

# Channels face off over election night viewers



## Reality show trimmings mark TV One coverage

by Emma Page

Losers. Winners. Bungled live crosses. Stakeouts. Planes threatening to crash into buildings.

TV1's coverage of the election had all the trimmings of a reality TV show with twice the entertainment factor and a generous helping of analysis.

Susan Wood and the amenable Mark Sainsbury were teamed up with an assortment of experts and motley side-kicks to comment on the battle of the blue and red line and that elusive 5 per cent prize.

Their comments were at times insightful and surprisingly edifying. This was especially true of Colin James who at one point pinned Labour's comeback on its door-to-door campaign strategy in electorates with high-density state housing.

But James' fellow commentator, statistician Hugh Morton, was not so insightful.

Not one to hedge his bets, he declared early on that Labour was in trouble. Not surprisingly, as the red and blue lines on his laptop slowly came together he received less and less airtime.

TV1's graphics in general were clearer, cleaner and classier than its rival.

A virtual house of Parliament provided some nice eye candy. Professor Nigel Roberts, lord of the Beehive cyber world, added academic credibility to the virtual proceedings.

However the analysis wasn't all suit n' grey-haired. Early on, when counted votes were thin on the ground, live crosses to cheeky Jeremy Wells and the endearingly odd Hugh Sundae provided some light relief.

Stationed in a Greymouth pub on the pretence of canvassing the locals' views, the duo inadvertently provided one of the best calls of the night.

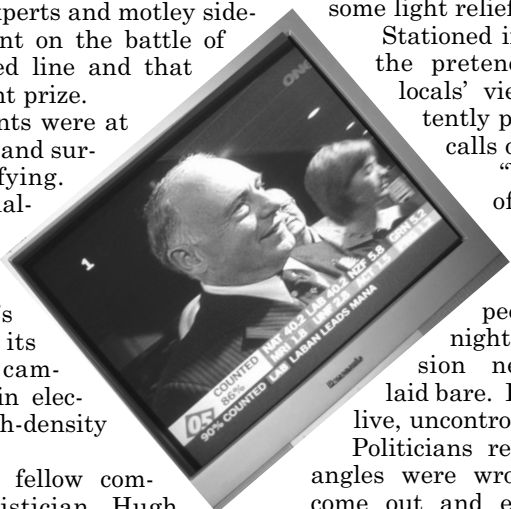
"You look like a couple of Auckland poofers there with your cocktails," said Wood.

One of the unexpected outcomes of the night was seeing the television news-making machine laid bare. It was over five hours of live, uncontrollable television.

Politicians refused to talk, camera angles were wrong, Helen would not come out and even the stately Judy Bailey had trouble reading her autocue.

All of which added to the overall chaotic and exciting feel of the night.

It was nail biting, compulsive viewing. Some of the best live television of the year.



## Campbell's panache charms jaded viewers

by Michelle Whiteford

The wit and charm of John Campbell helped make TV3's election coverage relaxed and amusing. He was joined by four other panellists including *Sunday Star-Times* columnist Deborah Coddington, and former MP, turned mayor of Wanganui, Michael Laws.

As expected, the channel had staked out all the major party headquarters and key electorate seats across the country with eager journalists Duncan Garner and Stephen Parker leading the charge. Garner was on a mission — bumping and grinding with Don Brash as the National Party leader arrived at his headquarters late in the evening. Despite Brash repeating that he would talk soon Garner continued firing questions.

Campbell swung between the serious and trivial, poking fun at Coddington rewriting her Sunday column in the ad break and also declaring that the country should all pitch in and buy Helen Clark a dishwasher — a sneaky reference to the "what is Helen like at home" interview she had granted Prime's Paul Holmes.

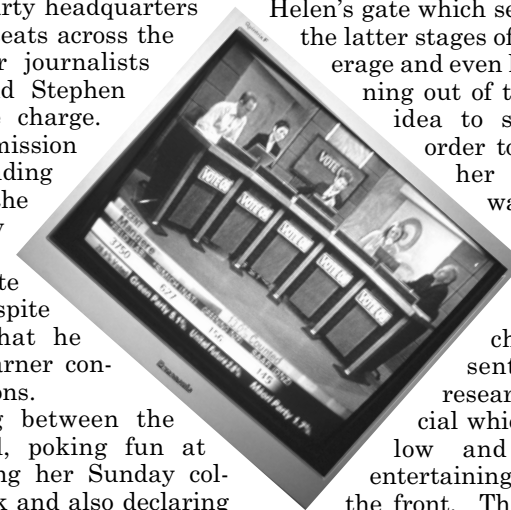
The newsreader within Campbell even got to come out and play when in

breaking news, a crazy lone pilot decided to try and crash a stolen plane into the Sky Tower. Despite the potential threat to New Zealand's famous landmark and that the pilot could be coming for Helen, Campbell steered the news back to the election when the plane happened to crash on Kohimarama Beach in the Tamaki electorate.

With that out of the way it was time to head back to the election and ... Helen's gate which seemed to dominate the latter stages of the channel's coverage and even had Campbell running out of things to say. His idea to sing Kumbaya in order to get Helen out of her Mt Albert house was not picked up by his fellow panellists.

At the end of the night the channel had presented a well-researched election special which was easy to follow and understandably entertaining with Campbell at the front. They covered all the major electoral seats extensively and took interest in the Maori seats which Campbell himself described as "fascinating".

If you wanted to hear some old codgers talking politics you should have watched TV1.



# German stalemate mirrors NZ

by Suenje Paasch-Colberg

Watching election coverage was like *Groundhog Day* for Germans in New Zealand as the result of Saturday's election and Sunday's general election in Germany showed one surprising similarity.

In both countries the MMP system resulted in a stalemate for the two major parties.

Tilman Enders, deputy head of mission at the German Embassy in Wellington, says there have been other similarities in both elections.

The policies of Germany's two big parties, the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Christian Democrats (CDU), can be compared to those of Labour and National, although with a different economic background, he says.

While the economy in New Zealand is performing well, Germany is going through more difficult times.

"But in both countries you have a conservative party challenging a more socially orientated governing party."

Another parallel is the fact that the small parties will play a big role in the coalition negotiations.

Christoph Muecher, director of the German culture institution the Goethe-Institut, says he was surprised to see the similarities, especially as both countries are in different situations.

He says the voters in both countries seem to be evenly divided — but for very different reasons.

In Germany, where the unemployment rate of about 11% is the highest since World War Two and the economy is showing only weak signs of revival, a "lack of courage" seems to be the reason why neither the SPD nor the CDU was able to obtain a stable majority.

Muecher says voters want to see things change but are also scared by social reforms that may hurt them.

He sees a different kind of division in society in New Zealand.

"The election outcome mirrors two different social currents."

On the one hand there is the traditional, egalitarian and co-

operative feeling which is represented by Labour, he says.

The second social current could be described as a neo-liberal, success-orientated one which is represented by National.

Iris Heinz, from the New Zealand German Business Association in Auckland, has a similar view.

In Germany the growing dissatisfaction was the reason why people are undecided, she believes.

"A lot of Germans hope that the reforms of the SPD will finally be effective. Others are frustrated with the reforms and voted for the other party, CDU."

In New Zealand — which is "on the top rung" economically — society is split for another reason, she says.

Some people voted for Labour because the economy is good and they trust the party.



NAIL BITER: Berliners Frieder Bechtel and Daniel Buron (left) followed election coverage in the international student's lounge at the University of Auckland.

Others felt they would rather reap the benefits from the country's well-being and voted for National because of their tax-cut-promises, she says.

German students gathered at the University of Auckland early on Monday morning to follow the coverage of the German election on a big screen and have a shared breakfast.

Political science student Frieder Bechtel from Berlin says he was surprised when the election outcome turned out to be so similar to New Zealand's.

But he says the close result will probably cause more problems in Germany, as New Zealand is used to having minority governments and Germany is not.

PHOTO: SUENJE PAASCH-COLBERG