

Stadium Invercargill it is, then

So Invercargill ratepayers will own Rugby Park. Lucky them. Some will be wondering what to charge their Southland and Gore district guests for admission. Others will be thinking ahead to the next big non-footy entertainment. Perhaps something of a Colosseum theme, with five city councillors in Christian roles. That'll get the turnstiles whizzing.

Even some of those councillors

who voted yes to the rescue package are at pains to point out how happy they aren't. They are in reverse-Godfather mode, wanting us all to understand that this was an offer they couldn't refuse to make, because nobody else was going to come to the aid of an otherwise financially ruined Southland Outdoor Stadium Trust, and by extension Rugby Southland — and somebody had to, right?

Views sharply diverge on this, either on the question of whether rugby rescues are really such a compelling cultural necessity, or whether, in any case, this is a whipped-up crisis intended to resolve a long-unconfronted problem by landing ratepayers with the regular annual losses that pretty reliably come with stadium ownership. And just city ratepayers, mind you. Southland and Gore districts aren't in the

front row, or even flanking, this community push.

Many councillors are bitingly reproachful of the Community Trust of Southland, for lending money to the stadium trust in (they say) the knowledge it could never be repaid. Fact remains that it was accepted as a loan, even if the recipients or their parent bodies were of the view that someone else would one day have to repay it, or that such loans were

really just grants in their pupae stage.

To hear some councillors tell it, ICC money is precious stuff, wrenched from the pockets of gasping ratepayers, whereas CTOS slings around provincial playmoney which, if some of it were to go missing in action on occasion, would scarcely be missed. Well, no. The CTOS trustees have steely fiduciary responsibilities that don't

evaporate in expedience.

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