

FRANK AND FASCINATING

On Radio Live last Friday morning, Hillary Barry who is arguably the first lady of mainstream news, had a fit of giggles so bad that she had to stop and hand over to the sports reporter. She'd introduced a story in which New York Congressman Anthony Wiener was resigning after having been exposed for sending images of a certain body part to women who weren't his wife. Cut to Wiener solemnly making his announcement to a handpicked hometown audience. But, instead of politely clapping as one would expect, they cheered loudly and then started chanting, "Leave, you per-vert!"

Frankness in politics is as rare as a redneck with all his teeth, so this unexpected frankness completely undid Hillary. Unprofessional? Totally. Forgivable? Completely.

This time next week we will have a result in the Taitokerau byelection. Like no other, this election is for and about Māori. Its result is also fascinating like never before, not because of the individuals standing, but because of the very different implications that a win for any one of them holds for us.

As a voter in this byelection, my job has been to figure out what each of the candidates' parties stands for, which one stands closest to where I am, and which is heading where I want to go. It's become clear to me that although there are three serious contenders in this byelection, there are really only two positions; government by and for the rich and powerful, or government by and for everyone else. So what are the voting options for Māori? I've boiled them down to what I call the satellite, the landing craft or the planet.

In my frank opinion, a vote for Kelvin will maintain the Māori satellite that orbits the potential Labour government of the future, while a vote for Solomon involves replacing a crew member on the manned Māori Party landing craft within the current National government. Alternatively a vote for Hone is a stake in the planet itself. As for the other two candidates who are standing, in my opinion a vote for them is a wasted one – pardon the pun.

If my political frankness causes the majority of eligible Māori voters to fall about laughing, then my candidate of choice may be in trouble. But if that same majority share my view, they won't be clapping politely when the result is announced next week, but will be cheering and shouting, "Go, you bea-u-ty!"

P.S. News has just reached me that Cathy Crene (nee Semenoff) has passed away. She hailed from Te Rarawa, Te Paatu and Ngāti Kahu, and if ever there was a frank lady it was Cath, or Giddy-Gas as some of us affectionately knew her. Moe mai ra e te whaea Cath. I know one thing, if she'd have been in Congressman Wiener's crowd she wouldn't have clapped politely either