



**Four Pillars**

**In this, the third part of a four-part campaign, *Te Waha Nui* continues to question the integrity of the so-called four pillars of society.**

**This week we focus on the local body elections currently taking place in and around Auckland, the recent APEC summit in Sydney, and the visit to New Zealand by Mexican president Felipe Calderon.**

# Pasifika politics on the up

By Kristy Turton

The future of Pacific politicians is looking up — more Pacific people are getting involved in local government.

Pacific Islanders represent around seven per cent of the population. However, only around one per cent of current local board members are of Pacific descent.

But this is set to change, says Rachel Afeaki, owner and director of FaceNorth, a company for the promotion of excellence in Pacific youth.

“There are more Pasifika people running for local government in Manukau than ever before, and I believe that if we keep informing Pacific people and educating them by raising their awareness, then more people will participate in local elections in the future.”

Pacific people are under-represented on local boards because they are unfamiliar with local government and how it works, says Afeaki.

“Pacific people are sometimes quite unaware that our local government has a direct influence on our lives.

“We can change this by providing accessibility to these areas and supporting Pacific people,” she says.

Otara community board candidate Tunumafono Ava Fa’amoe agrees.

“The future people of Pacific leadership need to come together and support each other, so we can help represent our local communities better.”

The encouragement shown towards the candidates gave them confidence, says Fa’amoe.

“I am grateful for the support shown towards me and other Pacific candidates for these elections; it’s obvious that many people think we should have more Pacific voices on our local boards.”

Afeaki says the younger generation of Pacific people are leading the way in becoming more aware of what goes on in local politics.

“The media has exposed the local government system to them, so they are more educated about it now, and more young Pacific people feel that they can contribute because of this.”

# APEC protest first-hand

By Sam Stewart

As the hype of Sydney’s recent Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference dies down, individual stories begin to emerge from the 10,000-strong protesters that demonstrated during the eight-day summit.

Ian Rintoul is the founding member of the Queensland-based Refugee Action Coalition. He travelled to Sydney specifically to protest at the conference.

Weeks before the event Rintoul was told by the Federal Police that he was on the Government’s ‘declared list’. He was told if he entered designated declared zones around the city he would be arrested immediately.

“It didn’t surprise me that I had been added to the list. The Government tried a few tactics to keep people away — it just fuelled the fire,” he says.

Rintoul was not told why he



**THE THICK BLUE WALL:** The police preside over an APEC protest.

was put on the list, but he was not the only one warned about attending protests.

“I know of people who had letters sent to them, were phoned and even approached leaving the pub by federal police. They were

told not to get involved in APEC or there would be dire consequences.”

Just what the consequences were was also never specified but they did not stop thousands of people turning out to show their

disapproval of the event.

To combat the mobs of protesters, 3000 police and army troops were recruited to keep the peace.

Private citizens were asked to be police spies and police were given extra powers in declared

zones, says Rintoul, who believes this escalated the tension.

“APEC was so hyped up by the Government and police talking about the scale of violence that was going to occur that it got the police whipped into a frenzy,” he says.

Rintoul and nine others were arrested in what he describes as an unprovoked situation.

“It was totally unnecessary. A small group of us were having a meeting in the park after the protest and it ended in nine of us

getting arrested.”

Rintoul, along with most of the others, was released without conviction three hours later, but two of the group were charged.

The protests had a “festival” feeling, he says. The police presence, however, “could only be compared to the (1981) Springbok tour to New Zealand”.

The police presence and the protests took away from what Prime Minister John Howard was trying to achieve, says Rintoul.

“Howard wanted to use [APEC] as a way to parade around with Bush but the emphasis they put on the protests during the build-up and the reality of how peaceful we were overshadowed the whole event.”

**“The Government tried a few things to keep people away — it just fuelled the fire.”**

PHOTO: ALLAN MILNES