

### Whose line is it anyway, Prime Minister?

The speculation over the topic of Nicky Hager's new book also sparked speculation about Prime Minister John Key's likely response. Left-wing blogger Daryl McLaughlan offered readers a game of "spin bingo" on the topic where a winning line could include "fairy story", "conspiracy theorist", "left wing" and "have not bothered to read it". Key filled in two of the winning lines in interviews before the book was even released last night.

### Shearer urges NZ help with humanitarian crisis in Iraq

Labour foreign affairs spokesman David Shearer is continuing to push for New Zealand to help with the humanitarian crisis developing in Iraq. Shearer said this country should "urgently pledge increased humanitarian assistance" to United Nations agencies there as well as to non-government agencies on the ground. He said the United States airstrikes on advancing Islamic forces were needed to protect the vulnerable.



**Big draw:** About 200 people crowded into Unity Books in central Wellington for the book launch last night.

# Book details Nat links to blogger

TRACY WATKINS and MICHAEL FOX

THOUSANDS of leaked emails have revealed the extent of the relationship between Right-wing blogger Cameron Slater and prominent National Party figures.

The latest Nicky Hager book, *Dirty Politics*, was released late yesterday, having earlier been shrouded in secrecy, apparently to stop some of the people named in it taking out an injunction to stop its publication.

Hager, whose book *The Hollow Men*, exposed the inner workings of the National Party, said the book raised serious questions for Prime Minister John Key to answer.

Key said through a spokeswoman last night that the book was a "cynically timed attack" from "a well-known Left-wing conspiracy theorist".

"It makes all sorts of unfounded allegations and voters will see it for what it is."

A spokeswoman for Key said last night that he would not comment until he had read the book.

Hager said the emails were passed to him after Slater's website was crashed in January following comments about a West Coast man who died in a car crash.

He said they showed long-term advisers in Key's office were engaged in activity including "going inside the Labour Party's computers", organising dirty tricks



**Blogger Cameron Slater**

and feeding material to Slater and another Right-wing blogger, David Farrar, to use in personal attacks.

"You will not believe what you read and how bloody awful it is."

However, most of the emails seem to relate to exchanges between Slater and other bloggers and National Party activists, including Simon Lusk.

The book includes claims that Slater's blog is partly funded by big business, including the tobacco industry.

One of the most explosive claims refers to former ACT leader Rodney Hide being blackmailed into stepping down from the ACT leadership over him sending "inappropriate text messages to a young woman".

But there is no evidence linking the prime minister's office or senior ministers to the action

against Hide, which was mostly discussed between Slater and Lusk.

Hager names ninth floor staffer Jason Ede as the main conduit between the prime minister's office and Slater, and says Ede helped Slater search inside Labour Party computers after they discovered a security breach.

Other examples cited by Hager include Ede drafting Official Information Act requests for Slater to use in other attacks, including salary information used to attack Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade staff embroiled in a dispute over restructuring.

Hager also details exchanges between Slater and Justice Minister Judith Collins, whom he describes as Slater's "close friend and ally".

Hager writes that the pair called it "the double rule rule" where "if someone attacked them, they gave back twice as much".

Hager also writes about Collins, a former police minister, discussing a potential leak from the police to Slater related to the Urewera raids.

The book also implies Collins was involved in leaking former National Party president Michelle Boag's email about ACC claimant Bronwyn Pullar, who was accidentally sent private details of thousands of ACC clients, but there is no direct evidence that she did so.

Hager denied the book was politically motivated, saying the in-



**Secret's out:** 'You will not believe what you read,' Nicky Hager said after the release of *Dirty Politics*. Details of what was in the book had been shrouded in secrecy, apparently to prevent injunctions to stop publication. Photos: ROSS GIBLIN/FAIRFAX NZ

formation was "so illuminating" and he had "worked like a dog because I believe people have a total right to know this before the election".

"I think voters have got a total right to know about their government beyond just the glossy face that people put on - of the things which the Government doesn't want to be seen."

Key had "very serious questions to answer", he said. "I think that a prime minister, who's got his longest serving press person who sits in an office two doors away from him going inside the Labour Party's computers and organising other dirty tricks and feeding out information to David Farrar and to Cameron Slater when they want to attack someone

and not have their own hands on it, he really has to answer to this."

Slater posted on his Whale Oil site last night that he had just arrived in South Korea where he had "pre-existing arrangements".

"No doubt you will all want to talk about Hager's book, even though none of us [has] read it yet," he said to followers on the blog.