

Irish publican takes on Tizard in Auckland Central

by John Aspden

One Irishman is offering central Auckland voters something quite different this election.

Irish storyteller and avid cyclist Thomas Forde announced last month that he would run for Auckland Central.

The expat has lived in New Zealand for 14 years but is disappointed with current Government efforts to ensure students can avoid crippling state debt.

Forde has launched his campaign with a promise to ensure payments on student loans are tax deductible if the student decides to remain and work in New Zealand.

The policy outstrips both Labour and National's current student loan offerings, which deal only with interest accruing on student loans.

However there is far more to this campaigner than his quirky slogan — "A little bit left, a little bit right, so nobody's left behind".

The ex-University of Auckland student runs Forde's Frontbench, an out-of-the-way

"political pub" on Anzac Ave, situated behind a Chinese restaurant.

Forde believes his pub is the ideal office from which to mount his campaign.

The sole employee, Forde would be available to his constituents for up to 15 hours a day.

The former stand-up comedian plans an intensive campaign but voters will not find his effigy on billboards across the city.

"It'll be an environmentally friendly campaign," he says, jokingly referring to his minuscule campaign budget.

He plans to print leaflets and posters which he will hand-deliver to possible voters. He also plans to use his political pub to host a series of public debates between Auckland Central candidates.

Forde promises his campaign will add an element of humour to the election. He has launched a political caricature competition and offers \$1000 for the best cartoon and caption.

Despite his enthusiasm, Forde will be hard-pressed to take the important Central Auckland electorate, held by



IRISH LOVE: Publican Thomas Forde is running an independent campaign for Auckland Central.

Labour front-bencher Judith Tizard.

With just 43,000 voters, it is New Zealand's smallest seat. The Electoral Commission esti-

mates that as many as 20,000 eligible constituents may be unregistered in the area.

This could be crippling news for his campaign, but Forde

remains optimistic. To him, failure is inconceivable.

"Regardless of the small possibility that I don't get elected, I'll still pursue my policies."

Migrant art influence 'invades' Auckland

by Kate Fisher

Nazism, kamikaze pilots and confessions were just three of the components of a recent live exhibition in Auckland on the effects of migration.

A conversation between Asian and New Zealand cultures, commenting on conflicts, prejudices, ideology and politics was the focus of *Invasian* at Auckland bar Galatos last month.

Drawing from their diverse cultural backgrounds, eight artists portrayed the effects of 25 years of migration on Auckland's cityscape.

In the 1990s Auckland's Asian population rose by 38,000 and is now equivalent to the urban Maori population at 8 per cent, according to the Auckland City Council.

Kiwi performance artist Kerryn McMurdo says all Kiwis are migrants.

McMurdo says despite this many Pakeha New Zealanders are not culturally aware and have little contact with other cultures.

Their ideas of particular cultures are dependent on class, she says.

"That's not wrong. It's just that the communities we grow up in set up the culture of how we like to live."

McMurdo says her experience of living in Japan influenced her installation for *Invasian* — her satire of Winston Peters as a kamikaze pilot symbolises the end of "zero tolerance".

Installation artist Eu Jean Chang, 25, who came to New Zealand from Taiwan in 1989, says he loves the environment



ALTERNATIVE VISION: Asian artist Eu Jean Chang gives his impression of Auckland's cityscape.

and agrees with the anti-nuclear policy but has held on to his Asian roots.

Frustrated with the transport situation in Auckland, Eu Jean creates an alternative vision of a future Auckland city in his installation, *Parallel Sky Ways*.

The catalyst for *Invasian* was Korean Min Kyoung Lee, 31, a Kiwi-trained performer.

She plays both preacher and confessor in her role-play, pitched at helping viewers to evaluate their judgments.

"Some politicians put fire in people's negative sides, so people will turn against each other or on people who are different."

"How is that so different from Nazism?" she asks.

A dancer and first generation Kiwi from Chinese parents, Jocey Fong, 43, says she felt like a misfit growing up in New Zealand.

She says her parents viewed

her as a foreigner, with Western ideas and beliefs.

Forty-two-year-old New Zealand performer Charles Koroneho says culture is a condition we're forced to live within.

In his work, *Cultural Misfit*, he morphed between Asian, Maori and Pacific Island figures, taking on archetypal roles of society's misfits.

He says he hybridises cultural images in his performances, just as we take on the culture of our environment.

The Auckland community may reflect this, but in a 2004 Opinions Market Research survey, in which 300 took part, 65 per cent said Auckland still suffered from racism.

Invasian initiator Kyoung Lee says we need to recognise our own judgments and take responsibility for them, instead of blaming and creating disharmony.

Chain stores threaten boutique High Street

by Zoe Walker

Auckland's High St precinct could lose its unique charm if more chain stores move into the area, say some of the street's shop staff.

Portmans and Pumpkin Patch opened on High St last year, and jewellery store Bling opened on Vulcan Lane last month.

Neville Findlay of Zambesi is disappointed that chain stores are moving into the precinct.

"The more interesting, independent or individual stores will seek out a precinct and it becomes more and more popular. Not only do the big boys want to move in, but the landlords want to whack the rents up," he says.

"Unless you're prepared as a city to exercise some form of control, it's market forces prevailing. I guess then what happens is that people move on somewhere else."

He says those who work in the area have no way to stop chain stores moving in.

"I and a lot of people around Vulcan Lane have fought very hard to maintain its image and its special intimate nature."

However Findlay says the "incredibly interesting" precinct has "a fairly long shelf life yet".

An employee at Karen Walker agrees that chain stores do not fit into the area. The area is a place for fashion boutiques and design stores, she says. Chain stores don't have the same feel as boutiques.

"Chain shops are for malls and Queen St."

She believes Teed St in Newmarket, with high fashion shops like Kate Sylvester and Drop Dead Gorgeous, is taking over as "the new High St".

Findlay says stores have followed Zambesi to Teed St.

"You say it's the new High St but I think it's probably gone beyond that."

He says the changing face of the High St precinct has influenced Zambesi's decision to open a store in Ponsonby — "not that we have lost faith in where we are now".

He thinks Ponsonby Rd is an interesting street.

"It hasn't attracted the big boys, the middle market stores."

However, Kylie Collins from Kate Sylvester is not concerned about stores like Portmans moving into High St.

"It's no competition to us as they're selling to a totally different market."

She was taken aback when Portmans first opened, but she says the store has tried hard to fit into the area.

"It depends on the look of the store, and they do good window displays — so each to their own I guess."

Inner-city shoppers agree that chain stores in the city are better suited to Queen St.

Most perceive the High St precinct as stylish and upmarket with expensive designer shops.

"It's very trendy and expensive — I see it as the centre of fashion in Auckland," says Queen St shopper Carrie Hansen.

Findlay says it is "the way of the world that things evolve".

"You can only hope that if you have something that works and people enjoy it, then it will remain," he says.

"A lot of the responsibility lies with the owners and the landlords to maintain an area, but they're always looking at the dollar as well."