

Back from brink of democracy

Well, dear voters, we've all had a narrow escape - you, democracy and I.

I don't want the 5173 who voted for me to feel insulted by what I'm about to say, because you can be sure if I'd been elected to anything, anything at all, I would have gripped the levers of power so tightly the bureaucrats would have been quaking in their cardigans.

No, what I'm getting at in the opening sentence is the sense of relief I feel from being spared an experience that just wasn't going to be what I'd imagined.

How can I say that, after all the campaign stuff about being an observer and holder-to-account of local body politicians for half a century?

Well, I have an admission.

After going to all the meetings at NPDC over the last couple of months, it began to dawn on me that sitting on the press bench keeping a stentorian eye (is there such a thing?) is one thing, but having to make a speech on every issue, voting according to one's conscience and what was going to look good in the Daily News, attending endless social functions, responding to everyone with a real or perceived grievance, knuckling under to every egregious central government policy applied to everything and anything with which mere local body politicians are surely not to be trusted, enduring the idiosyncrasies (polite word) of those hewing to the demands of the disaffected, and – surely the worst – having to wear a tie again, all added up to something best avoided.

I would have adapted, I guess, But in fact there was an even bigger obstacle to my political aspirations – during the campaign I was unable to shed the habits of a lifetime and stop being a journalist.

Former work colleagues from such exotic places as Masterton pleaded with me online to cease being a journo when I went to political events, and start being a candidate.

They pointed out I was giving as much coverage on my Facebook page to rivals as I was to me, usually more.

Harry Duynhoven despaired over it. "When are you going to stop being a reporter?" he rightly demanded, as I neglected to kiss of babies and I flitted about with my iPhone 6 shooting video and still photos, and making online videos in which I largely failed to appear.

Quite right, Harry. And the answer, as we now know for sure, is 'never'.

So there it was: something like 25,000 words of supposed wisdom and reportage expounded on Facebook, to an audience of, well, who knows?

Facebook lies to you about reach to get you to spend more money on a mysterious process called "boosting", so it's impossible to know whether you're getting to dozens, hundreds or thousands. One video I posted had nearly 4000 views, but good old FB said it reached a fraction of that.

The campaign was anything but a waste of time, however. We met some excellent people, learned pretty quickly who we thought would be good councillors, although little of that was reflected in the actual result.

Jim Tucker column for Sat, Oct 15, 2016

Probably the funniest moment was watching retiring councillor Grant Coward giving his farewell speech, in which he noted that at least in his previous job he'd had a gun.

It was interesting to see who bothered to attend council meetings to brief themselves beforehand. Only Deb Tawa, Alan Melody and I were faithfully regular visitors to the council chamber.

My greatest regret, sort of, was not getting a chance to trot out a defence to my brief experience as a policy writer for the ill-fated Internet Party at the last election.

After Richard Handley was unkindly reminded about goings-on at Witt (which he ably deflected) I was sure I was next.

But the dirty trick never came, so I had no reason to tell of a moment following the Dotcom party launch when he asked me how it went down with my assembled former colleagues, whom I had spent most of the day dodging.

After my mumbled "pretty well", he boomed: "I am now going to hug you." The attempt went awry, and somehow as I reared back in alarm, I clipped him under the chin with the top of my head.

"Oh my god, you have broken my jaw," he roared. I hadn't. But for a second I imagined John Key approving a knighthood.

It's all just history, now. The really important stuff is about to happen.

The best of luck to them all.