

Over the Fence



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Oh dear, what a gap between this and my last newsletter. No excuses, but the reason is intellectual diversions.

DOWN WITH INTRA-REGIONAL PAROCHIALISM

Over recent days there have been a number of examples of parochialism within Hawke's Bay that have, frankly, agitated me sufficiently to get back into *Over the Fence* action.

One was a letter sent to regional councillors by Napier-based list MP Stuart Nash.

This related to suggested remedies for those Regional Council lessees who are suffering hardship (which, by the way, the Council is very conscious of and is endeavouring to see that no one is cast out.) One of his solutions was the transfer of the \$80 million leasehold portfolio from Hawke's Bay Regional Council ownership to Napier City Council. I quote: if "a workable solution...cannot be agreed upon, then perhaps the best outcome is a transfer of the leasehold portfolio to the Napier City Council."



In my response to him I stated, "This frankly is outrageous and would amount to nothing more than legal theft. I have no doubt the New Zealand Parliament would not countenance such a thing. If it did it would divide Hawke's Bay as never before. The argument that as the property is situated in Napier then revenue from it should be for the benefit of Napier is spurious at best. Well, really, it's nonsense." (The Regional Council, incidentally, has \$11 million of real estate in Wellington. The revenue derived from that investment is ours to spend - we own it.)

For the reader's benefit, as I did for him, I'll outline the history of this land and why it belongs to you, Mr and Mrs Magpie. It's yours legally and morally, and you're going to get to keep it!

Hawke's Bay Harbour Board was formed by an Act of Parliament in 1875. (Note: initially all harbour boards were named after the port. Ours was known until its centennial as the Napier Harbour Board. Only Lyttleton remained unchanged.) Endowed in the Board at its formation were 3,600 hectares of the Ahuriri Lagoon which ranged from a depth able to take small coastal craft, through to tidal mud flats. It was part of the Board's endowment because at the time it was seen as unable to be applied to dry land use.

By the late 1930s the lagoon had been de-watered to virtually its present state. This was due to:

- Siltation (the Tutaekuri and Esk flowed into the lagoon), a natural process but accelerated by erosion as a result of farming.
- Reclamation of Napier South in the early years of the last Century by "The Syndicate" of Nelson, Kennedy and Latham (hence the street names) who provided the capital and took considerable risk in the process. The Harbour Board had no money for this development and so the Syndicate was paid by the forfeiture of 4 out of 5 (I believe) sections, which it subsequently sold. The Harbour Board leased those held under the Glasgow rent formula; so the terms of these rents have been with us a long time, and indeed have stood the test of that time through good years and bad.

- The 1931 earthquake, which pushed the bed of the Lagoon up 2 metres. This only partly-drained the water and in the early 1930s the Government drained the remainder by constructing the parallel stop banks running westward from embankment road. Water outside the banks was pumped out and the land kept dry ever since. As payment the Crown took title to the north of the outfall channel, which it still holds.
- Development by the Napier Borough/City Council starting with the suburb of Marewa in 1940. Payment for development was again in kind.

It should be remembered too, that the Harbour Board was funded primarily by a rate on Hawke's Bay land – mostly rural as initially that's pretty much all there was – which was overtaken as a funding source as revenue from shipping built up. Rates were abolished I believe in the late 1930s."

I also challenged Mr Nash's intent on serving Napier's interests if it is, as would be the case here, at the expense of the wider region: "Not one person in Napier voted for Stuart Nash. You are a list MP by virtue of being high enough on the Labour Party list to become a MHR. You are accountable to the Labour Party, or, more specifically, those who voted Labour on the list. Given that 62% of the population of Hawke's Bay region live outside Napier City, and on the assumption that the Labour list vote was reasonably evenly spread, non-Napier people would have made a greater contribution to your election than Napier people. Do you feel any obligation to uphold their interests? If not then the parliamentary constituency that covers the northern half of the HB region, Napier, effectively has two MPs, while the southern, Tuketuki (Wairarapa also intrudes into CHB) has just one. This is not fair representation and is undemocratic." This is what we get with MMP of course.

(In last Friday's paper *Hawke's Bay Today* referred to Stuart Nash as "Napier Labour list MP." So it's playing right into his hands. 'Napier based list MP' I can wear; it's factual.

Napier Councillor Mark Herbert

In a recent issue of the *Hastings Mail* Cr Herbert made a comment that also compelled challenge. I responded with this letter:

In recent times our twin cities have worked much closer for their mutual benefit than was the case hitherto. But the destructive rivalry is far from dead. Such was represented in the comments reported in last week's Hastings Mail from Napier City Councillor Mark Herbert, referring to the now failed (regrettably) bid for national funding for the proposed Velodrome. Cr Herbert said; "...why should we support Hastings' Velodrome when Hastings never gave a cent towards the redevelopment of McLean Park..."

What he did not say was that Hastings was not asked to support McLean Park. What he did not say was that Hastings contributed \$1 million to Pettigrew Green Arena. What he did not say was that Hastings has committed \$1 million to the redevelopment of the Museum and Art Gallery. What he did not say was that Hastings has committed \$300,000 to Park Island. In fact, my guess is that for every Hastings resident that visits HB Museum, ten Napier people will participate at the Regional Sports Park, even without the Velodrome.

In addition, most of those projects have had funding from the people of Hawke's Bay via the Regional Council.

If that is not enough we now have list MP Stuart Nash (who didn't stand in the last election but presumes to be a Napier MP) suggesting that the Regional Council's \$80 million land portfolio should be made over to the Napier City Council, no matter that it belongs to the people of Hawke's Bay and always has.

These attitudes serve to keep antagonism between Napier and Hastings alive. I think it's pathetic.

Signed

Ewan McGregor

This brought this email response from Stuart Nash:

Ewan

re your letter:

I just want to thank you for providing me with even more ammunition in my argument against amalgamation.

hugely appreciated

Kind regards

Stuart

The sarcastic tone and lazy punctuation apart, I can't figure out what the guy is getting at. What ammunition? What can he take out of the above letter to advance the case for the status quo in council structure? Beats me! Frankly, I expect a more professional communication than that from an MP.

The third stirring-me-up item was a letter in Saturday's *Hawke's Bay Today*. This relates to the forever crusade by some Napier people to reopen the old Napier Hospital. This is not a case of fighting yesterday's battle, but, literally, last century's. Twenty years ago, when I was on the first regional council, we debated the issue of the intended closure by the then HB Hospital Board. Today there are some who are still flogging this dead horse, or really the skeleton of one. The letter was from one D Cook. It argues that because the Napier hospital is located on a solid rock foundation it would withstand an earthquake, whereas the regional hospital in Hastings may not as it is on alluvium. This of course is prompted by the Christchurch disaster. It is appropriate for us to use that event to question the safety of our buildings, but if these people are scavenging on this catastrophe to advance their case then it is despicable.

It should be noted that in 1931 the nurses' home at the hospital collapsed in a heap, killing night-duty nurses who were sleeping, whereas (unfortunately only) three buildings in downtown Napier remained intact, as did the main block of Napier Boys' High School, constructed of brick and built on an old swamp. This suggests that the key factor is building quality. Incidentally, when the first council debated this I was briefed by the hospital board chairman Andy Train, who informed me that the Napier hospital would stand a severe quake, but damage would likely make it inoperative.

Further, what of access to the old hospital? It's bad enough as it is, to say nothing of finding a park when you got there. I suggest there would be a fair chance of road closure in a catastrophic quake. Besides, you can't land a helicopter there. This compares with the regional hospital, which is accessible by flat, wide roads. We won't even get into the cost to the Kiwi taxpayer of funding two hospitals so close together.

(I recall early in the hospital closure debate Napier MP - a real one - Geoff Braybrooke unwittingly conceded that Napier didn't have a case when he said, "I'm being unashamedly parochial about this". This is something a politician never admits. Phrases to employ are ones like 'this is a matter of principle to me', or 'I firmly believe', or 'this is in the interests of all Hawke's Bay people'.)

Did the editor of HBT check out D Cook's seismic or building structural credentials? If not, or if he /she was unable to cite them, then this letter shouldn't have been published. If the letter is to have any effect - indeed, it could be the *intended* effect - it would be to undermine public confidence in the structural integrity of our hospital. Crying "Fire!" in a crowded theatre doesn't come within the bounds of the right of free speech, and neither does this letter.

Most of the parochialism in the province, and the three examples cited above, comes from Napier, but it hasn't always been the case. Through the 1950s and 60s Hastings was on a roll - the heyday of Watties, the two big freezing works, and affluent farmers and their wives bringing commerce into the town. In 1959, I can recall my 3rd Form Social Studies master at NBHS saying, "We in Napier have to accept that if the present trend continues

Hastings will become the main city of Hawke's Bay." I wasn't so pleased at the prospect. Napier was the city of my affections; of my birth with family connections going back to the 1850s. Eight years of my education were at schools there. In the event, happily both cities have grown in parallel.

So when Hastings was doing better than its sister city there was a fair bit of parochialism south of the Ngaruroro. I recall especially the habitual parochialism of Hastings Councillor the late Hugh Baird (I got to know Hugh and enjoyed visiting him and his wife in their Hastings home in later years. A nice fellow, the parochial old bugger).

Napier is a magnificent city with its characteristic architecture (like Hastings of course), the hill, sea, port, and inner harbour all giving it a unique character. But it is not a social or commercial island, and the reality is that it is not an entirely political one either. But the way some talk, you would think it was.

In my lifetime I have seen Hawke's Bay society become increasingly assimilated. This has been the case with the town-country divide: following the abolition of farm subsidies on the one hand and protection of secondary industry and services on the other, each seen by the other side as privileged, and through rural women increasingly working in town where they build wider social circles. Likewise, as the roads between the two cities during rush hours illustrate, many living in one work in the other. Enabling all of this is ever-improving communications.

It's a pity that for some the spirit has not moved in parallel.

CAPE KIDNAPPERS SANCTUARY – what an exciting initiative!

Late last month a small group of Regional and Hastings Councillors and staff had an afternoon trip around the Cape Kidnappers Sanctuary, guided by the sanctuary's ecological advisor John McLennan. What an inspiration!

This is New Zealand's biggest private reserve at 2,400 hectares, and, as you'll know, isolated by a 10.6 kilometre predator proof fence. (Note: the fence itself is predator proof, but obviously nasties can enter it along the beaches at each end. So the objective is to maintain predators at a very low level.)

This whole complex is basically due to the generosity of two well-established individuals: one Kiwi - Andy Lowe, and one American - Julian Robertson. Aren't Hawke's Bay and New Zealand lucky to have them?

This is a unique combination of uses - and a harmonious one. Inside the fence is an ecological sanctuary with the introduction of species not seen in Hawke's Bay for over a hundred years, a world class golf course, and a commercial farming operation.

The whole area, from Haumoana to Ocean Beach, features in the just-published March – April *New Zealand Geographic* magazine. Well worth the cost...



Looking south over the sand dunes where a whaling station was located.

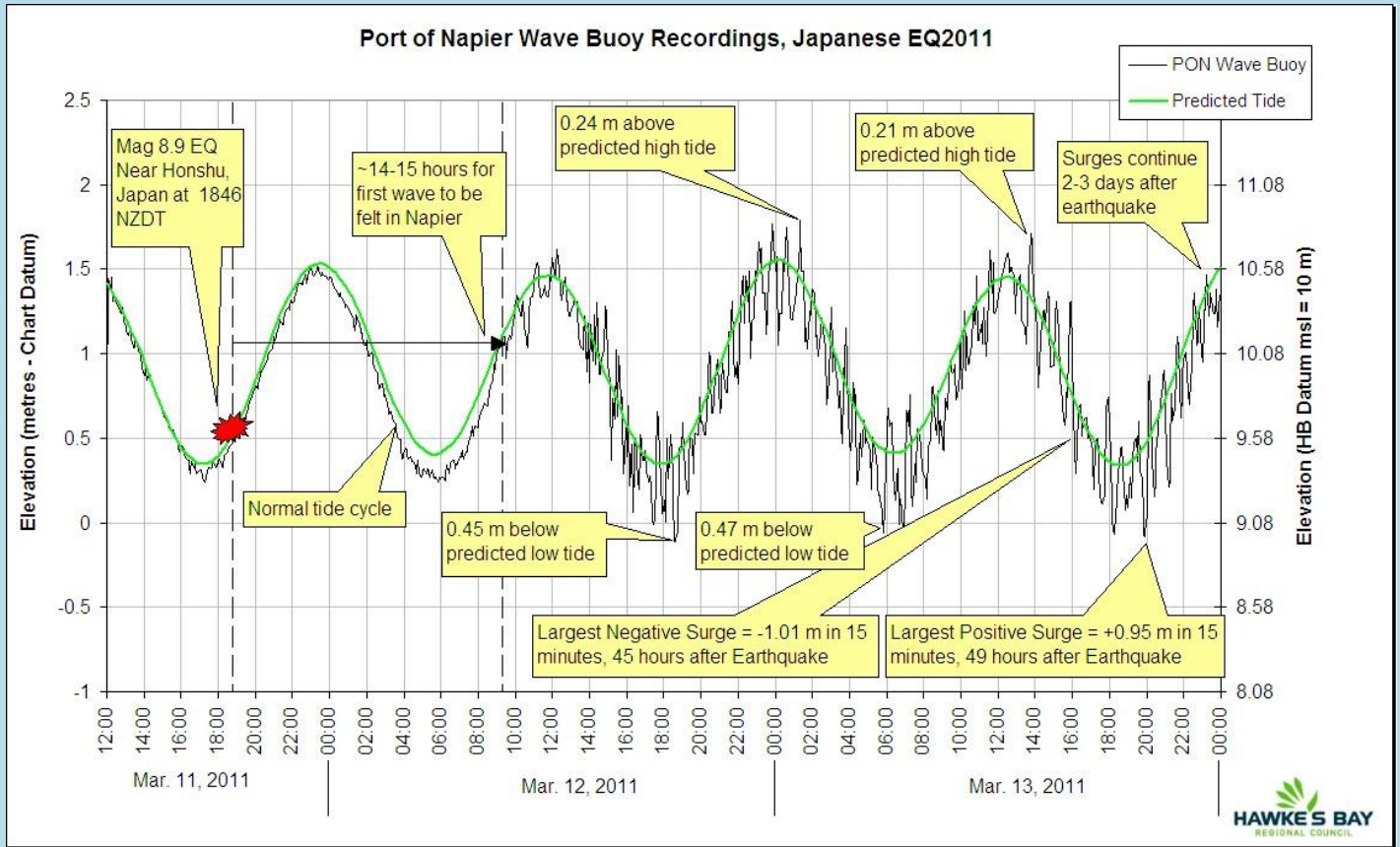


Looking north. Note tiny shepherds hut where they used to stay during lambing. Can we guess that the beat would be finished by mid afternoon, and then it was securing a crayfish dinner?



Farm dam on which Pateke - brown teal - have established.

NOTICE THIS



Here's one from the 'you might find this interesting file – courtesy of the Regional Council.

The A & P Society has asked me to include this promotion for the SFF Hawke's Bay Farmer of the Year dinner.

The Hawke's Bay A&P Society invites you to join with them to celebrate excellence as we announce the winner of the Silver Fern Farms Hawke's Bay Farmer of the Year.

Silver Fern Farms Hawke's Bay
Farmer of the Year 2011
"From the Shearing Shed to the Savoy"

GUEST SPEAKER: ON THE COUCH WITH SARAH ULMER AND NIKKI HAMBLIN
 CATERER: ORTON CATERING

THURSDAY 14TH APRIL 2011 6PM
 EVENTS CENTRE, SHOWGROUNDS HAWKE'S BAY
 TICKETS: \$125.00 PER PERSON GST INCL



* Don't miss **THE Gala event** on Hawke's Bay's farming calendar where we showcase the best Hawke's Bay has to offer from **the shearing shed to the Savoy**.

* Dine on Hawke's Bays finest produce, matched with its best wines.

* Be inspired as Olympic Gold Medallist **Sarah Ulmer** and Commonwealth Games Double Silver Medallist **Nikki Hamblin** share their story of their quest for excellence.

* Celebrate with the rest of Hawke's Bay as we crown this year's winner.

For further information, bookings or to reserve a table please contact Hillary Riches, Hawke's Bay A&P Society
 email: events@showgroundshb.co.nz or phone: 06 878 3123 or 027 258 8784

YOU KNOW YOU'RE IN CHRISTCHURCH WHEN ...

Let's not allow a tragedy to steal our sense of humour. You know you're in Christchurch when...

You put dirty clothes on the line to wash them in the rain

When you have to fight the cat or dog for a place to crap in the garden

When a group of students turn up at your place and leave it in a better condition than when they arrived

Half the children come from broken homes

Your friends and family want you to move back to Invercargill and it sounds like a good idea

When your 3 year old can say "liquefaction" clear as a bell but can't tell you their home address

When you drive on the right side of the road and no one thinks it's wrong

You are happy two Policemen came for a visit

When your bike becomes your best friend

It is normal for a soldier to be stationed at the end of your street

You see armored vehicles driving down the road

You smell

Every house is a crack house

If you are looking for it - it's on the floor

The earth moves and you are not having sex

You take a plastic bag when you go for a walk even if you don't have a dog

LAST WORD

If you haven't already, don't forget to take a look at the new website: www.overthefence.org.nz.

And if you think a friend would like to read Over the Fence, then feel free to forward it.

Cheers, Ewan Mac