

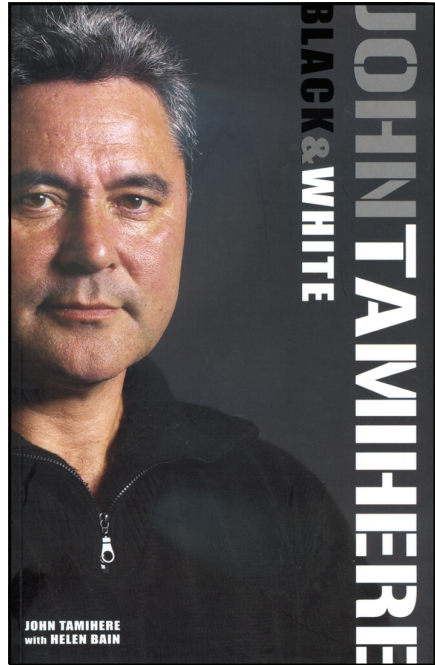
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## Frank insights into Labour's controversial political maverick

***Black and White: John Tamihere*, by John Tamihere with Helen Bain. Auckland: Reed Publishing (NZ) Ltd, 2004. 190 pp. ISBN 0 7900 0964 1.**

**H**AD John Tamihere delayed the launch of his autobiographical book *Black and White* by nine months, he could have trebled its 190-odd pages. Since the book's release, penned with former press secretary Helen Bain who is now political editor of the *Sunday Star-Times*, Tamihere has stumbled from political foot-in-mouth, damning revelation and Serious Fraud Office and government-driven investigations.

Since the release of the book in



August last year, Tamihere, who until then was still considered an outside chance as New Zealand's first Maori prime minister by some supporters, now looks heading for a new career following this year's elections.

A theme in the book is Tamihere's uncanny ability to survive utterances and actions that should have ended the career of almost any other politician. At the time this was true.

However, in the now notorious *Investigate* magazine article in April, where he put his blokey boot into a number of powerful Labour Party colleagues, and snapped ties with a few

more of his diminishing list of friends, he looks to have shattered an image of seeming invulnerability. Even Tamihere's staunchest supporter would concede that his recent outbursts have opened terminal political wounds.

Anyway enough of the present, and back to the future.

*Black and White*, despite being a tad dated, remains a good read. It is written in the same down-to-earth style that has seen Tamihere earn the ear of a wide swathe of Maori and Pakeha middle New Zealand.

The book is fairly frank in detailing Tamihere's less positive exposures, including acknowledging his multiple drink driving convictions, backgrounding accusations of rape and of his failed defence of brother David – convicted of the 1989 murders of Swedish tourists Heidi Paakkonen and Sven Hoglin.

There is enough detail of his background to give a better understanding of Tamihere, forced to rise from the battle for resources inevitable when growing up as one of a dozen siblings in a modest four-bedroom West Auckland home, to become a prominent Maori leader.

Despite a rocky educational start, the street smart youngster got a break that thrust him from prospective manual worker into university.

He developed from a low profile lawyer into the driving force that turned the then struggling Waipareira Trust into a national role-model for Maori driven social service providers.

The book does not blanch from the scandal that has shrouded the ebullient Tamaki Makarau MP since donning his red ribbon and entering politics.

There will no doubt be a second instalment of the life of John Tamihere. Whether it is written by a sitting MP is looking increasingly unlikely.