

FOREWORD

In April 2006 someone inside the caucus of the Hungarian Socialist Party recorded Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany at a closed sitting of his party. This is what he said: 'You cannot quote any significant government measure we can be proud of, other than at the end we managed to bring the government back from the brink. Nothing. If we have to give account to the country about what we did for four years, then what do we say? We lied in the morning; we lied in the evening.' Someone inside this caucus, like those National Party people who leaked material to Nicky Hager, wished for 'more principled and democratic behaviour' within the Socialist Party. Nicky is not alone in having had access to private communications, and making the choice to disclose.

The resulting book is extraordinarily comprehensive in its coverage of the topic. This is assisted by the range of correspondence and key informant information Nicky has amassed in the past three years. To my knowledge, there has been no New Zealand politics thesis containing this amount of detail. Nicky would never, though, have been able to enrol in a New Zealand university to write this as a thesis: because of the extraordinary access he has had to private and personal communications he would never have received ethics approval. And even if his enrolment were permitted, the thesis would have been buried alive and not made available to the public.

Nicky deals with this in his preface, and there should be concern about these extraordinary breaches of privacy. While none of the detail was surprising, the extent of the leaks was shocking to me.

But this must be balanced with the choices that faced those who possessed the material. Before emails, I was a sophisticated leaker, and I was also good at getting others to leak to me. Documents 'fell off trucks' and were 'left on photocopiers'. I believed I did this in the public interest. As a student of politics myself I studied *The Pentagon Papers* thanks to Daniel Ellsberg, and *All the President's Men*. Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward were much lauded for their work in these leaks with former FBI official W. Mark Felt, and Woodward continues such disclosure in respect of the Iraq War. The Blair Cabinet leaks. Robert Noval leaked the identity of CIA agent Valerie Plame.

Nicky's approach is thorough. He generally assembles the subject matter in each 'case study' chronologically, so we can trace the emails, any other correspondence, the diary entries and the newspaper coverage, point by point. In the social sciences we call this 'sophisticated rigour' and Nicky would mark very highly in this respect. And *The Hollow Men* is a damn good read. Nicky writes well. The book is always accessible, never turgid. He handles a great deal of material very competently, and each chapter has its point and purpose.

In an effort to undermine and distract from the contents of *The Hollow Men*, Nicky will undoubtedly be criticised and called some lefty names. Some will try to find offence in the commentary he makes. There will be accusations that he has committed any number of breaches. There will be witch hunts and blaming and name calling. But this work meets some high academic standards. I also believe, as Nicky states in his preface, that this is a story about democracy, and the public of New Zealand deserve to know what they have when they speak of such an ideal. I would expect to see much of the evidence set out in the book reported to the Electoral Commission, Parliamentary Services, the

police and the Auditor-General.

There is *nothing* in this book that surprises me. But I think only a few hundred people in New Zealand would be in this camp. My own history and my current work mean that I pay attention to this aspect of the world, and how democracy does or doesn't work. I would expect the content of *The Hollow Men* to be very shocking to a serious number of those in the current National caucus, people who ran in the election believing the 'inoculated' versions of policies, and were then advised that they 'owed' their marginal or party list win to Brash, which meant he couldn't be changed or challenged. (I'm not naïve enough to believe that there weren't also those who worked out exactly what was going down and liked it.) The book will also shock the good, genuine party people I remember from my own campaigning days, and those I know now – at my country golf club, for example – who support the National Party.

In some ways not a lot of the principles raised are new. There has always been church engagement in politics. The Catholic church was a big player in my years in Parliament. That tight cabal of Robert Muldoon, Wellington lawyer and SPUC president Des Dalgety and *Tablet* editor John Kennedy worked very closely together: the *Tablet* was at times a Muldoon mouthpiece. Muldoon frequently pushed the *Tablet* position, on private schools for example, in caucus, so there's nothing new there. I always had a bill in my drawer ready for introduction to remove the tax-deductible status of their 'education' campaigns if they drove me too crazy. Dalgety was also very helpful to the government in the aftermath of the *Erebus* disaster as Muldoon had appointed him to the Board of Air New Zealand. There are a lot of untold stories there.

Those who paid attention could work out who the National Party's larger funders were. We were reminded about the brewery contribution every time a conscience bill came to the House on the drinking age or similar. The viticultural industry was cleverly even-handed in a party political sense, but a number of protected manufacturers were very close to Muldoon.

Nicky Hager describes the different person Don Brash has chosen to become. Politics can drive people to become 'other'. In *Three Masquerades* I wrote about this process happening to me and the self-contempt I developed figured largely in my own decision to leave politics – though the need to 'seize the moment' precipitated this departure a little earlier than I had presumed. Many women politicians have spoken and written about the pressure to become what you aren't, but generally they have meant a change in character, not a consciously contrived change in what they believed in and stood for, which was an invitation to lie constantly.

Politicians have been trained in dealing with the media for years, since the advent of television. 'Ignore the question and say the same thing over and over again' is not a new trick. I used to think that was all right, because I trusted the New Zealand public had enough information to see through the trick and into the shallow content. But with the popularity of talkback radio and the absence of good *journalism* as opposed to columnists, I now despair of that happening.

There's nothing new, either, about political parties going to an election with no intention of legislating for the policies they espouse. Sometimes this is also a consequence of their choosing ignorance. We find this every election in the human rights field, where there is always a raft of policies, especially from minor parties who are untroubled by such ethics, that contravene New Zealand's fundamental human rights obligations. The policy on criminal liability for children of twelve... is in this camp. And it will yet be demonstrated, as the Supreme Court found in Canada, that New Zealand's

second-class Civil Union right is a breach of these fundamental principles.

These memories demonstrate why Nicky's book is so important. I can recall these events and patterns, but no one has ever held them up to the light, and it is time that this happened, so that New Zealanders can decide the nature of the democracy they want.

Of course, many of the events and communications recorded in *The Hollow Men* were legitimate, written by people going about their lawful business. We mightn't like their ideologies, but they would profess as genuine a love and concern for this country as I do. We just see it in a completely different way. But I don't have their business interests. (There's not too much conspiracy in some of the letters quoted from old politicians. I once wrote to John Banks agreeing with something he had said, but I certainly wouldn't want anything to be inferred about my political ideology from that!). There will undoubtedly be a lot of commentary of that nature, but Nicky has undertaken an excellent systems analysis. You cannot take isolated and separate instances away from the whole, and still make sense of the analysis. The constant build-up of data and texture means the book must be examined as a whole. I hope the reviewers will see that.

I must admit to a sense of anticipated despair about the treatment *The Hollow Men* might receive. Most of the people I know (and a number of them sit in parliamentary seats) are disgusted with the sandpit the House has become – and it was certainly this bad when I was an MP. We are desperate for a government and an opposition with policies that have content. We are desperate for intelligent debate about the wrinkles around the shades of grey that are the real choices. There's tremendous impatience from many of us with the present simplistic black/white approach. We feel ashamed that a country with such a basically decent and principled population can be so manipulated.

There's a real chance that both politicians and the media, and especially the talkback hosts, will see this book as more grist to the sensationalist mill. The focus may be on looking for and condemning the leakers, as opposed to scrutinising an appallingly mendacious political campaign. This is not the outcome Nicky intends. I am sure, as he notes, that there are unpleasant little stories in the emails of other political parties. They may be best to stay well away from the task that now lies in front of National. There have always been people of integrity, intelligence and liberal disposition in the National Party, and they have often been spurned for the cheap sensation of the poll-driven leader. But the country may now like the look of such a refreshingly different group of people: I always prefer the honesty of politicians who agonise in the grey areas.

In March 1984 I wrote a piece for the *New Zealand Listener* on 'Leaving Parliament'. Early in the essay I quoted from Adrienne Rich's writing in *Women and Honour: Some Notes on Lying*: 'We assume that politicians are without honour. We read their statements trying to crack the code. The scandal of their politics. Not that men in high places lie, only that they do so with such indifference, so endlessly, still expecting to be believed. We are accustomed to the contempt inherent in the political life.'

It is my hope that the ultimate effect of *The Hollow Men* will be the return of honour and honesty to our democracy. I thank Nicky Hager for his courage and extraordinary hard work.

Marilyn Waring
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Preface