

Hollow men on stage

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By Julie Jacobson

The controversial book that triggered the end of Don Brash's career with the National Party is about to be made into a play – thanks to a \$38,000 grant from Creative New Zealand an organisation funded by the Government.

The play, written by Auckland's Dean Parker, is an adaptation of Nicky Hager's book *The Hollow Men: A Study in the Politics of Deception*.

It was one of 245 projects to receive almost \$4 million from Creative New Zealand last week as part of its second 2006–07 funding round.

The Hollow Men, based on emails to and from former National leader Don Brash and other political figures, documents the goings-on behind the scenes in the lead-up to the last election. It suggests that Brash and other senior National MPs – including new leader John Key – did not disclose the extent of their contacts with the Exclusive Brethren and notes the influence that the far right – Roger Douglas, Michael Bassett, Brian Nicolle, Catherine Judd, multi-millionaire Diane Foreman and Matthew Hooton – had on Brash's rise.

The book also quotes Brash as suggesting that concealing National's superannuation policies might be an option, and it is widely regarded as one of the prime motivators for Brash's resignation. Brash tried to prevent the book's publication with a court injunction but resigned a day before it was released.

A spokeswoman for Prime Minister Helen Clark, who is also Minister of Arts, Culture, and Heritage, said Clark had not been aware of the play or of the grant. The ministry operated separately from Creative New Zealand, she said.

Parker told the *Herald on Sunday* yesterday that the production was being cast now – "if we can line up Scarlett Johansson to play Diane Foreman, then I'm prepared to pay the ultimate sacrifice and play Don Brash myself" – and the play would premiere at Bats Theatre in Wellington in September before a season in Palmerston North.

Parker said *Hollow Men* was a faithful adaptation of Hager's book and focused on the way politics "were waged by political parties rather than about the people who make up those parties".

The play will be directed by Jonathan Hendry, currently directing the critically acclaimed *Othello* at Wellington's Downstage Theatre.

Parker is a veteran of stage. He wrote the screenplay for the movie *Came A Hot Friday* and worked on many TV shows in the 70s and 80s, including *Roche* and *Mortimer's Patch*.

