

Mayoral egos lord it over rest of us



The Farmer's Voice

— Ian Walker

During an interview on Radio New Zealand, I was described as a Far North civic leader.

I have been called many things, some good and some not so good — that's politics, so at the time I thought little of it.

However, soon after I was informed by RNZ they had received a complaint from Far North Mayor Wayne Brown. Apparently I am not to be called a civic leader because it seems such a title is reserved for his esteemed Far North Holiness.

While I have always known that ego and mayors generally travel in the same carriage, this action by the Far North mayor even surprised me. Then again, maybe it is just the time of year because that same radio interview got me in trouble with the Pope of Whangarei, His Holiness Mayor Stan Semenoff.

Some years ago, the Whangarei District Council sought financial support from the Northland Regional Council to upgrade Okara Park. After much soul searching, the NRC got involved and organised the construction of the new

improved stadium. Luckily for Northland, the NRC chief executive, Ken Patterson, is a highly experienced structural engineer and, under his project management, Northland has something we can all be proud of.

So much so that the Government offered an unsolicited \$3 million for construction enhancements. A list of improvements was agreed and work commenced. And that's when things started to go astray.

Suddenly, the WDC wanted to wrest back control of the stadium. They wanted to have final sign-off on Ken's work. They caused so much trouble in Wellington that the Government refused to allocate the money until the two councils patched up their differences.

They say success has many fathers while failure is an orphan; and this is very true about mayors who want to be seen cutting ribbons on success stories.

Not to be left out, we have one last mayor in the Northland mix, His Reverence the Mayor of Kaipara, Neil Tiller.

Now Neil and his council have just released a new district plan. This plan, written by Auckland planning consultants, is about the worst anti-growth plan I have seen in some time. It

is clear that the Kaipara District Council has no idea what it's actually doing and criticism has been mounting.

In my capacity as chairman of Farmers of New Zealand, I voiced my concerns in a local paper, the *Kaipara Lifestyler*. While no one has shown that my comments were not factual, KDC withdrew all advertising from this publication. Worse, during a public meeting on the plan, where members of the public demanded that the plan be withdrawn, I was told by another media publisher that the Kaipara mayor had phoned him, abused him for making comments he did not like and threatened the same action as had befallen the *Lifestyler*.

It is these same three mayors that contracted a consultant to write a report to justify the allocation of greater powers within their own kingdoms. They want the demise of the Northland Regional Council and to split up the spoils.

Like all feudal lords they are now arguing among themselves about who gets what. It seems the dark ages are still alive and well in Northland. And, who's paying? Their lowly subjects, the ratepayers.

— Ian Walker is chairman of Farmers of New Zealand.

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