

Grilled lamb

PUBLISHED: 12 HOURS 22 MINUTES AGO | UPDATE: 12 HOURS 22 MINUTES AGO

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Veteran corporate hard nut Mark Mentha is revelling in his new role as Bankwest's sacrificial lamb.

The wind-up specialist has come out swinging a couple of times in recent months on behalf of Bankwest after numerous unhappy bank customers accused it of unfairly calling in debts.

The claims stem from the so-called "book-cleaning" operation that Commonwealth Bank of Australia implemented after it took over Bankwest in 2008.

Since his appearance on the ABC's *Four Corners* program on Monday night, Mentha has received a stream of hate mail. It seems to be co-ordinated, since almost every letter has called him a "heartless bastard". That's not to say he doesn't have supporters: one letter writer suggested he go on a permanent holiday – to North Korea.

Mentha has clearly honed his Machiavellian image by adhering to principles that a true prince trying to keep the masses under control can only applaud: such as, it is better to be feared than loved.

The Prince reckons he might pick up a few gigs out of his television performance from other banks looking for a sacrificial lamb.