

EDITORIAL

# Candidate has a colourful history

The contest to be Gisborne's next mayor has heated up somewhat with the injection of former police officer (1966-87), Member of Parliament (1987-96), political lobbyist and businessman Ross Meurant into the race this week.

While voters tend to look askance at candidates trying to parachute into their electorate, Auckland-based Meurant, who is about to turn 72, has had business connections here for over a decade and says he will move to Gisborne if elected.

He should campaign strongly and as shown in his advertisement today, will challenge the status quo as well as the governance records of his leading opponents.

Meurant has had a national profile ever since he was second-in-command of the Red Squad, a riot unit during the 1981 Springbok tour, then wrote a book about it.

He served two-and-a-half terms as the National MP for Hobson, an electorate that was abolished when MMP was introduced in 1996. Faced with being a list MP, he quit National in 1994 and formed a new political party called Right of Centre, later renamed the New Zealand Conservative Party, which supported the National government of Prime Minister Jim Bolger.

After leaving Parliament, Meurant was elected on to Rodney District Council in 1998. His Wikipedia profile describes the experience as short-lived: "the entire council was dissolved by the Minister of Local Government after an acrimonious relationship between the general manager and Meurant culminated in a split within the council". A Stuff obituary of former TVNZ identity and then Rodney mayor Doug Armstrong said his third term "was marred by internal bickering — fuelled in part by the earlier election of outspoken former police detective Ross Meurant as a councillor — and led to his resignation in 2000". That was alongside five councillors, and was followed by the Government sacking the council and appointing a commissioner.

Meurant's association with this district is through his involvement with Russian business interests here, and especially the redevelopment of the former post office building. In reality he has a mountain to climb to get in serious contention for the mayoralty, but he is clearly up for the challenge.

# The green, green grass of home . . .

by Clive Bibby



I'VE never been much of a Tom Jones fan although I do admire his ability to keep drawing the numbers to his less frequent concerts.

However, the one song of his that gets me humming along is a nostalgic rendition of "The green, green grass of home".

I was reminded of its capacity to bring grown men to tears, including me, as it played on our car radio during a recent return to my turangawaewae near Waipawa in Central Hawke's Bay for a family reunion.

Our family had once owned a sizeable chunk of this beautiful part of New Zealand's pristine farmland and although statistically our control over what happens on that land is less significant today, it is impossible to ignore the memories of that association — which come flooding back when you re-enter the zone.

As a student of history, I am proud of the fact that our tenure as kaitiaki of this magnificent piece of our national heritage has been recorded in honourable terms.

Right from the time in the late 19th century when my great-grandparents legitimately acquired the land — most of it in a non-productive state — and began the long, slow, expensive and at times heartbreaking process of development, successive generations have shown that they appreciate how fortunate we were to have chosen this lifestyle as a vehicle to make our contribution, and this area to call our spiritual home.

Other families, both Maori and Pakeha, can testify to this sense of belonging as an ideal basis for building societies confident in their own skin — each one proud of their individual successes in establishing footprints for others to follow.

Apart from the sheer hard work involved in conserving and maintaining each property, ready for handing on to future generations, there will always be a need for appreciating the requirements of a management role.

Whether our names are on the deed of title or not, our responsibilities to the nation are far more important. Our individual occupancy is temporary — the land and its surrounding community is permanent.

Understanding those responsibilities is

the main feature of communities who want to continue moving forward for the benefit of all — learning from the past but not continually litigating it.

I say that as we watch yet another sad chapter of our colourful but fractured history (this time at Humatao), which has produced little else apart from unsightly squabbles between family (hapu) members over land ownership and whose view should hold sway.

It is a shame that so much energy is wasted trying to establish leadership and negotiating authority in what are really only family disputes, when a compromise solution should not only be achievable but would benefit all.

Why do we pander to these groups who appear to want nothing more than a public scrap at the taxpayers' expense? Is it fair to ask our police force to keep their vigil watching over proceedings on freezing nights, well beyond the warmth from the protesters' log fires? I think not!

None of this current generation is serving their people responsibly if they spend most of their waking hours in front of the cameras. Their time as kaitiaki may have come but it already has all the hallmarks of wasted opportunities. The memory of their tupuna deserves better.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Homeless need a home

It is very sad to see these homeless people in Gisborne City.

Surely it would be an easy fix if the GDC or some other well-meaning people were to give them somewhere to sleep that is warm and comfortable.

This should be a priority, as these people are lacking so much and a move into safe, secure accommodation could help them to also receive other services, food and medical checks more easily.

They are also not a good look for visitors.

The old police station is an obvious choice. People could donate a television set, beds and mend any broken bits such as lights, toilets and showers.

If our community can show compassion for these people I am sure their lives will improve, as will "the look" of our city centre.

ALAIN JORION

### Kokowai 'pure awesome'

Re: East Coast represented in Tangata Beats, August 15 story. The band in the picture are pure awesome — watched them at the Gisborne finals. So pleased to see

them doing so well. The bloke in the funny hat was hilarious. I loved these kids, so hope they do well.

SHELAGH WEST

### What about 5G roll-out, Ross?

Re: Committed to rail, August 15 story.

Kia ora Ross. Thank you for confirming that Rehette Stoltz must be some kind of left-wing liberal because why else would someone with your credentials be standing? Meredith must be rubbing her hands with glee.

Can you please tell us whether you support the 5G roll out, technocracy and the internet of things? If you don't answer me here you will have to answer at the upcoming public meetings, so you may as well get it over with.

Believe it or not, this is the defining issue of our time. The rumoured health consequences pale in comparison to the total state control of every aspect of our lives that 5G will enable, so here is your chance to pick up a swag of votes — because as far as I'm aware, the other candidates can't see it rolled out fast enough.

I am not a National Party supporter but if you oppose 5G using the precautionary principle you will get my vote.

PETER JONES

### Objectors are out of line

Re: Manu Caddie's reply to the letter of August 10, Translation of possession.

The following is confirmed by the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975: "Her Majesty the Queen of England confirms and guarantees to the Chiefs and Tribes of New Zealand and to the respective families and individuals thereof the full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their Lands and Estates, Forests, Fisheries and other properties which they may collectively or individually possess so long as it is their wish and desire to retain the same in their possession."

The key words here are "so long as it is their wish and desire to retain the same in their possession".

As I see it this says there is an "option" — keep or sell. It is a personal choice.

From a real estate point of view, the Maori owners of the adjacent land at Humatao, now in dispute, did not object to the sale to Fletchers. As it is, they are to receive a parcel of land plus homes. Sounds like a good deal to me.

On the face of it the objectors are out of line and should depart immediately.

BOB PIPER

### Another soldier identified

Re: Names sought for Gisborne's unknown soldiers, June 24 story.

William Percy Leggett was my great uncle — he is the one on the bottom right of the picture.

Born in 1897 and died in 1970 in Gisborne. His parents were William Leggett and Margaret Paton who lived at Ormond on the street behind the hotel. He never married, and the last time I saw him he was living in a railway bach at Bartletts in around 1960.

I am researching this branch of

my family tree, and am having great difficulty in locating when William Snr arrived in NZ.

Percy's younger brother Reginald was born in Tokatoka, Kaipara. He was married and only had one child, who died either as a stillborn or soon after.

My Grandmother Amy Madge Sutton was born in 1901 and died in 1952 in Tauranga. She had two children, my Aunt Valarie and my Dad Peter.

TONI MCKAY, Taupo

### Also a 'Tairawhiti Birds' page

Re: Citizen scientists needed for Bird Atlas update, August 14 story.

There is also a Facebook

page "Tairawhiti Birds" to support the NZ Bird Atlas effort.

M. RUTHERFORD

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- The maximum length for letters is 350 words.
- Anyone can write a column, 600 words maximum, but a photo is required.
- Always include full name and contact details.
- If you use a nom de plume, there is a higher bar for acceptability.
- Letters may be edited for clarity, length or legal reasons.

