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Editorial

Hello everyone!

Here we are with both feet well into 2004! At least most of us I hope! This morning I wondered if one of my heels may not still be back on the cross-over line! I tried to start this editorial yesterday but my brain just did not seem to want to focus. So this morning I had another good look at my feet ...



nah, they are both firmly here in 2004! So I gave my brain a good mental boot, to kick-start it into gear, so here goes!

By now, we should all have recovered from our New Year festivities, I think! But, while most of us were having a good time, mother nature let loose right in the middle of it with her awesome power, just to remind man how puny he is against her awesome might! It started with the terrible earthquake in Iran, virtually destroying the ancient city of Bam, killing 30,000 people! Then on it rolled, flash floods in both the Philippines and Peru, with the loss of hundreds more lives, forest and scrub fires in other parts of the planet, fortunately with little loss of life in these. Then hurricane Heta roared into the south-west Pacific, slap-bang into our tiny neighbour to the north-east, Niue Island. We all

saw only too well on our TV's the utter devastation it caused, close to home!

Now, in this morning's newspaper I read of a big freeze in Eastern Canada, with temperatures dropping to 39 below zero! Talk about a Siberian winter! The authorities found at least seven people frozen to death, in the first 24 hours, presumably mostly homeless waifs sheltering in unheated, derelict buildings. I think I shall never complain about our North Island winter again! The Canadian met office warned to expect this big freeze to continue in Eastern Canada for several days!

Now I would like to make a few comments on an article from one of our members, regarding payments from Swiss AHV and New Zealand national super. I wholeheartedly agree with Mr and Mrs Blattner! I wrote a letter to WINZ many months ago, challenging their moral right to deduct foreign super payments from our New Zealand national super on behalf of a case similar to the Blattners'. It's no use challenging WINZ on a legal basis in a New Zealand court of law, as WINZ appears to be acting within their legal rights as the laws stand now. Part of my letter to them was thus:

"Could you please explain to me how much you are going to deduct from national super from the tens of thousands of immigrants and refugees from Asian and Middle Eastern countries, not one of which, as far as I know, has a national super scheme for its ordinary citizens. Thousands of these folk will turn 65 long before they have paid taxes in New Zealand for 20 years. These laws appear to me to be running dangerously close to ethnic discrimination - against immigrants from Europe, most of whose countries have had a national super scheme of some kind for many years".

After six months, I'm still waiting for a reply from WINZ regarding my above points! Don't get me wrong, I have nothing personal against any Mid or Far Eastern immigrants; I merely wished to point out strongly to WINZ what is obviously a blatant inconsistency in our present national super rules! The reason I mentioned a "tax payment over a 20 year period" is this: Apparently, when the first Labour Government passed legislation during its first term in office in 1935-38, to provide universal welfare services for all New Zealand residents, one of the primary laws was that new immigrants had to live and pay taxes in New Zealand for 20 years before qualifying for the "old age pension", as it was known for donkey's years! So if a person arrived in New Zealand aged 46, they had to work to age 66 before getting "the pension". This was to make it fairer on the New Zealanders who had lived, worked and paid taxes all, or most of their lives! I still think even today, this was a good law! I only found out a few years ago that the little old Social Securities Act had been almost completely changed by new legislation enacted primarily some time in the 1960s, followed since by more bits and pieces of new relevant legislation. Like Mr and Mrs Blattner, any immigrants lucky enough to get a few measly dollars per week from any super fund from their birth land, would do so because they are entitled to it, because they paid into it before coming to New Zealand, or, they continued paying into it from New Zealand with money on which they have already paid full income tax!

So, like the Blattners, I fail to see that these payments have anything to do with the New Zealand Government! But maybe it needs extra money to help pay the over \$100 million per year it is paying Australia for social services to ex-pat New Zealanders living there, because the rate is about ten to one in vice versa! I wonder!

**Cheerio
Paul**

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