

Letters to the Editor

Putting a halt to pylons

I would like to respond to your well balanced editorial in your September 29 issue, "Halting ads and pylons," Edition 15).

Firstly, the community directly involved in the Transpower 400kV project are grateful for the involvement of AUT ad creativity students. The standard of work produced is very high.

I would particularly commend the students on the thorough research completed and the level of knowledge they showed in their presentations — this is a highly complex issue.

The net result is some very creative and powerful work that does exactly as we would hope — attracts attention, generates debate and develops awareness with Aucklanders.

One of our major concerns is that the health effects from 400kV power lines are not definitively established but there appears to be such impact that it would be prudent for people not to live in close proximity of high voltage transmission lines. (We have more background on this on www.notowers.co.nz).

While Transpower has established that if they build the 400kV line, there will be clear easements, the secondary issue is that they are not interested in dealing with the issues within the urban environment where people have no choice but to live under similar lines.

The reality is that people struggle to buy their own home, typically fully extending themselves and with the escalating housing prices in Auckland, someone always ends up disadvantaged, usually those with least choice!

The rural landowner issues are that the lines impact significantly on the environment (Transpower acknowledge this by ruling out a number of routes "because of high visibility and potential visual impact") and dramatically restricts the use of the land for the farmer.

The Transpower grid upgrade plan was deficient in that it did not consider all viable alternatives. Also absent from the debate are questions on future lines. The proposal from Transpower creates a situation where if for some reason (mechanical failure, weather event, earthquake, accident etc) the 400kV lines were suddenly taken out of service, as the rest of the system endeavours to balance, there is the serious risk (perhaps more than risk — it would happen) of a cascade failure. This therefore means the system must be balanced with additional high capacity (400kV) circuits. Where will these go? We again end up with many communities

affected. Is it necessary? Normal practice throughout the world is to fully utilise existing assets before we build new.

Man is having such dramatic impact on our world that we need to think about the legacy we leave behind. Encouraging for us is the information that there is a better way with this project; the existing assets can be upgraded to ensure the lights do not go out in Auckland and the impact on the land is neutral compared to building new (400kV) lines.

Unfortunately there has been some panic and misinformation has created an environment where there is fear. Fear creates news, whereas, sadly it seems that logic and commonsense do not sell newspapers or attract viewers. The aim of our campaign is to create more interest, dispel unnecessary fear and to inform on a very limited budget. Thank you to the ad creativity students and *Te Waha Nui* for helping to balance this vital debate that affects us all.

Steve Hunt
Chair, HALT

American's rosy view of NZ

Recently an American woman spent time here. She had had inside experience of Bush senior's government, was involved in housing and with Wall Street. This is how she sees New Zealand:

"I am now in my last week of a six-week trip to NZ. New Zealand is truly one of the most beautiful places in the world: South Pacific islands rising from the sea full of fresh air, outdoor sports and hard-working, highly literate, playful people.

"As NZ is an island country, exports are the lifeblood of the economy. New Zealanders or Kiwis as they call themselves, are highly literate, love the land and are remarkably knowledgeable about what is going on throughout the world. I found a positive intimacy between government and citizen. Kiwis are proud about living clean — and proud of their culture and country, being one of the least corrupt in the world. They take a great interest in government and current events. No whining is allowed. Got a problem? Get to work on solutions! I hope to bring back to America the fresh energy and ideas about building a sustainable world that are percolating through New Zealand and to help build more linkages between us," said Catherine Austin Fitts.

We all know that this is a rather idealised picture of our country but perhaps we could bear it in mind and try to live up to it?

Audrey Evans
Auckland

Crash a chilling reminder

The news yesterday that a light plane piloted by Yankees pitcher Cory Lidle had crashed into a Manhattan skyscraper instantly drew comparisons to the attacks of September 11, 2001.

New York police officials were quick to dispel any thought that the attacks were an act of terrorism and yet fighter jets were quickly scrambled over a number of American cities.

It seems that years after the 9/11 attacks the United States is still extremely skittish.

So it's probably a good thing that most US citizens are still in the dark over what happened on that fateful day five years ago.

Ever since the day after, numerous conspiracy theories have sprung up surrounding the true motive, method and ultimate master of the attacks.

Quickly rubbished, these claims have been gaining currency as more evidence comes to light. And many questions need to be answered.

There is growing evidence that planes did not crash into the Pentagon or a Pennsylvania field.

If you look at pictures of the damage to the Pentagon the hole created by the impact does not fit with the size nor shape you would expect a fully-laden passenger jet to make.

A number of eye witnesses describe smelling cordite, a powerful high-explosive, after the impact, not jet fuel. These are military people who would know the difference.

Most disturbingly, the only footage released of the Pentagon crash (all four frames of it) shows a towering explosion and yet no sign of a jumbo jet.

Has anyone ever actually seen proof that a plane crashed in Pennsylvania?

The only aerial footage of the alleged-crash site of United 93 shows a gouge in the earth and sprinkling of wreckage. There is scant evidence of a plane crash.

Of course there is no dispute that two planes struck the Twin Towers. The second crash must have been one of the most filmed events in history.

However the conventional wisdom that the towers collapsed as steel was weakened from the fire is being challenged.

If this was the case then it would be the first time ever that skyscrapers collapsed due to fire alone. More alarming is the fact the buildings fell at almost terminal velocity. In just 10 seconds.

Many witnesses described the collapse of the towers as looking like a controlled demolition. And in fact, numerous witnesses, including a number of New York

City firefighters described hearing secondary explosion's just before the buildings came down.

There is also seismic and video footage that could support these claims.

The American Government admits it does not know who all the terrorists were and that some of the original names released were wrong.

All of this and other evidence adds up to some chilling conclusions and yet no one in the mainstream is asking the questions that need answering.

Perhaps it is comforting just to blame the "others" who are Islamic extremists rather than looking for terrorists within.

Unlike yesterday's plane crash, the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks are unknown. And no one seems to be looking

* Today's issue of *Te Waha Nui* is the last for 2006.

While this means many of us no longer need to spend 50 hours a week at uni, it also signifies that our last day as students at AUT is fast approaching.

Some of us have jobs lined up already, but many more here are concerned at the apparent lack of them — see News groups cut media jobs, page 7.

TWN will reappear next June with a new crew of budding journos pulling the strings. The class of 2006 wish them all the best.

And last, but certainly not least, a well-deserved thank you to all of our tutors for guiding us through the year.

— Mathew Grocott

From the editor...



Put sports journos to the slaughter



Karen Tay

— but that's the exception rather than the norm.

In my field of work, I've been coddled, petted and treated like a ditz little girl by enough sports writers and rigger-heads to realise that the regular public are losing the battle.

So I might not know how many players there are exactly in a cricket team (11 plus the 12th man, I'm told).

Am I the only person who thinks that male sports journalists are usually prejudiced, grogswilling swine? To be "balanced", there are some decent ones out there

Or why exactly they need a scrum in rugby apart from it being a reason to touch each other's personal bits... or even what exactly the difference is between league and rugby.

But this shouldn't stop me from being given sports matches to cover.

The problem with sports writing in this country is that half the journos are ex-players who are hardly unbiased.

The other 50 per cent are hardcore spectators who are so smug about their abilities they can't tell their heads from their arses.

What sports writing needs is not more arrogant know-it-all prats who will tell the public what they should damn well be watching.

They should take into consideration people like myself (of which there are an alarming number), who would personally

not mind learning a bit more about sports but don't want to make it our entire reason for living. Where would I go to read up about the subject?

Certainly not newspaper columns — because they assume we're already in-the-know.

Not textbooks, they're a bit dry and nobody wants to touch those after high school.

Magazines concentrate on Shane Warne's sex life and I'm certainly not watching television or going to a game if I haven't a clue what's going on.

So what's the solution? Do some colour pieces. Explain even the most basic terms, don't just assume that everyone already knows.

What's the sin bin? What's a red card? And just what exactly is the point of the Tri-Nations?

Why does soccer matter to the rest of the known world but not to

New Zealand? Female sports coverage has become a joke as well. Male sports writers don't like female sports because they say it's nowhere near as entertaining as male sports.

There are standing jokes about women tennis players in short skirts and long rants about the poorer quality of female-orientated sports as opposed to male. Well, look at the funding.

Male rugby gets the bulk of the money and the rest drips down till it slows to a trickle when it comes to things like netball.

And if you think netball is some kind of pink girly sport, just ask those who play it recreationally.

A friend of mine who plays indoor netball has pulled her Achilles tendon, broken two fingers and gotten a black eye.

How is that different to having

cauliflower ears?

What we need are both male and female writers who have an interest in sports, but can go in as a journalist instead of a fan.

You need someone asking the basic questions because, as most good journos know, sometimes it's the stupidest of questions that gets you the soundbite.

Male sports journalists in this country, in any kind of media, need to stop treating the audience that pays their wages like idiotic trolls unless they already know a fair amount about sports.

Sport is not politics — it's not meant to be serious.

We all know that. It's meant to be entertaining and if I'm not being entertained — who is?

Stop covering sports for the elite: write for the public, you damn little North Shore princes.

Brenton Vannisselroy's view on women's sport — page 22