

Today, Tuesday 21 November 2006, was to be the day of the launch of my new book. The books are printed, preparations for the launch were finalised and then we learnt of Friday afternoon that an injunction had been granted that has blocked release of the book. The man who sought that injunction, National Party leader Don Brash, has suggested publicly that he had to block publication because the book is about his private business. That is incorrect and, although the injunction prevents us from selling the books, we have decided to proceed with what would have been the book launch to announce what the book is really about.

I should begin by saying what the book is not. This is not a book about Don Brash's personal life. There is nothing in the book about his personal life and there are none of his personal emails. It is a serious book about politics. Secondly, despite some earlier rumours, the book has nothing to do with the Labour Party or New Zealand First or any other party. It is purely my initiative. I have been working on the book for the past nearly three years. Finally, contrary to other rumours in the media, it is not a 'Brash email' book or a book primarily about Brash. Those rumours were vaguely right but off the mark. The book is about the Brash-led National Party and based on interviews with and a large amount of documentation from National Party sources. These included many emails to and from Brash but the majority of documents were other kinds of documents and other people's emails.

The book, which is called *The Hollow Men*, gives an inside account of the National Party over the last three years. It is about Don Brash's rise to leadership of the National Party and documents the huge efforts National made to win the 2005 election. The subtitle is *A study in the politics of deception*. There is abundant information in the book to justify that title – in various cases involving deceiving journalists in this room – but I am not permitted to talk about many of the details.

However you can see from the contents page I've handed out the range of subjects covered by the book. It includes:

- * The political strategies behind Don Brash's 2004 Orewa race speech;
- * National's links to American neo-conservatives and their input into National's campaign, which were kept secret and denied;
- * Hidden links with industry lobby groups that were allowed to help write National policy speeches, at a time when National was accusing the government of being beholden to special interests;
- * National's big donors and their relationships with the party;
- * The election strategies and techniques advised by the Australian strategy consultants Crosby/Textor;
- * and a range of possible breaches of election finance laws and parliamentary spending rules that National has kept secret, while it has attacked other parties on these issues.

And much more.

For example, Chapter 1 is about National's links to the Exclusive Brethren and its million-dollar election advertising campaign. During my research for the book I managed to find out a lot about what was going on. I can say that, based on sources other than Brash emails, the book shows decisively that the top National Party people were well aware of the Exclusive Brethren's plans for a pro-National advertising campaign months before the election and that they were having discussions with the Brethren about its plans. The main people involved in the contact with the Exclusive Brethren were Don Brash, John Key and campaign manager Steven Joyce. The book provides details. Despite all their subsequent denials, these contacts were well underway by May 2005 and after that the senior National Party people were aware of the plans.

I believe that it is information like this that explains why National is trying to block publication of

the book.

I want to say a few words about my sources and the injunction. First on the sources of the book. Again the rumours and claims are incorrect. The book is not the result of someone hacking into the parliamentary server or gaining access to Don Brash's computer system or other suggestions like that. The only reason I could write this book is that there were people in and close to the National Party who gave me interviews and the extraordinary collection of inside papers upon which the book is based. These people did not help me frivolously. They were willing to help the book to be written because of their unhappiness that their party had been acting unethically, dishonestly and even illegally and was getting away with it. I became, in part, a channel for their concerns.

Concerning the injunction: if the book had been about Don Brash's personal life, and it had been based on his personal emails, I think he would be justified in trying to stop publication. As some of you will know, I have written and spoken widely about privacy issues and I have no interest in knowing about or publicising Dr Brash's personal life. He has a right to privacy in such matters.

But that is not what the book is about and claims about personal privacy should not be used to dodge political accountability. The book is about people who are paid by the public and who are accountable to the public. The party wants the right to be the next government and so the public has a right to know about their actions. Indeed, the National Party has campaigned all year on the subject of integrity and then when information arises that questions their integrity, they have used legal devices to try to stop publication.

I believe the injunction is aimed at suppressing unwanted news and that the motivation of senior National Party people is to try to avoid accountability for their actions.

You can see from the parts of the book I am able to give you what kind of book this is. Since the book is not about personal emails and Dr Brash's personal affairs, he should immediately drop the injunction. It is not consistent with National Party philosophy to try to suppress a book just because you do not like what it says.

Finally, I note that the National Party, as part of its job as an opposition party, obtains and publicises leaked documents regularly, to expose what it sees as wrongs and to hold others accountable for their actions (see sheet noting some recent examples). It cheerfully uses leaked papers, including emails, from government departments, iwi organisations and the Labour Government. I hope no one will take them seriously when, because the leaks are from within their own party, they suddenly argue that leaking somehow amounts to theft.

I am sure every journalist here would have leapt at the opportunity if you had been offered the information I was given. I am certain that National would have been delighted to receive similar information about Labour and been the first to talk about its high public interest value. Please do not let them get away with hypocrisy on this point.

I think I have written a very good book, one of high public interest and integrity. I stand by the work and look forward to New Zealanders being able to judge it for themselves. It shines a light onto many deceptive and unethical activities that otherwise would have remained secret, and raises important questions about the future of the National Party. I want to use this occasion to thank publicly the people inside and outside National who helped make the book possible.

The reason we have continued with launching news of the book is so that the public and everyone involved in the legal cases knows at least in general terms what National is trying to suppress. I hope I will be able to launch the book itself in the near future.