

Report is a council plot

My compliments on your shrewd and informative editorial in respect to the "infamous McKinlay Douglas report" regarding unitary merger for Northland, (*Northern Advocate*, April 21).

That same day of publication of your editorial I attended a community meeting in Pahiia held for the purpose of explanation of the McKinlay Douglas report by the Far North District Council.

Because your editorial provided a different slant on the report, I attempted to introduce it to the meeting. This was vigorously opposed by the chairman of the meeting, who was himself elected to local government on the election ticket of Mayor Wayne Brown.

My insistence on drawing attention to your editorial resulted in threats of ejection from the meeting and my copy of the *Advocate* being snatched from my hand and flung out of the meeting hall.

I was not proud of my involvement in this unseemly exhibition, but I was forced to raise my voice in order to be heard reading from your editorial above the hysterical yelling of the chairman for me to "shut up".

It is clear from all this that you have exposed the plot against the Northland Regional Council by the district councils, which I believe is not for the purpose of better local government, but to purloin and share out the well-husbanded financial assets held by the NRC. The revenue from these assets is instrumental in maintaining the very low rates charged by the NRC for its services.

Transferring these assets to the debt-ridden district councils (current debt at FNDC around \$120 million) will see the... swallowed in this debt, and then ratepayers will be called upon to pay fully for the district councils to perform the duties presently carried out by the NRC.

DEREK ELLIS
Kerikeri

Ratepayers the losers

Congratulations on your spot-on editorial "Ratepayer spectator in power game". It is one of the



HEADING WHERE?: Stan Semenoff and Wayne Brown.

PICTURE / FILE

best I have read in years.

It should be required reading for every ratepayer who is forking out ever-increasing amounts of their rates in a futile exercise which, as you point out, is totally lacking in integrity.

One hopes that by now Whangarei District Council members will realise just how out of touch they are with reality, what a sham this is and will put an end to the nonsense.

And, if they won't take any notice of their own ratepayers, let us hope that they respond to Rodney Hide, who outlined what a complete farce this whole process is (*Advocate*, April 20).

And, yes, let us have a proper conversation about future governance and how best Northland could achieve this. This is exactly what the Northland Regional Council is promoting before

Wayne Semenoff and Brown and their compliant councillors hijacked the process for their own narrow reasons.

WAYNE DEEMING
Maungakarema

Wary of scary leaders

Your correspondent Geoff Vause raises some clear concerns for us to consider regarding the current local political thrust to change the local government structure in Northland. That the elected council would then decide what and how local community boards would function is scary.

When you have "hillbilly dictators" who demonstrate a lack of understanding of the whole package of the communities' needs, whose vision is limited to business, dollars, and personal aggrandisement, add to that the power to decide just what

decisions a community board may make, you create a frightening scenario.

Community boards throughout the country have been given very mixed powers by their councils. Whangarei has had no experience of community boards as they were seen as another layer of expensive local government.

But if the push to unitary authorities succeeds, then the need for community boards, to be elected and with legislated responsibilities must be considered as part of the package.

We must remain very wary. Cowboys who knowingly disregard environmental regulations, who may hold the power of a unitary authority, would lead to a sad disillusionment of the greater part of our society who, in recent years have come to increasingly value our landscapes, wetlands, forests and to putting effort into improving their ecology.

Our need for a government-level national environment protection agency to take over the activities of the Resource Management Act from local councils and politicians is a way forward we should support.

There is more to this local government business than currently being proposed.

ROBIN LIEFFERING
Whangarei

Help with history book

We are a small group supporting historian John Fletcher who has written the *Interesting Factual History*, an account of the development of agricultural education, nature study specialists and science advisers over 100 years working in NZ primary schools from 1906 to 2006.

This book is now ready for publication and we need to trace individuals and families of many of these people who trained in these fields as instructors, specialists and advisers.

Our records are incomplete and before we publish we would like to make contact with everyone who was trained with those who moved to other fields of education and other employment.

If you were one of these folk or know where they are, contact Barry at 49 Lily St, Raglan 3225 or call 07 8256727. Email tricia.barry@raglanaccommodation.co.nz

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