascal's mother Yolanda is still here – she is an invaluable help for them every day in many ways. She has now found a place to stay in South Auckland and she

would like to thank all those who have helped and have offered to help make this time less difficult for her.

Edith is working hard keeping the business running, finding out about ACC, spinal rehabilitation methods and where to get them, Occupational Therapy, etc etc. She and Pascal would like to thank everyone who has been so caring and helpful.

Pascal loves to see visitors at the spinal unit in Baird's Road, Otahuhu. The best times to visit are anytime between 12 and 1.30pm or 4.30 and 8pm weekdays, or anytime between 11am and 9pm on weekends. If you are visiting on the weekend though, please ring first – he may have 'escaped' again! Ph (09) 270 9016.

If you would like to send or bring a small gift here are some suggestions instead of flowers or sweets:

- Vouchers for alternative therapies, eg acupuncture, massage,
- Flax seed oil
- Fresh vegetable or fruit juice
- Natural yoghurt
- Floradix drink (available in chemists)

Thank you for your concern and support. From: Edith and Pascal.

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AHV v NZ Superannuation

Following the many concerns expressed at the Swiss Society AGM back in early June, I've continued to pursue this matter with some persistence, right up to the highest levels.

First I sent a complaint to the Minister of Finance as advised by the Manager of the International Policy and Agreement Unit. After some weeks of waiting I was finally told by the Minister that my correspondence was being handed over to the Minister in Charge of Social Development and Employment, the Hon. Steve Maharey. To make sure that he did receive it, I sent him a copy as well. Again weeks passed until I received a reply from that quarter. To make sure that all members affected by the NZ Portability Provisions contained in Section 70 of the NZ Social Security Act 1964, are aware of the position we are in, I give you the Minister's reply in full.

'Thank you for your correspondence of 24 August 2004, regarding the direct deduction of Swiss pensions. I have also received a copy of your letter of 18 June 2004 addressed to the Hon Dr Michael Cullen, Minister of Finance. As you are aware, overseas pensions are directly deducted dollar for dollar from the New Zealand Superannuation entitlement.

'The direct deduction policy has been designed in this way so that no pensioner who has lived overseas is financially advantaged over someone who has lived and worked in New Zealand for their entire life. The direct deduction policy also applies to any New Zealander who works in Switzerland and

then returns to New Zealand to live. Any amount of Swiss pension they are entitled to would be directly deducted from their New Zealand Superannuation entitlement. The Ministry is currently considering its position on the treatment of voluntary pension contributions. I can assure you that the overseas assessment unit of Work and Income's International Services does not arbitrarily make enquiries of clients about overseas pensions. They make these enquiries when there is evidence that the person in question has resided overseas at some stage of their working life. It is correct that it is not compulsory to provide Work and Income with information relating to potential overseas pension entitlement. However, if a client chooses not to provide this information when requested, they will not be eligible to receive New Zealand Superannuation. In this situation, the client would receive their overseas pension free of direct deduction, but would not be entitled to receive New Zealand Superannuation. It is incorrect that if you wanted to return to Switzerland for your retirement your New Zealand Superannuation would cease after six months. Under the general portability provisions, if you wished to return to Switzerland you could apply to take 50% of the gross rate of your New Zealand Superannuation entitlement with you. The requirements are that you apply for portable payments before leaving New Zealand and are ordinarily resident and present in New Zealand on the date of the application. You must also be intending to reside in the overseas country for more than 26 weeks,

and be entitled to receive New Zealand Superannuation on the date of application or will be entitled to it before leaving New Zealand. Please contact International Services on 0800 777 117 if you have any further questions about portable payments overseas. The New Zealand Superannuation Portability Review is attempting to address some of the issues you have raised in your correspondence. The Review is ongoing, and at present I am unable to advise you of a completion date for the review process.'

Well, there you have it!! In my letters to the Ministers I'm also asking for some explanation as to why in the 1950-60s Swiss immigrants were seemingly excluded from the 'Assisted Immigration Package' available to British and Dutch people, as well as why we, who had paid our own way, were never informed that a tax rebate was available for immigrants, like us, who had paid their own way, but were never, nor were our employers informed that such a rebate was in place!!!

In my reply to the Minister, I'm calling for our full NZ Superannuation to be reinstated until such time as meaningful Social Security Agreement between our two countries is signed and sealed contending that such a solution would no doubt greatly expedite the 'current' review of the general portability provisions.

I hope this report will assist in understanding the situation we are currently in. Rest assured, I will continue to fight this issue for as long as it takes.

By Heinz Leuenberger