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Editorial

This month I would like to write about a subject which keeps cropping up every now and then during conversations among my Swiss-descendant 'Kiwi' friends and myself, and that is, multiple citizenship. In particular, many bemoan the fact that they are no longer Swiss citizens through no fault of their own, yet have paternal cousins who are (dual citizens). Unfortunately, most of these situations came about mainly because new laws were legislated or old laws changed, by individual states.

I well recall the main cause of the above problem. For many years, no-one who was not a NZ citizen could buy a farm or even just a few acres of bare land! If memory serves me right, I recall the 'old swissies' in the 1950s saying this law came into force in the 1920s. For quite a few years, at first, it did not matter much,

as all immigrants were allowed to retain citizenship of their birth land, provided it had no objection to its citizens becoming New Zealanders!

However, I think in the late 1930s or during the 1940s, this law changed. If a 'foreign' citizen wanted to become a naturalised NZ citizen, then he or she had to forfeit all other citizenships held! It was precisely during these years 1930-1950 that the Swiss immigrants who arrived shortly before WWI, and again between the two World Wars, when many arrived, were looking to buy their own farms, after many years of hard toil! So, to do so, they had to forfeit their Swiss nationality!

Unfortunately, it was not only them and their spouses who lost their Swiss citizenship, but also all their children who were yet to be born, and, even

their living children born in NZ, if the parents had forgotten to register their births with the (then) Swiss Consulate in Wellington.

Unfortunately today, there are many first, second, and even more generations of NZ born 'Swiss' Kiwis who are very sad that they no longer have the Swiss citizenship of their forefathers. They feel especially hard done by, when they see friends whose parents or grandparents arrived in NZ about the same time as their own, and, yet talk happily about their dual citizenship rights!

Fortunately today the governments of very many states have become quite relaxed about dual citizenship and indeed have inter-state agreements covering these matters. But this trend did not start until the late 1960s or early 70s, and then only slowly! In today's world, when one can fly from NZ to Europe on the other side of the planet in 24 hours, it is very handy sometimes, to have dual citizenship, often more when we have a young son or daughter who wishes to visit the old homeland of the forefathers but needs to work there for a time to support themselves during their big OE adventure!

With all this in mind, yours truly has been digging and burrowing like a busy little beaver, for scraps of information on these matters. It seems that at least some of you in the aforementioned situation, may be able to regain your Swiss citizenship, if you are keen to do so. If you desire further information, I am available most evenings between 7pm and 9pm. My phone number is in every issue of Helvetia.

Adieu for this month
Paul

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