

New Zealand politics is currently decorated with a tapestry of contrasting political parties, each with their own significant key ideologies and policies. With the political climate constantly changing as New Zealand develops into the future, many political parties have had to manipulate policy to fit a changing society. The deciding factor as whether or not a party will continue to function into the future is determined by many factors however, one significant one being their malleability.

Firstly, arguably the most dominant party in New Zealand politics today is the Labour party, led by Helen Clark, the current Prime Minister. Labour's key ideologies are based on the 'left-wing,' socialist perspective. Labour traditionally ensured that the state had a very active role in the economic management of New Zealand and believed that the state could provide a very 'co-operative society.'¹ However, early on in Labour's history, its positioning was at the more moderate end of the socialist scale, based more on the Christian and liberal humanitarianism, rather than the doctrine of Marxism. During the time of the Trade Union disputes, Labour's key focus was to reflect the concerns that were emerging regarding the poorer side of society, and wanted to ensure individual citizens in this area would flourish. Yet, if Labour wanted to continue into the future and gain enough votes, it had to broaden its horizons and include not only the poorer and trade aspects of society, but also the middle class and rural communities. In the 1980's Labour chose to move away from the socialising of 'production, distribution and exchange'² and shift to a "vaguely defined concept of democratic society."³

¹ Richard Mulgan, *Politics in New Zealand*, (Auckland University Press, 2004) pg. 244

² Richard Mulgan, *Politics in New Zealand*, (Auckland University Press, 2004) pg. 245

Today, Labour's key policies revolve around the fundamental basics of society, education, healthcare, law and order, and now more than ever before, conservation and environmental issues. Labour's motto is "Labour. Forward. Together,"⁴ and the party strongly believes education is a very integral part on New Zealand society and everyone should be entitled to access quality public education. Labour believes in training a skilled work force and has set up many programmes in accordance with their policies. Labour's key policy based around health care is to increase the accessibility to affordable quality healthcare.⁵ In pursuing this objective, Labour has had the largest hospital upgrades ever undertaken in NZ, increased funding to District Health Boards and other health services.

Labour's policy around law and order is protecting the rights of citizens and ensuring we have a fair and safe legal system.⁶ The party wants to focus on early intervention and decrease domestic violence in NZ homes. Finally, Labour's policies regarding conservation and environment are becoming more and more important, especially at this time of heightened awareness around the issue of climate change. The Labour party's main policy is in accordance with sustainability, and it wants to work closely with local government and community to enhance the environment.

Labour is a historical party that has traditionally had many significant groups of supporters, including Maori, trade workers and the poorer end of society. With its

⁴ www.labour.org.nz

⁵ www.labour.org.nz

⁶ www.labour.org.nz

growing emphasis on areas of major concern, such as a sustainable future, a broadening and flexible policy base this is demonstrated by Labour's movement on the political diagram, with Labour now more in the centre, still to the left of National and Act, but not as far left as Alliance and Progressive. In my opinion, Labour will be around for a very long time yet.

Secondly, as the opposition to Labour, National is another highly influential and important party currently in New Zealand (NZ) politics. Unfortunately, the emergence of National's ideologies is not as colourful as that of Labour, as the party basically started to give Labour opposition and prevent NZ from becoming a country ruled by socialism. National is traditionally positioned in the centre of the 'right-wing' and is not a party that is based completely on the doctrine of principle.⁷

However, National was based much more on freedom and sanctioned more general principles in harmony more with private interests, rather than state inference.

National's ideologies are based around having an economy that has regulations and management and during the time of the Labour, Savage/Fraser Government, believed in expanding welfare provisions.⁸ Growing support by business and rural sectors reflected National's decisions in these areas, as these supporters wanted structure and regulation. National contrasted Labour considerably in many aspects.

National's key policies are very similar to many in parliament, again based on the fundamentals of society. However, it is the way in which National forms and shapes

⁷ Richard Mulgan, *Politics in New Zealand*, (Auckland University Press, 2004) pg. 245

⁸ Richard Mulgan, *Politics in New Zealand*, (Auckland University Press, 2004) pg. 246

the policies that make the comparative difference. An example of this is apparent in the party's education policies. National believes that a key into improving primary education is standardisation, testing and then comparing grades across the nation.⁹ Other education policies include, raising productivity in the education sector and ensuring young people have work to go into once they are qualified.

National's policies regarding health are related to care for the elderly, ensuring that elective surgery waiting lists take a dramatic decrease, increase the funding for pharmaceuticals and provide subsidies for primary health care through the country.

National believes almost all of these objectives can be fulfilled in the next three years.

National holds a very strong stance on justice in New Zealand and has decided on many powerful policies for which it believes many positive repercussions are to follow. These policies include: increasing the efficiency of the civil litigation system by cutting down court fees, ensuring trial dates speed up, restructuring the family court system, making it a requirement of the law commission to undertake law reform projects and finally, ensuring there is no abuse of the legal aid system.

Lastly, National's environmental policies are based around the '100% Pure NZ' aspect¹⁰. The party wants to increase funding to community conservation initiatives, develop Government work schemes and also establish a New Zealand Protection Authority. In my opinion, National is another party that has a certain future in New Zealand politics. With strategies already being implemented to deal with issues that

⁹ www.national.org.nz

¹⁰ www.national.org.nz

appear to become very much apparent in our near future, such as climate change and health concerns, National will be in contention at the next election.

Traditionally the Green party has been positioned on the 'left-wing' side of politics, even more so than Labour's positioning. The Green's core ideologies have always been based around care for the environment and their ideologies include strong ecological wisdom, the belief in non-violent approaches, social responsibility and powerful decision making. Key policies that have emerged from this party include: improving the quality of our eco-system, cleaning up our environment, the possibility of offering alternative and less oil-consuming transport, to make NZ waste free by 2020, to prevent justice by rebuilding local communities, thus preventing violence towards other people and the environment, introduction of fair trade through out NZ and to increase health care standards by addressing the underlying causes of illness.¹¹ In my opinion the Green party will definitely be apparent at the next election, with the major reason the public's growing concern over climate change and environmental issues.

The Maori party is a very young party in New Zealand politics and their core ideologies originate from the values that provide well being of all. The party want a constant state of refinement and enrichment for everyone.¹² The core policies of the Maori party are based around the hopes of the 'tangata whenua to achieve self-determination for whanau, hapu and iwi'¹³ within their area. The Maori party believe

¹¹ www.greens.org.nz

¹² www.maoriparty.com

¹³ www.maoriparty.com

in free education from pre-school to tertiary. The party also believe good health care is a right, not a privilege and should be free from under 6 years and over 60 years. The Maori party's recent emergence has meant that the party is still in the forming stages; however it is gaining growing support and will be around in the next election.

New Zealand First was formed in the early 1990's to cater to the needs of New Zealanders concerned about the social and economic direction of our country. The party also catered to the growing concerns of selling of public assets to foreign control and the decline of employment and social services.¹⁴ New Zealand First's core policies include, putting New Zealanders first, cuts on taxation, the proposal that social welfare must only be used to assist people becoming independent from the state and decrease government involvement. I believe New Zealand First has a strong voter base, especially in the elderly population. With our mean age getting older, I believe New Zealand First will be around into and past the next election.

Finally, the Act party is considered to be 'neo-liberal.' The party is based on the core ideologies of personal responsibility, choice and freedom.¹⁵ Act is based on the belief that people are capable of running their own lives without too much state interference and thinks the true job of the Government is to 'protect freedoms, not assume responsibility.'¹⁶ The party's core policies are very similar to many other parties and again revolve around the fundamental and Act believes that education is the key to societal advancement. Act believes that tertiary education should be available to all

¹⁴ www.nzfirst.org.nz

¹⁵ www.act.org.nz

¹⁶ www.act.org.nz

people regardless of race, both public and private institutions. Act believes also believes in the abolishment of school zoning. Act's policies around health care include utilising both public and private health systems to deliver the best results to New Zealanders. The party appears ruthless when discussing welfare, as they believe anyone who can work should work. Act has taken a significant drop in representation over the years and is now down to 2 Members of Parliament. However, it does have a strong, loyal group of voters, and now under MMP, should be around for the next election.

In conclusion, there is much variation between the significant parties in New Zealand politics today, each with their own specific ideologies and policies. In a time of a changing society, parties must be prepared to change with the times and incorporate appropriate policy to cater to the needs of New Zealanders. One example of this is the climate change debate; parties need to be aware of what New Zealand needs. In my opinion all the parties discussed in this report will be in the next election, as they each in their own ways which has been built from their ideologies, are capable of being represented in the House.