

Piece of PR

Congratulations to John Bain for his excellent article (*Advocate*, 30 April).

To counter the accusation that local government reorganisation was just a smokescreen to grab the assets of the NRC, Whangarei District Council have developed a delightful piece of PR spin and repeat ad nauseam the mantra "the assets belong to you, the public; council are just the custodians".

So, is WDC's little in-group going to ask us if they can sell our assets? Get real!

This council has a burgeoning debt problem and they are approaching it by adopting the usual subterfuges: smoke, mirrors, secretly selling the family silver and deferment of expenditure.

The first two involve indulging in meaningless exercises in order to divert attention from real issues. Councillor Halse, in an adjoining contribution to John Bain's, did an excellent job in describing the needlessness of local body reorganisation and the process that his council has adopted.

The latter two simply transfer the problem to an area where it is not so immediately obvious. To a layman, it seems that the prudent approach to a debt problem is to cut, not defer, expenditure. Starting with, say, \$20 million for a bridge.

Such a move requires political courage and it is hard to see this council taking this sort of a hit to their collective ego in an election year.

I am sure that councillor Syers will now "rise to the bait" and tell us what the debt level was when he took office, what it is now and what it would be if all of the subterfuges were removed; as well as how he plans to obtain "our" permission if his little in-group wishes to sell "our" assets.

Over to you, councillor Syers.

WAYNE DEEMING
Maungakamea

Northern Advocate

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