



The Douglas family: Megan, Malcolm, Glennis, Grant, Roger. (middle) Norman and Jennie. (front) Kim, Rod and Kelly

Politics In The Blood For The Douglas Family

Winston no newcomer to Electoral Hijack

Televised images of a defiant Winston Peters fighting back from the hot seat before Parliament's Privileges Committee brings back mixed memories for Malcolm Douglas of Karaka, especially as our local electorate takes on the name Hunua for the upcoming General Election.

"That spirit of independence and adventure shown by our parents and grandparents is still prevalent"
- Sir Roger Douglas

It was in an electorate called Hunua that Winston, standing for the first time for National, overturned Malcolm's 301-vote win in the 1978 election, turning it into a 192-vote victory for himself, by individually dissecting vote after vote. Despite a barrage of criticism and a subsequent rejection of the decision by the Court of Appeal two years on, Malcolm was out after six months as MP for Hunua and Winston was in - and on his way up the political ladder.

Malcolm: "At the time, voters were instructed to strike out the name of every candidate except the one they wished to vote for. In Hunua, 560 voters instead put a tick or a cross beside one name to indicate who they supported. Most - 354 - struck out all party affiliations except one, assuming that the one left would be counted. Up until then, and in other electorates in the 1978 election, as long as the voter's intention was clear, the vote was allowed, based on previous court rulings. But Chief Justice Sir Ronald Davison and his court rejected this. More than 200 other votes were disallowed because the electors' names were on both the Hunua and Maori rolls."

Two years later, in rejecting the Hunua decision, the Court of Appeal clarified the situation for future elections, saying the Electoral Court had "fallen into error" and that an incorrectly filled in voting paper had to be counted as long as it "succeeds in conveying the intention of the voter clearly." But it was all too late for Malcolm, and Winston Peters' controversial political career was well underway.

The Douglas family are no strangers to the weird and wonderful world of politics, with Malcolm's brother Sir Roger Douglas, coming out of political retirement to stand for the newly formed Hunua electorate in this year's General Election. Sir Roger first entered parliament in 1969 as MP for Manurewa, becoming a Cabinet Member during the term of the Third Labour Government and taking over the portfolio of Finance Minister in 1984.

By going into politics the Douglas brothers were really, just following in the family