

## Referenda bender spoke good sense

I write this with reluctance. There's an implied obligation to record some thoughts about the referendum results, but my two previous columns, one on each, drew such nasty reactions I'm not sure I want to go there.

I got death threats over the cannabis one, which speaks volumes about some of its less well-mannered adherents. With euthanasia, the venom was strong enough to be bottled and used to despatch me legally when my time comes.

The sensible take now is to accept the results for what they are, especially given they closely align with recent pre-election polls, and say simply that democracy with all its flaws has spoken. It was worth the extra expense to hear its voice.

The Swiss, if they notice at all, will be applauding our use of a political safeguard they have employed more than 600 times since 1848 (according to Wikipedia). Their success with referenda, staying out of wars and guarding other people's money speaks for itself in terms of a country's stability.

Our results signal to those in government you better do your homework when writing new law on controversial issues, because if given a real opportunity we'll reject anything not clearly drafted.

From my reading of them, the two proposed laws were chalk and cheese. One was detailed and precise, the other left too much to chance, so a majority rejected it out of concern for unintended consequences.

Both laws are overdue, since both address social issues whose resolution can no longer be postponed. But one had a longer and more meticulous incubation and therefore a better chance of being accepted.

While Labour has jumped in with indecent haste to say it won't be taking cannabis any further for now, that doesn't mean the controversy will go away.

It's tempting to assume cannabis is a youth issue, that there's an army of voters below the baby boomer bulge who will eventually get their way. But from what I've read, there may be a significant number of boomers who've long dabbled with the weed and supported its legalisation in line with our reputation for self-indulgence.

So it's complicated, isn't it. And you can't blame the newly elected government for wanting to avoid distractions. The Nats were opposed, but it's almost mischievous to speculate on what their stance might be in three years' time.

Staying on the topic of polls, when you read this the world might still be holding its breath over who gets to rule America for the next four years.

I have a personal interest in this, given I exchange the occasional message with a man who lives deep in the red (Republican) zone and who happens to have exactly the same name as me.

I warm to him as someone who hates Trump, and share his angst that his brother is an equally passionate supporter of the (current?) president.

I've never seen a photo of Jim's brother, but I'm wondering if he looks like a man in a photo published by the *Taranaki Daily News* last Saturday of a Trump supporter holding a large poster declaring his wish to make America great again.

What struck me was the man's attire, its lack of style awareness bringing to mind a thing my mother used to say about loud-mouthed people of little substance: "All mouth and no trousers."

According to Google - to which in my darkest moments I apply the same phrase - another version is "all mouth and trousers." I was hoping for mention of belts, but there was none, which is a pity because it was the man's belt that attracted my eye.

It was one of those wide, cowboy, light-coloured leather affairs, that in itself seemed appropriate, but it was what it was doing that jolted me. It held in his shirt. Yep, you read that right - his shirt was tucked into his pants.

If you saw it, you'd be as shocked as I was. Nobody does that any more. Late last century I was not taken aside by one of my journalism students but dressed down publicly for not allowing my shirt tails freedom to hang loose.

If the man in the photo is a typical Trump voter we are indeed in trouble. It confirms what we already suspected when someone helpfully revealed the structural details of Trump's hairdo - these people are living in some awful past.