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ADVERTISING AND THE MARKET ORIENTATION OF POLITICAL  
PARTIES CONTESTING THE 1999 AND 2002 NEW ZEALAND  
GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

A THESIS PRESENTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes an alternative way of establishing a link between market orientation and electoral success, by focusing on market orientation as a *message* instead of as a management function. Using interpretive textual analysis the thesis examines the advertising messages of the highest polling political parties for evidence of voter orientation and competitor orientation in the 1999 and 2002 New Zealand general election campaigns. Relating manifest market orientation to a number of statistical indicators of electoral success the thesis looks for plausible associations between the visual manifestation of market orientation in political advertisements and parties' achievement of their party vote goals in the 1999 and 2002 elections. It offers party-focused explanations for electoral outcomes to complement existing voter-centric explanations, and adds another level of scholarly understanding of recent electoral outcomes in New Zealand.

While the thesis finds little association between demonstration of *competitor orientation* in political advertisements and electoral success, it finds a plausible relationship between parties that demonstrated a *voter orientation* in their political advertisements and goal achievement. The parties that achieved their party vote goals in 1999 and 2002 tended to demonstrate an affinity for their target voter groups by showing images of voters and their environments and images of party leaders interacting with voters. They demonstrated concern for the satisfaction of the needs of existing voters by using words of togetherness and proving they had met their previous promises. They did not change their policy or leadership messages dramatically between campaigns. There was a visual consistency to their television, print and billboard advertising messages which rendered the messages easy to recognise and remember. They were clear about what they were offering in exchange for the party vote and recognised the need to offer something in addition to previous offerings in order to attract new voters.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Terms and Abbreviations	v
List of Images, Tables and Figures	vi
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Political Marketing	3
1.2 Market Orientation and Political Communication	14
1.3 New Zealand Context	22
1.4 Summary and Research Aims	25
2. DECODING ADVERTISEMENTS	27
2.1 Data Collection	27
2.2 Interpretive Textual Analysis	30
2.3 Visual Criteria	34
3. 1999 CAMPAIGN	40
3.1 National 1999	40
3.2 Labour 1999	68
3.3 New Zealand First 1999	92
3.4 The Alliance 1999	107
3.5 ACT 1999	121
3.6 The Greens 1999	136
3.7 United New Zealand 1999	148
4. 2002 CAMPAIGN	161
3.1 Labour 2002	164
3.2 National 2002	185
3.3 The Alliance 2002	208
3.4 ACT 2002	220
3.5 The Greens 2002	236
3.6 New Zealand First 2002	254
3.7 United Future 2002	266
5. CONCLUSION	277
5.1 Advertising and Electoral Outcomes	279
5.2 Theoretical Contribution	281
5.3 Applied Contribution	285
Bibliography	287

## LIST OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

9/11	September 11, 2001, when New York City's Twin Towers were destroyed by Al Qaeda terrorists.
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation.
FPP	First Past the Post electoral system.
GE	Genetic Engineering; the deliberate modification of the characteristics of an organism by manipulating its genetic material
Gestalt	An organised whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional electoral system.
MP	Member of Parliament.
NZES	New Zealand Election Study.
Sans Serif	A form of type without serifs, the slight projections which finish off each stroke of a letter; e.g., T.
Serif	A form of type with slight projections which finish off each stroke of a letter; e.g., T.
Still	A single image captured from a moving image sequence.
TVNZ	Television New Zealand.
URL	Uniform (or universal) resource locator, the address of a World Wide Web page.
US	United States.
UK	United Kingdom.
V/O	Voice over; narration in an advertisement not accompanied by a picture of the speaker.

## LIST OF IMAGES, TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1.1	p. 16	NZES respondents viewing televised advertising and news in the 2002 campaign.
Table 2.1	p. 39	Visual criteria used to identify market orientation.
Image 3.1.1	p. 42	Stills from National's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.1.2	p. 43	Stills from National's 1999 television commercials.
Image 3.1.3	p. 43	Still from National's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.1.4	p. 44	Stills from National's 1999 television commercial featuring Treasurer, Bill English.
Image 3.1.5	p. 45	Stills from National's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.1.6	p. 45	Still from National's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.1.7	p. 46	National television commercial featuring Jenny Shipley, 1999.
Table 3.1	p. 47	Inclusive pronouns we/our per minute in 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.1.8	p. 48	Stills from National's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.1.9	p. 49	National party vote billboard, 1999.
Image 3.1.10	p. 50	Still from National's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.1.11	p. 51	National television commercial featuring Minister of Social Welfare Roger Sowry, 1999.
Image 3.1.12	P. 52	National television commercial featuring Deputy Prime Minister Wyatt Creech, 1999.
Image 3.1.13	p. 53	National television commercial featuring Prime Minister Jenny Shipley, 1999.
Image 3.1.14	p. 53	Stills from National's 1999 opening night address.
Table 3.2	p. 54	I-statements per minute in 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.1.15	p. 56	Stills from National's Creech and English television commercials, 1999.
Image 3.1.16	p. 57	National's commitment brochure, 1999.
Figure 3.1	p. 58	NZES tracking poll, 1999.
Image 3.1.17	p. 59	National newspaper advertisement, 1999.
Image 3.1.18	p. 59	National billboard, 1999.
Image 3.1.19	p. 60	National billboard, 1999.
Image 3.1.20	p. 61	National's 1999 postcard attacking the Greens.
Image 3.1.21	p. 62	National newspaper advertisement, 1999.
Image 3.1.22	p. 63	National Tax television commercial, 1999.
Image 3.1.23	p. 63	National Stable Government television commercial, 1999.
Image 3.2.1	p. 69	Clark in the Park Labour television commercial, 1999.
Image 3.2.2	p. 70	Stills from Labour's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.2.3	p. 71	Stills from Labour's 1999 attack television commercial.
Image 3.2.4	p. 72	Still from Labour's 1999 opening night address.

Image 3.2.5	p. 73	Stills from Labour's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.2.6	p. 76	Labour's 1999 party vote billboard.
Image 3.2.7	p. 78	Labour policy brochure, 1999.
Image 3.2.8	p. 79	Labour's 1999 commitment card.
Table 3.3	p. 80	Commitment card equivalence to NZ Values Study.
Image 3.2.9	p. 81	Stills from Labour's 1999 Future television commercial.
Image 3.2.10	p. 82	Labour Party vote billboard, 1999.
Image 3.2.11	p. 85	Labour newspaper advertisement, 1999.
Image 3.2.12	p. 85	Close-up of Labour newspaper advertisement, 1999.
Image 3.2.13	p. 86	Labour newspaper advertisement, 1999.
Image 3.2.14	p. 88	Labour party vote billboard, 1999.
Image 3.2.15	p. 88	Labour newspaper advertisement published on the day before the 1999 election.
Image 3.3.1	p. 93	Stills from New Zealand First's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.3.1	p. 94	Stills from New Zealand First's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.3.3	p. 95	Stills from New Zealand First's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.3.4	p. 96	Stills from New Zealand First's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.3.5	p. 96	Stills from New Zealand First's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.3.6	p. 97	Still from New Zealand First's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.3.7	p. 98	Final frame from 1999 New Zealand First television commercial.
Image 3.3.8	p. 99	New Zealand First's party vote billboard, 1999.
Image 3.3.9	p. 101	Stills from New Zealand First television commercial, 1999.
Image 3.3.10	p. 102	Stills from New Zealand First television commercial, 1999.
Image 3.3.11	p. 103	New Zealand First billboard, 1999.
Image 3.4.1	p. 109	Alliance billboards, 1999.
Image 3.4.2	p. 110	Stills from Alliance closing night address, 1999.
Image 3.4.3	p. 110	Still from Alliance closing night address, 1999.
Table 3.4	p. 111	Party name mentioned per minute in 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.4.4	p. 112	Stills from Alliance television commercial, 1999.
Image 3.4.5	p. 113	Alliance party vote billboard, 1999.
Image 3.4.6	p. 114	Alliance brochure, 1999.
Image 3.4.7	p. 115	Alliance billboard promoting its Kiwi Bank policy, 1999.
Image 3.4.8	p. 116	Stills from Alliance 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.4.9	p. 116	Alliance street signage, 1999.
Image 3.4.10	p. 117	Alliance's newspaper advertisement published the day before the 1999 election.
Image 3.5.1	p. 123	Stills from ACT's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.5.2	p. 123	Stills from ACT's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.5.3	p. 124	Stills from ACT's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.5.4	p. 134	Stills from ACT's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.5.5	p. 125	Stills from ACT's 1999 opening night address.



Image 3.5.6	p. 126	Stills from ACT's Treaty television commercial, 1999.
Image 3.5.7	p. 127	ACT Treaty policy print advertisement, 1999.
Image 3.5.8	p. 127	Still from ACT's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.5.9	p. 128	Stills from ACT's 1999 Law and Order television commercial.
Image 3.5.10	p. 129	ACT billboard, 1999.
Image 3.5.11	p. 130	Stills from ACT's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.5.12	p. 131	ACT Treaty newspaper advertisement, 1999.
Image 3.5.13	p. 132	Still from ACT television commercial, 1999.
Image 3.6.1	p. 137	Stills from Green's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.6.2	p. 138	Stills from Green's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.6.3	p. 139	Stills from Green's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.6.4	p. 139	Green newspaper advertisement, 1999.
Image 3.6.5	p. 140	Green newspaper advertisement, 1999.
Image 3.6.6	p. 140	Rod Donald in Green opening night address, 1999.
Image 3.6.7	p. 141	Stills from Green's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.6.8	p. 142	Green billboard, 1999.
Image 3.6.9	p. 143	Stills from Green 1999 television commercial.
Image 3.6.10	p. 145	The <i>Local News</i> , 1999.
Image 3.6.11	p. 146	Green newspaper advertisement published the day before the 1999 election.
Image 3.7.1	p. 150	Stills from United New Zealand's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.7.2	p. 150	Stills from United New Zealand's 1999 opening night address.
Image 3.7.3	p. 153	Stills from United New Zealand's 1999 closing night address.
Image 3.7.4	p. 153	Stills from United New Zealand television commercial, 1999.
Image 3.7.5	p. 155	United New Zealand newspaper advertisement, 1999.
Image 3.7.6	p. 156	Stills from Future New Zealand television commercial, 1999.
Image 3.7.7	p. 157	Future New Zealand brochure, 1999.
Image 3.7.8	p. 157	Future New Zealand newspaper advertisement, 1999.
Image 4.1.1	p. 166	Stills from Labour's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.1.2	p. 166	Still from Labour television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.1.3	p. 168	Stills from Labour's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.1.4	p. 168	Stills from Labour's 2002 opening night address.
Table 4.1	p. 169	Inclusive pronouns we/our per minute in 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.1.5	p. 170	Stills from Labour's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.1.6	p. 172	Stills from Labour's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.1.7	p. 173	Stills from Labour television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.1.8	p. 173	Labour's 2002 commitment card.
Image 4.1.9	p. 174	Labour's 2002 policy brochure.
Image 4.1.10	p. 175	Labour's 2002 party vote billboard.
Image 4.1.11	p. 176	Labour's images of Helen Clark in 1999 (left) and 2002 (right).
Image 4.1.12	p. 176	Labour newspaper advertisement, 2002.
Image 4.1.13	p. 178	Stills from Labour's law and order television commercial, 2002.

Figure 4.1	p. 179	NZES tracking poll, 2002.
Image 4.1.14	p. 180	Labour newspaper advertisement, 2002.
Image 4.1.15	p. 180	Stills from Labour's 2002 attack television commercial.
Image 4.2.1	p. 186	Stills from National's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.2.2	p. 186	Stills from National's Education television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.2.3	p. 188	Still from National Small Business television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.2.4	p. 188	<i>National Times</i> cover, June 2005.
Image 4.2.5	p. 189	Still from National's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.2.6	p. 189	Stills from National Education television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.2.7	p. 190	Stills from National Education television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.2.8	p. 191	Stills from National's 2002 opening night address.
Table 4.2	p. 192	I-statements per minute in 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.2.9	p. 193	Stills from National's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.2.10	p. 194	Still from National's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.2.11	p. 195	<i>National Times</i> cover, May 2002.
Image 4.2.12	p. 196	Still from National Law and Order television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.2.13	p. 197	National party vote billboard, 2002.
Image 4.2.14	p. 197	National newspaper advertisement, 2002.
Image 4.2.15	p. 199	Still from National Economic Growth television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.2.16	p. 200	End visual National television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.2.17	p. 200	End visual, Labour television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.2.18	p. 202	National Treaty newspaper advertisement, 2002.
Image 4.2.19	p. 203	Stills from National's 'I Believe' television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.2.10	p. 204	National newspaper advertisement, last week of 2002 campaign.
Image 4.3.1	p. 209	Alliance party vote brochure, 2002.
Image 4.3.2	p. 210	Stills from Alliance 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.3.3	p. 211	Stills from Alliance 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.3.4	p. 212	Alliance party vote billboard, 2002.
Image 4.3.5	p. 213	Stills from Alliance Education television commercial, 2002.
Table 4.3	p. 213	Party name mentioned per minute in 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.3.6	p. 214	Stills from Alliance 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.3.7	p. 215	Progressive Coalition newspaper advertisement, 2002.
Image 4.3.8	p. 217	Alliance newspaper advertisement, 2002.
Image 4.4.1	p. 221	Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.4.2	p. 221	Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.4.3	p. 222	Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.4.4	p. 222	Stills from ACT Tax Cut television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.4.5	p. 223	Stills from ACT Zero Tolerance For Crime television commercial, 2002.

Image 4.4.6	p. 224	Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.4.7	p. 224	Still from ACT's 2002 opening night address (left); ACT billboard (right).
Image 4.4.8	p. 225	Stills from ACT One Law for All television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.4.9	p. 225	Stills from ACT's 2002 closing night address.
Image 4.4.10	p. 226	Still from ACT's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.4.11	p. 227	Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.4.12	p. 228	Still from ACT's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.4.13	p. 229	Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.4.14	p. 229	Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.4.15	p. 230	Stills from ACT party vote television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.4.16	p. 231	Selection of ACT billboards, 2002.
Image 4.5.1	p. 237	Green newspaper advertisement, May 2002.
Image 4.5.2	p. 239	Green newspaper advertisements, 2002.
Image 4.5.3	p. 239	Stills from Greens' 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.5.4	p. 240	Close-up of Greens' 2002 typography.
Image 4.5.5	p. 241	Green posters featuring Nandor Tanczos, 2002.
Image 4.5.6	p. 242	Still from Greens' 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.5.7	p. 242	Stills from Greens' 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.5.8	p. 243	Green party vote billboard, 2002.
Image 4.5.9	p. 243	Green party vote billboard, 2002.
Image 4.5.10	p. 244	Stills from Greens' 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.5.11	p. 245	Green Team billboard, 2002.
Image 4.5.12	p. 246	Stills from Greens' 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.5.13	p. 247	Green newspaper advertisement, 2002.
Image 4.5.14	p. 248	Stills from Greens' GE television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.5.15	p. 248	Stills from Greens' GE television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.5.16	p. 249	Still from Greens' 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.6.1	p. 255	Stills from New Zealand First's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.6.2	p. 256	Stills from New Zealand First's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.6.3	p. 257	Stills from New Zealand First's 2002 opening night address.
Image 4.6.4	p. 259	Stills from New Zealand First Treaty television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.6.5	p. 260	Stills from New Zealand First Law and Order television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.6.6	p. 260	Stills from New Zealand First Immigration television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.6.7	p. 261	New Zealand First newspaper advertisement, 2002.
Image 4.6.8	p. 262	New Zealand First party vote billboard, 2002.
Image 4.6.9	p. 262	Alfred Leete poster (left); Winston Churchill (right).
Image 4.7.1	p. 267	United Future brochure, 2002.
Image 4.7.2	p. 268	United Future brochure, 2002.
Image 4.7.3	p. 269	Still from United Future's 2002 opening night address.

Image 4.7.4	p. 270	Stills from United Future television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.7.5	p. 271	United Future newspaper advertisement, 2002.
Image 4.7.6	p. 272	Stills from United Future television commercial, 2002.
Image 4.7.7	p. 273	United Future brochure, 2002.
Table 2.1 (rep)	p. 278	Visual criteria used to identify market orientation.

This thesis examines the 1999 and 2002 New Zealand election campaigns through a political marketing lens. The term *political marketing* is multifaceted. It describes the application of commercial marketing principles and processes to contemporary political campaigns. It is also a term that covers academic enquiry into such application. What sets political marketing aside from earlier views of political campaigning (in which the role of parties in election campaigns is to sell policies to voters), as well as other approaches to the study of election outcomes (which are focused on the behaviour and opinions of voters), is its focus on political parties' and candidates' strategic concern with, and sensitivity to, the satisfaction of the needs of voters; in other words, their market orientation. The fundamental assumption underlying political marketing is that a party or candidate with a market orientation is likely to achieve enhanced electoral performance.

The focus of this thesis is in line with an increasing international interest in what might be termed as "supply-side" approaches to understanding electoral outcomes; that is, concerned with party rather than voter behaviour. This is a new way of approaching the study of elections in New Zealand which, for most of the last forty years, has been directed towards the examination of voter responses to campaign events, policies and leaders. During this time parties have used communication and promotion techniques such as advertising to persuade and mobilise voters (see, for example, Donnelly, 2000, 2003; Faehrmann, 2003; Frazer & Zangouropoulos, 1997; Grafton, 2003; McCarten, 2000; Thomas & Stephenson, 2000; Stonyer, 1997, 2000, 2003; Williams, 2000, 2003). But the phenomenon has not been studied in any depth by scholars who, for much of this time, believed party-controlled campaign efforts had minimal influence on voters. More recently, in line with increased international interest in campaign effects, New Zealand scholars have acknowledged many of these techniques to be of growing importance in an increasingly competitive and volatile electoral environment.

The most common response of New Zealand scholars to campaign communication has been to document party communication responses to the new competitive situation brought about by MMP; for example, by collecting campaign pamphlets (Cousins

& McLeay, 1997; Pearse, 2000); photographing party billboards (Roberts, 2000; 2003); counting money spent on advertising (Denemark, 1998); and describing the content of the campaign on television (Atkinson, 2004; Church, 2000; 2004); in newspapers (Hayward & Rudd, 2004; Sharp, 2004); in party manifestoes (Gibbons, 2004); and of party websites (Barker, 2004). While all these studies are significant for their acknowledgement of the importance of campaign communications, none of them has examined the campaign material within any theoretical framework linking party behaviour or strategy with electoral outcomes. The majority of scholarly resources devoted to electoral outcomes in New Zealand, like the New Zealand Election Study (NZES) and the New Zealand Political Change Project are still primarily focused on the impact of voter opinions, rather than the impact of political party behaviour (Levine & Roberts, 1997, 2000, 2003b; Vowles, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2004a, 2004b).

The lack of scholarly attention to party-generated explanations for electoral outcomes is not altogether surprising – New Zealand political science has a long tradition of scholarship in the area of voter-generated explanations, influenced by three main theoretical approaches: sociological theories that see voters' party preferences originating in the social groups to which they belong; psychological theories that see voters' party preferences as a result of individual and family influences; and economic theories that see voters' economic self-interest as the motivating factor underlying a voting decision (Vowles, 2003b). These theories, reinforced by quantifiable, testable, and internationally comparable voter surveys, have been used to explain New Zealand election outcomes over much of the past forty years (Holland, 1992).

In the view of Jack Vowles (2003b), lead scholar behind the NZES, these three approaches may no longer be sufficient to explain electoral outcomes in contemporary campaigns:

In an era of voter volatility, the three traditional theories of voting behaviour are increasingly under challenge. Political parties and those who are hired to market their wares now seek to shape the behaviour of voters by the use of increasingly sophisticated techniques. To remain relevant, the study of voting behaviour needs to focus with increasing concentration on how effective such strategies may be (p. 198).

However, even the NZES has yet to make the adjustment. It has identified certain points at which parties' fortunes changed during the 1999 and 2002 campaigns, and related them to news media coverage of events on television (reported in Atkinson,

2003, 2004; Banducci & Karp, 2004; Banducci & Vowles, 2002). Party-controlled strategies, messages or activities, however, have not been counted as significant television events and have received no analysis.

The privileging of news-mediated influences over party-controlled influences reflects the dominance, both in New Zealand and internationally, of agenda-setting theory which proposes that media audiences rely on and accept guidance from the news media in determining what information is important and worthy of attention (Graber, 1984; Gronbeck, 1990; Hope, 2003) and evidence (internationally and in New Zealand) which has confirmed a close correspondence between the issues covered in the news media and the issues mentioned as important by voters (Banducci & Vowles, 2002; de Vreese, 2004; Joslyn, 1990; Kim, 2004; Schleuder, McCombs, Wanta, 1991).

The emphasis on the media's role in agenda-setting does not preclude there being party-controlled influences on voters during the campaign, however. Enter political marketing, a relatively new field drawing influence from marketing, political communications and political science, with models that acknowledge party-controlled behaviours and strategies as key factors affecting electoral success.

### 1.1: POLITICAL MARKETING

*Political marketing* is an umbrella term that covers a number of concepts, including the practice of marketing engaged in by politicians, political parties and their advisors; the theory informing that practice; and the academic field which has that theory and practice as its primary focus. The academic field of political marketing is primarily centred in Western Europe and North America (although two key British scholars, Phil Harris and Jennifer Lees-Marshment, have recently moved to New Zealand). It has generated a handful of scholarly publications; it holds regular conferences; and since 2002 has its own scholarly journal, the *Journal of Political Marketing*. Although a number of New Zealand scholars and commentators have an interest in political marketing as a phenomenon, it has yet to make its presence felt as a field of study in this country.

As a discipline political marketing has both a descriptive and prescriptive focus. It may be prescriptive in its recommendation of models for the implementation of more efficient and effective strategies to enable parties and candidates to achieve their goals. Its descriptive focus is on the role political marketing plays in affecting election outcomes; offering a new perspective for interpreting elections beyond that

gained by other forms of political science (O’Cass, 2001a; O’Shaughnessy, 2002). Political marketing differs from political science’s focus on voter behaviour – a political marketing perspective would see this as the consumer side of the market – by being more concerned with the distribution side of a market: the strategic behaviour of parties and candidates in campaigns and the adoption and application to their operations of commercial marketing concepts, strategies and techniques.

### **Changes in Voter Behaviour**

The rise of political marketing can be seen in the context of changes in voter behaviour in many western democracies, including New Zealand, in the late twentieth century. For much of the last century voters in western democracies were largely committed to a party or ideological stance; they tended to vote according to class, geographical, religious, ethnic, or generational allegiances. Voter turnout at elections was consistently high. Most voters did not alter their votes significantly between elections and made their electoral choices well before the commencement of a campaign (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes, 1964; Klapper, 1960 cited in Gronbeck, 1990; Harrop & Miller, 1987; Robinson, 1970).

By the end of the twentieth century the strong attachment voters had to political parties had substantially broken down in most western countries as the influence of institutions that previously structured meaning, identity and political preference, such as political parties, the nuclear family, mainstream religion, neighbourhood, ethnic and social-class groupings, began to diminish. At the same time, globalisation and changes in media markets heralded a proliferation of products, services, brands, experiences and communication channels all competing for the attention of voters outside of the political sphere. People’s needs, identity and feelings of worth were increasingly met through the consumption of products and services. As the global economy increased in size and worth as a result of greater product and service competition and consumption, western democracies faced declining levels of party identification, party membership and loyalty, low levels of interest in politics, declining participation rates at elections and increasing volatility in voting patterns (Banducci & Karp, 2004; Blumler, 2001; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Dermody & Scullion, 2001; Holtz-Bacha, 2002; Jackson, 2003; McAllister, 2002; Norris, 2000, 2002b; O’Cass, 2001a; Palmer, 2002; Vowles, 1997, 2001, 2003).

Scholars observing the behaviour of political parties and candidates internationally noticed changes in the way political actors interacted with voters in this volatile electoral environment. In particular, they observed political parties and candidates



increasingly applying commercial marketing concepts, strategies and techniques to achieve their electoral goals. For example, scholars tracking the application of commercial marketing techniques in electoral campaigning found it assisted the electoral successes of Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative party in the UK in the 1980s (Scammell, 1995); Bill Clinton in the 1992 and 1996 US Presidential campaigns (Ingram & Lees-Marshment, 2001; Newman, 1999), Tony Blair and the 'New' Labour Party in Britain in 1997 and 2001 (Bartle, 2002; Ingram & Lees-Marshment, 2002; Scammell, 1999); Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia in Italy in 1994 (Axford & Huggins, 2002); and Gerhard Schröder's Social Democrats in Germany in 1998 (Bergmann & Wickert, 1999; Holtz-Bacha, 2002; Schweiger & Adami, 1999).

### **The Marketing Concept**

Why focus on commercial marketing concepts, strategies and techniques? Because in contemporary commercial industries that are highly competitive, the adoption and implementation of the marketing concept has been considered integral to goal achievement and enhanced business performance. The *marketing concept* is a business management philosophy based on a company-wide acceptance of the need for customer and competitor orientation, and a coordinated response to customer need (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990; Kotler, 2003).

This is quite a shift from traditional business thinking, which relied on a more product-centred philosophy that was primarily concerned with manufacturing and then selling a product or service to as many customers as possible. Demand for a product or service was, it was thought, something that could be created. Failure of a product or service to sell was seen largely as an advertising or promotions problem, rather than because the product failed to meet the needs of customers (Hall, 1980; Kotler, 2003; Klein, 2001; Schmitt, 1999).

In the more contemporary customer-centred approach, customer needs come at the beginning of the production-consumption cycle and business profitability hinges on a company being more effective than its competitors in identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer needs, wants and desires on both a short- and long-term basis. In a competitive market buyers are able to choose between multiple different offerings (goods, services and experiences) on the basis of which is perceived to deliver the most value, generally considered to be a combination of quality, service and price. The process of obtaining a desired product from someone by offering something in return is defined by the term *exchange* (Kotler, 2003).

A political marketing perspective sees similarities between electoral and commercial environments in that an exchange takes place when a voter, increasingly referred to in the literature as a political consumer (Lees-Marshment, 2004), casts their vote, gives their opinion, time or financial support, for the party or candidate that will offer the most value and best meet their needs through an amalgamation of elements, like leadership, expertise, reputation, stability, organisation and policies (Dermody & Scullion, 2001; Kotler & Kotler, 1999; Lees-Marshment, 2004; O’Cass, 1996; Palmer, 2002).

Political marketing scholars consider that adoption and implementation of the marketing concept may bring a number of advantages to parties and voters in a competitive and volatile electoral environment, including the effective meeting of diverse voter needs; and the efficient use of resources engaged in the business of campaigning and, later, governance (Ingram & Lees-Marshment, 2002; Kotler & Kotler, 1999; Lees-Marshment, 2001; O’Cass, 2001a; O’Shaughnessy & Henneberg, 2002; Scammell, 1995; 1999).

But what is really new or different about political marketing? After all, political parties have always had a degree of voter-centredness. Through electorate organisations, party conferences, volunteers, party workers and members of parliament, parties have maintained connections with their constituencies. Indeed, this is the very basis of the idea of electorate representation that is central to most western democratic electoral systems. However, there are differences. Traditionally political parties have tended to maintain these links with constituents but still be more product- than market-oriented, promoting policies informed by a set of firmly held ideological beliefs or principles (Bennett & Entman, 2001; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Harrop & Miller, 1987; Kline, 1997; McNair, 1999; Postman, 1987; Richardson, 2003; Robinson, 1970; Wernick, 1991). Political marketing scholar Jennifer Lees-Marshment (2001) has labeled these parties *product-oriented* parties. They often blame their own electoral failure not on the content of their policies or the party’s values or beliefs, but on their inability to promote their policies sufficiently well in their advertising or failure to persuade the news media to focus on their agenda (Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Kotler, 2003; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Nimmo & Swanson, 1990).

According to Lees-Marshment (2001), a major difference between a product-oriented and market-oriented party is that the latter “does not attempt to change what people think, but to deliver what they need and want” (p. 696). Political marketing scholar Darren Lilleker (2004) adds, “the political consumer will not believe their leaders just because they lead; like the customer in the shopping mall, they expect to be

listened to”. It is thus the identification and satisfaction of voter needs, rather than persuasion, that becomes the primary mission of a market-oriented party in an election campaign. And it is no longer ideology alone that differentiates parties from one another in a competitive electoral environment. The strategic response of parties to their supporters and their competition is another important factor (Collins & Butler, 1996; 2002; Scammell, 1999).

### **Strategic Behaviour**

The following section discusses the strategic behaviours associated with a market-oriented political party, drawing from the commercial and political marketing literature. This section is structured in accordance with the three behavioural components of market orientation identified by seminal American scholars Narver and Slater’s definition of commercial market orientation—customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination (1990).

### ***Customer/Voter Orientation***

According to Narver and Slater (1990), “customer orientation is the sufficient understanding of one’s target buyers to be able to create superior value for them continuously” (p. 21). A party or candidate with a market orientation can therefore be expected to tailor its offering(s) to the needs of groups of target voters. These groups of voters will be defined, and the mix of voter segments that parties may realistically target in order to achieve a majority, or in New Zealand’s case the highest proportion of the party vote, determined.

There is nothing new in parties representing segments of the electorate. In line with rational choice theory, which is primarily focused on the economic self-interest of voters (Downs, 1957), political parties have always identified with groups of voters with similar economic interests. In New Zealand, for example, the Labour Party has traditionally represented the interests of workers and trade unions; the National Party, business and farming interests. However, in a marketing environment target voter groups need no longer be simply differentiated on the basis of traditional socio-economic groupings, religious or trade union affiliation, demographic profiles or geography. In commercial marketing, psychographic profiling has become a feature of target group segmentation; that is, segmentation of consumers into different groups on the basis of lifestyle, personality, attitudes, aspirations, opinions, interests and activities. A political marketing perspective understands that voters’ needs may be rational in an economic sense, but may also be emotional, aspirational or lifestyle

(Bartle & Griffiths, 2002; Dermody & Scullion, 2001). It requires that politicians must listen to and understand voters, about what moves and motivates them both rationally and emotionally, and then deliver policies, messages, and behaviours that will satisfy those needs at a profit to both voter and party (Kotler & Kotler, 1999; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Scammell, 1999).

A market orientation also requires parties to be in permanent campaign mode; that is, campaigning unofficially for office as soon as the previous election has been held. The most obvious manifestation of permanent campaigning is the constant use of opinion polling, focus groups, and MP visits to electorates as strategic devices to guide policy-making and presentation. It may also be manifest in advertising and publicity campaigns conducted by parties at regular intervals throughout a parliamentary term in order to reassure core supporters that they have chosen well and can be confident their party is delivering.

In commercial marketing the process of establishment, maintenance and enhancement of long-term relationships with customers is referred to as *customer relations management* (Henneberg, 2002). Satisfied customers tend to be loyal customers. They buy more as a company introduces new products and upgrades existing products, talk favourably about a company and its products, and pay less attention to competing brands. They are also expected to be less sensitive to price (Kotler 2003).

In politics too there are long-term benefits in having satisfied voters, like satisfied customers, over and above short term electoral success. Satisfied voters may be expected to stay loyal to a party longer, be open to new policies, talk favourably to friends and family about a party and its policies, pay less attention to competing parties' offerings, willingly provide information about needs, values and aspirations and will be easier to contact. Parties with a market orientation will therefore recognise the need to use political marketing in the creation, promotion and delivery of broader aspects of a political party's offering, over and above a single election campaign in order to avoid core-voter alienation (Lees-Marshment, 2001).

A party or candidate with a political market orientation will also recognise the risks in neglect of their existing core supporters, or their internal market, by failing to deliver on their campaign promises to those voters. Core supporters may be defined as those voters that normally vote for a party. It is these voters the party needs to satisfy in order to guarantee their continued support. If the needs and expectations of these core voters are neglected, voter dissatisfaction follows, and "certain beneficial activities (votes, resources, donations) are withheld or shifted to other players (sometimes out of the electoral market)" (Henneberg, 2004, p. 230). The more remote from voters the

party becomes, the more effort and resources will need to be devoted to continuously finding new target voters, and a party's competitive strength may decline (Ingram & Lees-Marshment, 2002; Scammell, 2003).

### ***Competitor Orientation***

In any crowded market, be it commercial or political, products need to differentiate themselves from the competition in order to be noticed. The second strategic behaviour associated with a market-oriented party is therefore competitor orientation. According to Narver and Slater (1990) "competitor orientation means that a seller understands the short-term strengths and weaknesses and long term capabilities of both the key current and the key potential competitors" (p. 22). Commercial marketing scholars Kohli and Jaworski (1990) have found stronger relationships between a market orientation and enhanced business performance when the competition is stronger.

Parties with a market orientation need to identify and assess the strengths and weakness of all the actual and potential rival offerings and substitutes that a voter might consider to satisfy their needs, and position themselves accordingly. In addition, market-oriented parties need a strategic understanding of the wider commercial market because voters' identity, aspirational and lifestyle needs are often better served by the commercial market through the process of consumption. A party or candidate with a market orientation should provide value to voters by offering more benefits in some or all of these areas than the competition, as well as additional benefits to the ones offered in the previous election. Voters are then able to make their choice based on whichever offer gives them most value.

In the commercial market firms can be classified by the roles they play in the target market. Four well established typologies for this are: market leader, market challenger, market follower, and market nicher (Kotler, 1994; 2003; Porter, 1980; 1985, referred to in Butler & Collins, 1996). Examining these typologies in relation to recent European elections, Irish marketing scholars Neil Collins and Patrick Butler (2002) found that market-oriented parties engaged in the same competitive strategies employed by firms in analogous market positions. They concluded that parties, regardless of name or ideology, faced similar strategic decisions depending upon their market position.

Applying Kotler's (1994) definitions of commercial market position to the political market, Collins and Butler have suggested that a *market leader* party will be faced with three strategic options: to expand the total market (create more voters), expand their market share further (by attacking smaller and more vulnerable rivals) or defend their

market share (the least risky option.) By virtue of their leadership position they will be subject to continuous attack and will need to engage in defensive strategies, like reinforcing the party's existing image among its supporters. The most constructive response to terrain defence by market leaders is thought to be continuous innovation – the development of new products and services in order to increase competitive strength and value to customers (Kotler, 2003).

Collins and Butler propose that a *challenger* party, one that has chosen to attempt to depose the leader while not necessarily being the next biggest party, will have attack as its basic strategic objective. This could take the form of either direct attack on the market leader, attack on competitors of its own size or attack on small and regional competitors. The challenger must have a competitive advantage that can be sustained throughout a campaign and must be able to neutralise the leader's other advantages.

*Followers*, assert Collins and Butler, are parties with a stable base of committed supporters, whose strategy is to maintain and protect their electoral share rather than challenging for the leadership. They slipstream behind the market leader, are careful not to change their core product too radically, and avoid alienating large numbers of traditional voters. They may receive rewards of office, like cabinet appointments, for not challenging a challenger or leader.

Finally *nichers*, according to Collins and Butler, are parties that opt to lead in a small well defined market rather than play follower. Highly focused product-positioning is central to their campaign efforts as they seek to create, expand and defend their niches. The main danger they face in a competitive environment is that the niche might disappear or be taken over by a larger, more resourceful party determined to succeed.

Later this thesis reports on the application of the typologies to the competitive positioning of New Zealand political parties in the 1999 and 2002 campaigns, and assesses the utility of the competitive positioning typologies as a model for analysing election outcomes.

### ***Interfunctional Coordination***

The third strategic behaviour associated with a market-oriented party is *interfunctional coordination*. This is “the coordinated utilization of company resources in creating superior value for target customers” (Narver & Slater, 1990, p. 22) and involves the whole organisation in the generation, dissemination, and responsiveness to market

intelligence (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990, p. 3). Narver and Slater are quick to point out that “creating value for buyers is much more than a ‘marketing function’” (p.22); that is, not simply the function of the marketing department alone. It needs to be the focus of the entire business.

A number of political marketing scholars have produced models which are similar to organisation-wide marketing models – prescribing processes in which all aspects of party behaviour are coordinated and geared to customer satisfaction. Jennifer Lees-Marshment’s (2001, 2004) model of a market-oriented party, for example, takes account of the whole behaviour of an organisation. She argues that a political party should not simply use marketing to sell its product, but in the design of that product, and she expects that a market-oriented party would go through a multistage marketing process including

- Market intelligence (identifying the market, understanding its demands and behaviour, segmenting the market)
- Product design (in response to market intelligence)
- Product refinement or adjustment (ensuring it is achievable, adjusting to suit internal/individual opinion, taking account of the competition and targeting)
- Implementation (managing marketing - ensuring it is accepted and there is unity and it actually happens)
- Long term, continual communication
- Short-term campaigns
- Delivery.

Similarly Kotler and Kotler’s (1999) and Baines, Harris, and Lewis’ (2002) models move through environmental research, internal and external assessment analysis, strategic marketing, goal setting and campaign strategy, communication, distribution and organisation plan, key markets and outcomes.

### **Causal Link?**

One of the questions that the field of political marketing has yet to answer is whether there is a causal link between market orientation and electoral success. Despite it being asserted that to win elections, parties need to become market-oriented (Lees-Marshment, 2001), a causal connection between market orientation and election

success has not been made. In her 1999 critique of political marketing Margaret Scammell writes:

A marketing perspective can identify which party/candidate waged the more rational campaign. It can test campaigns against the various dimensions of marketing, from product development, positioning, market segmentation, targeting and promotion. It is possible also, through analysis of surveys and media content, to make some sort of assessment of campaign success in achieving targets. However, this falls short of causal explanations (p. 737).

As an example, while Tony Blair's New Labour Party was by many of the measures identified by scholars a market-oriented party (Ingram & Lees-Marshment, 2001), and this party has also had three electoral successes over the past eight years, an absolute connection between the party's market orientation and its electoral success has not been made.

This is not a problem unique to political marketing. Identifying a causal link between market orientation and business performance has challenged commercial marketing scholars for the last fifteen years or so as well. One of the main variables identified in the commercial marketing literature is that of external influences. Firms may behave with a market orientation but cannot control external influences like rate of technological change, rate of market growth, size of business in relation to its competition, ease of entry of new competitors into a market, the number of competitors in a market, the stage of development of the market, and the strength of the economy (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990; 1994).

Similar variables impact on election outcomes. No amount of market orientation can control the multitude of external events out of the immediate control of a political party, for example, the personal misdemeanours of members of parliament and unforeseen events such as accidents and scandals, as well as external influences on a nation's foreign policy, weather events and other natural disasters, the fall and rise of the dollar, the euro or the yen, and cultural shifts.

There seem to be internal influences that political parties find hard to control as well. Aron O'Cass's (2001a) study of political marketing in Australian political parties found that while party managers had a degree of understanding and a positive view of the value of political marketing at a philosophical level, especially in terms of the satisfaction of voter need, at an operational level there was less of a commitment; and that the will and mechanisms (like grass-roots organisational systems) to engage in a political marketing process were not always there. O'Cass (2001a) concludes:



The difficulty appears not so much in getting parties to accept the philosophy and practice, but instead overcoming the inertia bred of individual party culture - because creating a marketing community involves changing the fundamental way in which a party and members see themselves, their political environment and their future (p. 1023).

In addition to the inability to control external and internal influences, another reason for the inability to make a causal connection between market orientation and electoral success may be the actual focus of studies of market orientation. Underpinning much of the literature is the managerial assumption that the achievement of operational efficiencies leads to competitive and cost advantages. In political marketing scholarship this seems to have been translated as meaning the greater the utilisation of a marketing *process*, the more competitive the party, the better the electoral performance. Influenced by the commercial literature, which also states that the starting point of a market orientation is market intelligence (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990), political marketing scholars commonly assume that a political party's utilisation of a marketing process *prior* to the commencement of an election campaign is a good indicator of the extent to which that party is "infused" with a market orientation. O'Cass (2001a) argues that "studies of political marketing should examine the organisational or party processes and perspectives as a primary concern for the implementation of marketing" (p. 1008).

Not surprisingly then, in seeking to determine the extent to which parties have adopted the core idea of the marketing concept in constructing their overall strategies, much of the international literature is focused on the processes and practices engaged in by the parties contesting election campaigns, including the sophistication of the resources devoted to gathering market intelligence; the engagement of professional consultants; the segmentation of target audiences; and the design and implementation of a party or candidate's strategic response to market intelligence (Bannon, 2004; Kotler & Kotler, 1999; O'Cass, 2001a; 2001b; Moloney, Richards, Scullion & Daymon, 2003; Wring, 2002).

And yet the question remains: how can there be a causal connection between a *process* and electoral success? Scholars may conclude that a party or candidate with an efficient process is likely to wage the more effective campaign than one without. But to make a causal connection with election outcomes is a big stretch, for it is not efficiency in management that voters exchange their votes for, but something else. A focus on process or operational efficiency may not be the only way or even the right way of assessing whether a party has a market orientation, or explain its electoral

outcomes. This thesis proposes an alternative way for establishing a link between market orientation and electoral success which focuses on market orientation as a *message*. A party's offering to voters is manifest in its campaign message, and it is the message carried by forms of political communication that a substantial proportion of voters exchange their votes for.

## 1.2: MARKET ORIENTATION AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

In some ways, the focus on process has been a way for political marketing to differentiate itself from the discipline of political communications, which has a primary concern with the influence of forms of communication and channels of media on voter behaviour. There is reluctance within the political marketing discipline to privilege forms of communication, on the grounds that market orientation is so much more than an exercise in communication (Lees-Marshment, 2003; Scammell, 1999). Henneberg (2004) even claims that a focus on political communication instead of strategic aspects of political marketing management and other marketing instruments constitutes an "impoverishment" of political marketing research which can "endanger its development" (p. 235).

Scholars seem to be particularly nervous about singling out political advertising for analysis. For example, Dominic Wring (2002) writes:

Misinformed commentators sometimes inflate the importance of advertising, the most recognisable communications tool, to the extent that it is held to represent the entire marketing process (see, for instance, Tyler 1987). Such a mistake fails to appreciate the complexities of a complete strategy, not to mention other parts of the promotional mix (p. 177).

O'Shaughnessy and Henneberg (2002) also write:

Nor is marketing just advertising, even though less sophisticated organisations see it as this, and in politics it has often been regarded merely as a synonym for political advertising. Marketing fundamentally involves the integration of some total "offer" into an overall strategy, and political marketing has advanced beyond issue and image advertising and into strategy itself (although strategy also has evolved independently from other, historical sources) (p. xiii).

Political marketing scholars prefer not to believe that any form of communication is more important than the other. They regard each form of communication as a factor, not a focus, of the process of exchange; an operational rather than a strategic concern (Henneberg, 2004; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Scammell 1999).

The claim that marketing is so much more than advertising is not debated here. Nonetheless, this thesis claims that there is good reason to examine forms of political communication if seeking to establish a link between market orientation and election outcomes. This is because it is through forms of political communication that most voters interact with political parties. Furthermore, it is the message carried by forms of political communication that voters exchange their votes for. These points will be elaborated on below.

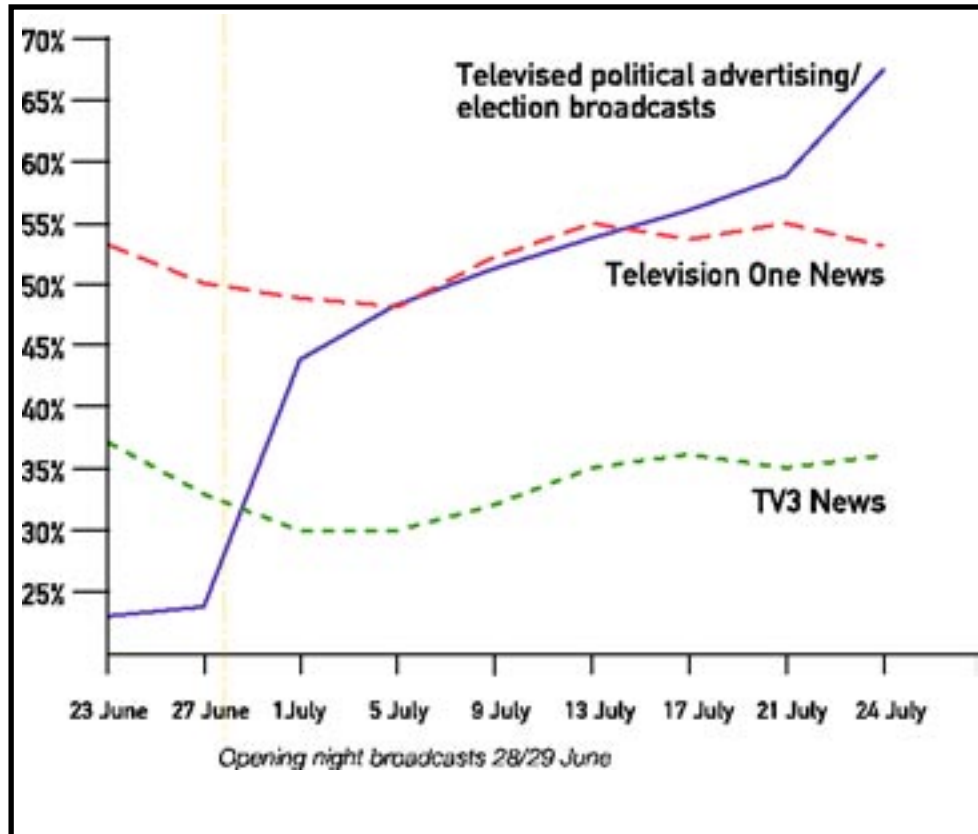
### **Voter Interaction**

Few voters meet politicians or party workers “in the flesh”. Instead, most voters’ interaction with political parties is through forms of political communication like television, radio and print advertising, manifestoes, web-sites, email, direct mail, mobile phone communications, posters, billboards, brochures, speeches, media releases, television debates, and media interviews (Banducci & Karp, 2003; Dermody & Scullion, 2001; Garecht, 2004; Harris, 2001; Henneberg, 2002; O, Shaughnessy, 2003; Scammell, 1995; 1999; Wring, 2002).

As an example, according to the NZES in the 2002 New Zealand general election campaign only seven per cent of voters were contacted by a political party through telephone calls or personal visits (Karp & Banducci, 2004, p. 107). Compare that to the number of respondents viewing controlled and uncontrolled messages on television. Figure 1.1 illustrates the percentage of NZES respondents viewing televised political advertising, TV One news and TV3 news either the previous night or the night before in the 2002 election campaign. The question on advertising viewing was included in the 2002 NZES at my request. Combining the TV One and TV3 figures and assuming that most viewers choose one channel for their news rather than watching both at the same time, for much of the campaign between 80 and 90 per cent of respondents would have seen at least some election news on television. Come the last week of the campaign more voters recalled seeing advertisements than television news on either of the previous two nights. This is not to claim that viewing of television news or political advertising has a behavioural effect on voters – the phenomenon of behavioural change is complex and is discussed below. However, the statistics are an indication of much greater voter interaction with political messages

contained in televised political advertising and channeled through television news than in the flesh communication.

Figure 1.1: NZES respondents viewing televised advertising and news in the 2002 campaign.



Source: Raw 2002 NZES data supplied by Jack Vowles.

### Communication Effects

In addition to the substantial numbers paying at least some attention to messages contained in forms of political communication during campaigns, a significant proportion of voters are open to the effects of these messages. These effects are generally categorised as *mobilisation* (motivating citizens to come out and vote), *reinforcement* (supporting an pre-existing partisan voting decision) and *conversion* (changing a vote preference). American political communication scholar John Zaller (1992) found that the key variables upon which the success of campaign communications depend are the political predispositions of voters (including lifetime experiences, political values and being on the receiving end of government policies)

and their degrees of political awareness. The greater a person's level of awareness, the more likely they are to receive campaign messages. However, with a greater level of political awareness also comes the ability to resist information that is inconsistent with their basic levels of partisanship. Zaller found that for communication to have any behavioural effects it needed to reach "low-awareness" voters; that is, people with little prior information; little access to alternative communication flows, and little contextual information to process the implications of a given issue for their values.

In addition to levels of awareness, recent studies have found time of voting decision to also impact on the effect of campaign messages. Voters who make their voting choices prior to the commencement of the campaign are more likely to be influenced by partisan identification, whereas voters who leave their voting decision until the election campaign are open to the range of campaign communication effects. Not all late deciders seem to have the same responses to campaign communications, however. Late-deciders with high levels of political awareness and exposure to the news media and previous partisan affiliations are most likely to have their ideological or party predispositions reinforced by campaign communications. Late deciders who have little general awareness of politics are less likely to be interested in elections, but they are more likely to change their partisan or issue preferences once exposed to information in a campaign (Herrnson & Patterson, 2000; Iyengar & Petrocik, 2000; Kavanagh, 1995; Lachat & Sciarini, 2002; McAllister, 2002; Schmitt-Beck & Farrell, 2002).

These late-deciding low-awareness voters are the voters most likely to invoke heuristics, or mental shortcuts, that enable them to reduce the time needed to process complex political information and make their voting decision without much effort. These heuristics are frequently found in forms of political communication like advertising messages, news stories, newspaper headlines, and billboard slogans (Edelman, 1964; Graber, 2003; Kunda, 1999; Henneberg, 2004; Lachat & Sciarini, 2002; Mutz, Sniderman & Brody, 1996; Norris & Sanders, 2003; Perloff, 2003; Schmitt-Beck & Farrell, 2002; Shea, 1996; Sniderman, Brody & Telock, 1991; Zaller, 1999).

Drawing from NZES data provided by Jack Vowles, I have calculated that in 2002 27.3 per cent of New Zealand voters could be categorised as late deciding with low levels of political interest; that is, voters with low or reasonably low levels of political knowledge who made their voting decision during the campaign. This represents over a quarter of voters in the 2002 New Zealand general election, which is a significant proportion of the electorate.

There is also British evidence that exposure to third party political advertising encourages more support for those parties. A 2002 study of the influence of party election broadcasting by C.J. Pattie and R.J. Johnston on voters' opinions in the 1997 British general election found that although a majority of British voters did not view party election broadcasts, those who viewed a Liberal Democrat broadcast became more likely to support that party. This included voters entering the campaign with a different voting intention. Even after controlling for intention to vote Liberal Democrat at the start of the campaign, those who reported seeing a Liberal Democrat party election broadcast mid-way through the campaign were three times more likely to vote for the party than those who did not see one. The influence of party election broadcasts was found to be much more pronounced for the Liberal Democrats than it was for the two major parties. The authors conclude that the Liberal Democrats benefited considerably from a greater than normal exposure to their messages through election broadcasting.

This is potentially significant in the New Zealand electoral context. Under both the First Past the Post (FPP) and Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral systems the third or minor party vote has represented the interests of a significant proportion of the electorate. In 1996 and 2002 around 38 per cent, and in 1999 30.7 per cent, of the party vote went to minor parties. Party messages are thus a potential influence on this significant group of New Zealand voters.

In summary, it is through forms of political communication that most voters interact with parties in election campaigns, and it is through the messages contained in these forms of communication that a significant proportion of voters potentially get their voting cues. This is a strong argument for the focus of a study of market orientation to be on forms of political communication. Furthermore, despite the concern of scholars that marketing is not advertising, advertising lends itself particularly well to a study of market orientation. Advertisements are potent constructions of political meaning (elaborated on below) and contain graphic evidence of a party's campaign offering.

### **Message Exchange**

A party's offering to voters is largely intangible. That is, it is a promise, a perception, a product with symbolic value but largely no practical value or inherent meaning (Palmer, 2002). Voters cannot take their political offerings out for a test-drive; they cannot look at and feel them on the shop floor ahead of purchase. According to Scammell (1999) this means "a relatively high uncertainty factor. Therefore [the voter] is heavily dependent on information" (p. 727). That information is manifest

in the campaign message – a system of concepts and signs that represent a party’s policy, image and behaviour. These concepts and signs have a material dimension – words and images articulated in the many forms of political communication. The term *sign* is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

These concepts and signs are particularly potent in political advertisements. Because advertising affords political parties control over the timing, location, content and target audience of their messages, political advertisements tend to contain the messages parties absolutely want to convey directly to voters before the messages get mediated by journalists and others (Damore, 2004; Kline, 1997). In addition, the structural features of advertisements enable parties to combine into their advertising messages visual, verbal and aural signs that activate complex psychological and cultural meanings in the minds of viewers (Barry, 1997; Barthes, 1973; Beasley, 2002; Biocca, 1991b; Descutner et.al, 1991; Dyer, 1982; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Messaris, 1997; Williamson, 1978; Rose, 2001).

It is through the predominantly visual manifestation or representation of political offerings in the political advertisement that viewers decode most meaning. The way voters think, react and interpret political meaning is guided by a network of concepts in their semantic memory, often referred to as cognitive schema — perceptual knowledge, codes, conventions, experiences and interpretations of events that pre-exist in voters’ minds, some of which date from early childhood — which enable people to interpret the world meaningfully (Biocca, 1991a; Hall, 1997; Messaris, 1997; Richardson, 2003). Visual images have particularly strong activation effects on the semantic memory because of the way they imitate “reality”. They elicit reactions that are instinctive or emotional and influence conscious thinking before the logic derived from language is engaged (Barry, 1997). Visual images are able to contain more information, and be processed in a shorter amount of time, than the same material in verbal language. When visual images are combined in advertisements with written or verbal text and music they create richer, potentially more potent messages than verbal messages alone (Emmerson & Smith, 2000; Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998; Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Nelson & Boynton, 1997).

Political advertisements often receive “bad press” from commentators and scholars concerned that they are contributing to increased levels of public disinterest in politics (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Hope, 2001; Miller, 2000; Postman, 1987). Their concern is that the “rational” process of communicating meaning through words uttered by politicians has been replaced in forms of communication like advertising by the “manipulation” of emotion through slogans and imagery – often

referred to as “spin” – by “spin doctors” – professionals with no direct responsibility to the electorate, and that this is ultimately bad for democracy, dependent as it is on a normative model of decision making based on the ideal of full deliberation of objective information (Bennett & Entman, 2001; Richardson, 2003).

Although there is no evidence that this has in fact happened, the scholarly bias against visual forms of communication like advertising is deeply entrenched in a rationalist view of social processes and social interactions. Predominant in this rationalist view is the notion that messages and meanings reside in verbal language, while emotions are conjured up by visual and non-verbal language. As a consequence the word has been privileged over the image; the rational argument has been preferred over the appeal to the emotions (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998; Nelson & Boynton, 1997).

With the shift in the 1980s that has been described as the postmodern or cultural “turn”, many traditional assumptions about rationality and meaning were challenged. Cultural Studies, Media Studies and Visual Communication scholars, drawing upon social constructivist theory, led the way in encouraging a reassessment of the process of the production and exchange of meanings between members of society and the function of representation within this process. These scholars argued that communication is seldom a linear process with meaning no longer inhering in words alone; that the brain does not absorb messages like a sponge; and meaning cannot simply be “received” in the form it is sent. Instead meaning is believed to be constructed through the use of representational systems comprised of cultural codes and conventions specific to groups of people and historical contexts. Visual images, critical to this process, have been reconceptualised as signs, and acknowledged as carriers of a range of encoded meanings on a number of different levels that needed to be meaningfully decoded by viewers before a message takes effect (Biocca, 1991b; Ehses, 1989; Fiske, 1990; Hall 1980, 1997; Rose 2001).

This reconceptualisation of the significance of visual images in the communication of meaning has meant that advertisements, ubiquitous in popular culture, have been acknowledged as an important cultural factor moulding and reflecting everyday life (Williamson, 1978). As such they are worthy texts for academic study and analysis; not so much for their surface or denoted meaning, which tends to be a call to action to purchase a product or a service or vote for a party or politician, but for their connoted meaning – their encoded messages about social, cultural and political roles and values. Over the past few decades scholarly analyses of visual images in advertisements have demonstrated that rather than being vacuous forms of communication, they



contain deep levels of meaning which often have an ideological role, perpetuating mythological, patriarchal, capitalist, scientific, white, and/or middle class values (Barthes, 1973; Biocca, 1991b; Fiske, 1990; Frith, 1998; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997; Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Nelson & Boynton, 1997; Richardson, 2001; 2003; Williamson, 1978).

### **Advertising and Market Orientation**

What does this mean in relation to market orientation? O’Cass (2001a) suggests that “market orientation is the overt behaviour of an organisation that has adopted the marketing concept and is the means for implementing the marketing concept” (p. 1005). Although O’Cass himself interprets overt behaviour as the engagement of a party in a marketing *process*, there is no reason why overt behaviour could not also be thought of as the manifestation or *demonstration* in a political advertisement of the extent to which target voters’ needs have informed the party, how its product will deliver the benefits that will satisfy those needs, and how the party is positioning itself in relation to the competition. Because a party’s product offering is intangible, and because the market concept is a philosophy, a party’s market orientation will not be immediately apparent at the surface level of an advertisement. Created out of visual and verbal symbols, cultural codes, conventions and myths, it will be encoded and evident at a deeper level.

Looking for a direct link between market orientation and election outcomes through an examination of the messages encoded in political advertisements may be asking too much, given the uncertainty of external variables discussed earlier. Nonetheless this thesis argues that it must be possible to look for a plausible relationship between the two. Such an examination would not provide evidence of the extent to which a party has adopted the marketing concept in terms of its organisation and management behaviour and processes. Nor would it find evidence of the absolute effect of advertisements on voter behaviour. But it should be possible to associate the visual manifestation of a party’s voter and competitor orientation with its election results in order to ascertain whether parties that demonstrate a market orientation in their advertising messages also achieve their electoral goals, thereby offering a possible answer to the question of whether there is a link between market orientation and election outcomes. This thesis proposes to explore this in relation to recent New Zealand election campaigns.

### 1.3: NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT

There are good reasons to examine recent electoral campaigns in New Zealand from a political marketing perspective. The influences and adjustments that saw the international rise of political parties with a market orientation have also been felt in New Zealand. For example, despite having a reputation as a country of high voter turnout, turnout at New Zealand general elections has declined substantially in recent decades. In 1990 the age-eligible effective turnout was 76 per cent. By 2002 this had reduced to 71.7 per cent (Aimer & Vowles, 2004). The New Zealand electorate has also become more volatile. In 2002 61% of New Zealand voters made their voting decision during the election campaign – the highest figure recorded at any New Zealand election. The 2002 election also saw historically high numbers of voters changing their voting intention between the start and end of the campaign – the NZES found that around 30% of voters changed their voting intention during the 1999 and 2002 campaigns. In the last week of the 2002 campaign 20% of voters changed their voting intention. The 2002 NZES also found high levels of vote switching – 48% of those who voted at both the 1999 and 2002 elections chose differently in each election (Vowles, 2002, 2003b).

In New Zealand, widespread public disillusionment with politicians and dissatisfaction over the “elective dictatorship” of one-party governments (Aimer & Miller, 2002, p.2) resulted in reform of the electoral system and the introduction of the MMP form of proportional representation in 1996. Until this, the FPP electoral system had been dominated by two major parties (Labour and National), although sometimes a third party (usually Social Credit) featured. Many more small parties stood candidates in electorates, with minimal success. With the introduction of MMP came a proliferation of political parties competing for the attention of voters. In 1999 24 registered political parties, the highest number in New Zealand’s electoral history, competed for the party vote. In 2002 only 15 registered parties competed for the party vote, but this figure may be an anomaly as the 2002 election was called early, and a number of parties had not registered by the official cut-off date.

Although most of these parties did not register a significant vote, the number of serious contenders for the party vote rose with MMP. In 1990 there were three parties represented in parliament (National, Labour and NewLabour). In 1993 four parties were represented (National, Labour, the Alliance and New Zealand First). In 1996 the number of parties represented in parliament rose to six (National, Labour, the Alliance, New Zealand First, ACT and United). A seventh party (the Green party) was added to the mix in 1999. With the Alliance failing to gain sufficient support

to cross the five per cent threshold, the number of parties represented in parliament returned to six in 2002.

In addition to the increased numbers of parties competing for office, MMP has made electoral competition more complex. FPP competition between the two major parties was most intense in what were termed “marginal electorates”, where a small number of swinging voters could tip the balance between left (Labour) and right (National). Under MMP, where the party vote determines a party’s share of seats in the House, the focus of party competition has moved away from electorates and onto the nationwide party vote (Denemark, 1998). Now the two major parties have to compete nationally not only with each other, but with smaller parties, including some on the same side of the ideological spectrum, many of whom have ambitions to expand their appeal and voter base beyond simply representing a small special interest group or ideology, and some of whom are potential coalition partners.

This new era of multi-party politics and increasingly competitive electoral environment has required political parties to develop alternative ways to demonstrate their relevance and responsiveness to voters. More political parties contesting elections has meant increased competition for both news media attention and limited broadcasting time and funds. Despite the increased numbers of parties contesting MMP elections, the amount of funding allocated to parties for election broadcasting remained unchanged between 1990 and 2002 at \$2.1million. Parties also have to compete with a proliferation of brand, product and service advertising, through multiple channels, for the attention of voters in prime-time viewing and listening hours. New Zealand political parties have had to find alternative ways of reaching out to voters in election campaigns and to become more competitive in their quest for voters’ attention. Increasingly they have applied commercial marketing instruments to achieve their electoral goals. These are discussed below.

*Market research:* Although New Zealand political parties have been conducting market research since the early 1970s in the form of occasional opinion polls (Wilkes, 1978), contemporary market research has become much more sophisticated, and includes the continuous opinion polling of voters between and during election campaigns and extensive use of focus groups findings to ascertain policy priorities, leadership image and party image (Hope, 2003). The large parties commission nightly opinion polling during election campaigns (Hope, 2001; 2003; James, 2001; 2003a). Parties with fewer resources still tend to rely on “more traditional methods, such as following ‘gut feelings’ ” (Miller, 2004, p. 4).

*Communications professionals:* Campaign consultants are not the permanent feature of New Zealand party organisations that they are in the US, aside from the ACT party which employed Australian campaign consultants in its 1996, 1999 and 2002 campaigns (James, 2003a). However, the major political parties use public relations and advertising professionals to give advice and conduct information campaigns in-between campaigns (continuous campaigning). In addition, parties have been known to engage assistance from demographic researchers, computer specialists, direct-mail marketers, television interview trainers and image consultants (Hope, 2003; James, 2003a, Miller, 2004). These are options mainly open to the major parties. Tight budgets prevent most New Zealand political parties from making extensive use of professional agencies and consultants, with the result that their campaigns are more heavily dependent on the motivation of candidates and party workers (Miller, 2004).

There is nothing “new” in the engagement of professionals in this area – advertising agencies have been used by parties for most of the last century, and broadcasting training specialists were first brought in for radio training in the 1950s (Jackson, 1962) and then television training in the 1960s (Mitchell, 1969). What has been new since the late 1980s, however, is the central advisory role that communications units staffed by journalists and other communication professionals now have in parliamentary offices; a recognition of the importance of image and news management to core party business.

*Message targeting:* The delivery of specially tailored messages to particular groups of voters became a feature of the last few FPP elections in New Zealand, with key messages geographically targeted at swinging voters in marginal electorates (Collinge, 1991; Denmark, 1998). The ability to target messages went hand-in-hand with new technological developments in the form of computerised mailing lists drawn from the electoral roll. The Labour Party used the technology in 1987 to send personalised letters to target voter groups in marginal electorates (Leitch, 1992), a move quickly followed by National in the 1990 election campaign (Collinge, 1991), and by both parties again in 1993 (Vowles, Aimer, Catt, Lamare and Miller, 1995).

Since 1996 message-targeting has reoriented towards voters segmented along demographic and psychographic, rather than geographic lines, as the focus of party efforts has moved off marginal electorates and onto the nationwide party vote. For example, ACT has spent a lot of time and resources targeting women, with increasing amounts of success over the years (Fraser & Zangouropoulos, 1997; Thomas & Stephenson, 2000); New Zealand First has targeted the elderly (Denmark, 1998);

and the Greens have targeted youth and the “Values generation” (Donald, 2002). Direct-mail is widely used to target these groups, and television and radio advertising placement has become extremely important too. In the 1996 campaign Denmark (1998) found that although Labour strove to get evening news coverage on TV1 as the channel that reached the widest audience, the party ran most of its advertisements on TV2 and TV3 in line with the viewing tendencies of its target audience. Similarly New Zealand First placed many advertisements on the radio and in newspapers, reflecting the amount of time its elderly target audience spent covering the campaign at home. New Zealand political parties also use new technology to target their messages to core supporter groups, making extensive use of web sites, electronic newsletters and email lists to gather and communicate to supporters. Some conduct on-line opinion surveys of their supporters to gauge issues of current concern (Barker; 2004; Miller, 2004).

Over the years scholars, practitioners and commentators have identified some electoral advantage for political parties using marketing techniques and new technologies. For example, Wilkes (1978) attributes part of National’s victory in the 1975 election down to its “zealous market researching” (p.207) and part of Labour’s failure down to its lack of funding to conduct similar research. Leitch (1992) attributes some of Labour’s success over National in 1987 to its use of a sophisticated polling system and use of direct mail to target key individuals and groups of voters, both of which National lacked at the time. Following its 1987 defeat National Party president John Collinge (1991) felt the party’s regrouped and improved organisational capacity, use of market research and polling gave it a big advantage over Labour in 1990. Labour Party president Michael Hirschfeld (1997) clearly felt that Labour was disadvantaged in the 1996 campaign by its lack of consultants and lack of facility to conduct in-depth polling. Similar claims have not been made in respect to the 1999 and 2002 election outcomes.

#### **1.4: SUMMARY AND RESEARCH AIM**

Political marketing scholars consider that adoption and implementation of the marketing concept, a business management philosophy based on a company-wide acceptance of the need for customer and competitor orientation and a coordinated response to customer need, will bring advantages to parties in a competitive and volatile electoral environment. These scholars have not yet been able to determine whether there is a direct link between market orientation and electoral success, however. This may be because much of the international political marketing literature

is focused on market orientation as a management function. This thesis proposes an alternative way for establishing a link between market orientation and electoral success which focuses on market orientation as a *message*. A party's offering to voters is manifest in its campaign message, and it is the message carried by forms of political communication that voters exchange their votes for.

This thesis will examine the advertising messages of the highest polling political parties for evidence of voter orientation and competitor orientation in two recent New Zealand general election campaigns. It will relate degrees of manifest market orientation to a number of statistical indicators of electoral success (discussed in the following chapter), with the aim of finding plausible associations between the visual manifestation of market orientation in political advertisements and electoral success in the 1999 and 2002 elections. That is not to claim that it is political advertisements per se that have a direct effect on all voter behaviour. Rather this study assumes that political advertisements are graphic evidence of a party's broader market orientation, and this makes them worthy objects for examination.

In so doing this thesis will offer party-oriented explanations for electoral outcomes to complement existing voter-centric explanations, and add another level of scholarly understanding of recent electoral outcomes in New Zealand. The conclusions should also be of theoretical interest to political marketing scholars searching for links between market orientation and election outcomes.

The next chapter covers the data collection process and method of analysis used in this study. Chapter 3 analyses the messages contained in the political advertisements of the National, Labour, New Zealand First, Alliance, ACT, Green and United New Zealand parties in the 1999 election campaign. Chapter 4 analyses the messages contained in the political advertisements of the Labour, National, Alliance, ACT, Greens, New Zealand First and United Future parties in the 2002 election campaign. The final chapter assesses the contribution that a study of political market orientation can make to an understanding of electoral outcomes.

This chapter describes the data collection process engaged in for this research and discusses the method of interpretive textual analysis employed in the decoding of political advertisements. Key visual criteria for examining evidence of market orientation are identified, and indicators of electoral and message success used to verify the analysis are discussed.

### 2.1: DATA COLLECTION

Televised political advertisements make good data for “supply-side”, or party behaviour, analysis (Damore, 2004). They are easier to track, capture and record than many other forms of party-controlled communication like candidate walkabouts or campaign meetings, which happen at more random times and not all of which are utilised by all parties. Televised political advertisements are used by all the major parties and many of the minor parties contesting an election. They have a set structure and format; a comparable time length; and they occur at every election campaign, enabling comparisons to be made between competing parties in single campaigns and across campaigns (Biocca, 1999b; Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Nelson & Boynton, 1997; Zaller, 1999b).

In order to investigate the market orientation of political parties in the 1999 and 2002 New Zealand election campaigns I videotaped and digitised the moving images, and transcribed the verbal dialogue, of the televised political advertisements of the parties that crossed the five per cent threshold for the party vote, or achieved representation in parliament having gained an electorate seat in 1999 and 2002. These were the Labour, National, New Zealand First, Alliance, ACT, Greens, and United (-New Zealand in 1999; -Future in 2002) parties. Not formally included in the study (although it is discussed) was the Progressive Coalition, a party which won an electorate seat and therefore parliamentary representation in 2002, but which had not been registered in time for it to be given access to broadcasting time and funding in the 2002 campaign. It therefore produced no television advertisements in 2002.

Selected for study were all opening and closing night addresses and television commercials screened in commercial airtime from the night of the opening addresses up to and including the final night of each election campaign. These advertisements were captured between the hours of 5pm and 10pm on either TV One or TV3. In the 1999 campaign I started to capture advertisements screened early in the morning and mid-afternoon on all major channels, including TV2. However, I soon discovered that this was an unnecessary duplication of resources and did not continue the practice in 2002. The sample collected represents most of the political advertisements screened on television during the 1999 and 2002 election campaigns. In total 86 discrete television advertisements were studied: 41 from the 1999 campaign and 45 from the 2002 campaign.

Of these television advertisements it is the opening night addresses that receive the most detailed attention in the thesis. These are substantial advertising texts: the longest, belonging to National and Labour, are 12 minutes long; the shortest, belonging to some minor parties, are four minutes long. In comparison, ordinary television commercials range from 15 seconds to one minute in length. New Zealand political parties receive free broadcasting time from TV One to enable the addresses to go to air, and they also receive state funding through the Electoral Commission for broadcasting production costs. Opening night addresses are screened four weeks out from election day and parties are highly motivated to use them to set their agenda for the campaign (Church, 2002). This makes them important evidence of market orientation.

### **Other Advertising**

Supplementing the collection of television advertisements are print and billboard advertisements. These are important vehicles for the communication of political messages and are unique amongst forms of advertising for the way they communicate an entire message in a single graphic composition. This makes them significant evidence of a party's main offer(s) in exchange for the party vote.

I collected party vote newspaper advertisements from the major North Island daily newspapers: the *Dominion* and *Evening Post* (in 1999), *Dominion Post* (in 2002), the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Sunday Star Times* (in 1999 and 2002). There are other major newspapers in New Zealand, but as parties tend to place the same advertisements in each of them there was no need to extend this data collection beyond the papers collected. Most of the significant newspaper advertisements were collected. Most of the important party vote advertisements are full page in size and many feature



in the last week of the campaign. The last week of the campaign is the time that parties put much of their effort into getting their printed campaign messages into the public eye.

In both campaigns I photographed the main billboard messages around the streets of Auckland and Wellington. There was no need to go much further afield – party vote messages are nationwide and are found in the same form all over New Zealand. Also collected were party vote pamphlets and newsletters delivered to letterboxes in the Wellington Central and Rongotai electorates. These electorates were unashamedly and pragmatically selected because I live in the Rongotai electorate, my mother lives in the Wellington Central electorate, and we could gather material from our letterboxes easily. Unlike the television and newspaper advertisement and billboard resources, the brochure samples collected do not constitute most of the content of brochure advertising campaigns – there are simply too many items printed for them to all be collected. They supplement the main focus of the analysis which is the television, newsprint and billboard advertising.

Each party and each election campaign was studied separately, although links were made between parties and between campaigns. The unit of analysis in the study was the whole television commercial, newspaper advertisement or billboard, with key images and dialogue highlighted for the way they best demonstrated, visually and verbally, the meaning of a campaign message.

### **Not Featured**

As my primary concern was with the party vote message, individual electorate campaigns are not discussed, with the exception of the Coromandel competition in 1999 which became the subject of a nationwide party vote attack by National.

I did not include radio advertising in this study on the grounds that it is a primarily aural form of communication and the primary focus of this research is the visual communication of meaning. That is not to say that radio advertising is not an important means of communicating with target audiences; simply that it was not within the scope of my research objectives.

Discussion about the influence of the advertising agencies that created the advertisements does not feature in this study. It could reasonably be argued that ultimately parties do not select the words and images that feature in advertisements, that this is the prerogative of art directors in advertising agencies, and that political advertisements therefore contain messages the agencies intended but parties were not

necessarily conscious of. However, as client the party is the one that bears the ultimate responsibility for the message. It briefs the agency, it provides much of the copy used in advertisements, it vetoes or approves all the imagery used in advertisements and billboards, all messages are signed off by the party and it pays the invoices or organises to have them paid. At this point the party bears all public responsibility for the content and form of delivery. For this reason it is entirely appropriate to focus on the party not the agency.

Also not discussed is who in the party made the strategic decisions about advertising direction and message content, and when these decisions were made. Such an analysis would be appropriate if writing a history of the advertising in these two campaigns. But this is not a “whodunit” historical analysis. It does not seek to apportion blame or credit to any one individual or group of individuals. An underlying assumption is that some strategic decisions were deliberate, while others were unconscious, a result of cultural understanding existing outside of conscious intent. Ultimately it does not matter. The manifest message and its meaning is the focus of this thesis.

Nor is the identity and survey techniques of the market research firms or consultants engaged by parties discussed, although such information might be useful if examining the internal marketing processes employed by parties. Once again, my interest lay not in who did the market intelligence, but the manifest implementation of market intelligence in campaign messages.

## 2.2: INTERPRETIVE TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Meaning in the political advertisements collected for this study was primarily decoded using a form of interpretive textual analysis drawing upon Barthesian semiotics to decode the denoted and connoted meanings in a message. The term *decode* refers to the process of interpreting or taking a particular meaning from a message. This is a qualitative rather than quantitative method of analysis, and is recorded in a written interpretation.

This type of analysis has its origins in broader semiotic theory, which is concerned with the construction of meaning through signification. In semiotic theory meaning is constructed by people who share a common language and methods for interpreting that language. The language is comprised of *signs*, which may be words, actions, sounds or visual images. Signs consist of two parts: their form or *signifier* (for example, an actual word or image), and the meaning triggered by the form, or *signified*.

It was French semiotician Roland Barthes (1973) who articulated in the late 1950s the multi-layered nature of meaning conveyed by visual images. Until this time semiotic theory (first developed in the early twentieth century) was primarily concerned with the way words signified meaning. Barthes extended this to visual imagery. He described the first level of signification as *denotation* – the common-sense obvious or obvious reading of an image and its state of mechanical reproduction. This is sometimes referred to as its representational meaning and may be identified by listing the objects, people, words and scenery in an advertisement (Frith, 1998). Barthes labeled the second order of signification *connotation*. This is sometimes referred to as latent or symbolic meaning – where the image meets the values, understandings and experiences of a culture (Barthes, 1973; Fiske, 1990).

At the connotative level visual signs frequently trigger meaning through evocation of *myth* (Barthes, 1973; Fiske, 1990; Nimmo & Combs, 1980; Nelson & Boynton, 1997). Myths are the shared characters, themes and stories used by a culture to make the world meaningful to its people and to legitimise authority. They are usually deeply ingrained into a culture, operate at an unconscious level, and work to make particular social meanings acceptable as the common-sense or dominant truth about the world (Barthes, 1973; Campbell, 1988; Hart, 1997). A good definition of myth has been proposed by political communication scholars Dan Nimmo and James E. Combs (1980) as:

*A credible, dramatic, socially constructed re-presentation of perceived realities that people accept as permanent, fixed knowledge of reality while forgetting (if they were ever aware of it) its tentative, imaginative, created, and perhaps fictional qualities* (p. 16, italics in original).

Because myths are largely naturalised in cultures, it is one of the roles of the semiotic analyst to decode the myths consciously or unconsciously buried in texts (Barthes, 1973; Rose, 2001; Williamson, 1997).

### **Polysemic Interpretation**

One of the difficulties with semiotic analysis is that signs (be they words or image) are “polysemic” – they have many meanings. The relation between a sign and its meaning is not permanently fixed; the concepts to which they refer change throughout time, and within different cultures and contexts, resulting in there being, as cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1997) writes, “no single, unchanging, universal ‘true meaning’” (p. 32; see also Bignell, 1997; Biocca, 1991a; Fiske, 1990; Hall, 1980; Rose, 2001). Signs depend for meaning on their relationship to other signs in and around the message they are contained in and those meanings may be used by audiences in different ways.

Viewers of advertisements will draw from a wealth of associations, experiences and competing messages when negotiating the meaning of an advertisement and no two readings or decodings of a message are likely to be the same. Meaning generation is not a completely random process, however. Hall (1980) has identified three main ways that people decode connoted messages:

- (i) from within the dominant code, when viewers decode the connoted meanings in the way intended by their encoder;
- (ii) from a negotiated code or position, where a viewer acknowledges the legitimacy of the connoted meanings but chooses to take a different meaning from a message; and
- (iii) from an oppositional position, where the meanings decoded from a message are “read” according to a completely different agenda to the one intended by the message’s creator.

The smaller the subculture, the closer the shared understandings, the clearer the communication is likely to be (Fiske, 1990). The larger the audience, the greater the likelihood that people will decode the message differently, with more “aberrant”, or oppositional, readings (Hall, 1980).

This causes some difficulty for the analyst of meaning in communications. With polysemic readings in circulation, there is no guarantee that two analysts will arrive at the same interpretation and replication of analysis is unlikely. Nor is it likely that an analyst can expect to understand how other members of an audience have decoded the message (Rose, 2001), especially with messages increasingly targeted at smaller groups who have their own particular understandings of meaning. This raises the risk of the analysis being “highly speculative” (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998, p.213). Nor is it likely that an ordinary viewer of a message will decode that message with the same level of sophistication as an interpretive textual analyst.

However, there is an increasingly large body of literature devoted to mapping and decoding the grammar of visual language and the organisation of signs in relation to each other through coding systems (see, for example, Barry, 1997; Bell, 2001; Bignell, 1998; Biocca, 1991a, 1991b; Fiske, 1990; Hansen et.al, 1998; Iedema, 2001; Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 1995; Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Messaris, 1997; Rose, 2001; Silverblatt, Ferry & Finan, 1999; van Leeuwen, 2001). As long as analysis is done with reference to this literature, the chances of it being idiosyncratic are reduced. Furthermore, as Hall noted, most people of a shared culture learn to read the world in terms of the codes and conventions which are dominant within the specific socio-cultural contexts and roles within which we are socialised. Providing

that meaning is related to context the chances of an analysis being completely speculative are mitigated.

### **Context**

In this thesis relating meaning analysis to context is achieved in a number of ways. I collected newspaper clippings of campaign stories in both campaigns to get a news-media perspective on the context of the campaigns. In between the 1999 and 2002 campaigns I interviewed a range of significant campaign actors in order to gain knowledge of the background context to the two campaigns from a party perspective. Those interviewed were: Mike Williams (President of the Labour Party), Mike Smith (General Secretary of the Labour Party), Pat Webster (Women's Vice-president of the Labour Party); Doug Woolerton (then) President of New Zealand First and list member of parliament; Jenny Shipley, leader of the National Party from 1998-1999; Rod Donald, (then) co-leader of the Green Party; another party leader who has asked not to be named, and Fraser Carson, director of Fresco Advertising, Labour's advertising agency in 1993, 1996 and 1999. I also related my analysis to first-hand campaign accounts of other campaign strategists provided in the news media and at the Victoria University post-election conferences and later published in the books *Left Turn* (Boston, Church, Levine, McLeay, Roberts, 2000) and *New Zealand Votes* (Boston et.al, 2003).

Throughout the campaigns I related significant advertising events to the NZES tracking polls and the other significant media events identified in the news media and later by Vowles (2002b; 2004a) to ensure that my analysis was not unrelated to other events in the campaign. In addition I compared my analysis to the reasons for the electoral outcomes that have been suggested by political scientists writing in the principal texts on election outcomes; that is, the above publications and in the books *Proportional Representation on Trial* (Vowles, Aimer, Karp, Banducci, Miller, Sullivan, 2002) and *Voters' Veto* (Vowles, Aimer, Banducci, Karp, Miller, 2004) to ensure my findings were not completely out of sync with other views on election outcomes. In the sections analysing the outcomes of each party's campaigns I have included the interpretations of the three senior New Zealand electoral analysts: Stephen Levine and Nigel Roberts of Victoria University, and Jack Vowles of Auckland University.

### 2.3: VISUAL CRITERIA

There are no models for how evidence of political marketing meaning might be decoded in advertising images, so I had to create my own. I based my criteria for analysis on the customer and competitor orientation aspects of Narver and Slater's behavioural definition. It was not my goal to look for evidence of interfunctional coordination, as that related more to the area of process study. My interest was also not on the internal messages circulating within a political party, but with the external messages. It should be noted that my criteria for determining market orientation are not absolute. They are not the only visual markers of market orientation that could have been selected for study. Reasons for their selection are discussed below.

#### **Voter Orientation**

This section is broken down under the following headings: target audience identification, sense and response, voter relations management, and offers in exchange. These are key factors taken from the literature on political marketing.

**(i) Target audience identification:** I searched for images of the types of voters and places the parties privileged as being worthy of recognition. At a denoted level there may not be anything exceptional about the people and places featured in political advertisements. However, this can be significant at a connoted level. Advertising relies upon consumers' identification with advertising images to strengthen emotional involvement with a message (Barry, 1997; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 2004; Messaris, 1997; Perloff, 1993; Watts, 2004). Persuasion scholar Richard Perloff has found that "similarity between source and receiver enhances persuasion" (1993, p. 146); that is, people tend to gravitate and pay attention to those who share their attitudes, especially when an issue is affective and personal. The types of people and places they occupied in advertisements are therefore interpreted as evidence of a message's target audience.

**(ii) Sense and response:** I assumed that if parties were concerned to demonstrate their affinity with voters, or that voter needs had informed party policies, this would be demonstrated in images and words of togetherness. I looked for the ways parties demonstrated in visual images that party leaders, MPs or candidates had interacted with voters, including images of listening (nodding, laughing, touching). Images of physical interaction often connote a close relationship between people (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The study of images in this section was supplemented by a content analysis of personal and inclusive pronouns spoken, and party names mentioned, in opening night broadcasts. I related parties' visual images of togetherness with their

employment of the words “we” and “our”, and “I”, in their opening night addresses. Widespread use of the former was seen as evidence of a party wanting to demonstrate affinity with target voters; the latter was seen as evidence of a party wanting to promote its leadership as a product. I also counted the number of times the party name was mentioned in order to find evidence of the strength of brand identity held by the party. In the commercial market, for example, repetition of brand name is a common technique used to enhance product recognition amongst consumers.

**(iii) Voter relations management:** I looked for evocation of party history and myth in advertisements. These included the myths associated with the histories of the individual political parties, other cultural and political myths, leadership myths that have grown up around previous party heads, and myths about leadership characteristics. I also looked for messages that referred to other signs in cultural circulation. This is the concept of intertextuality – the co-presence of other texts in an advertisement (Beasley & Danesi, 2002). The meaning of a message often relies for its interpretation on the meanings associated with and recognised as belonging to another image or message. Sometimes the link is historical; sometimes the link is contemporary. It could be a piece of music, reference to a historical event, or an object that invokes memories, for example. In referring to the other sign, the target audience is credited with the shared experience to make sense of the allusion. This is a way of cementing an affinity between the two parties to a message and is used in this thesis as evidence of party and voter sharing a common understanding.

In addition, I looked for messages that violated understandings from one campaign to another. Sometimes advertisements seek to violate expectations of what people are programmed to look at as normal. This often involves some sort of unexpected optical illusion, but it can also be unexpected behaviour or words. Violation is often used to attract attention to an advertising message (Messaris, 1997). In the case of political advertisements, violation of understandings may also be a sign that a party has chosen to ignore its previous messages, renege on earlier promises and replace them with a new set. This may be interpreted as a risky strategy in terms of voter relations management, where consistency of offer is extremely important.

**(iv) Offers in exchange:** Newspaper and billboard images, usually (but not always) featuring party leaders were analysed for what the party was offering in exchange for the party vote. Specific items for analysis included the leader’s facial expression, camera close-ups, dress, and the physical setting of the leadership image. These signs have been found to communicate qualities of stability, authority and affinity in a leader (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). In addition, I looked for offers of something

new or different in relation to the competition. This may have been words or images signifying added value to existing policy platforms; particular benefits that the party would provide in exchange for the party vote; or something new addressing an unmet need in the marketplace.

Parties' choices of typeface were also examined. Typefaces are as meaningful as signs as words or visual images. In any graphic composition choice of typeface and style conveys many psychological impressions about a message even before any words are read (Heller & Meggs, 2001; Spiekermann & Ginger, 1993). Type designer Rudy VanderLans (2001) explains:

There are at least two different aspects to a typeface. First there is the utilitarian/alphabetic aspect, which allows it to create linguistic meaning when letters are combined into words and words into sentences, etc. The other is the artistic aspect, the different type designs that express the alphabet visually in myriad ways. It is the latter that makes type so desirable because type users recognize the value of differentiation that a particular typeface design brings to their message (p. 225).

From the type choices some assertions can be made about the party's message intent and target audience. Typefaces may reflect the era in, and purpose for, which they were created. They will be familiar to audiences of a similar era or context. Typefaces often get reappropriated for use by different subcultural groups some time after initial publication, their meanings forming a communication code familiar to members of those subcultures or target audiences.

### **Competitor Orientation**

In order to find evidence of competitor orientation, I related party messages with the market position typologies discussed in the introduction – market leader, challenger, follower and nicher – to ascertain whether those messages were appropriate to the party's competitive position.

In applying these typologies to political parties Collins and Butler (2002) argued that a party's position in a political market should be determined by the position a party was in immediately after the last election. Their claim was that "opinion polls are not definitive" and the election poll the "only truly reliable guide" to parties' market share (p. 6). This is different from the commercial market where a firm's competitive position is determined by its proportion of total sales at any given time. In applying this to New Zealand political parties, I found that it was not possible to be as dogmatic



about market share as Collins and Butler. In 1999 especially, the public opinion market share occupied by parties at the commencement of the election campaign was considerably different to their market share following the 1996 election, and required a very different set of strategic considerations. The analyses in this thesis discuss both the market share occupied by parties at the previous election *and* the market share occupied by parties as they entered the campaign, and the difficulties this caused parties when it came to offering a message.

In market leader advertisements I looked for whether a party tried to increase its competitive strength and value to voters by introducing new policies and personalities in its advertisements; defend its market share by anticipating and responding to attack messages from challenger parties and/or by launching attack advertisements at smaller and more vulnerable rivals; and defend its position by core voter retention messages emphasising stability and consistency.

In challenger party messages I looked for whether they were consistent and committed in their attacks on the market leader; whether they were aware of and prepared for attacks from other challengers; and whether they had some offer, either policy or leader, that differentiated them clearly from the competition.

In follower party advertisements I looked for whether they maintained consistency in their messages from one campaign to another; that they did not attack and were instead supportive of the party they had chosen to follow; and that they nonetheless managed to offer something that differentiated them from the competition.

In niche party advertisements I examined whether they remained true to the original niche message or whether they had changed emphasis; whether they had found a new niche or niches to promote; whether they appeared satisfied maintaining their niche position or were seeking expansion; whether they were prepared for a larger, more resourceful party appropriating their niche.

### **Indicators of Electoral Success**

With the goal of finding plausible associations between market orientation and electoral success, an important consideration for this thesis was how to define electoral success. This was done in a number of ways. In relation to a party's own campaign objectives I looked at the context each party found itself in at the commencement of an election campaign and identified party vote goals from party speeches and from chapters written by party strategists in the books *Left Turn* and *New Zealand Votes*. If a party achieved the party vote objectives it set at the commencement of the campaign

the party was assessed as having achieved electoral success; if it failed to achieve its party vote objectives I assessed that it had failed to achieve electoral success, even though it may still have crossed the five per cent threshold and retained a presence in parliament. All the minor parties articulated percentage goals for their party vote. National and Labour never publicly announced their objectives. I have assumed that as major parties with a strong history of being in government their objectives were to (i) gain sufficient support to govern without the need for coalition partner or (ii) gain sufficient support to be the first party to organise and lead a coalition government.

In addition I related a party's messages to the NZES statistics on voter retention and flow (Vowles, 2002b, p. 89; Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p.22). These provide evidence of the percentage of voters gained, retained and lost by parties. I assumed the number of new voters attracted to the party, and from which party they came, to be evidence of a party's success in offering greater benefits to new voters than other parties. I also assumed the number of previous voters a party had retained to be evidence of the party's concern for core voter satisfaction. The number of previous voters taking their vote elsewhere I took to be evidence of a party ignoring the needs of its core voters.

Message success was also assessed by relating the policies promoted in the advertising to the issues that voters claimed were of most importance to them in the 1999 and 2002 NZES (Vowles 2002a, 2004a) and the 1998 New Zealand Survey of Values (Perry & Webster, 1999). If there was a deviation between policy and importance to voters I took it as evidence of a party valuing the promotion of its own product more than understanding and responding to voter need.

Finally message success was assessed by relating leadership offerings to the judgment of personality characteristics measured in TV3 NFO opinion polls. This is the only public opinion poll that asked the same questions about leadership characteristics across both elections, thus enabling tracking and comparisons to be made. Again, if there was a deviation between leadership offering and leadership characteristics assessed by voters I took it as evidence of a party's primary focus on its own product rather than understanding and responding to voter need. If there was a close association between leadership offering and leadership characteristics assessed by voters I took it as evidence of a party having a good understanding and response to voters' leadership needs.

## Summary

The following table summarises the key criteria used to find evidence of market orientation in political advertisements. The next chapter analyses the messages contained in the political advertisements of the electorally successful parties in 1999.

**Table 2.1. Visual criteria used to identify market orientation.**

Behaviour	Criteria
<b>Voter orientation</b>	
(i) <i>Target audience identified</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>images of target audience and environment included in advertisements</li> </ul>
(ii) <i>Sense and response to voter needs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>images of party and/or leader interaction with voters including images of listening (nodding, laughing, touching) and words of togetherness (in particular the inclusive pronouns <i>we</i> and <i>our</i>)</li> <li>images or words of care for core supporters</li> </ul>
(iii) <i>Voter relations management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evocation of party history and myth – acknowledgement of shared characters, leaders, themes and stories</li> <li>intertextuality – the co-presence of other recognisable texts</li> <li>kept policy promises</li> <li>consistent leadership offer of person and leadership characteristics</li> <li>messages that maintained (or violated) understandings from one campaign to another</li> </ul>
(iv) <i>Offer in exchange</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>whether they asked for the party vote, and what policy and leadership they were offering in exchange</li> <li>policy and leadership qualities not promoted by other competitors</li> <li>something in addition to previous election offering</li> </ul>
<b>Competitor orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>whether the party behaved as market leader, challenger, follower or nicher</li> <li>competition is identified and targeted in attack messages</li> <li>policy appropriated from smaller niche parties</li> <li>demonstrated open-ness to coalition arrangements (including evidence of the benefits of coalition)</li> </ul>

## 1999 CAMPAIGN

This chapter examines the 1999 advertising messages and market orientation of the electorally successful parties in order of their party vote position in the 1996 election from highest to lowest; that is, National, Labour, New Zealand First, the Alliance, ACT, the Greens and United New Zealand. Each party discussion commences with the context the party found itself in at the commencement of the 1999 campaign, followed by the party's campaign objectives in relation to the party vote. The advertising analysis is broken down into examinations of voter orientation and competitor orientation. Stills from television and newspaper advertisements, billboards and brochures feature in the text to illustrate the points being made. Transcribed excerpts of verbal dialogue also feature where the dialogue supports the meaning of the image. Each section draws a conclusion about the possible links that can be made between a party's market orientation, or lack of it, and its electoral outcome.

**4.1: NATIONAL 1999****Context**

National was the incumbent governing party in 1999. It had been in government since 1990 when then leader Jim Bolger led National to a landslide victory over Labour, with 67 seats to Labour's 29. In that campaign National had strongly appealed to voters disillusioned with the previous Labour government's "new right" policies. However, once in office National continued and expanded those policies. The outcome, explains political scientist Antony Wood (2003):

was a clutch of measures that within months had made National perhaps the most unpopular government ever surveyed. Social welfare benefits were cut; the Employment Contracts Act 1991 deregulated the labour market; public sector restructuring continued, notably with reforms to the health system; and further privatisation took place including, by 1993, sale of the Bank of New Zealand and the state railway system (p. 252).

National also reneged on its 1990 election promise to remove the Labour government's surcharge on superannuation. The surtax was not only retained but increased. Cabinet and the government caucus became increasingly unpopular and divided. One of the party's most outspoken internal critics was National MP for Tauranga Winston Peters, whose frustration with his party eventually led to his departure and the formation of the New Zealand First party in 1993.

In the 1993 election National's massive 1990 majority was all but wiped out. National was able to lead with 50 seats, but it had a majority of one. Labour won 45 seats, and the Alliance and New Zealand First won two each. That year, in a referendum on the electoral system, voters agreed to move from the FPP system to the MMP electoral system. Chastened by the electorate's backlash in 1993 National slowed down the pace of reform.

In the first MMP election in 1996 National won 33.8 per cent of the party vote, to Labour's 28.2 per cent. Neither party held an outright majority and both entered coalition negotiations with the third highest polling party, New Zealand First. In December 1996, after two months of negotiations, Winston Peters announced his decision to form a coalition with National. National leader Jim Bolger assigned Peters the new portfolio of Treasurer and granted New Zealand First eight out of 20 cabinet seats.

Relations between the two parties began to sour almost immediately and National's public opinion poll support plummeted to a point when, in May 1997, leader of the Opposition Helen Clark overtook Jim Bolger in public opinion polls as preferred Prime Minister and both her and Labour's support climbed above National's. When the situation did not improve, fifth ranked cabinet minister Jenny Shipley marshalled the numbers to overthrow Jim Bolger as leader of the National Party. The leadership change was accompanied by a rapid rise in National's standing in the polls, and halted the rise of Clark, whose ratings, along with Labour's, began to fall.

Tensions within the coalition continued, however, finally coming to a head in August 1998 with its collapse (described in further detail in the New Zealand First section). This added to increasing levels of public mistrust in politicians and frustration in the electorate about the new electoral system (Perry & Webster, 1999; Vowles, 2002). National limped along to the 1999 election as a minority government propped up on confidence and supply by some independent MPs and ACT.

### Campaign Objectives

In 1999 National was campaigning for a fourth term of office. It has never publicly stated its party vote objectives for the 1999 campaign. However, it can be assumed that the party hoped to be in a position to be lead party in the next coalition government.

### Voter Orientation

It is not easy to identify National's target audience in its opening night address on Friday 29 October 1999 because very few New Zealanders who were not cabinet ministers or National MPs and officials featured in the broadcast. The few images included were of people in Auckland central city shopping precincts, obviously addressed to Aucklanders who could afford to shop in the central city; and images of New Zealand European parents with their children. The party's affinity was with a largely New Zealand European audience (Image 3.1.1).



Image 3.1.1: Stills from National's 1999 opening night address.

The background imagery of National's later television commercials provided more evidence of its intended target audience. A sequence of commercials featured National's front bench cabinet ministers in various settings around New Zealand (Image 3.1.2). The settings featured nuclear families in country gardens, renovated villas and the mainstreets of provincial towns. These were images that demonstrated National's vision of heartland New Zealand lifestyles and values, a vision that was intimately connected with the land and people who enjoyed an outdoors and predominantly rural lifestyle; a recognition of the party's landowning and farming heritage.

One of National's key messages was that it understood the needs of ordinary New Zealanders because its MPs were ordinary too. In the opening night address Jenny Shipley announces: "I'm a politician, but I'm a Mum as well, and I have the same

hopes and concerns for my children as other parents do...” As she is saying this her hands form the shape of her breasts, a subconscious act perhaps signifying her maternal feelings (Image 3.1.3).



Image 3.1.2: Stills from National's 1999 television commercials.



Image 3.1.3: Still from National's 1999 opening night address.

The deeper message was that having children made Shipley a more well grounded politician. In part this was a dig at the childless Helen Clark; it may also have been an attempt at countering the heartless reputation she had developed as Minister of Social Welfare earlier in the 1990s when she reduced welfare access for young mothers; but it was also part of National's wider message promoting the competence of the front bench as ordinary New Zealanders with links to "real" New Zealand.

This was also demonstrated in the images of front bench cabinet ministers at home with their families in commercials shown frequently during prime time viewing hours. Each commercial opened with a front bench minister engaged in an activity at home with their family, moving to a local electorate location or office, driving their own car, and seated behind a desk in their Beehive office. For example (Image 3.1.4):

Male Voice Over (VO): Bill English. Husband, father of six, farmer and our Treasurer. . . .



Image 3.1.4: Stills from National's 1999 television commercial featuring Treasurer, Bill English.

The images implied that the lifestyles led by the National politicians were in common with its target audience. However, the television commercials failed to demonstrate any connection those ministers had with actual voters in their electorates. There were no images of the ministers meeting or consulting with voters. In fact, National MPs were shown having very little physical contact with *any* New Zealanders that were not family members or other National MPs. For example, in National's opening night address Jenny Shipley talked about National helping families at risk, while she strode up an empty and wealthy Ponsonby street (Image 3.1.5, right). The only image suggestive of National's concern for the families at risk that she talks about is a two second establishing shot of a state housing area before the Ponsonby street scene cuts in (Image 3.1.5, left), but Shipley is nowhere to be seen in it. The images showed a party that was more comfortable being seen in middle class suburbs than state housing areas. The contrast with Labour's leader Helen Clark was marked. As



will be discussed later, in Labour's opening night address Clark appeared comfortable walking on her own in state housing areas visiting with people who had not had their needs met by the National government.



Image 3.1.5: Stills from National's 1999 opening night address.

Not only did Jenny Shipley not have any physical contact with those she claimed to care about, the only ordinary people she met in the opening night address (who were not officials, MPs and heads of state) were two women passing on their good luck to her as she was having a coffee with her family (Image 3.1.6).



Image 3.1.6: Still from National's 1999 opening night address.

In a 15 second television commercial that aired in the last week of the campaign Shipley was seen meeting and greeting some other New Zealanders in her ceremonial capacity as Prime Minister (Image 3.1.7), but still she was not seen listening to and consulting with them as Helen Clark will later be seen to do.



Image 3.1.7: National television commercial featuring Jenny Shipley, 1999.

Studies of political rhetoric have found that politicians wanting to make a more personal connection with “the people” use more inclusive than personal pronouns in their verbal rhetoric; that is, the words we and our, as opposed to I. The frequent use of inclusive pronouns is a technique used by politicians to bridge the gap between speaker and audience. Implicit in the use of inclusive pronouns is the idea that the speaker identifies with the audience; they are peers capable of reaching similar conclusions to the speaker. In political rhetoric the use of the words we and our is also employed to deny the elitism of the speaker. By pointing to similarities in thinking between speaker and audience, an enemy is created in them and they (Canovan, 1999; Wells, Duty & Walton, 2002).

National had a high mean use of the inclusive pronouns we and our in its opening night address (Table 3.1), suggesting a closer verbal affinity with voters than demonstrated in its advertising images. Having said that, the we used in National’s dialogue tended to refer to we – the Government, rather than we – the Government and the people. So interpreting affinity with voters from this statistic may be a little misleading.

**Table 3.1: Inclusive pronouns we/our per minute in 1999 opening night address.**

Party	Total minutes	Inclusive pronouns	Mean, ranked highest to lowest
Greens	4	32	8
National	12	64	5.33
New Zealand First	8	35	4.375
United NZ	4	13	3.25
Alliance	8	25	3.125
ACT	8	21	2.625
Labour	12/2	31/13	2.583

### National Offer

National’s core offer to voters in 1999 was stability. In February 1999, well in advance of its official campaign period, National’s campaign manager Jeff Grant indicated that the party would be concentrating on proving they were a “safer bet” than Labour (in Kirk, 1999, p. 7). By the time the election date had been announced in September, the strategy had been refined to emphasising stability through incumbency, as journalist Helen Bain (1999a) reported:

After nine years in power, National is not the freshest loaf on the shelf, but the government will try and portray this as a strength rather than staleness by emphasising experience (p.2).

In the opening night address Jenny Shipley asked voters to stick with National:

A strong economy is absolutely vital if we are to have a fair and successful society. We’ve made great progress under a National led government. We must not stop now and we certainly must not change direction.

This message was visually communicated through images of National in office. As incumbent governing party, National had many opportunities to visually associate the party and its leader with settings signifying the competent exercise of authority. The opening night address (Image 3.1.8) and subsequent television commercials featured a range of such images including MPs talking to each other in the caucus room and in cabinet (a symbol of authority), smiling and relaxed (signifying a unified and happy party); Jenny Shipley strolling through corridors of parliament, on her own and with party officials; walking on her own across the forecourt of parliament; looking busy getting out of her Ministerial car; front bench cabinet ministers in and around their offices, engaged in their official duties. All these images connoted a party at ease in office and seriously engaged in the business of government.



Image 3.1.8: Stills from National's 1999 opening night address.

Supporting the message about National's ease and competence in office was a party vote image of a smiling close-up of Jenny Shipley's face in her Beehive office that featured on National's billboards, brochures, and newspaper advertisements published in the last week of the campaign (Image 3.1.9). Behind her can be seen the back of a high-backed padded executive chair, shelves with books (to imply intelligence), a photo frame (to signify her love for her family) and a woven basket (to signify her respect for Pacific women's crafts). She was wearing National Party blue, and a silver fern brooch to demonstrate her patriotism. National's 1999 campaign manager Jeff Grant confirmed it was chosen as the key party image for the way it conveyed Shipley as prime ministerial. In a newspaper article on billboard images he is quoted as saying "It's a natural shot. It shows her day-to-day position in her office" (in Catherall, 1999, p. A5). In the same article the photographer described it as an "honest photo" because it was not taken in a studio. There is nothing inherently more natural or honest about this photograph than any other staged image. However, these comments are evidence that National was hoping to affirm itself in the minds of voters as the "natural" party of government, a symbolic state it had claimed prior to the 1980s.



Image 3.1.9: National party vote billboard, 1999.

National's message of competence in office is common to incumbent governments. Such images reflect citizens' behavioural expectations of elected representatives. Without detailed inside knowledge of the day to day operations of government most citizens rely on symbolic codes and conventions, most commonly found in televisual images or newspaper photographs, to assess how their representatives are coping with the responsibilities they have been granted (Edelman, 1964; Elder & Cobb, 1983; Kaid & Johnston, 2001). Images denoting politicians hard at work in their office, for example, signify serious attention to the work of government (Johnston-Cartee & Copeland, 1997); being seen meeting important world leaders signifies both a level of international competence as well as pursuit of the national interest (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). Used in campaign communications these images convey the message that elected representatives are doing the job they were elected to do and may be counted on to continue to do that job, competently and effectively, if voted back in to office.

Consistent with this, Jenny Shipley was seen, in the opening night address and television commercials, walking with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, meeting with APEC leaders and with US President Bill Clinton. The images communicated that Shipley was doing a competent job representing New Zealand at the highest international level. The images of Shipley smiling as she greeted and talked with Bill Clinton and Clinton holding onto her hands in particular (Image 3.1.10) signified

that National had passed a success test: she was on personal terms with the so-called “leader of the free world”, something that the Labour prime ministers of the 1980s had not achieved as a result of Labour’s anti-nuclear policy. At another level, Clinton’s image was also being used as a celebrity endorsement for National, the underlying hope being that his status and reputation would rub off by association on National.



Image 3.1.10: Still from National's 1999 opening night address.

Why would voters believe the next National government would be any less chaotic than the last? Because National believed it had a new and young front bench that would invigorate the party – Jenny Shipley and Wyatt Creech had only been Prime and Deputy-Prime Minister for 18 months; the others were all aged under 40 and newly appointed to senior front-bench positions. A series of television commercials showed Shipley, Wyatt Creech, Bill English, Nick Smith and Roger Sowry constantly on the move in their cars, striding along streets and walking inside their offices.

The perception of motion is one of the strongest attractors of attention, an instinctive biological reaction that once alerted people to danger from predators (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1997). As a televisual convention it is now commonly used to signify a sense of purpose, direction and progress (Silverblatt et.al, 1999). In these television commercials motion was used to attract and hold viewers’ attention to the essential message, expressed by Wyatt Creech in his television commercial as: “this government’s fresh, young vigorous approach will keep our country moving forward”.

Minister of Social Welfare Roger Sowry was seen barbequing in the back yard while children played cricket (Image 3.1.11); and Minister of Health Wyatt Creech was seen chopping firewood with his son (Image 3.1.12). These images tapped into the nostalgic myth of a time when the nuclear family unit was the centre of the social and political world, the rural world was New Zealand's heartland, and real New Zealanders had a back yard big enough in which to swing a cricket bat. The message carried by the images was that National not only shared a nostalgia for, but lived, the real New Zealand, and that the best way to preserve that stable and safe vision was to vote National.



Image 3.1.11: National television commercial featuring Minister of Social Welfare Roger Sowry, 1999.

The ministers also spoke direct to camera as much as was physically possible, in an effort to establish and hold a personal connection between speaker and viewer and communicate the integrity of the party.



Image 3.1.12: National television commercial featuring Deputy Prime Minister Wyatt Creech, 1999.

Connecting the incongruence of the front-bench MPs being seen as youthful but ordinary New Zealanders, with the images of incumbency that showed them as mature and extra-ordinary people, was a linking device in the form of the self-drive car. The Ministers were all seen driving a car while talking to camera. The underlying message: that despite their important work, they were not carried away with the trappings of office and were still humble enough to drive themselves to work. It was a device that helped convey the myth that with effort, work, self-reliance and competition, ordinary New Zealanders of all ages, from average families, can still drive themselves to the office to be cabinet ministers (bottom left, Images 3.1.12 and 3.1.13).





Image 3.1.13: National television commercial featuring Prime Minister Jenny Shipley, 1999.

Even though Jenny Shipley featured throughout National's advertising, National's team message was also emphasised, both visually and verbally, in many of the advertisements. Shipley was often seen conferring with officials and with her colleagues (Image 3.1.14).



Image 3.1.14: Stills from National's 1999 opening night address.

Scholars investigating political rhetoric have found that I-statements are likely to be found where a leader or candidate is particularly motivated by the need to establish their own exceptional profile (Canovan, 1999; Hart, 1997; Wells, Duty & Walton,

2002). Political rhetorician Roderick P. Hart (1997) writes of the importance of I-statements in a political text and the need for critics to pay special attention to them:

I-statements are important because they are not particularly common and because they index a person's feelings and ambitions in especially prominent ways . . .

I-statements are only part of rhetoric, and comparatively little is known about them at present. But ... they can shed light on the motivational dynamics of discourse. Speakers who use a great many self-references hint strongly that a special persona is being created in the texts they produce (pp. 225-229).

As demonstrated in Table 3.2, National's use of I-statements was not particularly high in relation to other parties. Consistent with its promotion of the National team in its television advertising, it seems that offering the leader as a product was important but not necessarily a crucial communication goal for National in 1999.

**Table 3.2: I-statements per minute in 1999 opening night address.**

Party	Total minutes	Total personal pronoun spoken by party leader	Mean, ranked highest to lowest
Alliance	8	9	1.125
NZ First	8	7	.875
National	12	7	.583
ACT	8	3	.375
Labour	12	4	.333
United NZ	4	1	.25
Greens	4	0	0

Having said that, National was not particularly consistent with its offering. A wide variety of slogans, across a broad range of communications media were offered in exchange for the party vote. These included billboards:

Value your country. Vote National with your party vote .

Trust yourself. Not them. Vote National with your party vote;

and newspaper advertisements:

Give National your party vote. Keep New Zealand going forward.

New Zealand works better with National...so give National your party vote.

Vote National with your party vote. Keep your say. It's your job. It's your pay.

Compared to Labour's newspaper and billboard messages, which differed little in verbal and visual content from one medium to another, for most of the campaign National's message had very little visual or thematic consistency, although they did keep a typographic consistency with their use of a condensed sans serif typeface, a "work-horse" display face used to enhance legibility. Low awareness voters seeking cognitive shortcuts with which to make an effective decision would have found it hard to pick exactly what National stood for, especially at a time when Labour's intentions were being simply and repeatedly spelled out in its slogans and visual imagery (discussed further in Section 3.2).

### **Competitor Orientation**

Using the market share typologies, National would be considered market leader on the basis of its 1996 election result. However, National entered the official campaign period 2-5 points behind Labour in public opinion polls, having been largely trailing it since mid 1997. Complicating the context further was the market position of the National and Labour Party leaders, with Jenny Shipley performing better than her party in the opinion polls and leading Labour leader Helen Clark as preferred Prime Minister going into the campaign. Shipley's average levels of personal support from the beginning of her period in office at the beginning of 1998 to the election had been about 27 per cent. Helen Clark's had been about 23 per cent (Vowles, 2002a). Thus National's market positioning was far from straightforward. It went into the official 1999 campaign period effectively as both market leader and challenger.

In theory, as market leader National had three strategic options: to expand the total market, expand its market share further and defend its market share. It seems National chose the latter, through its message of stability, competence in office and no change. National was also prepared for possible attack on its trustworthiness over the past nine years from Labour. It included in its television commercials a series of confessions. Approximately ten seconds into each front-bench television commercial, after the Minister was introduced with their family, came an admission of error. For example, Bill English:

You know I really did underestimate the effect the drought would have on our economy and I really do think that was a mistake. But we've reduced inflation from over ten percent to under two percent and we've kept it there...

The expectation of a confessional advertisement is that voters will “forgive” candidates who publicly admit their mistakes. Controlling the circumstances of the confession is considered safer than waiting for an attack in an uncontrolled situation like a news media interview or a debate, when the answers might be less prepared (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997).

While confessing, the National ministers spoke direct to camera, the camera slowly zooming in, a televisual convention alerting viewers to the opening up of the true feelings of the speaker (Image 3.1.15). Communicating sincerity convincingly would have been a very important component of this message as admitting mistakes had not been a characteristic of the Shipley government before the campaign.



Image 3.1.15: Stills from National's Creech and English television commercials, 1999.

Despite the camera zoom in, the direct eye contact and the words of apology, National did not appear to be entirely sincere in its message. Firstly, the mistakes apologised for were ones not entirely within the control of the National ministers: the Asian economic crisis; the drought; fathers not spending enough time with their children. National ignored the mistakes that voters and the media mistrusted it for, and that Labour eventually attacked it on, like excess public sector payouts to chief executives. In National's last year in office there had been a number of embarrassing scandals over the high levels of “golden handshake” payments made to Tourism Board members and to Television New Zealand newsreader John Hawkesby. Secondly, the facial expressions of some of the front bench as they made the confessions were not

convincing. Bill English and Wyatt Creech have small smiles, almost smirks on their faces, exposing a lack of personal conviction about their verbal message.

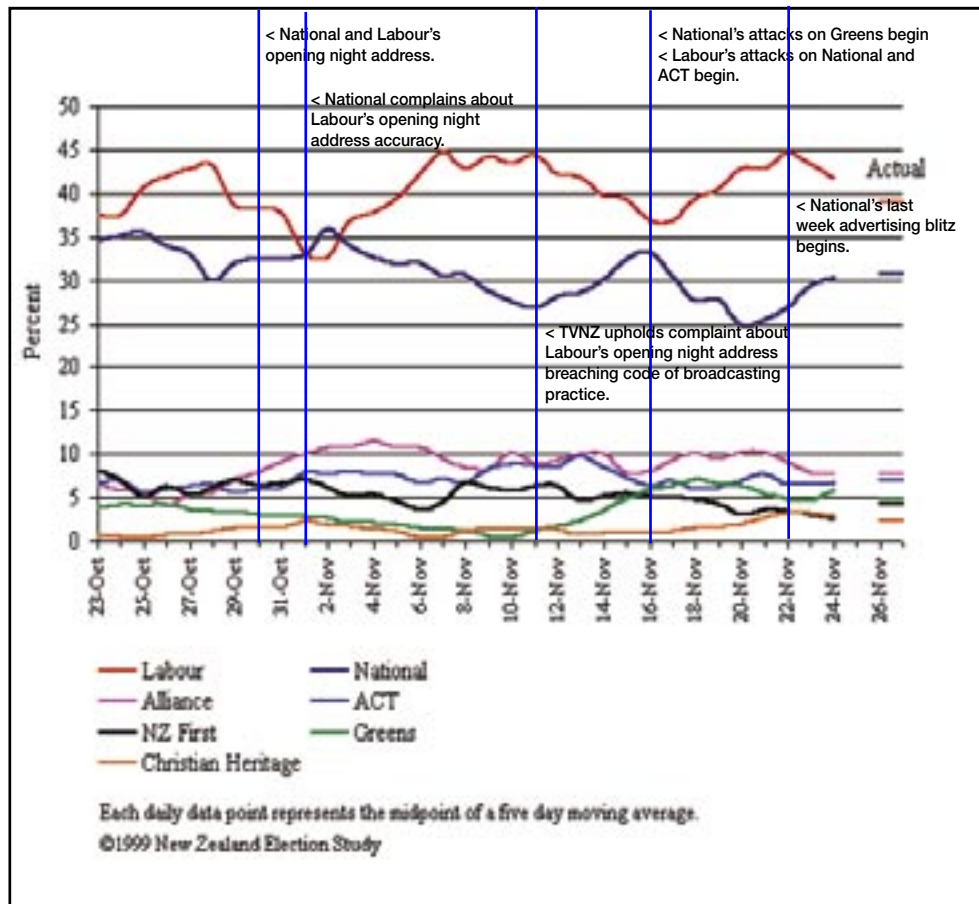
Interestingly, defence against attack on its trustworthiness seemed to be all that National had anticipated ahead of the campaign. Despite having plenty of advance warning of Labour's policy platform (Labour's commitment card, discussed later on in Section 3.2, had been released in May 1999) National did not seem to be prepared for Labour's policy challenge. National's initial campaign defence did not respond to Labour's seven commitments. Only in the final week of the campaign did National address Labour's commitments with seven promises, under the heading "Keep New Zealand on Track" in a brochure mailed to all households (Image 3.1.16), in its final newspaper advertisements and the closing night address.



Image 3.1.16: National's commitment brochure, 1999.

That the response to Labour's commitments came so late in the campaign was not necessarily poor strategy, as many voters had still to make their voting decision. From the NZES Vowles (2002a) found at least a quarter of voters had still to make up their mind one week out from election day in 1999: 14 per cent of voters made their voting decision in the last week of the campaign, and 12 per cent made it on election day itself. As can be seen in the NZES tracking poll for the 1999 campaign (see Figure 3.1, p. 58), National's support began to rise and Labour's to decline in the last week of the campaign.

Figure 3.1: NZES tracking poll 1999.



\*Lines and events have been added by me to the original NZES chart.

Rather than promoting new policy or seeking out new voters, as a market leader might be expected to do in defence of their position, most of National's defensive behaviour involved attack on other parties. In this regard National behaved more like a challenger than a market leader.

One benefit that National offered voters was its tax cut policy. However, rather than promote this as a positive policy alternative to Labour, National largely ignored promoting its own policy and focused the agenda on Labour's tax increase policy, emphasising the negative aspects of such a policy. National's attacks were initially conducted using a series of billboard and newspaper messages. The advertisements and billboards relied on purely text slogans and the colours black and white to communicate their meaning (Images 3.1.17 and 3.1.18).



Image 3.1.17: National newspaper advertisement, 1999.



Image 3.1.18: National billboard, 1999.

The attack billboards did not include National's party logo. The only indication they were National billboards lay in the small print containing the authorisation of J.J. Grant, 57 Willis St, Wellington, and only if a viewer knew Grant was National's campaign director would they have made an absolute connection of the messages with the National Party.



Image 3.1.19: National billboard, 1999.

While this tactic may have encouraged passers by to read the message without prejudice, and allowed National to avoid the repercussions of being closely associated with a negative message, it added an element of confusion. At a time when National should have been getting as many party vote benefits as possible from identification with a message, National was in effect gifting its attack message to all parties opposed to Labour's tax policy (Image 3.1.19).

National's defensive behaviour also involved attacks on smaller parties the Greens and the Alliance, and in this regard National continued to behave more like a challenger than a market leader. National's strategy seemed to be to promote its own stability by drawing attention to the instability of other parties.

National's strong attack on the Green Party mid-campaign was one of the defining features of the 1999 campaign. Deeply concerned about a Green upsurge the previous week to five per cent in party vote support and Jeanette Fitzsimons' lead on the National Coromandel candidate of 3-4 percentage points, Conservation Minister Nick Smith complained to police on 16 November about a link on the Greens' web site to a site advocating sabotage and eco-terrorism. The next day Jenny Shipley paid a visit to the Coromandel electorate during which she drew attention to the Greens' policy to decriminalise cannabis. Backing up her accusations, a postcard was disseminated to Coromandel voters accusing Green co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons, and candidates Sue Bradford and Nandor Tanczos of extreme views and tendencies. The card pronounced: "The Greens. Worrying Facts and Faces You Need to Know" overlaid over an image of a cannabis leaf (Image 3.1.20). The strong inference was



that a vote for the Green Party would be a vote in support of cannabis law reform, which at the time was a negative connotation.

**The Greens  
WORRYING  
FACTS & FACES  
You Need to Know**

**Under MMP:**

**A vote for  
JEANETTE FITZSIMONS**

- Opposes Replacement of single lane Kipui Bridge
- Supports immediate legalisation of cannabis and education programmes for school children on "safe" cannabis use
- Voted against tougher penalties for home invasion
- Opposes international trade
- Would scrap Airforce and Navy

**=**

**will help elect  
SUE BRADFORD**

- Professional Prostitute
- Unemployed for years
- Opposes community work for unemployed
- Faced over 15 charges for assault of police, obstructing police, obstruction of justice, assault, trespass, resisting arrest and breach of bail
- Avowed Communist and Marxist

**+**

**and  
NANDOR TANCZOS**

- Restaurateur, Leader Wildt Greens
- Openly supports sabotage and breaking of the law
- Co-ordinated vandalism of Canterbury research crop
- Imported safety kits for Ecstasy use in New Zealand
- Opposes prisons
- '96 Cannabis Party candidate
- Greens Justice spokesperson

**THINK BEFORE YOU VOTE**

Adapted by W. Lee, 77 Saddle Road, Whittier

Image 3.1.20: National's 1999 postcard attacking the Greens.

The attacks were panned in the news media for their heavy-handedness, and National's poll support plummeted. But to National the Green challenge represented much more than loss of a single electorate seat. Were the Greens to win the seat their party votes would all count, they would have a larger foothold in parliament than they had as part of the Alliance, and there would be a significant alteration to the New Zealand political landscape and to the number of seats National held in the House. In the last week of the campaign a new National newspaper advertisement attacked the Greens in addition to Labour and the Alliance (Image 3.1.21).



Image 3.1.21: National newspaper advertisement, 1999.

This newspaper advertisement coincided with a series of 15 second television commercials screened in the last week of the campaign attacking Labour's tax and employment contracts policies, and the prospect of a Labour/Alliance or a Labour/Alliance/Green coalition. All the commercials featured a red balloon for Labour and green balloons for the Alliance and the Greens (Images 3.1.22 and 3.1.23). A male voice-over was spoken with a tone of scepticism. After the first statement the Labour balloon burst with a loud bang, followed by the Alliance and Green balloons bursting with a bang after the statement "Let's not go back". For example:

Voice Over (V/O): Under a Labour/Alliance government everyone working full-time will pay more tax. They will stop the tax cuts promised by National. And they'll put a tax on success and on hard work. [Labour balloon burst]

Let's not go back. [Alliance balloon burst]

Give National your party vote.



Image 3.1.22: National Tax television commercial, 1999.

and

V/O: Labour say they can work in harmony with the Alliance. Oh really?  
 What happens when you add the Greens? How many agendas do you  
 want working in government? New Zealand does not need an unstable  
 government. Not now [Labour balloon burst]

Not ever. [Alliance and Green balloons burst together]

Give National your party vote.



Image 3.1.23: National Stable Government television commercial, 1999.

### ***Coalition Options***

With the coalition arrangement with New Zealand First having almost destroyed the previous government, it was ACT that most commentators considered would be the most appropriate party for National to enter into a new coalition arrangement with. However, despite National having been propped up in office for much of the last term by ACT, there was no mention of ACT as a potential coalition partner in National's advertising messages. National's last week of the election campaign newspaper advertisements read "A vote for any other party will NOT help National or New Zealand". There was therefore no indication that a National/ACT coalition was desirable from National's perspective, even though on a working level it would have been eminently so. There was little indication from ACT that it desired to be part of a coalition either. In fact, ACT started the campaign with strong attacks on National's performance in government, which National did not defend (discussed further in Section 3.5).

### ***Last Week***

In the last week of the campaign National engaged in a television advertising blitz, screening many different 15 second television commercials each evening. For example, of the 13 political advertisements screened on TV One between 6pm and 9pm on Wednesday 24 November 1999, three days out from the election, eight were National television commercials. Labour, New Zealand First, ACT, the Alliance and the Christian Heritage party screened only one each. National's included its series of balloon attack television commercials, a message from Shipley calling for stability and a further set highlighting a more personal aspect to Shipley, smiling and enjoying the company of others (Image 3.1.7). Demonstrated was a consistency and confidence in message that National had not demonstrated in the previous weeks of the campaign. An association can be seen in the NZES tracking survey between the blitz, a decline in Labour's popularity and rise in National's in the last week of the campaign (see Figure 3.1, p. 58).

### **Discussion**

Although its party vote only declined 3.3 per cent from its 1996 percentage, National failed to be in a position to form the next government in the election. It received 30.5 per cent of the party vote to Labour's 38.7 per cent. While neither was able to form a majority government, Labour quickly entered a coalition agreement with the Alliance and formed a minority government. National found itself in opposition.

Political scientists Stephen Levine and Nigel Roberts (2000) explain National's electoral outcome as this: "Just over 3 per cent of respondents considered the government's performance to have been 'very good'. By contrast, five times as many respondents thought the government's performance had been 'very poor'" (p. 163). They point to the large numbers of people angry and disaffected by both the MMP electoral system, and the government's poor handling of a wide range of "quality of life" issues. Jack Vowles argues for the electoral life-cycle and the "degenerative effect on a government's support of an extended period in office" as an explanation for the electoral outcome (2002b, p. 98). He points out that "as governments tend to lose support at successive elections, and sometimes history is a guide to future expectations, all other things being equal the odds were low that National would win a fourth victory in a row in 1999" (p. 97).

National MP Annabel Young in her (2000) review in *Left Turn* of National's 1999 campaign strategy confirmed that the party had little in the way of coordinated strategic direction, and that there was general confusion in the ranks about National's overall strategy. She blamed the loss on the party's difficulty in retaining a campaign focus while also meeting the daily operational demands of being in power:

National's confusion of strategy, tactics and operations may have been a result of being in government. It seems that incumbency led to an assumption that being in government was itself the strategy (p. 35).

What additional perspectives does this political marketing examination offer? National had a message that connected it with its core target audience. Its vision of heartland New Zealand lifestyle and values, which included images of nuclear families on farms, in country gardens, renovated villas and the main streets of provincial towns, and of personal achievement and competence in government, seemed to be shared by many core supporters. The party retained a considerable number of loyal National voters. According to the NZES, 73.4 per cent of its voters had voted National in 1996 (Vowles, 2002b, p. 89).

But National could offer little new other than a handful of fresh cabinet ministers promising a continuation of what had gone on before, and this was not enough to attract new voters. Both National and Labour argued that they understood the needs of ordinary voters. However, while Labour offered the image of a leader who could be trusted to care for the needs of ordinary New Zealanders, National could only offer MPs who appeared more concerned with their own and their families' needs. There was scant evidence of National's concern for others. While the choice of advertising

images confirmed that National understood *how* to govern, they left unanswered the question of *why* they were governing.

Moreover, it was hard to know exactly what National was exchanging for the party vote. There were many offers inconsistently presented across a range of media. The NZES found that National was not as close as Labour to most issues of concern to voters, but its closest issues were the economy and taxes (Vowles, 2002a, p. 23). However, it was not enough to bring in new voters, because it transpired that National's focus on tax was not in an area of priority to most voters in 1999. The 1998 New Zealand Values Survey found that New Zealanders were not averse to tax rises, if they were to help put more money into health and education (Perry & Webster, 1999). The 1999 NZES also found the economy, taxes and unemployment of much less concern to New Zealanders than health and education. Nor did taxes or unions feature in the list of issues that were of great personal concern in the NZ Political Change Project survey (Levine & Roberts, 2000). Nor was stability a great need amongst a majority voters either. Survey evidence confirms that New Zealand voters were much less interested in stability than other issues. The New Zealand Political Change Project's 1999 pre-election survey identified stability as a low ranking problem for most New Zealanders (Levine & Roberts, 2000). That National was rejected in the polls suggests that rather than wanting more of the same, voters may have wanted to be saved from more of the same.

In its market defence National made an attempt at acknowledging the frustration felt by voters by apologising for some mistakes, but the apologies were not sincere, were not the apologies voters may have been looking for, and were insufficient to deflect the attacks of other parties. National lost votes to Labour, ACT and New Zealand First (Vowles, 2002b, p. 89), the parties that attacked the government most vociferously in their advertising messages (these attacks will be discussed in later sections). National's own attacks on Labour, the Alliance and the Greens ultimately seemed to halt their threatened rise one week out from the election, however. The NZES tracking poll (see Figure 3.1, p. 58) saw support for the Greens decline from a high of just over seven per cent on 18 November to just over five per cent, and support for Labour decline from a high of 45 per cent to 38.7 per cent, while support for National rose in the last week from 27 per cent to 30.5 per cent on election day. Nonetheless, National did not succeed in keeping the Greens out of parliament. The Greens won Coromandel and also crossed the five per cent threshold.

Any party that gets 30 per cent of the party vote and retains over 70 per cent of its core supporters from the previous election still has a lot in common with its core

supporters. But the evidence from the party's political advertising demonstrated a party no longer able to identify and satisfy the needs of sufficient numbers of *additional* voters needed to stave off Labour's challenge.

## 4.2: LABOUR 1999

### Context

In 1999 it had been nine years since the Labour Party was last in government. It lost to National in 1990 after a tumultuous six year period in office. It was well and truly punished at that election, winning only 29 seats to National's 67. The 1990 and 1993 elections were fought under the leadership of Mike Moore. The 1993 result was much closer, with National winning 50 seats and Labour 45. Nonetheless, Mike Moore did not last long as leader after the second loss and Helen Clark successfully challenged for the leadership in late 1993.

A lingering distrust of the 1984-90 Labour government and perceived internal divisions in the party continued to plague the Labour Party (Hirschfeld, 1997), resulting in poor public opinion poll results throughout 1994 and 1995. Towards the end of 1995 the situation looked even bleaker for Labour when it began to be outpolled by the Alliance, a new party formed out of voters of the left who were disillusioned with the previous Labour government. In addition, Clark trailed behind Alliance leader Jim Anderton as preferred Prime Minister. Heading into Clark's first campaign as leader of the Labour Party in the first MMP election in 1996, Labour's poll results began to rise, and the party eventually regained its position as second highest polling party. Commentators thought Clark had performed well in the campaign, especially in the televised debates (Aimer, 1997). It was not yet enough to oust National, which managed to win 33.8 per cent of the party vote to Labour's 28.2 per cent. This did not stop Labour entering into coalition negotiations with third ranking party New Zealand First, although the outcomes were not favorable for Labour, denying Clark the opportunity to become New Zealand's first female Prime Minister. That honour fell to National's Jenny Shipley in November 1997.

Tensions in the National/New Zealand First coalition appeared not long after the 1996 election and soon Labour overtook National as most popular political party. When Jenny Shipley rolled Jim Bolger for the National Party leadership in late 1997 National had sunk to around 30 per cent in Colmar Brunton polling, and Labour had risen to around 52 per cent. During the next year the parties played see-saw in the polls – when one went up the other went down. The Labour and Alliance parties took advantage of the growing unpopularity of the coalition government to build a strategic foundation for the 1999 election and agreed to enter a non-aggression pact for the 1999 campaign. Come 1999 Labour was ahead in the polls for most of the time, though the gap between the two big parties was never great (Aimer & Miller, 2002).



## Campaign Objectives

Entering the 1999 campaign many signs were pointing to a Labour victory. According to Labour's 1999 campaign director Mike Williams (2000), the party's electoral objectives were to:

- be in contention as the senior partner in a centre-left coalition government; and
- improve its 1996 vote (28.2 per cent) by over ten per cent .

## Voter Orientation

"Ordinary kiwis" were Labour's primary target audience in 1999. Images of a range of New Zealanders featured in Labour's opening night address, in two television commercials on high rotation, and in still photographs in printed material. Ordinary kiwis were also mentioned frequently in Labour's verbal dialogue, as in this excerpt from a high rotation television commercial which featured New Zealanders of a wide variety of ages, sexes and ethnic backgrounds:

Man: "Helen, most of us are finding it pretty tough these days."

Helen Clark: "You're absolutely right. I'm hearing that all 'round New Zealand from ordinary kiwis who just want to get ahead."

Woman: "So what do we do?" ...



Image 3.2.1: Clark in the Park Labour television commercial, 1999.

The references to ordinary New Zealanders that peppered Labour's advertising rhetoric had been tested in 1996. Juliet Roper (2000), in her study of the campaign discourse in Labour's 1996 written texts, found that much of it addressed ordinary New Zealanders, identified by Labour as working New Zealanders who had not been affected by the economic recovery of the 1990s. Not included in Labour's definition of ordinary in 1996 were beneficiaries or the poor who were instead targeted by the Alliance.

Seven target groups featured in Labour's opening night address (Image 3.2.2). Four were beneficiaries: a male sickness beneficiary, one female sole parent on the DPB in state housing, one female sole parent in emergency housing and one female pensioner. The others were a female medical student, a male entrepreneur, and a mature female secondary school teacher. In Labour's television advertising Clark never met with any other socio-economic groups. Labour's extension of the definition of ordinary to include beneficiaries/poor was a significant incursion into the target voter territory occupied by the Alliance in the 1996 campaign.



Image 3.2.2: Stills from Labour's 1999 opening night address.

Labour's message was aimed more at women than men: five of the seven members of Labour's target voter group were female. Only one of the target voters in the opening night address was of non-European ethnicity, although Pacific workers were seen in the background of the segment on industry assistance. In 1996 Labour had received a shock when many Maori voters split their vote, giving their electorate vote to New Zealand First and their party vote to Labour. For the first time in over half a century Labour no longer had a monopoly on the Maori seats. It might have been expected that Labour would have made more of an effort to include Maori in its 1999 target audience images. While Maori were present in the advertisements they were not singled out for special attention.

Another group targeted by Labour's advertising messages were young urban professionals. Labour's one attack television commercial (discussed as a strategy later) tracked a dark haired New Zealand European man in his 30s, wearing a dark collarless shirt underneath a dark jacket, walking up an inner city street and talking direct to camera (Image 3.2.3). That he was not wearing a shirt and tie suggested that he was not necessarily an office worker or bureaucrat. Locating him walking in a city street indicated, however, that the message was targeted at an urban rather than rural audience, differentiating the party from National. His lack of smile connoted a degree of seriousness about the issue, and the tone of his voice indicated his sense of anger at government expenditure decisions. The direct gaze between the man and viewers demanded an affinity with him. The television commercial was tonally dark and largely colourless, adding to the impression of the troubled state the man finds himself in as a result of government expenditure decisions.



Image 3.2.3: Stills from Labour's 1999 attack television commercial.

A further target group for Labour's television advertising messages were previous Labour Party supporters who had left the party in dismay at the Fourth Labour

government's actions in the 1980s. In 1999 Labour sidestepped reference to that government and reminisced about earlier times in Labour's political history. In Labour's opening night address Helen Clark noted that "fifty years ago this country had the third highest standard of living in the world. Today we rank around 25th", thus signaling her desire to be identified with the goals of the First Labour government of Joseph Savage and Peter Fraser in the period 1935-1949 when New Zealand last featured at the top of the OECD tables. There was also a nostalgic link to the Kirk Labour government in Labour's 1999 slogan "It's time for a change, only a vote for Labour can change the government" which was similar to the Kirk Labour Party's 1972 slogan "It's time. For Labour". This signaled the party's desire to return to its social democratic roots; a message that sought to appeal to voters who had latent predispositions towards the 'old' Labour Party.

### *Sensing Need*

In the first few seconds of its 1999 opening night address Labour signaled it had been listening to ordinary New Zealanders (Image 3.2.4):

Helen Clark: You know people often think that politicians are out of touch, and they might have a point. It's easy to get remote from the realities of everyday life. That's why I spend as much time as possible meeting people, asking them questions and listening to them talk about the realities of the challenges they face. These folk aren't whingers and moaners. They're ordinary hard working kiwis who just want to get ahead and achieve their goals. But sometimes there are just too many barriers in the way.



Image 3.2.4: Still from Labour's 1999 opening night address.

In the rest of the broadcast Helen Clark was seen visiting people in their own homes and one in his factory. Commenting on the making of the opening night address Brian Edwards, who devised Labour's 1999 opening night address, said:

It would be an interesting idea, and very much in keeping with Helen's way of approaching things, that rather than have a sort of hyped advertising sort of [sic] message she should do what she does all the time which is talk to ordinary people (in Venter, 1999b).

It is highly unlikely this is what a busy opposition leader just about to fight an important election would in fact do on her own in her spare moments. But the idea that Clark personally cared for ordinary New Zealanders was a potent one. Images of an unaccompanied Clark walking around under an umbrella on a grey day implied that she was not a "typical" disinterested politician so much as a good Samaritan, going out of her way to get in touch with the distressed. In the broadcast Helen Clark assumed the role of a sympathetic interviewer. She was seen listening, sharing a cup of tea and nodding in empathy with her interviewees (Image 3.2.5).



Image 3.2.5: Stills from Labour's 1999 opening night address.

A familiarity with the news-documentary genre by those who might also watch a current affairs programme like *60 Minutes* or *20/20*, where reporters talk with victims of some event in the security of their own homes, contributed to the meaning of the broadcast. The interviewees appeared to be giving unscripted responses. Used in advertisements personal anecdotes make compelling cognitive shortcuts because they have a reality and immediacy that enhance their believability (Perloff, 1993).

Here was a major difference between National and Labour's visual interpretation of the concept of ordinary. Both parties had policies targeted at ordinary New Zealanders.

But while National's concept of ordinary suggested that it understood the needs of ordinary New Zealanders because its MPs were ordinary too, Labour's demonstrated that Labour understood the needs of ordinary New Zealanders because its leader had been listening to them.

In terms of inclusive language engaged in the opening night address, Labour had the lowest mean use of the inclusive pronouns we and our (see Table 3.1, p. 47). This does not accord with the visual message of togetherness Labour was demonstrating. However, much of Labour's opening night address featured other people talking in the interview situations. Helen Clark addressed viewers directly for only two minutes of the 12 minute broadcast, during which she uttered the words we and our frequently. Labour was also ranked fifth of all parties in terms of the average number of I-statements spoken in the opening night address (see Table 3.2, p. 54). Despite Helen Clark being the focus of the broadcast, the impression was that Clark was not doing this for personal gain, but for the people.

The message that Helen Clark had an ability to connect with ordinary people was carried through to Labour's two high rotation television commercials. Located in an informal park setting, an establishing shot showed a crowd gathering around her. Cameras and microphones were visible, adding to the impression of the moment being "live", despite the event being artificially staged and cast. According to Labour's advertising consultant Fraser Carson (personal communication, 7 February 2002), the people were Labour Party members bussed in for the day. The message was that Helen Clark was not only comfortable and could speak easily in natural surroundings, but she was approachable and that ordinary people flocked to listen to her because she was a significant person (Image 3.2.1).

Throughout the history of art and mythology a significant personality or leader will often be portrayed in the centre of circle surrounded by admirers. This is a visual code derived from a perceived need for people to place themselves in direct communication with a "centre", be it in the form of a person or location, imbued with sacred power (Campbell, 1988). Locating Helen Clark in the middle of a circle of admirers made her look like a significant leader. It would therefore not have required a great leap of faith for voters to believe her when she ended the television commercial speaking close-up and direct to camera of her commitment: "That's my promise to you and I intend to see it through".

Close-up facial images are frequently used to stimulate ideas of the honesty and integrity of a political candidate (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). To see close-up facial images, report visual researchers Carey Jewitt and Rumiko Oyama (2001)

is to see them in the way we would normally see people with whom we are more or less intimately acquainted. Every detail of their face and their expression is visible. We are so close to them we could almost touch them. They reveal their individuality and personality (p. 146).

Images involving direct eye contact, or gaze, communicate similar messages. A direct gaze draws its attention-getting power from people's real-life tendency to look back when looked at (Messaris, 1997) and communicates an imaginary relationship between image and viewer. Visual communication scholars Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996) call this an *image act*, one that demands from viewers that they enter into a relation of affinity with the beliefs of the image. It is also an attempt to inspire trust. "By appearing to look the viewer squarely in the eyes, the politician may also appear to be an aboveboard, nothing-to-hide kind of person", says advertising researcher Paul Messaris (1997, p. 23).

### **Labour's Offer**

For much of the time between taking over leadership of the Labour Party in 1993 to the first MMP election in 1996, Helen Clark's levels of personal popularity in opinion polls were extremely low (2-3 per cent). Brian Edwards, in his 2001 biography *Helen*, describes the perception the public had of Helen Clark for many years as

bloodless, bluestocking, cold, humourless, remote in her thinking and her interests from the concerns of ordinary people, a mind without a heart. Her "marriage of convenience" [to husband Peter Davis] and self-imposed childlessness were advanced as evidence of a lack of womanly feeling and a willingness to sacrifice everything and everyone to political ambition. Her sexuality was called into question, her looks disparaged, her manner of speaking ridiculed (p. 274).

Over the years, however, she worked hard to cement her leadership, all the while receiving media training and grooming (Edwards, 2001). By 1999 Clark was considered by the Labour Party to have become such an asset that the meaning of the party was entirely carried by her. She was the Labour Party's principal offer in exchange for the party vote. A photographic image was created that was the antithesis to the perception of her described above by Edwards. This image was widely used on the commitment card (discussed later), on party billboards, on party newspaper advertisements, on its web-site home page, on printed brochures and in the policy document mailed to homes (Image 3.2.6). The photographer, Monty Adams, claimed he wanted to

create a strong image that jumped out. He “surrounded her in glowing light, making her skin seem cleaner, teeth whiter and eyelashes blacker. She wore more makeup than usual, her eyebrows were blackened and her hair was groomed in a chic fringe” (quoted in Catherall, 1999, p. A5). The camera angle had her looking up ever so slightly at the viewer, a subservient position for someone with a prior reputation for being overly dominating. There was even a slight halo effect behind her, created by back lighting. These are techniques most commonly found in fashion photography to hide the worst and exaggerate the best features of any model; techniques that made Helen Clark appear soft, warm, friendly, approachable and attractive.



Image 3.2.6: Labour's 1999 party vote billboard.

The image drew much public and media attention for the way the portrait violated pre-existing perceptions of Clark's appearance, and a significant amount of media attention focused on whether it had been retouched or manipulated (for example, Trotter, 1999b; Bain, 1999c; Catherall 1999; Scott, 1999). Violation of expectation is a technique used in advertising to attract attention to a message. Messaris (1997) explains, "in a medium whose very essence is the ability to reproduce the look of everyday reality, one of the surest ways of attracting the viewer's attention is to violate that reality" (p. 5). When people's expectations are violated it has been found they are more likely to remember the content of messages (Graber, 1984; Perloff, 2003). There is a basis for this in the way the brain processes information. If messages received are compatible with pre-existing cognitive networks there will not be a perceived need to alter reactions to them. Only when the cognitive system receives



signals that violate prior expectations (Barry, 1997; Boulding, 1956; Kunda, 1999) is there any possibility of voters questioning their pre-existing assumptions, or lack of them in the case of low awareness voters, and a message having any persuasion or conversion effects.

Commentators and scholars have expressed disappointment that so much media emphasis goes on personality traits and appearance of leaders to the detriment of issue coverage. But one reason why political campaigning in the televisual political world has become so focused on these elements is that personal appearance, facial expressions, gestures and posture are included in the range of images cognitively programmed for instinctive or emotional effect. Researchers have found that when voters look at a physically attractive candidate they feel positively about that candidate and “connect their positive affect with the candidate when it comes to casting their vote” (Perloff, 2003, p. 138). Whether we like it or not, persuasion scholar Richard Perloff adds, “people are more likely to pay attention to an attractive speaker, and this can increase the odds that they will remember message arguments.” (p. 170).

In the 1996 election there was a large gender gap between women and men voting Labour: 32 per cent of women to 24 per cent of men (Vowles, 2002b). According to political analyst Susan Banducci (2002) it was as a woman leader that Helen Clark may have attracted a disproportionate share of women in 1996. If Labour was able to appeal to as many men as women in 1999 its percentage of the vote could potentially be raised by a significant amount. Although it has not been publicly acknowledged by Labour campaign strategists, this particular campaign image seemed encoded for a male audience. Clark’s mouth and eyes were manipulated to make her appear more attractive – her teeth were straightened, a mole on her chin was removed and the blue of her eyes was brightened. Research into gender images in advertising has found that the areas of the face that attract the most attention are in a narrow zone encompassing the eyes and mouth (Messaris, 1997) and that images of women who smile broadly and have suggestive eyes are most frequently directed at a male audience (Goffman 1976; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

Later on in the campaign the image was supplemented with a still image from one of the television commercials encoded, through the hint of people and trees in the background, and her gaze away from the camera, to signify a more relaxed and natural Helen Clark (Image 3.2.7). This image implied a snapshot, rather than a posed image, of Helen Clark smiling and looking towards something off camera (to the *left* of the image, of course). Although this image was also slightly retouched, that it supplemented and in some cases replaced the earlier image suggests that even Labour may have found credibility a bit stretched by the other more controversial image.

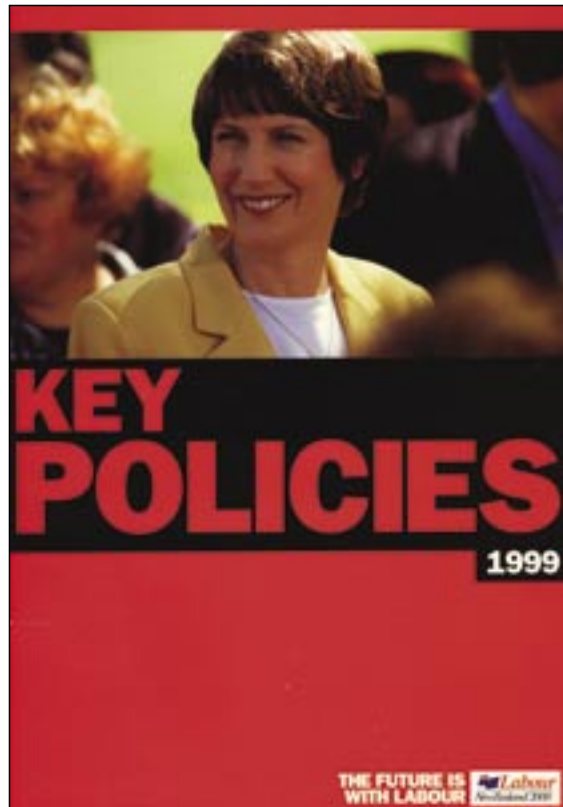


Image 3.2.7: Labour policy brochure, 1999.

### *Commitment Card*

Clark's earlier billboard image featured on the Labour Party's commitment card, a laminated card featuring the Labour Party's seven most pressing commitments (Image 3.2.8). The commitment card was an idea copied from the British Labour Party, who considered it to have helped them win the 1997 British General Election (Edwards, 2001). It was launched well out from the official campaign period at Labour's election congress in May 1999, in order to give the public sufficient time to get used to Labour's tax increase policy and steal a march on National (Williams, 2000). It was about the size of a credit card and became a very important symbol for Labour in the 1999 campaign. As well as the seven commitments, the card included Labour's logo, campaign slogan and party contact details as well as Helen Clark's signature and photograph, the words "My Commitment to You" in quotation marks and, in bold sans serif capitals the phrase "We will deliver." All Labour's key slogans were set in sans serif black caps, a type style that is normally reserved for headline type and to signify important information.



Image 3.2.8: Labour's 1999 commitment card.

Connoted by these elements were some significant messages. Firstly, that Helen Clark could be trusted to personally guarantee the commitments: her large signature, smiling face and speech marks were evidence of this – a signature on a credit card is a cultural signifier for honesty and veracity. Secondly, that Labour's promises were so simple and easy to understand they could be reduced to the size of a credit card. For low awareness voters searching for cognitive shortcuts to help them make their voting decisions, having simple phrases to consider instead of wordy brochures or manifestos could have been appealing.

The commitments closely matched six of the seven most important values held by New Zealanders at the time, as found in the New Zealand Values Study conducted in 1998 (Perry & Webster, 1999). These are summarised below in Table 3.3. The survey found substantial support for increased government expenditure in the health services (93 per cent) and the education system (90 per cent) even though it would mean higher taxes. The close reflection of Labour's commitment card pledges to the important issues identified by the Values Study is a sign that Labour had a good understanding of the needs of most voters.

**Table 3.3: Commitment card equivalence to NZ Values Study.**

<b>NZ Values Study: The responsibility of central government is to:</b>	<b>Commitment Card equivalent: Labour policy commitment is to:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a decent standard of living for the old (95 per cent agreed)</li> </ul>	4. Reverse the 1999 cuts to superannuation rates. Guarantee superannuation in the future by putting a proportion of all income tax into a separate fund which <u>cannot</u> be used for any other purpose.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impose strict laws to make industry do less damage to the environment (94 per cent)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide industry with the help it needs to grow (91 per cent)</li> </ul>	1. Create jobs by promoting industries and better support for exporters and small business.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep prices under control (87 per cent)</li> </ul>	7. No rise in income tax for the 95 per cent of taxpayers earning under \$60,000 a year. No increase in GST or company tax.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide decent housing for those who can't afford it (87 per cent)</li> </ul>	5. Restore income related rents for state housing so that low income tenants pay no more than 25 per cent of their income in rent.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a job for everyone who wants one (71 per cent)</li> </ul>	1. Create jobs by promoting industries and better support for exporters and small business.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce income differences between the rich and poor (60 per cent)</li> </ul>	7. No rise in income tax for the 95 per cent of taxpayers earning under \$60,000 a year. No increase in GST or company tax.

***Future Orientation***

Unlike National, which essentially offered a continuation of more of the same, Labour offered a vision of the future. “The future is with Labour” was one of its campaign slogans. In its advertisements Labour’s message about the future was conveyed in images of children. Images of children carry many meanings that turn them into potent symbols for the future. The child is often a symbol of the nascent “Self”, representing “the strongest, most ineluctable urge in every being, namely the urge to realize itself” says symbologist Anthony Stevens (1998, p. 240). When people see images of children, they are reminded of their own hopes and dreams. People also respond to images of children from an innate predisposition to nurture (Messaris, 1997). Images of children (like baby animals) trigger a range of feelings in viewers from vulnerability and innocence to opportunity and potential. These were

communicated by the children that featured in a 30 second “Future is with Labour” television commercial (Image 3.2.9), that debuted at the end of Labour’s 1999 opening night address and continued to be regularly screened on television throughout the rest of the campaign. The television commercial used a variety of speeds and camera angles, soft lighting, cute kids of a variety of ethnic backgrounds and ages, dreaming innocently of what the future would hold. Those adults who had similar fantasies of the future, or who had children, might identify with the idealism of the children and in turn identify with Labour.

Child 1: The world’s going to be a better place.

Child 2: Safer than it is now.

Child 3: The future’s going to be better.

Child 4: I think there might be bigger animals.

Child 5: Everything will be faster.

Child 6: And there won’t be any traffic jams.

Child 7: The future means change.

Child 8: I might go places.

Child 9: I want to go to Mars and see some Martians.

Child 10: Older people will be looked after better.

Child 11: More robots.

Child 12: A TV in every bedroom.

Child 13: The future is hope.

Child 14: A better place to live in.

Child 15: I want the future.

Child 16: I want to be part of the future.



Image 3.2.9: Stills from Labour’s 1999 Future television commercial.

Labour also had a billboard, full page double spread newspaper advertisement and posters featuring the smiling face of a boy wearing a Labour-red coloured tee-shirt, staring direct to camera, with his arms and hands folded behind his head in a relaxed

pose (Image 3.2.10). Like the television commercial, the message implied that Labour could be trusted to realise his future dreams. In many ways it was a risky image to select. Having a white skinned boy symbolise every New Zealand child risked alienating the parents of the majority of New Zealand children who were not white skinned or male. However, Labour needed to increase the numbers of male voters, and this image demonstrated Labour's desire to connect with them. Furthermore, the dominance of the boy's face and the size of the billboards and newspaper advertisement also served to loudly proclaim Labour's "ownership" of the future agenda. To move past double-page advertisements in newspapers requires more than the flick of an eye that it takes to skim over a smaller advertisement; instead it requires physical movement to turn a page, forcing the eye to linger for just a moment longer on the message and consider its meaning.



Image 3.2.10: Labour Party vote billboard, 1999/ Graffiti added to the original image by taggers.

Prior to the 1999 campaign there had been some speculation in the news media whether Helen Clark's childlessness made her in some way unfit to be a leader (Edwards, 2001). There was accordingly some sensitivity within the Labour camp that National might use this to attack Helen Clark (which it did, but not with the intensity anticipated by Labour). Primarily aimed at communicating Labour's positive future-focused theme, the images of children confirmed that the party did not need a leader with children in order for it to share New Zealanders' hopes for the future.

## Competitor Orientation

Given the dominance of National and Labour in New Zealand electoral history and the results of the 1996 election, in which Labour was the highest polling opposition party, Labour was without question the primary challenger to the National government in 1999. In terms of the competitive positioning typologies, Labour could have been expected to have attack as its strategic objective, be it direct attack on the market leader, attack on competitors of its own size or attack on small and regional competitors. Labour's market position was made complicated, however, by it being around three percentage points ahead of National in the public opinion polls going into the election. In effect this placed Labour, like National, in the position of being both challenger and market leader going into the campaign, and needing a message that took both into account.

Prior to the election it was reported in the news media that direct attack on National Party leader Jenny Shipley was indeed going to be the Labour Party's strategy. The April 1999 edition of *Metro* magazine featured an image of Helen Clark on its cover under the headline "Clark Attack: Labour's secret strategy" and editor Bill Ralston wrote of 1999 being the year of the "Clark attack", with Helen Clark as Labour's primary weapon in the party's election strategy:

Conceding that this will be a "presidential" campaign, a straight knock-down, drag-out slugfest between the Opposition Leader and the Prime Minister, Labour strategists are determined to pit Clark against Shipley at every opportunity this year. The spin doctors quickly realised, in policy terms, the difference between Labour and National is minimal. How could they sell Labour policies that differed only in a small degree from the Government's? The short answer is, they couldn't. The only logical alternative was to make the election campaign a straight personality contest, a battle of the battle-axes (p.44).

In the end, however, Clark did not adopt the role of challenger with the aggression anticipated by Ralston. Labour's desire to defend its role as market leader meant that Labour refrained from too much attack. Instead it tried to remain positive and future focused (Williams, 2000).

Shortly after the opening night addresses went to air National complained to the news media and to the TVNZ complaints committee that Labour had misrepresented the financial circumstances of two state house tenants spoken to in Labour's address. The NZES tracking poll showed a dramatic slide in Labour's popularity subsequent

to this (see Figure 3.1, p. 58). Although Labour recovered once the campaign fully got underway, Labour's popularity took a further slump when, on 11 November, TVNZ upheld the complaint, finding that Labour's opening night address breached the code of broadcasting practice that requires broadcasters to be truthful and accurate, and a guideline in the advertising code of ethics that says that advertising must not be misleading (Bain, 1999b; 1999c; Venter, 1999a; 1999b). If there is any relationship between the complaints and the polls, it was likely to be because of public disappointment at being misled, reflected by the *Dominion's* editorial of 10 November 1999:

Was Labour aware the item was misleading? Party adviser (and National Radio host) Brian Edwards insists that every attempt was made to ensure it was accurate. The conclusion must be that there was appalling carelessness or a serious political misjudgment.

Because of its desire to appear positive and future focused, Labour found it hard to deflect these "hits". Fortunately for Labour, most late deciding voters would not have made their voting decisions immediately following the opening night addresses or the TVNZ ruling. It was not until midway through the campaign that Labour began to attack National back, in the form of the "gutsful" advertisement discussed earlier, which was screened after 16 November, and a corresponding newspaper advertisement campaign discrediting "National's history" (Image 3.2.11). This was a double entendre announcing the end of National's "reign" as well as headlining evidence of the uncaring things National had done, drawn from the main daily newspapers over the previous two years. Significant in these newspaper advertisements was the placement of the headlines. In the close-up advertisement (Image 3.2.12), for example, the headline "Income disparities don't worry me, says Birch" is placed next to the headings "Fears for babies' health" and "Empty tummies dictate timing of school days", a gestalt placement linking the comment of Birch who readers familiar with New Zealand politics would read as National cabinet minister Bill Birch, and the health problems facing babies and school children. The headlines are all taken out of their original context, and reconstructed to form a body of documented evidence of disorder under the National government.

American researchers have noted that US political advertisements frequently try to offer some kind of proof to convince a voter to believe a candidate's claim. Such proof or evidence is often coded in the form of newspaper headlines or news copy (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1997; Kaid & Johnston, 2001). There is good reason for this. According to Perloff (1993) the research literature "strongly supports the





At a deeper level there is a disturbing aspect to the ripped headlines: a cinematic thriller aesthetic conventionally associated with obsessed fans or stalkers collecting evidence before planning some sort of attack. Viewers familiar with this visual code would not necessarily associate Labour as a party of axe-murders or rapists, but the advertisements might have triggered a sense of unease about the prospect of another National government, nonetheless. There is evidence to suggest that Labour's attack advertisements were effective. An association can be seen from 16 November onwards and a rise in Labour's popularity in NZES tracking polls (see Figure 3.1, p. 58), suggesting that the attack message might have contributed in some way to people's voting preferences at this time. This is an association Jack Vowles (2000) did not see – he could identify no change in Labour's fight, and put Labour doing well at this time down to National's attacks on the Greens.

Although Labour was apparently successful in attacking National midway through the campaign, it seemed to be unprepared for the need to respond to National's counter-attacks, especially in the last week of the campaign when they were intense. Labour's response constituted a wordy newspaper advertisement to counter National's newspaper advertisements (Image 3.2.13).

**The truth about tax**

"A desperate National party is not telling the truth about the taxes you will pay under a Labour government. My commitment to you is that people earning under \$60,000 a year, and that's 95% of those who pay income tax, won't be paying a single extra cent. There will be no increase in company tax or GST, and no new taxes either. Only money earned over \$60,000 will be taxed a modest 6 cents in the dollar more. The additional \$400 million raised will guarantee that we can deliver on our commitments to rebuild health and education and invest in our children's future. You have my word".

*Helen Clark*

Individual Income Tax (and Company Tax/Dividend)	Effect of Labour Tax Policy (per year)
< \$20,000	pay no more
\$20,000 - \$30,000	pay no more
\$30,000 - \$40,000	pay no more
\$40,000 - \$50,000	pay no more
> \$50,000	pay no more than \$5.7

**WE WILL DELIVER**

Only a Party Vote for Labour can change the Government

**Labour**  
New Zealand 2001

Image 3.2.13: Labour newspaper advertisement, 1999

National's recovery was not halted by Labour's counter-attack. During the last week of the campaign Labour went down in the polls and National went up, although the gap between the two parties was large enough for National's largely unanswered attacks to not adversely impact on Labour's chances of beating National to the finish line.

Labour's newspaper advertisements also warned voters about voting for ACT:

After nine years, National has plenty of excuses but no answers. But make no mistake: a vote for Act or anyone else won't do it. National controlled by Act will give us something far worse.

This election is our chance to restore that sense of pride we all have in New Zealand. Give your party vote to Labour and get rid of National and its hangers-on, and give New Zealand a new start and a better future.

ACT's response to these attacks will be discussed in Section 3.5.

Competition with the Alliance, Labour's principal rival for votes on the left, had already been effectively neutralised before the campaign when the two parties came to a non-aggression pact under which they agreed not to attack each other in the campaign (Vowles, 2000). Interestingly, although it was generally understood in the public arena that Labour would enter into a coalition arrangement with the Alliance following a successful election (Boston & Church, 2000; Campbell, 1999; McCarten, 2000; McLoughlin, 1999; Miller, 2002; Trotter, 1999), there was no evidence in any of Labour's advertising that it desired the Alliance to be a part of the next government. The word Alliance was not uttered or spelt out; Labour produced no visual images of cooperation. In Labour's closing night address Helen Clark put the choice between the two major parties only:

Good evening. At tomorrow's election you've got a choice to make. It's not just a choice between Labour and National, it's a choice between two very different futures for New Zealand.

No reference was made to other potential coalition partners like New Zealand First, with whom Labour had tried to negotiate a coalition arrangement in 1996, or the Greens, another party identified with the left. Labour's final newspaper advertisements and billboards were also strongly advocating a vote for Labour only, (Image 3.2.14). The day before the election Labour's newspaper advertisements (Image 3.2.15) read:

It's the Party Vote we need. The Party Vote is the only one that counts. A party vote for any other party is not a vote for Labour.



Image 3.2.14: Labour party vote billboard, 1999.

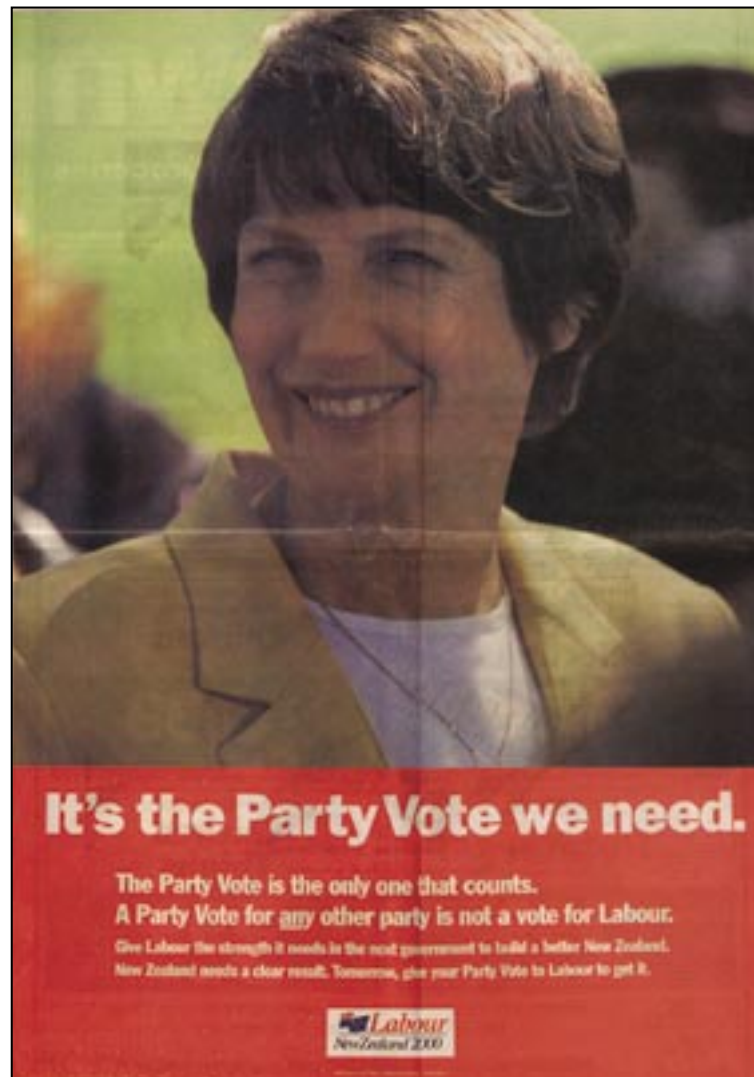


Image 3.2.15: Labour newspaper advertisement published on the day before the 1999 election.

There was a very subtle concession to the possibility of a coalition government in the next line, in smaller type and underneath the bolder statements, where it asked voters to “Give Labour the strength it needs *in* the next government . . .” (emphasis added) rather than “as” the next government. But omitting to mention the Alliance, New Zealand First or the Greens was, in effect, a sign of Labour’s preference to try and govern alone. Indeed, to a low awareness voter who had not taken much interest in politics in the prior six months there would be no obvious signs in Labour’s advertising that Labour had any intention of supporting the Alliance’s bid to win seats around the Cabinet table, just as there were no signs of National wanting ACT to join it in coalition either.

### **Discussion**

Labour achieved its electoral objectives. It gained 38.7 per cent of the party vote to National’s 30.5 per cent, and it became the senior partner in a centre-left coalition government with the Alliance. Neither Levine and Roberts (2000) or Vowles (2002) consider that Labour *won* the election, however. All agree that Labour’s victory was more a rejection of National than a vote for Labour. Nonetheless, they have also acknowledged that Labour was the party closest on most issues to the personal agenda of voters: “on issues of health, education, student loans, unemployment and superannuation, significantly more people (sometimes as high as two to three times as many) mentioning these matters went on to vote Labour rather than National” (Levine & Roberts, 2000, p. 170).

What political marketing factors might account for Labour’s 1999 electoral outcome? Labour had a much stronger voter orientation than National in 1999. Labour demonstrated that its leader had the ability to sense and respond to ordinary voters. In most of the party’s advertising images featuring Helen Clark she was talking to and interacting with voters. The strong message was that she cared, and evidence from the NZES shows that voters picked up on this message. 73.6 per cent of NZES respondents considered the word “compassionate” described Helen Clark well, compared to 37.6 per cent for Jenny Shipley.

The imaging of Helen Clark in 1999 demonstrated that it is not necessary to show images of incumbency, as National had done, in order to communicate strength in leadership. Susan Banducci (2002) has found the traits of “trustworthy” and “strong leader” to be good predictors of the party vote across all party leaders in 1999. If a voter perceived a particular leader to be trustworthy or a strong leader, there was quite a high probability they would give their party vote to the leader’s party. In Labour’s

case, a voter agreeing that the term trustworthy fit Helen Clark very well was 24 per cent more likely to vote for Labour than another party (p. 61).

Labour's message offered a party and leader that understood the lack of trust voters had in politicians, and addressed that through many signs of trust: verbal acknowledgement of the lack of trust felt by voters, reference to previous Labour governments that were trusted to uphold social democratic values, Helen Clark's personal promises to voters, the seal of her signature, the commitment card (the seven issues on which reflected the main issues of concern to voters in 1999), and her appealing photographic image. National, on the other hand, poorly addressed the issue of its own trustworthiness. It admitted, in an unconvincing manner, to mistakes that were not the mistakes that voters were angry at National for. It attempted to communicate its trustworthiness through more general signs of incumbency and the endorsement of world leaders. But these signs did not have the same personal connection with voters as Labour's. 73.1 per cent of NZES respondents considered the word trustworthy described Helen Clark well, compared to 47.6 per cent for Jenny Shipley; and 78.9 per cent of the survey respondents considered the words strong leader described Helen Clark well, compared to 69.2 per cent for Jenny Shipley (NZES, 1999d).

Labour also had greater benefits to offer than National in exchange for the party vote. In addition to Labour's relevant policy commitments, and its offer of a compassionate and trustworthy leader, Labour offered hope for the future. National was primarily offering stability and more of the same. Labour was consistent in its offer, verbally and visually throughout the campaign. National had so many different slogans it was hard to know exactly what National stood for. Labour was able to attract new voters from all over the political spectrum with its offer. According to the NZES 59.1 per cent of its 1999 vote were previous Labour supporters; 12.8 per cent were New Zealand First voters; 8.1 per cent were previous Alliance voters and 10 per cent came from National (Vowles, 2002b, p. 89).

In the area of competitor orientation Labour did not perform as well. Both Labour and National had difficulties behaving as market leader and challenger at the same time. So afraid was Labour of damaging its lead that it refrained from attacking National as much as it perhaps should have. National's attacks on the truthfulness of Labour's opening night address contradicted Labour's very strong trust message, and seemed to hurt Labour in the pre-election opinion polls. When Labour did finally attack back midway through the campaign, it had the desired effect and National went down in the polls. When Labour's attacks came off in the last week, National's support rose again. With the benefit of hindsight Labour should have acted as challenger for more

of the campaign. Labour's cautious strategy did not prevent it from achieving a higher proportion of the party vote than National on election day, but the margins between the two parties were closing back up by then.

### 4.3: NEW ZEALAND FIRST 1999

#### Context

New Zealand First was formed by MP Winston Peters shortly before the 1993 election. As a National MP and cabinet minister Peters had publicly criticised his party for its economic and social policy reforms. He was dismissed from cabinet as Minister of Maori Affairs by Prime Minister Jim Bolger in November 1991 for his maverick ways, but remained with National until July 1993 when he left to form New Zealand First. At the 1993 election New Zealand First won 8.4 per cent of the nationwide vote and two seats, that of Tauranga held by Peters, and Northern Maori, held by Peters' deputy Tau Henare.

New Zealand First was third highest polling party in 1996 with 13.4 per cent of the party vote, including the five Maori seats and the electorate seat of Tauranga. This gave it 17 seats in the House (six electorate and eleven list). Holding the balance of power it entered into a protracted series of coalition negotiations with both National and Labour following the 1996 election, ending up in formal coalition with National, an arrangement that many of its 1996 voters felt betrayed by (Donnelly, 2000). Prior to the 1996 election both Winston Peters and his 1996 deputy Tau Henare had foresworn any coalition arrangement with National and a majority of party supporters had demonstrated a preference for coalition with Labour (Miller, 2003b). Many of New Zealand First's voters thus perceived the party's decision to coalesce with National as a broken promise.

The coalition arrangement was not entirely harmonious. Ultimately New Zealand First's large number of inexperienced MPs, poor party management structures, lack of internal party discipline and an inability to see eye to eye with the National Party and its new leader on policy matters contributed to Jenny Shipley's dismissal of Winston Peters from Cabinet. This brought about the collapse of the coalition in August 1998 and the subsequent defection of eight of the seventeen New Zealand First MPs who went on to prop up the minority National government until the 1999 election (Miller, 2002).

New Zealand First entered the 1999 campaign, list MP Brian Donnelly (2000) recalls,

with a negative image with much of the electorate. Our party had been divided when we chose to go into government with the National Party; we were divided again when we left that government in August 1998; and



we were very much a weakened force as we faced the electorate again in November 1999 (p. 58).

In addition, the party recognised the high levels of volatility in the electorate, though not through market research – “We do not do polls” said Donnelly (2000, p. 58) – but by keeping their ear to the ground of the electorate.

### **Campaign Objectives**

Given all this, New Zealand First’s 1999 electoral objectives were not overly ambitious. According to Donnelly (2000), the party hoped to achieve just over the five per cent threshold with its party vote.

### **Voter Orientation**

New Zealand First had two primary target audiences in 1999: Maori and the elderly. Since the party’s inception in 1993 the elderly had been attracted to New Zealand First over its objection to National’s failure to lift the surcharge on superannuation; Maori had been attracted to the party because its leadership featured a number of prominent Maori MPs. Many Maori voters still felt disadvantaged by the changes brought about by the policies of the Fourth Labour government and were looking for an alternative voice in parliament (Sullivan, 2002).

Images of both target groups featured prominently at the commencement of New Zealand First’s 1999 opening night address. Screened in black and white, to add a sense of drama and documentary objectivity, as well as being the party’s colours, the broadcast featured images of a smiling Peters being greeted by well wishers, both Pakeha and Maori, and speaking at public rallies (Image 3.3.1). There were also images of an emotional Peters and his Maori supporters in the Beehive after Peters had been sacked as Minister of Maori Affairs by Prime Minister Jim Bolger in 1991.



Image 3.3.1: Stills from New Zealand First’s 1999 opening night address.

Following the black and white introductory sequence the opening night address moved to full colour and a different setting, one that might appeal more to the party's elderly voters. The comfy plush armchairs in front of a tiled fireplace and an antique vase with a lavish flower arrangement were images of reassurance of the social conservatism and traditional values of the party's leader (Image 3.3.2). In the broadcast Peters was interviewed by veteran New Zealand broadcaster Richard Griffin, a face that would have been familiar to older viewers.



Image 3.3.2: Stills from New Zealand First's 1999 opening night address.

The theme music from the opening and closing night addresses was the stirring, nationalistic hymn “I vow to thee my country” from *The Planets* by Gustav Holst, 1914–1916. This would also have been familiar to New Zealand's elderly voters and may have been familiar to rugby supporters too, having also been the theme music to the recently held Rugby World Cup.

Despite the inclusion of its target voter images, New Zealand First's campaign message in 1999 was focused more on the promotion of its leader than any demonstration of the party's ability to sense and respond to the needs of those voters. The opening night address sought to establish the leadership credentials of party leader Winston Peters, drawing unashamedly on the classic hero myth.

Studies of leadership image-making have found leaders to be often portrayed in terms of an ideal conception of achievement in a public role: not an ego-driven desire for money or power, but a willingness to commit to a higher calling or cause in the name of the greater good (Cammock, 2001; Nimmo & Combs, 1980; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997). Prominent in this ideal conception is the myth of the “hero's journey” (Campbell, 1988, 1993) which generally involves a hero growing up in a:

commonplace home where he eventually receives the call to adventure. Usually, he crosses some kind of threshold, and then is subjected to a series of ordeals [or labours], which are designed to test his power, ingenuity, and manhood (Stevens, 1998, p. 210).

Ultimately, the leader overcomes their “demons”, thereby proving themselves to be fit for higher office. This story, and variations of it, frequently recurs in American political advertisements (Nimmo & Swanson 1980; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997).

The opening narrative of New Zealand First’s 1999 opening night address implied that Peters had faced and vanquished demons and made sacrifices on his leadership journey, and this had turned him into a fit leader:

Male voice-over: Maybe it was when as a National Party Minister he criticised his own party for breaking their promises to the elderly. Maybe it was when he went back to Tauranga to win a by-election when he left the National Party. Maybe it was when the Maori people came to the Beehive to support him when he was fired by Jim Bolger as their Minister. Maybe it was when with hundreds and thousands of forgotten New Zealanders he formed a new political vehicle to keep the two old parties honest. Or maybe it was when he won the winebox after an 8 year struggle for accountability and one law for all on behalf of the New Zealand taxpayer.

Who can say for sure when it was he became a leader, but Winston Peters is the man to lead New Zealand into the next century. He has the leadership qualities, he listens to the people and most of all he’s prepared to make the financial and personal sacrifices required to make New Zealand great again.



Image 3.3.3: Stills from New Zealand First’s 1999 opening night address.

There were also images of Peters being protected as he was surrounded by well-wishers and news media camera operators, and many close-up head shots of him speaking in public with microphones visible. The visual sequence (Images 3.3.3 and 3.3.4) demonstrated his ability to comfortably straddle both Maori and Pakeha worlds, to be emotional and humble, to be a commanding speaker, and to attract news media interest as a popular politician.



Image 3.3.4: Stills from New Zealand First's 1999 opening night address.

Although the voice-over announced that Peters listened to people, there was no visual evidence of it in the party's opening night address. The images demonstrated people listening to Peters rather than Peters listening to them (Image 3.3.5).



Image 3.3.5: Stills from New Zealand First's 1999 opening night address.

In the closing night address Peters announced that he had been listening to voters:

In coalition New Zealand First delivered more benefits for New Zealanders than any other party in my lifetime. We all saw that other parties didn't want to share power. That's why it's time to move politics from the secret rooms of the Beehive out into the open. I've been listening to your concerns. You want an end to the nonsense that happens in politics. You tell me you want

politics cleaned up. New Zealanders don't want the tyranny of one party domination ever again.

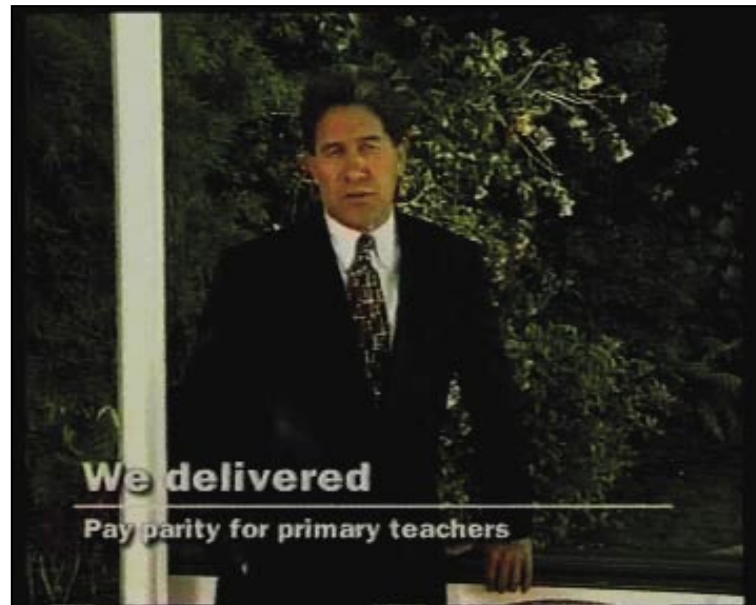


Image 3.3.6: Still from New Zealand First's 1999 closing night address.

But there was no evidence of listening in the broadcast visuals. Instead Peters spoke direct to camera on the porch of a house with bush behind him. In the foreground were textual statements reminding voters of what the party had achieved in coalition like free doctors visits for the under sixes, and removal of the superannuation surcharge.

There were many inclusive pronouns spoken in the opening and closing night addresses (see Table 3.1, p. 47). In the opening night address Peters based New Zealand First's policy platform on *our* needs :

Research and development policy based on our export needs; immigration policy based on our export needs; education and taxation policy should be focused on our export needs. That's the plan.

There was also widespread use of the inclusive pronoun we, although it was not so much in the sense of togetherness with voters, as in we the members of the New Zealand First parliamentary party. For example, Winston Peters speaking in this excerpt from the opening night address:

We've learned from our experience and New Zealand First starts this campaign with the view that we'll stay on the cross benches and vote on the issues as they come up, on their merits, from wherever they might come in the House, or wherever they might come from within the country. But if we could find a party prepared to do three things – honour its coalition commitments, keep good faith with its coalition partner, prepared above all to make MMP work in a new economic direction which this country desperately needs now, then we'll go into coalition. If we don't find those three combinations, we'll stay where we are.

There were no visual images to support these verbal messages either.

### **New Zealand First's Offer**

In exchange for the party vote New Zealand First offered itself as honest broker between the two major parties. Peters' voice-over ended the party's television commercials with the statement "Give New Zealand First your party vote and we will keep them honest." The message was confidently communicated in a bold sans serif type in the closing frames of all the television commercials as well as on party billboards (Image 3.3.7).



Image 3.3.7: Final frame from 1999 New Zealand First television commercial.

It was one thing to stake a claim as an honest broker. It was another to demonstrate that the claim was legitimate. If the party had a concern for long-term core voter satisfaction, and an awareness of the need to deliver on promises, demonstrating its own trustworthiness should have been the party's central focus in this campaign, given that many of New Zealand First's 1996 voters felt betrayed by the party's "u-turn" on a coalition with National in 1996. However, none of the party's advertising messages acknowledged the sense of betrayal felt by those voters. The party did not apologise for going into coalition with National. It did not make any special attempt to communicate that the 1999 version of the party was more reliable than the 1996 version.

Instead it was through the image of Winston Peters that the party offered itself as an honest broker. Party billboards featured a serious portrait of Peters, over the words "Keeping Them Honest". New Zealand First campaign manager Ernie Davis explained that the billboard portrait was chosen "for its naturalness and honesty. It's the Winston Peters everyone knows" (quoted in Catherall, 1999, p. A5). The billboard suggested that it was Peters specifically who would keep the bigger parties honest. Peters' integrity was communicated through his serious and direct gaze.



Image 3.3.8: New Zealand First's party vote billboard, 1999.

Although the images and music of the opening night address may have tapped into a sense of nostalgia and familiarity for existing voters, they may not have satisfied voters that the party could now be trusted to respond to their needs. In the opening night address Peters admitted to being personally bruised by the previous three years:

Richard Griffin: Well Winston Peters, from where we sit, where the rest of us sit, it looks to have been a pretty bruising experience. You've got other options, you've never exercised them, why choose to go back into the maelstrom again, why choose to go back to the political arena another time?

Winston Peters: Well it has been a bruising experience but that's no reason to give up...

It was a display of humility. But the display was concerned with Peters' feelings, not with the feelings of betrayal held by New Zealand First voters. It was a confirmation of the sacrifices Peters had made, in order to build up his leadership myth, rather than a demonstration of understanding with voters. There was no effort to address voters directly – all his answers were directed away from the camera and towards Griffin.

### **Competitor Orientation**

As third highest polling party in 1996 New Zealand First might (on paper) have been in a position to challenge Labour to become principal challenger to National in 1999. However, the party had been unable to sustain a high level of popular support since 1996 and by 1999 was one of a number of minor parties struggling to cross the five percent threshold. In terms of the competitive positioning typologies the most realistic competitive positions available to the party in such circumstances were as follower or nicher. As nicher, this would have meant focusing more intently on the needs of its elderly and Maori support base. As follower that would have meant aligning New Zealand First's policy platform and campaign message with, and refraining from attacking, either Labour or National.

However, New Zealand First did not adopt either of these strategies. It did not rule out coalition with either Labour or National. Winston Peters still claimed he could work with both. But rather than cosying up to one or other, New Zealand First attacked both major parties, as if it were a challenger party. In the opening night address Peters was asked if he had a preference for coalition with National or Labour. Peters replied:



Well, how do you choose between grey and grey. That's the choice New Zealanders have. If you look at Labour and National, close your eyes and go back over the last fifteen years, you can't tell the difference between what they did under Labour and are doing under National; how they betrayed the people under Labour and continue that under National; how they served the vested interests of the few and the very few powerful people in this country under Labour and under National the same thing. So that's what it comes down to. For a great majority of New Zealanders yet to make up their mind in this campaign, and for New Zealand First it is the same, it is a curse on both their houses for what they did and are not prepared to do now in the critical areas of New Zealand politics in terms of our future.

The party's subsequent advertising messages attacked both major parties, arguing for their *untrustworthiness*. New Zealand First's television commercials accused both major parties of being the same. In one television commercial this was achieved by placing Labour and National policies side by side, and showing little difference between them (Image 3.3.9). In the background recorded laughter can be heard. Clark and Shipley's images are combined together into a puppet-like character:

Puppet: New Zealand First says our policies are the same. Well I'd like to dispute that, and so would I.

WP: Give New Zealand First your party vote and we will keep them honest.



Image 3.3.9: Stills from New Zealand First television commercial, 1999.

The advertisement involved the use of visual parody. Visual parodies work by violating or distorting the familiar as a means of attracting attention to a message (Messaris, 1997). The television commercials would have relied on their being decoded by an audience familiar with a "Monty Python" aesthetic, and as such directed more at a baby boomer-aged audience familiar with this type of satirical humour than the elderly.

Visual parody was featured in another television commercial (Image 3.3.10), in which Clark and Shipley were portrayed as Pinocchio puppets with long wooden noses. In the classic fairytale Pinocchio's nose grows long when he tells lies. The advertisement suggested that the leaders of the two major parties could not be trusted, and that an honest broker (New Zealand First) would be needed to keep them in line.

Helen Clark puppet: New Zealand First will support who wins the most votes and so provide stability of government.

Jenny Shipley puppet: And on all other matters they will vote issue by issue on their merits to keep you honest.

Helen Clark puppet: What do you mean keep me honest. New Zealand First needs to keep you honest.

Jenny Shipley puppet: On what grounds have they, or the public got for that matter, not to believe me.

Helen Clark puppet: Oh plenty I'd say.

Jenny Shipley puppet: What about yourself.

Helen Clark puppet: What about you.

Jenny Shipley puppet: What about you.

Helen Clark puppet: What about me.

Winston Peters V/O: Give New Zealand First your party vote and we will keep them honest.



Image 3.3.10: Stills from New Zealand First television commercial, 1999.



Image 3.3.11: New Zealand First billboard, 1999.

This message was repeated on billboards (Image 3.3.11). The only clue why New Zealand First was the party to keep them honest, however, was the inclusion of Winston Peters' voice in the background of the television commercials. Like the party billboards the message was that New Zealand First would be able to keep the big parties honest because Winston Peters was its leader. The difficulty the party faced promoting this message was that it offered the very man many voters blamed for the party's broken coalition promise and its internal mismanagement (Donnelly, 2000). It was trying to persuade voters of its trustworthiness with the image of someone who to many symbolised its untrustworthiness.

Moreover, while the party was offering the message that it could be trusted to keep the bigger parties honest, the party's actions were not delivering on that offer. When the party list was announced at the commencement of the campaign, the party's only two women MPs, Jenny Bloxham and Robyn McDonald, were given such low list rankings that they were rendered virtually unelectable. The two objected loudly and publicly, their vitriol directed at Winston Peters. Stephen Harris, a Radio New Zealand journalist covering the campaign, quotes McDonald saying: "a party that campaigns on its honesty and accountability cannot be led by a man who has been so blatantly treacherous to me" (2000, pp. 84-5). A few weeks later, in the middle of the campaign, it was revealed in the news media that the party's seventh ranked list candidate, Suzanne Bruce, had not revealed to the party that she was under investigation in relation to outstanding GST questions. Stephen Harris describes the Suzanne Bruce episode as a "spectacular stain on the party's 'honesty' platform" (2000, p. 85).

## Discussion

When the opening night address was broadcast on 31 October 1999 the NZES was tracking New Zealand First support at just over five per cent (see Figure 3.1, p. 58). It then rose to around seven per cent, but dropped quickly from 10 November to just below five per cent where it hovered right up to the election on 27 November. The election saw New Zealand First gaining only 4.3 per cent of the party vote, but holding onto the Tauranga seat by 63 votes, enabling the party to return to the House with five MPs. Writing in the *Dominion* just after the election Nick Venter (1999d) suggested that New Zealand First had been the biggest loser of the election, having gone from “Kingmaker” in 1996 to “minnow” in 1999 (p. 2).

What are the political science explanations of New Zealand First’s 1999 electoral outcome? Jack Vowles (2000) accounts for the party’s drop from a high of seven per cent early in the campaign to its final 4.3 per cent on significant hits caused by the negative publicity afforded the Bloxham/McDonald and Bruce incidents, and views this as the result of inadequacies in the party’s candidate selection process. The party itself explains the outcome as the electorate punishing it for the collapse of the coalition, with much of the blame for this directed at Winston Peters. The party also considers the Bloxham/McDonald affair to have affected its appeal to women (Donnelly, 2000).

What political marketing factors might help account for New Zealand First’s electoral outcome in 1999? There was verbal evidence of party leader Winston Peters having listened to voters in the advertising messages, but this was not supported by any visual imagery. Where ordinary voters were shown in the party’s television advertising, they were listening to Peters, not being listened to. Nor was there much evidence that voter needs had informed party policies. The focus of the advertising messages was on the party’s need to re-establish some credibility through the leadership image of Winston Peters. The party’s message was that it had an exceptional leader. This took precedence over any demonstration of affinity the party had with voters. The party was not able to demonstrate that voter satisfaction was its fundamental goal.

The party was consistent in what it was offering in exchange for the party vote in its television commercials and billboards: Winston Peters as honest broker between the two big parties. In terms of long-term core supporter satisfaction it was important for the party to maintain a focus on Peters, having established the party and been its face and voice since 1993, and the party’s messages demonstrated the many policy promises it had delivered in coalition, including free doctors visits for the under sixes, and removal of the superannuation surcharge. With these messages the party

was able to retain a significant number of core supporters. According to the NZES 77.1 per cent of New Zealand First's 1999 voters had previously voted for the party in 1996 (Vowles, 2002b).

The party accurately identified that trust in political parties was of major concern to voters and it challenged the major parties' weaknesses in the area of trustworthiness. But the party's offer in response to the concern was itself weak. Having betrayed many of its voters with the 1996 coalition decision, New Zealand First was in no position to offer voters a party that could be trusted any more than National or Labour. Significantly, according to NZES data, New Zealand First was considered the most untrustworthy of the parties surveyed by 63.1 per cent of respondents (National was the next most untrustworthy party on 42.3 per cent) (NZES, 1999b).

In offering the image of Peters as evidence of New Zealand First's trustworthiness, the party was in effect throwing oil on fire. Many voters still blamed Peters personally for the coalition decision, and no longer felt they could trust him or the party (Donnelly, 2000; Miller, 2003). According to the NZES data, Peters was considered by voters the least trustworthy leader of the parties surveyed. 78.2 per cent of respondents did not feel the word trustworthy described Peters (Richard Prebble was the next least trustworthy leader according to 56 per cent of respondents). Peters was also considered to be arrogant by the most number of respondents (82.4 per cent) (NZES, 1999b). New Zealand First's leadership offer was not necessarily attractive to new voters in 1999.

What about New Zealand First's Maori voters? In 1996 New Zealand First had gained a substantial 42.3 per cent of the Maori party vote, and 48.8 per cent of the Maori electorate vote. According to researchers Ann Sullivan and Dimitri Margaritis (2002) Maori voters had been attracted to New Zealand First in 1996 as an "alternative, more assertive agency of Maori political influence" (p. 66). But come 1999, "the performance and achievement of the new team of Maori leaders in Parliament failed to meet Maori expectations" (p. 66). Four fifths of the party's Maori MPs had resigned from the party mid-way through the 1996-1999 parliamentary term. As a consequence, according to Sullivan and Margaritis (2002), Maori voters "were not impressed with either their performance or their lack of respect for the will of the people who had voted them into office as representatives of New Zealand First" (p. 71). New Zealand First's share of the Maori party vote in 1999 was reduced to 13.2 per cent (and 14.4 per cent of Maori electorate votes) and the Maori vote largely returned to Labour.

Although the party's share of the Maori vote decreased significantly in 1999, its Maori party vote support of 13.2 per cent was still higher than the 4.3 per cent overall nationwide party vote achieved by the party. In fact, had New Zealand First not gained such a high level of support from Maori, its overall party vote percentage would have been much less. The Maori vote thus masks an even greater lack of support by non-Maori than suggested by the overall party vote percentage.

What was there in New Zealand First's message that might have connected better with the needs of Maori than non-Maori in 1999? The image of Peters sitting in plush armchairs surrounded by his antique European collectables was hardly an image of alternative political influence! Having said that, there were more images of Maori people in New Zealand First's opening night address than in any of the other electorally successful parties' advertising, including Labour. This was an acknowledgement of the regard felt by some Maori to the party and of the emotional connection the party had with some Maori through Winston Peters. It must also not be overlooked that the image of Winston Peters, a lawyer of Ngati Wai descent and the only Maori leader of a New Zealand political party at the time, was an inherently powerful signifier for Maori aspiration and achievement. This would have given the party an advantage over all the other smaller parties competing for the Maori party vote.

#### 4.4: THE ALLIANCE 1999

##### Context

The Alliance was formed in 1991 as a merger of a number of small parties wanting to achieve greater political influence as a bloc. Those parties were NewLabour, the Green, Democratic (the remnants of the Social Credit party), Liberal and Mana Motuhake parties. The Alliance was led by Jim Anderton, the leader of NewLabour, a party that had formed in 1989 as a breakaway from Labour in protest at Labour's swing to "new right" policies and values in the 1984-90 period.

In the 1993 general election the Alliance as third highest polling party gained 18.2 per cent of the vote, which was a high third party vote by New Zealand historical standards. Under the rules of FPP, however, the large percentage could not be translated into seats in the House. Had it done so the party may have been looking at around 20 seats in an 120 seat House (Trotter, 2001). Instead, the 1993 election saw the Alliance win only two electorates: Jim Anderton's Wigram seat and Sandra Lee's Auckland Central seat. Although the 1993 results gave the party optimism for a good result in the first MMP election in 1996, the Alliance lost significant ground in the 1996 election, gaining 10.1 per cent of the party vote, and dropping to fourth highest polling party after National, Labour, and New Zealand First. In 1997 the Green Party, unhappy with the Alliance's leadership, announced they would be leaving the Alliance in 1999 to contest that election under their own Green Party banner. With it the Greens took an unknown but not insignificant proportion of Alliance voters.

Market research conducted by the Alliance following the 1996 election identified two major factors contributing to its loss of support. The Alliance's public rejection of a coalition arrangement with *any* party prior to that election had resulted in the perception that it had not resolved its ideological differences with Labour sufficiently for voters to be sure it could enter into a workable coalition arrangement should Labour have been electorally successful in 1996. In addition, the party's heavily tiered tax policy was not at all popular, perceived by Alliance and non-Alliance voters alike to affect many low income as well as high income voters (McCarten, 2000).

The Alliance concluded that the only way it would be able to affect change in New Zealand was to be seen cooperating rather than competing with Labour in 1999 (McCarten, 2000; Trotter, 2001). It decided to position itself in the public mind as the obvious coalition party on the left of Labour, with a coalition arrangement worked

out well in advance of the election and an agreement to openly support the Labour Party in the run-up to and during the 1999 campaign. This included bringing its tax policy in line with Labour's. The Alliance would try to differentiate itself sufficiently from Labour to not appear a Labour clone, while at the same time not challenging Labour's wider policy agenda (McCarten, 2000).

### **Campaign Objectives**

According to the Alliance's campaign director Matt McCarten (2000), the Alliance's campaign objectives in 1999 were:

- to ensure that the Alliance was part of a Labour-Alliance government; and
- to increase the Alliance party vote from an average of seven per cent in the public opinion polls to 10 per cent, which was the level of support it won in the 1996 election.

### **Voter Orientation**

The Alliance's *raison d'être* had been to provide an alternative political choice for voters disillusioned with the "Fourth Labour government's rejection of traditional social democracy in favour of a neo-liberal economic programme" according to political commentator Chris Trotter (2001, p. 252). Up to and including the 1996 campaign the Alliance had been in direct competition with Labour for the Left's vote, challenging it for the support of low income traditional Labour voters who had been adversely affected by the right-leaning economic policies of the period 1984-90 (Jesson, 1997; Roper, 2000e; Trotter, 2001).

The verbal and visual evidence contained in the party's advertising messages indicates that the Alliance's target audience in 1999 still included low income voters; that is, working class, the unemployed, students and superannuitants, but it also extended to families and people on hospital waiting lists. These groups were mentioned (but not pictured) in the party's opening night address. For example, this from MP Phillida Bunkle:

There are 190,000 New Zealanders waiting for hospital treatment, for glue ear, heart surgery, hip replacements. Fewer nurses, closed wards and theatres mean even longer waits. You can cross your fingers or you can vote Alliance.



Stereotyped images of these groups featured on party billboards (Image 3.4.1). A moustached man in a yellow coat and hard hat represented hard working New Zealanders that deserved a break; a smiling female teenager represented a future that should not be shackled with debt; a bored-looking male youth represented potential that should not be wasted; and a warmly dressed silver haired couple represented all older people deserving to live in comfort, not hardship, in retirement. The wider message was that the Alliance now had the interests of a range of (primarily European) New Zealanders at heart, not just those disaffected by the policies of the fourth Labour government.



Image 3.4.1: Alliance billboards, 1999.

Evidence that the Alliance was trying to spread its net beyond disaffected Labour voters came in the closing night address, in which party leader Jim Anderton was seen walking around a rugby stadium (Image 3.4.2). A sports stadium is not a symbol automatically associated with the image of a grass-roots left wing social democrat political organisation. Symbolically, sports stadiums have an almost sacred place in New Zealand culture: sites of historic conquests or defeats in our main national sports, rugby and cricket. They are considered places where all New Zealanders can come together as equals and share in the love of the game. The sports ground setting enabled Anderton to contextualise the problems facing New Zealand in a way that rugby fans could understand. Colour was used to indicate how many times over the

poignantly empty stadium would need to be filled to equal the number of jobless, or on hospital waiting lists (Image 3.4.3).



Image 3.4.2: Stills from Alliance closing night address, 1999.

Those resident in Jim Anderton's own Wigram electorate in Christchurch would have recognised it as the city's Jade Stadium. In this regard, Anderton was using the vehicle for the party's core message as a pitch for the support of voters in his own local electorate. In general, however, acknowledgement of the symbolism of that particular stadium signified that the party wanted to reach mainstream New Zealand with its message. It was now sharing the same target audience as Labour.

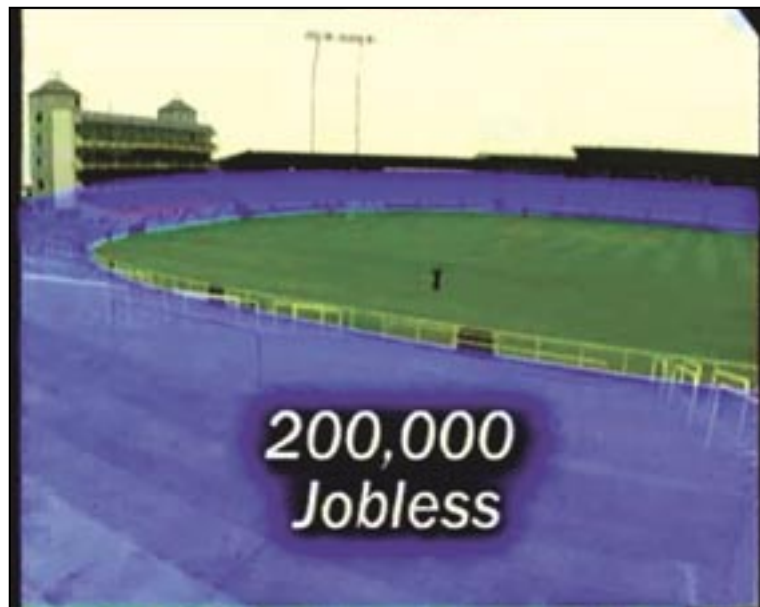


Image 3.4.3: Still from Alliance closing night address, 1999.

Despite the party's targeting of its images towards a more mainstream audience, there was not much evidence in those images of the party's desire to sense and respond to those voters. There were no images of any Alliance candidates meeting with or consulting with voters in Alliance advertising in 1999. Nor was there much evidence of the party's concern with identifying with voters in the party's verbal dialogue. The Alliance had the second lowest mean use of inclusive pronouns we and our in its opening night address (the lowest was ACT) (see Table 3.1, p. 47); it had the highest mean use of I-statements (see Table 3.2, p. 54), and the second highest (again next to ACT) mean use of the party name in the opening night address (see Table 3.4 below). What this strongly suggests is that the Alliance was primarily focused on promoting its own product over demonstrating its concern for satisfying the needs of voters.

**Table 3.4: Party name mentioned per minute in 1999 opening night address.**

Party	Total minutes	Total party name	Mean, ranked highest to lowest
ACT	8	22	2.75
Alliance	8	17	2.125
United NZ	4	8	2
National	12	20	1.666
Greens	4	6	1.5
New Zealand First	8	6	.75
Labour	12	4	.333

### **Alliance Offer**

The party's campaign slogan was the offer of a promise to care, to be "the heart of a new government". This campaign slogan was first signaled 50 seconds into the Alliance's opening night address by party leader Jim Anderton:

That's why I'm determined to lead the Alliance into a government that brings meaningful change to New Zealanders and it's why I'm making a personal appeal to you to make the Alliance the heart of a new government.

It was stated five times in the opening night address and twice in the closing night address. It was also the end statement in all the party's television commercials, and it featured on the party billboards. As a slogan it announced the party's objective to

be part of the solution to the problems facing New Zealand, and a reason why the Alliance should be part of the solution.

In mythology the heart, as signifier for human qualities of loving or caring for others is expected to lead the head in any quest for self-fulfillment (Campbell, 1988). Using the metaphor of the heart implied that the Alliance would become the central engine room of the new government driving policies that were motivated by a fundamental sense of concern for all New Zealanders, and that the Labour Party in government on its own would simply not be kind and caring without the Alliance. In the party's television advertising the meaning was visually communicated by a symbol of a red heart morphed out of an image of people holding signs with the names of different New Zealand cities (Image 3.4.4), which turned into a tick symbol. Morphing is a digital image processing technique, often found in product advertising and movies, used to demonstrate the metamorphosis from one image to another. It tends to be used to demonstrate that two visually different objects are interconnected in some unexpected but meaningful way. In the case of the Alliance's television commercials, the morphing communicated that the party's policies had been approved by and were in the interests of New Zealanders from all over the country.

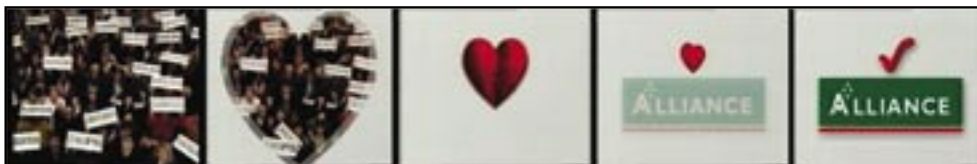


Image 3.4.4: Stills from Alliance television commercial, 1999.

The party's other main offering was its leader, Jim Anderton, whose presence dominated the party's advertising. He opened and closed the opening night address. He was the only candidate to feature in the closing night address. He had his own television commercial. An A3 sized poster and envelope containing personal letters sent out to homes featured the campaign image of Anderton. The main "The heart of a new government" party billboard featured his backlit head and shoulders photographic image on a black background. The combination of image and slogan communicated the message that Anderton would personally be the heart of the new government (Image 3.4.5)

A “dear voter” letter sent to homes was a personal message from Anderton to voters and was full of I-statements. For example, “I am asking”, “I believe”, “I would like you”, and “I look forward to”. On the back of the envelope is written “Can I take just one minute of your time before you vote this Saturday?”. Alliance advertising presented the Alliance and Anderton as one. Vote the Alliance to get Anderton.

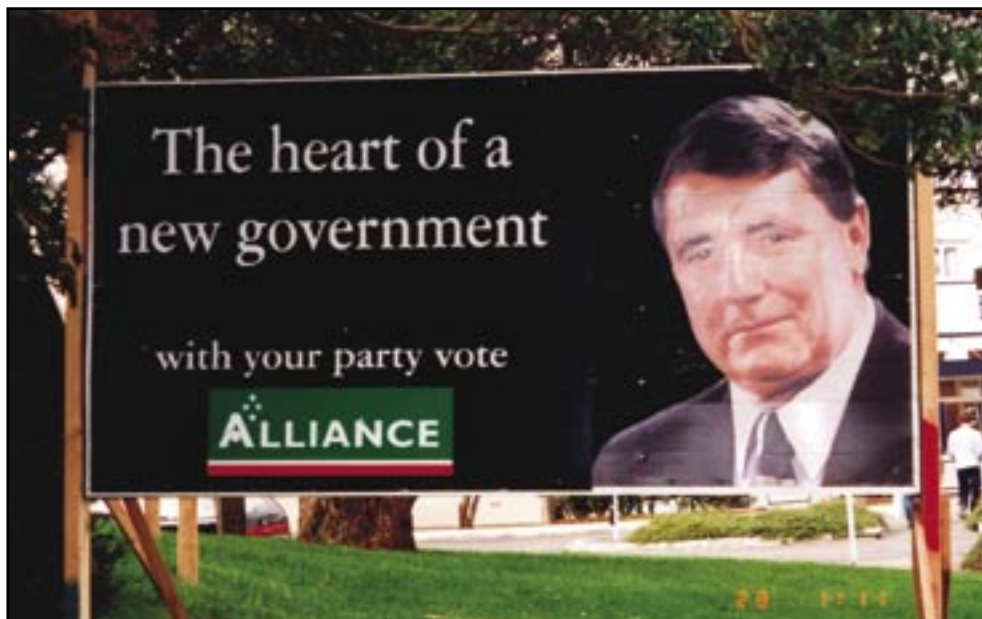


Image 3.4.5: Alliance party vote billboard, 1999.

In the A3 poster mailed out to homes (Image 3.4.6), the party used a slogan used frequently by Labour in its 1999 campaign material – “Its time for a change” – signifying a message in common to both parties. But while Labour’s messages went on to say “Only a vote for Labour can change the government” the Alliance’s went on to state “Only a party vote for Alliance makes a change of government worthwhile” [their underline]. Given the proximity of this message with Anderton’s dominant image, and direct eye contact with readers, the underlying message was that it would be worthwhile because Anderton would be there.

At the commencement of the campaign journalist Anthony Hubbard (1999) had predicted:

In this campaign the viewers will see a kinder, gentler Anderton. Gone is the furious prophet of woe, treachery and ruin, the Jehovah figure whose television advertisements reminded one political scientist of “a lunatic ranting in a carpet factory”. This time the voters will see a sleek statesman in a grey tie offering hope and good cheer (p. C1).

This was certainly Anderton in 1999. In his campaign image Anderton wore the uniform of the establishment: a grey wool suit, thin blue pin stripe shirt and navy and white tie with thick horizontal stripes. The message signified by his clothing and pose was one of competence and maturity. Selecting the image Alliance campaign manager Matt McCarten said he was looking for an image that would make Anderton “look solid and dependable, firm but fair” (quoted in Catherall, 1999, p. A5). The photographer was going for a “positive look, confident, business-like and managerial” (Catherall, 1999, p. A5).



Image 3.4.6: Alliance A3 brochure, 1999.

According to Matt McCarten (2000), the party’s advertising focus groups even “showed that Jim was seen as the sort of person they would like to have as their bank manager” (p. 39). Reinforcing this impression was a billboard image of Anderton in front of an image of a building with columns – symbols of sobriety, impersonality, masculinity and rationality (Jencks, 2002, p. 43) – carrying the symbol of a kiwi and the words Kiwi Bank (one of the party’s key policy offerings) and alongside the statement “our bank opening soon” (Image 3.4.7).

Consistent with the corporate image the party was trying to communicate, Alliance billboards were typeset in a serif typeface, the sort of typeface usually reserved for the communication of more traditional values (Spiekerman & Ginger, 1993). To signify that the party was still a little bit rebellious, the body type was set in lower case letters, capital letters were not used, the rules of “good” typography, which are that sentences should be opened with capital letters, flouted. This made an interesting contrast with Labour – which only used capital letters for its key messages.



Image 3.4.7: Alliance billboard promoting its Kiwi Bank policy, 1999.

This strong promotion of Anderton as the heart of the new government is somewhat paradoxical in the context of a party that was comprised of four smaller constituent parties that all wanted to maintain some kind of unique identity and leadership within the Alliance. Given this, and the Alliance’s social democrat political leanings, it might have been expected that it would be the Alliance, of all the parties contesting the 1999 election, that promoted the team orientation of the party and its connection with a wide constituency. Certainly the Alliance’s 1999 TV advertising featured the faces of candidates representing the other parties, except the Greens who had left by 1999, and some featured in their own television commercials. However, Anderton’s image was interspersed with images of other candidates, demonstrating his position of overall dominance within the team (Image 3.4.8).



Image 3.4.8: Stills from Alliance 1999 opening night address.

### Competitor Orientation

The Alliance's earlier decision to coalesce with Labour had the effect of shifting the party's competitive position from the challenger it had been in 1993 and 1996 to behaving as a follower party in 1999. In theory, follower parties agree not to challenge the market leader, on the understanding that they may be rewarded through the political system by cabinet appointments or other rewards of office. Although Labour was technically still a challenger party in 1999, it was also the market leader in other respects. A non-aggression pact the Alliance had entered into with Labour earlier in the year curtailed any opportunities for the Alliance to attack Labour in its advertising messages. Instead Alliance messages were now openly supportive of the coalition. In addition to the messages justifying the party's presence in the coalition on the grounds that it would bring some heart and a competent leader into the arrangement, it was the Alliance that advertised the tactical voting needed to achieve a workable coalition, as in the sign below asking people to give the Alliance their party vote and Labour the electorate vote.



Image 3.4.9: Alliance street signage, 1999.



In addition, the Alliance produced a half page newspaper advertisement the day before the election (Image 3.4.10) with an image of Anderton and Helen Clark smiling and holding raised hands in solidarity at the August 1998 Alliance party conference. The body language signified rapprochement between the two leaders and their ability to work together, a message reinforced by the banner “We can do it” in white sans serif type on green, to distinguish itself from the red background of a Labour message and to communicate that the parties could now work together. The slogan carried a secondary meaning – that the Alliance in 1996 was now mature enough to be considered a responsible coalition partner; the same message that was communicated in the mature dress and pose of Anderton in his campaign image.



Image 3.4.10: Alliance newspaper advertisement, published the day before the 1999 election.

Contradicting the Alliance’s messages of cooperation, however, were the Labour Party’s full-page newspaper advertisements and billboard stickers during the last week of the campaign informing voters that “A Party Vote for any other party is not a vote for Labour” [emphasis in the original] (Image 3.2.15). Labour’s lack of interest in advertising the idea or benefits of a coalition arrangement was a source of frustration for the Alliance according to McCarten (2000). From a political marketing perspective it is understandable, however. Market leaders and challengers need their strategic eye to be firmly directed at their competition. Looking after the support crew should not be a strategic focus. It made more strategic sense for a follower like the Alliance to be marketing the idea of a coalition with the party it stood to be rewarded by. However, the impression left was that the Alliance needed Labour more than Labour needed

the Alliance. This was a major turnaround from the days when key members of the party including Jim Anderton had eschewed the desire to be part of a government at any cost and left the Labour Party to form NewLabour, with the ambition of replacing Labour as the left-wing alternative to National (Jesson, 1997).

The Alliance did not fight back against the National Party's strong attacks against the Alliance in its billboard, newspaper and last week television advertising. The Alliance had decided not to direct attacks at *any* other party, on the grounds that the party wanted to present a positive rather than negative image (McCarten, 2000). As for the Alliance's relationship with the other competition on the left, the Green Party, the Alliance had not anticipated a need to develop a strategy before the election. According to McCarten the Alliance "took a position of neutrality towards the Greens. Our key local people in the Coromandel were hostile towards the Greens, but our national strategy was to avoid a confrontation" (p. 38). The reason for this: "it would have been preferable for us to have the Greens defeated, but we took the view that we were seeking a different constituency, and that it was an unnecessary fight to engage in" (p. 38).

## **Discussion**

The Alliance entered NZES tracking on 23 October at just under seven per cent. It reached a peak of just over 11 per cent around 7 November and then slowly declined to reach 7.74 per cent on election day (see Figure 3.1, p. 58). The Alliance achieved its goal of being part of a Labour-led government, and this was no small achievement. But the Alliance did not gain as much popular support as it had anticipated. The Alliance failed to ignite the interest of the additional voters it needed to achieve an increase in its vote to the ten per cent it was desiring at the beginning of the campaign.

Jack Vowles (2000) thinks that Anderton's effective performances in leadership debates and more generally were positive factors in terms of the party's electoral fortunes; but that in the second half of the campaign the increased media focus on the two major parties gave the Alliance "less purchase" (p. 159). He has also suggested that the party's inability to criticise Labour under the Labour/Alliance non-aggression pact made it difficult for the Alliance to gain further ground. Matt McCarten (2000) believes it was the media's focus on the Green Party in the last ten days of the campaign that locked the Alliance out of the campaign. He also blames the party's brand campaign, saying people were unsure exactly what the difference was between Labour and the Alliance – "they knew that the Alliance was more 'left'

than Labour, but they did not know what that meant. Ultimately that lack of clarity made the difference in the campaign” (p. 40).

What political marketing factors might help account for the Alliance’s electoral outcome in 1999? In terms of its goal to be part of a Labour-Alliance coalition, the party’s decision to enter a non-aggression pact with Labour was appropriate follower behaviour. The party was ultimately rewarded with three seats at the Cabinet table, including the Deputy Prime-Ministership for Jim Anderton. Having made the decision to follow Labour into government, however, the Alliance should not also have aimed for a greater market share. In theory the need to expand market share is a strategic direction open to market leaders more than followers. Followers need to concentrate instead on avoiding the alienation of large numbers of traditional voters by changing their core product too radically. If they ignore the importance of existing supporter maintenance strategies follower parties risk being attacked by aggressive competitors (Collins & Butler, 2002).

This seems to be what happened to the Alliance in 1999. In its eagerness to expand its market share, it largely ignored its original *raison d’être* and its original niche audience in its campaign messages in favour of a more mainstream message it had largely in common with Labour. The Alliance had previously differentiated itself from Labour on its refusal to compromise its social-democrat policy stance, something it had always accused Labour of doing. In the 1996 campaign “the Alliance will not sell out” was a key slogan in the party’s advertising (Roper, 2000e, p.10). Come 1999, however, the 1996 campaign message was turned on its head. Needing now to be openly supportive of the idea of a coalition with Labour, the Alliance’s new message was that a coalition with its old nemesis was both workable and desirable. The party’s new more corporate image was a considerable shift from the earlier anti-establishment image supporters had subscribed to. The Alliance had quickly turned from “avenging angels of the Left - sent by the Goddess of History to punish Labour’s malefactors”, in the words of Chris Trotter (1999a, p. 36), to respectable, corporate citizens in the space of three years.

Predictably two things happened with the Alliance’s party vote. Firstly, voters were attracted to the Alliance away from other mainstream parties. For example, the NZES found that almost half of the Alliance’s 1999 vote came from voters who had in 1996 voted for other parties: from Labour (12.5 per cent), New Zealand First (9.4 per cent), the Christian Coalition (9.4 per cent) and National (9.4 per cent) (Vowles, 2002b). Secondly, there was a significant loss of 50 per cent of its 1996 supporters. According to the NZES, 30 per cent of previous Alliance voters went to Labour in 1999. 11.6 per

cent went to the Greens, and 7 per cent to National (Vowles, 2002b). In other words, 37 per cent of its 1996 voters went to the two parties that had challenged the Alliance in some way in their advertising messages in the second half of the campaign.

If some of the Alliance's previous voters were *deterred* by the Alliance's repositioning towards the centre, how does this explain the movement of the 30 per cent of previous Alliance voters *towards* the centre-left in the form of the Labour Party? At the same time that the Alliance was encroaching on Labour's target audience, Labour was encroaching on the Alliance's. Both parties shared an underlying desire to convince voters they would look after ordinary New Zealanders affected by the uncaring policies of the National government. Labour's televisual messages conveyed this through the image of a party leader listening, talking and smiling in her interaction with ordinary New Zealanders. The Alliance's televisual images of caring – a heart symbol morphed out of a group of people holding signs and Jim Anderton walking around in an empty sports stadium, and not interacting with any voters – were symbols that failed to link the visual images with the meaning needing to be conveyed to the Alliance's existing constituency. The Alliance was so focused on the promotion of its leader as being ready for the responsibility of government it ignored the reason for him being there in the first place: as the face and voice of a niche group of frustrated voters on the left.

Finally, the Alliance's decision not to challenge the Greens in effect gifted the votes the Alliance needed to achieve its goal of a 10 per cent party vote directly to its closest competition for the niche voter on the left. When the 1999 Alliance and Green votes are combined (the Alliance won 7.74 per cent, the Greens won 5.2 per cent) the minor party support on the left actually rose to 12.9 per cent, an increase on the integrated Alliance/Green vote of 10.1 per cent in 1996. It is, of course, probable that the 11.6 per cent of voters that left the Alliance to support the Greens in 1999 had voted for the Alliance in 1996 because the Greens were standing under the Alliance banner. On the other hand, according to the NZES only 23.8 per cent of the Green vote came from the Alliance, meaning that 76.2 per cent came from other parties, a total of 3.2 per cent of eligible voters (Vowles, 2002b). This is a significant percentage of the final vote that was looking for an alternative to Labour that the Alliance could have competed for, had its marketing focus have been in that direction instead of playing on Labour's turf.

## 4.5: ACT 1999

### Context

1999 was the second campaign the ACT party (an acronym for the Association of Consumers and Taxpayers) had contested. ACT began its existence in the late 1980s as a think-tank for free-market ideas, especially limited government and less tax; and as a pressure group working to defend the interests of business, and lobby government into adopting its ideas (Reid 2001). In 1994 the think-tank became a political party. The party's founder and first president was Roger Douglas, who had been Minister of Finance in the Fourth Labour government from 1984-88 and a driving force behind a neo-liberal socio-economic agenda that was colloquially referred to as "Rogernomics". In 1996 Richard Prebble, who had also been a cabinet minister in the Fourth Labour government, became the party's leader. Prebble led a party that had been polling consistently at around 1 per cent in opinion polls to significant electoral success at its first general election later that year. ACT received 6.1 per cent of the party vote in 1996, and one electorate seat: that of Wellington Central, won by Prebble himself, giving the party eight MPs. Although never in formal coalition with the National Party, ACT propped up the National government on confidence and supply following the August 1998 collapse of the National/New Zealand First coalition.

### Campaign Objectives

According to ACT campaign staffers Jason Thomas and Thomas Stephenson (2000) ACT's objectives entering the 1999 election campaign were to:

- retain the Wellington Central seat;
- gain at least one other electorate seat; and
- more than double its 1996 vote from 6.1 per cent to 15 per cent of the party vote.

### Voter Orientation

In 1996 ACT had been very much a niche party. It strongly identified with neo-liberal economic thinking and had a well defined voter base that had been with ACT since its time as a pressure group. Statistics published following the 1996 election showed a close match between the values and aspirations of ACT voters and ACT's fundamental political beliefs. In 1996 ACT electoral support came overwhelmingly from male voters who were aged 35-54, high-income earning professionals with higher than

average education levels who strongly supported competition and the pursuit of high levels of economic growth, and who thought that government was doing too much for people in need (Perry & Webster, 1999; Levine & Roberts, 2000; Reid, 2001).

In 1998 ACT determined that if it was going to increase its share of the party vote at the next election it was going to have to expand its target voter base beyond its original niche supporters. ACT's 1999 campaign strategy drew heavily on the findings of market research, which included focus group research conducted throughout New Zealand and a public opinion poll in February 1999 (Thomas & Stephenson, 2000). ACT's Australian campaign strategist Nick Stravs described ACT's research as "sophisticated, ... spot-on and ... the most important weapon that we have" (in Clifton, 1999, p. 19).

From this market research the party identified "the 9 to 10 per cent of voters most likely to vote in support of ACT's political messages, based on ACT's core beliefs, or those groups we want to build support amongst" (Thomas & Stephenson 2000, p. 43). This included technicians and associated professionals, self-employed small business tradespeople, farmers, students, wealthy retired, spouses of core ACT voters and recreational shooters, many of them "soft" National voters. Women were also a specific target. In 1996 a disproportionate amount of ACT voters were men (84 per cent according to Levine & Roberts, 2000). If ACT could appeal to as many women as men in 1999, the party figured its vote could rise substantially.

Accordingly many of ACT's advertising images were addressed to women. The opening night address (Image 3.5.1) commenced with images of party leader Richard Prebble sharing coffee and croissants with his wife Doreen on the balcony of an apartment and then walking together, admiring plants in a garden. There followed images of Prebble speaking to a gathering of men and women in a peach-coloured living room – a stereotypical colour and site signifying the domain of women. The broadcast featured images of women having tea and talking at a party conference (Image 3.5.2). Laid over the images were words like "fair" and "compassionate" – stereotypical adjectives for women's values. A woman's voice featured as the voice-over to the opening night address and all other ACT television commercials. ACT was the only party that featured a female voice-over in its television advertising.



Image 3.5.1: Stills from ACT's 1999 opening night address.



Image 3.5.2: Still images from ACT's 1999 opening night address.

The presentation of a softer side to Richard Prebble needs to be seen in contrast to his reputation, from his time in the Lange Labour government, as a “political bover boy” (Taylor 1999, p. C2). In the 1980s Prebble was given the nickname “Mad Dog” by media commentators and was often caricatured wearing a studded dog collar. The 1999 image of Richard Prebble was a far cry from this.

Women were not the only target of ACT’s advertising messages. In its television advertising Prebble was seen out and about meeting ordinary people in a variety of circumstances and locations around New Zealand. Like Helen Clark in Labour’s opening night address, Richard Prebble was seen listening to, touching, smiling and enjoying the company of a wide range of New Zealanders, including kuia and the disabled, the young and the old (Images 3.5.3 and 3.5.4). A few images highlighting Maori women aside, the ethnicity of the New Zealanders featured in ACT advertising was overwhelmingly European. ACT was one of the only parties to have a female Maori candidate (Donna Awatere-Huata). Her image was shown in ACT’s opening night address (Image 3.5.2 bottom right), but she was not singled out for special attention; her name was not broadcast alongside her image. Low awareness voters would have not necessarily have assessed the significance of her presence.



Image 3.5.3: Stills from ACT’s 1999 opening night address.



Image 3.5.4: Stills from ACT’s 1999 closing night address.



Absent in the images of people Prebble met were the “white-collar” voters that made up ACT’s core support base. Also absent were images of ordinary voters from Prebble’s electorate of Wellington Central, aside from those congratulating him on his win in 1996. The excerpt from the opening night address below (Image 3.5.5) conveys more a leadership message about Prebble – that he is popular and a winner, therefore voters who support ACT are backing a winner – than a message urging the voters of Wellington Central to vote for Prebble again.



Image 3.5.5: Stills from ACT’s 1999 opening night address.

Despite the party’s purported interest in retaining the Wellington Central electorate, the dominant party message was an *anti*-Wellington one. In the opening night address the voice-over announced that the last three years in parliament had been rewarding for ACT because it “hasn’t gone to Wellington and stayed there”. Instead it

has been on the road listening to middle New Zealand, to farmers, to small businesses, to mums and dads, to teachers, to anyone and everyone who felt that their hard work was not being rewarded and who thought that we should be doing better.

Given ACT’s desire to forge a closer bond with a broader range of New Zealanders, it might be expected that there would be plenty of inclusive pronouns in its verbal dialogue. However, ACT’s use of the collective pronouns *we* and *our* in the opening night addresses was at the lower end of the scale (see Table 3.1, p. 47), suggesting that ACT’s affinity with its target audience may not have been as strong as it appeared in advertising imagery. With so much visual emphasis on Prebble as party leader, it might alternatively be anticipated that the verbal text would stress Prebble’s personal goals. This was not the case either. The verbal text in the opening night address was light on I-statements (see Table 3.2, p. 54). Instead it was in the interests of the party that ACT’s verbal text placed most emphasis. ACT had the highest mean use of its own party name in the 1999 opening night addresses (see Table 3.4, p. 111). In this regard ACT’s priority was very much on selling the party as a product.

## ACT Offer

In keeping with its neo-liberal aspirations, ACT listed a number of economic policy goals in its advertising, including: low flat taxes, welfare reform, cuts to red tape and excess bureaucracy, support for small business owners, and strengthening the Employment Contracts Act. In addition, a great deal of emphasis also went onto two other issues – the Treaty and Law and Order – that, although considerably removed from ACT's origins, were a response to a discernible need within the wider electorate for the government to take action. For example, the 1998 New Zealand Survey of Values found a great sense of frustration within the community about the Treaty settlement process. 34 per cent of respondents agreed that the Treaty should be abolished and 29 per cent saw a need for greater limits on Maori claims under the Treaty, while only five per cent thought the Treaty should be strengthened and given the full force of law (Perry & Webster, 1999). As for law and order, this had been an issue that had captured the public's attention in recent years. A spate of aggravated robberies on ordinary people in their own homes had inspired a petition seeking a referendum on the criminal justice system in 1999 and the Political Change Project pre-election survey found National, ACT and New Zealand First voters converging in seeking tougher penalties for criminals (Church, 2000b). ACT's market research found that violent crime was the issue of most concern to Aucklanders and Wellingtonians; while in Dunedin and Christchurch it was the Treaty of Waitangi (Clifton, 1999).

ACT's Treaty advertisements (Images 3.5.6 and 3.5.7) used an image of the monument and pine tree on One Tree Hill, a prominent icon in Auckland city. Five years previously Maori activist Mike Smith had taken a chainsaw to the tree in frustration at the National government's "fiscal envelope" that limited Treaty settlements to one billion dollars. Although the tree had been salvaged, it was barely hanging onto life. Its precarious existence was now a threatening symbol of the lengths to which Maori were prepared to take their land grievances.

Female V/O: Let's settle legitimate claims fairly, fully and finally and end the Waitangi grievance industry; then move forward together as one country.  
ACT, the party vote for positive change.

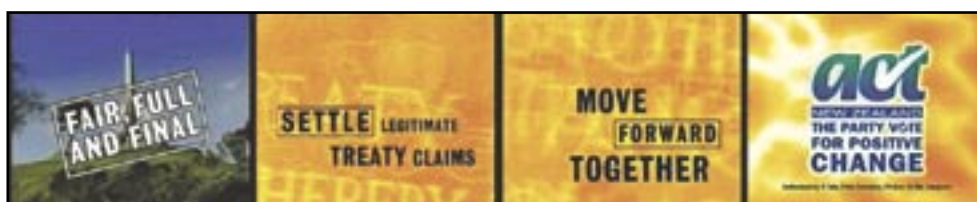


Image 3.5.6: Stills from ACT Treaty television commercial, 1999.

The emotional significance of the lone tree was enhanced by the camera angle of the image. Images photographed from below tend to exaggerate the importance of an object. The soundtrack of the television commercial features a bell ringing, some notes from a recorder, lending a mystical feel to the clip, and a loud bang as the words “Fair, Full and Final” are stamped over the image, to signify ACT’s desire to end the Treaty bargaining process once and for all. The image of a stamp signifies the completion of an item of business.



Image 3.5.7: ACT Treaty policy print advertisement, 1999.



Image 3.5.8: Still from ACT's 1999 opening night address.

ACT's willingness to stand up to those threatening people's sense of order was a strong message throughout the campaign. In the opening and closing night addresses

Richard Prebble was seen arriving and meeting people at the top of One Tree Hill before the party's Treaty policy launch. He was seen launching the party's welfare policy at a community house, and launching the party's law and order policy outside Mt Eden prison in front of news media cameras and reporters (Image 3.5.8). The message: Prebble was not afraid to confront, face-on, the serious issues facing New Zealand, and that what he had to say was important.

ACT's law and order advertisements contained a similar message. The sound effects in the television commercial included a dog barking, a gate closing and the siren of a police car; accompanying images of a torchlight focusing in on a balaclava covered eye, and a close-up image of handcuffs going on a pair of hands, and the words "Truth in Sentencing" stamped on top (Image 3.5.9). The message was that ACT was not afraid to confront and deal with criminals; there would be no getting away with crime under ACT.

Female V/O: Convicted violent criminals should be in jail, not let out early.  
Only ACT has proposed truth in sentencing laws. ACT, the party vote for positive change.



Image 3.5.9: Stills from ACT's 1999 Law and Order television commercial.

The party claimed to be "Toughest on Crime" in its newsprint and billboard advertising (Image 3.5.10). This was an image in contradiction to the softer, gentler side it was demonstrating to women. However, as a slogan it is further evidence of the shift in target audience for ACT's message to one that was not aimed at its core supporters. As discussed earlier, slogans are heuristic devices that appeal to late deciding, low awareness voters. It would be expected that high awareness voters, who comprise ACT's core support base, would prefer more reasoned argument.

In fact, all of ACT's key policy issues were reduced to simple slogans in its television advertising, in newspaper advertising and party vote billboards. These included the Treaty of Waitangi (slogans = Fair, Full and Final/Only ACT can fix the Treaty); law and order (Truth in Sentencing/Toughest on crime); welfare (A hand up, not a

hand out), and economic growth (Protecting the economy.) ACT, like Labour, used sans serif capital letters for its main billboard and newspaper messages, a method of emphasising the importance of the words. ACT differentiated itself by using a condensed face, Helvetica Bold Condensed, a typeface that enables more words to be fit into a small space.



Image 3.5.10: ACT billboard, 1999.

### Competitor Orientation

Although its origins were as a niche party, by 1999 ACT had repositioned itself more as a follower party. In 1996 National stood aside its Wellington Central candidate in order to facilitate Richard Prebble's winning of the seat, in so doing guaranteeing ACT representation in parliament, though ACT subsequently managed to cross the five per cent threshold on its own. In the period 1996-1999 ACT worked closely with the National government in parliament, supporting it on confidence and supply. In theory, as a follower party ACT's 1999 strategy should have been to not attack National in 1999 while maintaining its own niche in order to later be rewarded in office, just as the Alliance behaved.

The reality of ACT's competitive position in 1999 was not so straightforward, however. It was conscious that its own political fortunes were bound up with the re-election of a centre-right government; yet from its polling and focus group research it interpreted the mood of much of the electorate as wanting change. Consequently it did not want to be so tied to National that voters should toss them both out together. It also saw in National voters a source of potential ACT support if they would split their votes by giving National their electorate vote and ACT their party vote. As a consequence, ACT acted as if it were both follower *and* challenger to National, a somewhat incongruous strategic position.

ACT tried to address both positions in its advertising by acknowledging that its political interests would best be furthered by the re-election of a National government and supporting the idea of a centre-right government. But ACT also denied it was interested in being part of the next coalition. The party's mailout to homes explained:

ACT has shown it can work with a National government but remains separate. While National has said it would like ACT in government, ACT's first preference is to stay on the cross benches keeping the government honest, and making MMP work.

But supporting the idea of a centre-right government did not stop ACT from challenging the party whose success it stood to gain most from. ACT commenced the opening night address by attacking National, labeling the National government "impersonal", "uncaring", falling "way short of implementing their own agenda", and having "lost its way". In response to a question from a man at the living room meeting (Image 3.5.11) Prebble answered that National leader Shipley was weak, and ACT tough, when it came to New Zealand First, identified by ACT as its primary competition amongst the smaller parties. As he is speaking this piece of dialogue the camera closes-up on Richard Prebble's face, signifying the seriousness of the issue.

Man: But what about Winston?

Richard Prebble: Without ACT Winston Peters would still be Treasurer. Only ACT had the spine to steady Jenny Shipley's hand as she signed the notice to sack him.

Man: So is ACT the cure for Winston then?

RP: I think so. No matter what happens, ACT will be in parliament keeping them all honest. Especially Winston.



Image 3.5.11: Stills from ACT 1999 opening night address.

In print advertisements like the one featured below (Image 3.5.12), ACT likened National to all the parties ACT was opposed to. For example, “National, Labour, NZ First and the Alliance all voted against Fair, Full and Final settlements – and are allowing the grievance industry to divide the country”.



Image 3.5.12: ACT Treaty newspaper advertisement, 1999.

ACT advertisements were clear in their request for the party vote. In exchange, ACT offered voters a party that would affect “positive change” (Image 3.5.13). This was a direct response to ACT’s market research interpreting a mood for change in voters. The vibrant yellow and orange background colours used in the party’s television commercials and on billboards were a positive colour code that reinforced the change message. But these messages only confirmed that ACT wanted a bob each way, in order to give itself a role in parliament with or without National. No images featured of ACT and National together in any of ACT’s advertising. Sensing an impending Labour victory ACT seems to have all but given up on National by the time of the closing night address. “If the left has enough votes for a Labour/Alliance/Green coalition then a vote for ACT will ensure that in parliament there is a strong and effective opposition”, says Prebble. This was in marked contrast to Alliance advertising, which stressed the benefits of the Labour/Alliance coalition option, visually and verbally, all throughout the campaign. The contrast only served to confirm the perception that the centre-left coalition option was more cohesive than the centre-right.

Female V/O: On November 27th only a party vote for ACT will deliver positive change, positive change to balance the excesses of the Alliance and New Zealand First and deliver a strong centre-right government with new ideas. ACT, the party vote for positive change.

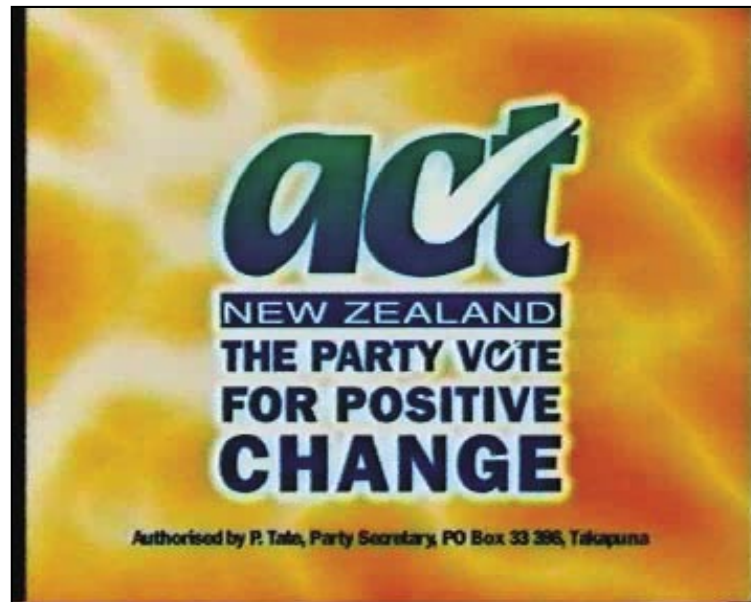


Image 3.5.13: Still from ACT television commercial, 1999.

For most of the campaign National treated ACT benignly. It did not respond to ACT's early attacks. Nor did it stand a candidate in Wellington Central so as to give Richard Prebble a better chance of holding onto the seat (Bain, 1999a). This worked to ACT's advantage and the party thrived in the polls while on the attack. Six weeks out from the election, the NZES registered ACT support at around seven per cent (see Figure 3.1, p. 58). When the opening night address screened on 30 October 1999 support had declined to around 5.5 per cent, but thereafter it tracked steadily upwards until 13 November where it peaked at just below 10 per cent. At this point, it appeared that ACT was heading towards a substantial increase on its 1996 support.

ACT released its economic policy on 14 November 1999, announcing that it would work towards a flat tax rate of twenty cents in the dollar to be funded in part through the sale of all state owned businesses, and the cutting of \$2.7 billion of government spending over the next five years. National's Minister of Finance Bill English immediately denounced ACT's policy for the cuts it would mean to social services. Subsequent news media attention focused on the divergence between the



two erstwhile coalition partners. It was at this time that National recognised it had to be more assertive about asking specifically for the party vote in an attempt to prevent voters from following ACT's instructions to give National their constituency vote (Edwards, 1999a), and began to request in all its messages that voters "give National your party vote". ACT's poll support started to decline.

Despite the apparent divergence between National and ACT in the news media, National continued to demonstrate restraint when it came to the ACT attacks, focusing its controlled counter-attacks on the Greens. Instead, the controlled attacks on ACT came from Labour after 16 November. And just as the Greens had no controlled messages to refute National's attacks, ACT seemed unprepared for Labour's advertising messages attacking both National and ACT together. To refute the messages on behalf of the coalition would have required a statement in support of a National/ACT coalition at a time when ACT was trying to differentiate itself from National. ACT hobbled towards the finish line, unable to recover to the levels of support it enjoyed midway through the campaign.

## **Discussion**

ACT achieved none of its electoral goals. It lost the Wellington Central seat to the Labour candidate. It did not gain another electorate seat. Nor did it get anywhere near doubling its 1996 vote, achieving a slight increase only from 6.1 per cent in 1996 to 7.04 per cent in 1999. For ACT to achieve a slight increase in support at a time of swing away from the National government is an achievement. Nonetheless, prior to the election ACT was confident its more ambitious goals were achievable. So what went wrong for ACT?

Jack Vowles (2000) proposes that ACT's support fell back when "deep fissures between itself and National emerged into the heart of the campaign, and the two parties began attacking each other" (p. 158), resulting in media coverage which focused on the divergence between ACT and National and leaving the impression that the negotiation of a centre-right coalition was increasingly unlikely.

What additional perspectives on ACT's 1999 electoral outcome does this political marketing examination offer? ACT's marketing orientation appeared contradictory. On the one hand the party sensed and responded to the needs of a more mainstream audience and added value to its policy messages in order to broaden its voter base. On the other, it failed to consolidate the support of its existing support base by not signaling that the satisfaction of core voter needs was its fundamental goal.

There is evidence that ACT's core supporters may not have welcomed this. According to the NZES only 39.7 per cent of ACT's 1999 vote had voted for the party in 1996. Yet the mainstreaming of the message seemed to appeal to many soft National voters. As ACT had hoped, 50 per cent of ACT's 1999 vote came from people who voted National in 1996 (Vowles, 2002b, p. 89). ACT's ability to attract so many new voters with its mainstream message offset the loss of support from its old voters. While this meant that ACT was able to increase its party vote slightly, it may explain why ACT was unable to achieve the larger increase in party vote it was seeking at the beginning of the campaign.

Was ACT's message enough to attract women voters? In an election which featured two strong female party leaders fighting it out, as well as a third party with a female co-leader, it was always going to be hard for other parties to present an image of themselves as more women-friendly than National, Labour and the Greens. But ACT's decision to engage in the opening night address stereotypical colours, sites and words that would be more at home in 1970s sexist advertising imagery suggests that ACT had little real understanding of the needs of potential female voters, who one would assume would like to have been treated as if they had benefited from the women's liberation movement. The number of female ACT voters increased slightly, from 16 per cent in 1996 to 21.7 per cent in 1999 (Levine & Roberts, 2000), although this was still nowhere near ACT's male vote.

There is also no evidence that the attempt to make Richard Prebble appear softer was successful. Only 13.7 per cent of NZES respondents agreed that the word "compassionate" described Prebble, the lowest percentage on this question (compared to 37.5 per cent for Shipley and 73.5 per cent for Clark). On the question "speaks for women", Prebble scored second to lowest, with only 7.4 per cent in agreement (the lowest was Peters on 5.6 per cent; the highest were Shipley on 53.8 per cent and Clark on 72.7 per cent) (NZES, 1999b).

What about Maori voters? It might be predicted that a party with a strong anti-Treaty message might not be overly popular with Maori voters. ACT ended up winning a very low .77 per cent of the Maori vote. Although prominent Maori activist Donna Awatere-Huata was high on ACT's party list, the party had not singled her out for special attention. Significantly the party's Maori vote percentage brought down the general electorate total for ACT from 7.38 per cent to its final 7.04 percent.

Perhaps in the ultimate irony, and contradicting the idea that market research assists a party achieve its electoral goals, ACT's awareness of the needs of the market ultimately

cost it the chance of becoming part of a centre-right government. On the one hand ACT claimed to support the idea of a centre-right government. On the other hand, sensing the public's mood for change, and seeking to differentiate itself from National, it attacked the hand of the very party that could have fed it in government. The effect was that the centre-right did not look as unified as the centre-left. The rest, as Labour said in its advertising messages attacking National and ACT, is history.

## 4.6: THE GREENS 1999

### Context

Arising out of the ashes of the defunct Values Party, the Green Party came into existence for the 1990 election, with a far more specific focus on environmental activism than the Values Party ever had. At that election the Greens won 6.8 per cent of the vote, but no seats – it was an FPP election. In 1991 the Green Party joined the Alliance. The 1993 election (also an FPP election) did not see any Green members of the Alliance gain seats. However, contesting the first MMP election in 1996 under the Alliance banner, two of the Green Party's list MPs, Jeanette Fitzsimons and Phillida Bunkle, were successful in gaining list representation.

The Green Party's relationship with the Alliance was not to last. Unhappy with the authoritarianism of the Alliance's leader Jim Anderton, the Greens announced in 1997 they would be leaving the party in 1999 to contest that election under their own banner. The 1999 election was the first MMP campaign the Green Party had contested as a standalone party.

### Campaign Objectives

According to Green Party co-leader Rod Donald (2000) the party's 1999 election goals were to:

- create the perception it would win the Coromandel electorate seat;
- win Coromandel; and
- win over five per cent of the party vote .

The party's rationale was that if voters from around New Zealand perceived the Green Party had a good chance of winning the Coromandel seat off the National Party they might then feel that a vote for the Green Party would not be wasted and be more inclined to give it their party vote.

The party's goals were ambitious. Since leaving the Alliance the Green Party had only once risen above one per cent support in pre-election One News-Colmar Brunton polling, and most observers saw little hope for the Greens to be able to gather up enough support to cross the five per cent threshold in 1999 (Vowles, 2000, p. 148).

## Voter Orientation

In the commercial marketplace firms entering a market often position themselves as leaders in a small, well-defined niche of little or no interest to larger firms (Collins & Butler, 2002; Kotler, 2003). Knowing a target customer well means niche firms can meet their needs better than other, more casual competitors. Niche firms are able to “offer high value, charge a premium price, achieve lower manufacturing costs, and shape a strong corporate culture and vision” (Kotler, 2003, p. 271). Using this strategy, firms with low shares of the total market can become highly profitable. According to Kotler the main threat they face is the possibility of the market niche drying up or being attacked by a larger competitor.

In the competition for the party vote in 1999 the Green Party was a niche player in the sense that it specialised in environmental politics and had two well-defined target audiences comprising the “Values generation” – 50-something voters with a social conscience that had in the 1970s supported the Values Party, and young, urban voters aged 18–25 who were attracted to the party’s activist values (Bale, 2003; Donald, 2000; Miller, 1992).



Image 3.6.1: Stills from Green 1999 opening night address.

Images in the opening night address targeted these two groups. Negative phrases were typeset in a “grunge”, or distressed, typewriter typeface on a scratchy black and white background. This was a visual code familiar to a post-modern youth market, used to represent a deficient present and uncertain urbanised and industrialised future. The black and white images featured cars, concrete, rubbish, graffiti, smokestacks, chemical spraying, newspaper headlines featuring crime stories, and vandalism – connoting the negative aspects of living in a post-industrial world (Image 3.6.1 above). These images were followed immediately by highly saturated colour images of unspoiled nature alongside Green spokespeople speaking on the Greens’ vision for the future and positive adjectives set in a clean sans-serif typeface. The colour images featured

fruit and vegetables, native flora and fauna, birds, people harvesting produce, walking, biking, using public transport and children at play; ideal activities for those with a social conscience to engage in. The images were addressed to both the post-modern youth audience and the Values generation.

The black and white images were a reminder to voters of how bad life would become without the Greens. The coloured images represented the world once the Greens had taken a hand to it, although in reality the colour images were not a promise of the future but were already of the present: a trolley bus, a train, people walking and cycling (ironically all currently existing without Green intervention). The party positioned itself as the difference between bad and good. The Greens have an advantage over other parties in that the visual imagery they can automatically call upon to represent their policies, including the colour green, is already strongly coded to mean life, existence and goodness (Beasley & Danesi, 2002; Bell, 1996; Williamson, 1978).

At the commencement of the broadcast Mike Ward, a Green list candidate, praises Green voters for their cleverness in an effort to make their core voters feel valued (Image 3.6.2):

Mike Ward: It doesn't have to be like this. We live in one of the world's most beautiful and abundant countries. Among the cleverest most creative and caring people.



Image 3.6.2: Stills from Green 1999 opening night address.

No other party demonstrated the same devotion to a cause as the Greens, especially with the Alliance having abandoned its activist image in order to follow Labour into government, and no other party's policies were driven by the same level of concern

for the environment. In 1999 the Green Party showed images of co-leaders Jeanette Fitzsimons and Rod Donald “walking the walk” and “talking the talk” and engaged in green activism in the opening night address and newspaper advertisements (Images 3.6.3, 3.6.4 and 3.6.5).



Image 3.6.3: Stills from Green 1999 opening night address.

The party’s integrity and commitment to the green cause was reinforced by the slogans “Our campaign won’t finish when the election does.” and “This is not an election campaign. This is our life’s work.”, seen in the newspaper advertisements below (Images 3.6.4 and 3.6.5). Offered by the slogans and images were party leaders whose contribution to the Green cause went beyond the satisfaction of personal desire for power and achievement through electoral success. In this way they set themselves up as being somewhat morally superior to other party leaders.



Image 3.6.4: Green newspaper advertisement, 1999.



Image 3.6.5: Green newspaper advertisement, 1999.

That the party's goals and vision superseded personal ambition was also communicated in the opening and closing night addresses by seven of the party's list candidates: Mike Ward, Jeanette Fitzsimons, Rod Donald, Sue Kedgley, Ian Ewen-Street, Nandor Tanczos and Sue Bradford. They spoke off camera on issues of concern to the party, the people of New Zealand and the wider planet. Speaking off-camera is a televisual convention belonging to the documentary genre, designed to make an audience sense it is witnessing an unscripted conversation between the interviewee and an objective interviewer. There were lots of close-up facial shots to convey the honesty and integrity of the speakers (Image 3.6.6).



Image 3.6.6: Rod Donald in Green opening night address, 1999.



The spokespeople talked lucidly on the subject of Green policies, demonstrating a shared vision and goals. The Alliance was the only other party to feature some of its candidates in its opening night address; although the Alliance's broadcast was opened and closed by party leader Jim Anderton. The Green Party was the only party to *not* have its broadcast opened and closed by a party leader. Instead the Greens' broadcast was opened by Mike Ward, Green spokesperson for strong communities, arts and local government, and closed by Nandor Tanczos, Green justice spokesperson. Tanczos, as the youngest member of the Green team, was used to demonstrate the Green Party's shared understanding with young voters (Image 3.6.7).

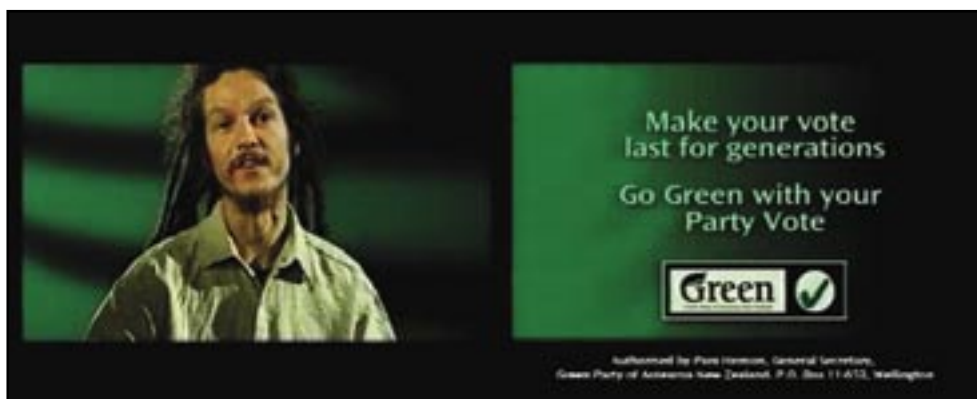


Image 3.6.7: Stills from Green 1999 opening night address.

Supporting the impression that its candidates were not there for personal gain but for the greater good, the party had the highest average use of the inclusive pronouns we and our in the verbal dialogue of the opening night address and the word I did not feature at all (see Tables 3.1, p. 47 and 3.2, p. 54) The Green Party was the only party *not* to use any I-statements in 1999.

### Green Offer

In exchange for the party vote the Greens offered a selfless party that would stand morally above other parties, thereby adding value to the normal experience of voting for a political party. Co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons in the opening night address urges voters to:

Remember, your party vote could make a difference for generations to come. With a Green voice in parliament New Zealand could provide the role model the planet is looking for.

The underlying message to voters was that they would be doing morally good works by voting Green. The party's slogan "Go Green" reinforced the idea that going green was a lifestyle choice as well as a voting option. The phrase "last for generations" was repeated in words, type and images in Green Party print, television and billboard advertising (Image 3.6.8). The Greens used a sans serif typeface with rounded corners for the communication of their slogans, a typeface that communicated a softer edge to their message than that of most of the other parties.



Image 3.6.8: Green billboard, 1999.

In Green Party advertising imagery the message was carried through the metaphor of children at play. Opening the opening and closing night addresses, and featuring as the party's only television commercial, was a 15 second moving image sequence of a curly haired toddler sitting on a rug on a grassy hill covered with daisies, playing with an iconic New Zealand buzzy-bee toy (Image 3.6.9). The dappled sunlight filtered through tree branches suggested it was a summery day. The audio track contains the sound of birds singing and the buzz of the bee as the child pulls its cord. As the camera slowly closes in on the girl's face Jeanette Fitzsimons says in voice-over:

Fresh air, clean water, safe food, happiness, health, education. The Green Party will continue to fight for these rights long after this election is over. Make your vote last for generations. Go Green with your party vote.

The same child's face was featured at the bottom of the Greens' newspaper advertisements alongside the party's slogan (Images 3.6.4 and 3.6.5). In utilising the metaphor of children at play, the Greens were drawing upon one of New Zealand's more nostalgic and utopian myths – that New Zealand is a safe and healthy place in which children have a right to grow up enjoying the outdoors and experiencing

nature, and that we need to preserve our clean, green and beautiful environment in order to maintain this ideal of New Zealand family life and identity (Bell, 1996; Cleveland, 1979).



Image 3.6.9: Stills from Green 1999 television commercial.

It is interesting to contrast the Greens' use of children in its advertising with Labour's in 1999. Labour engaged the innocence and naivité of children to paint a picture of a future filled with optimism, possibility and technological advancement enabled by the Labour Party. The Greens offered a more pessimistic vision of a future without the Greens, and sought to return to an ideal view of past childhood, a past in which toys were manual and wooden. There was nothing electronic in sight. By showing a nostalgic picture of childhood the party was asking Values generation voters to remember it as their past, associate it with the values of the Green Party and give the party their party vote.

### **Competitor Orientation**

It was one thing for the Green Party to demonstrate an awareness of target voter needs, reference myths believed by target voters, be confident in its offer to voters and to differentiate itself from the competition in the opening night address. It was another to get the repeated exposure needed for the message to be received by voters. One major disadvantage for niche parties in the current electoral environment is lack of state resourcing. Unlike a niche firm which is able to charge a premium price for a niche product, such premiums can not be charged in a largely state-funded environment. The smaller the party and public opinion support the smaller the broadcast time and funding allocated through the Electoral Commission.

In 1999 the Greens were granted \$42,000 for election broadcasting, four minutes free airtime for the opening night address and 1.5 minutes for the closing night address. In contrast the Alliance received \$194,998, New Zealand First received \$108,332, and ACT received \$129,999 for election broadcasting, eight minutes for their opening night addresses and 2.5 minutes for their closing night addresses. The Greens received the same allocation as the much smaller Legalise Cannabis party, Christian Heritage, Mauri Pacific and United New Zealand. The minimal resourcing meant the Green Party was restricted with regard to the length and quality of television commercials it could create and the amount of advertising time it could purchase. As a consequence, the opening night address aside, there were no Green advertisements on television for the first fortnight of the 1999 campaign. The party had to rely on the news media to carry its message. However, the news media did not allocate the party television debate time at the commencement of the campaign. Nor did the television channels give it news coverage, seemingly considering the party to be peripheral to the outcomes of the campaign. Following the opening night address, while the small parties that received television news coverage (Alliance, ACT and New Zealand First) went up in the NZES tracking poll, the Greens went down (see Figure 3.1, p. 58).

### ***Coromandel Challenge***

According to Rod Donald (2000) the Greens had studied ACT's success in the 1996 election, and determined that much of it rested on the perception that Wellington Central candidate Richard Prebble would win the electorate seat and that therefore all party votes for ACT would count. Accordingly, the Green Party set out to create the perception it would win the Coromandel seat. This transformed the party from nicher to challenger in the Coromandel and involved campaigning nationwide for an electorate seat. Nationwide the message was conveyed to voters by presenting, in the guise of a newspaper article, (undated) poll evidence of Jeanette Fitzsimons leading the National incumbent in the Coromandel. *The Local News* (Image 3.6.10) was a Green published broadsheet distributed to 550,000 homes in early November (Donald, 2000). The story about Fitzsimons' lead was understated in that it was not the key headline, but it was located on the right hand side of the front page where it could not be missed by anyone scanning the page from left to right, which is the standard way of reading a printed page in western cultures.



Image 3.6.10: *The Local News*, 1999.

On its own, this story was unlikely to make voters think that a vote for the Greens was not going to be wasted. However, other polling soon began to show similar results. On 10 November TV One News released a Colmar Brunton poll showing Jeanette Fitzsimons three per centage points ahead of the National candidate in the Coromandel seat. The NZES tracked party vote intentions for the Greens rising four points in the next five days (see Figure 3.1, p. 58). A *Dominion* newspaper poll result on 15 November showed Fitzsimons eight per cent in front (Donald, 2000). The party rose to seven per cent in the NZES tracking poll on 18 November.

In the commercial marketplace niche firms do not have to worry about being challenged too much, provided they have been nurturing their target market. In the 1999 political marketplace, however, having moved from nicher to challenger to National in the Coromandel, the Greens laid themselves open to counterattack by the National Party in the last ten days of the campaign (discussed earlier). Following National's attacks, the NZES tracking poll saw support for the Greens decline from a high of just over seven per cent on 18 November to just over five per cent on election day, while support for National rose in the last week (see Figure 3.1, p. 58).

National was not the only party concerned at the Greens' rise in popularity. Labour was also concerned that Green support was redistributing the centre-left vote. Helen Clark is reported as saying "I think it's important that we grow the share of the vote opposed to the government [but] the real issue is expanding the vote for change, not

carving it up into smaller bits” (in Brockett, 1999, p. 2). Shortly after the above poll results were published, Labour added the message to its advertising that “Only a vote for Labour can change the government”.

The Greens simply had no controlled advertising messages with which to fight back from the major parties’ challenges. The only television advertising screened in the second half of the campaign was the nostalgic buzzy-bee television commercial. The closing night address was a repeat of excerpts from the opening night address. On the day before the election the party published a half page newspaper advertisement which was a missed opportunity to counter National’s attacks (Image 3.6.11). Instead in a very wordy message it repeated much of what was in the opening and closing night addresses and added policy promises on an emissions tax and genetic engineering. The colour green aside, no awareness was demonstrated of the likely preference of late deciding voters for a heuristic cue which required minimal time to decode.



Image 3.6.11: Green newspaper advertisement published the day before the 1999 election.

## Discussion

The party achieved its electoral goals. Jeanette Fitzsimons won the Coromandel seat off the National Party incumbent and the Greens gained 5.2 per cent of the party vote, which gave it seven list and one electorate seats.

Jack Vowles (2000) credits the party's rise in support after 10 November to the increased news media coverage it received as a result of the favourable poll results. He also thinks that National's negative campaign may have been marginally successful for National. The last NZES campaign cross-section showed Jeanette Fitzsimons five per cent ahead of her rival, but her small majority after final votes were counted suggests that the National Party campaign against her and her party could have been successful. Rod Donald (2000) blames the party's fall from seven per cent to just over five per cent on Labour's last week message that only a vote for Labour could change the government.

What additional perspectives has this political marketing examination offered? The Greens entered the 1999 campaign as a niche party. Their specialist environmental messages were targeted at their core supporters. In exchange for the party vote they offered a party that would morally stand above other parties. Their commitment to the green cause superseded personal political ambition. They appeared to have a strong team culture and a shared vision and this differentiated them from the competition. In other words, their voter orientation was strong.

However, their competitor orientation was not as strong. A lack of funding and access to broadcast time made it difficult for the Greens to transmit their message to voters. This was especially so when the Greens challenged National for the Coromandel electorate. The Greens lacked the controlled messages to fight back when the National and Labour parties counter-attacked with strong messages warning voters of the consequences of voting Green. The Greens were not able to sustain the seven per cent support they had received mid-way through the campaign.

It was not all bad for the Greens, however. The counter-attacks resulted in increased free news media attention, and the Greens' message was brought to the attention of a wider audience. The Greens' voter base grew wider. According to the NZES the composition of its final vote was only 23.8 per cent from 1996 Alliance voters. In other words, around one quarter of the party's 1999 voters had voted for them as part of the Alliance in the previous election. All their other voters were new: 19 per cent had voted National in 1996, 16.7 per cent had voted New Zealand First in 1996; and 14.3 per cent had voted Labour in 1996. As the Greens had not stood in their own name in 1996 it is not possible to know if or to where they bled votes. Levine and Roberts (2000) note that the Greens attracted more support than any other party, as a proportion of the party vote, from people who had not voted in the previous election. While the party seemed to profit from its new market position as challenger, it was perhaps not by as much as it could have been had it had the message, funding or strategy to inoculate against the counterattacks.

#### 4.7: UNITED NEW ZEALAND 1999

##### Context

The 1999 election was only the second election contested by United New Zealand, although the party's leader, Peter Dunne, had held the Ohariu-Belmont seat since 1984 which he first won as a Labour MP. Unhappy with Labour's policy and leadership shift back to the left under Mike Moore and Helen Clark, Dunne had left Labour in 1994 to form his own party, the Future New Zealand Party. In 1995 he joined another party comprised of four disgruntled National and two Labour MPs – the United New Zealand Party. In February 1996 the United New Zealand Party signed a coalition agreement with the National Party, giving Dunne a place in Cabinet as Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister of Revenue. National also undertook not to contest Dunne's Ohariu-Belmont seat in the 1996 election. At that election the United New Zealand Party gained less than one per cent of the overall party vote and Dunne, the only member of the party to be re-elected (as an electorate MP), became party leader. A lone voice in parliament over the next three years, Dunne held the balance of power a number of times as the National-New Zealand First coalition disintegrated and the minority National government clung on to power. In 1997 the United New Zealand Party absorbed three minor parties – the Advance New Zealand, Ethnic Minority and New Zealand Conservative parties – in an attempt at broadening the party's social roots as well as increasing its percentage of the party vote (Aimer, 2003; Stonyer, 2000).

##### Campaign Objectives

Following the absorption of the minor parties, United New Zealand was cautiously optimistic about its electoral chances in 1999, estimating that only 370 votes per electorate were needed to gain a second MP. According to chief adviser to Peter Dunne Mark Stonyer (2000), United New Zealand's objectives entering the 1999 election campaign were thus to:

- retain the Ohariu-Belmont electorate seat; and
- gain a second MP through a small increase in the party vote to 1.3 per cent.



## Voter Orientation

Market research conducted by the party prior to the 1999 campaign sought to determine levels of public awareness about the party. It found high recognition for the party's name, the leader's name and his image, but not necessarily all three at once. It also found the public "unable to discern clearly the overall political 'flavour' of the party and its liberal philosophy" (Stonyer, 2000, p. 62). United New Zealand recognised it faced a tough job informing the New Zealand public of what it stood for. As a party of one sitting member it would receive much less television, radio and press attention than the bigger parties during the lead-up to the election, as well as a smaller election broadcasting allocation. It decided to target much of its campaign message to those groups it already had a connection with.

United New Zealand's target audience comprised the voters of Ohariu Belmont, whom it targeted with a print-oriented campaign, using advertisements in the local community newspapers, direct mail drops, and hoardings (Stonyer, 2000); and Asian and other minor ethnic communities in Auckland, a constituency inherited when United New Zealand absorbed the Ethnic Minority Party. Of the almost \$40,000 allocated to the party by the Electoral Commission for election broadcasting, the party spent one quarter of this on ethnic broadcasting in Auckland. Further party funding was then allocated to the ethnic print media, also mainly in the Auckland region. At election time, ten nationalities were represented among the 23 candidates fielded by United New Zealand, a number of whom had connections to various ethnic media broadcasters. Some had established programmes on Triangle TV, the manager of Korea TV and Radio was a list candidate, as was the head of Iranian TV in Auckland. The party hoped for free media attention by virtue of these candidates' positions (Stonyer, 2000). United New Zealand also had a generic party vote message for the rest of the voters of New Zealand which it conveyed in its opening and closing night addresses, a 15 second television commercial, and a series of quarter page advertisements, run in metropolitan newspapers during the last week of the campaign.

There were no images of Dunne interacting with ordinary New Zealanders in the opening night address. Instead Dunne was seen consulting with advisers and talking on the telephone in his office, demonstrating that he was accessible and open to advice (Image 3.7.1). Also suggested by the images in the opening night address was Dunne's ability to work hard. For much of the broadcast he went jacketless, attired in a business shirt with suspenders visible: a dress code for getting down to work. Dunne was also shown gazing out the window of his office, his hand on his chin: a code derived from Rodin's "Thinker" statue indicating that he was not being idle but

pondering a serious issue. He was also shown at his computer and toting up figures on a calculator in a dark office, the only light shining from a desk lamp. There was an element of the lone crusader connoted: a solitary MP, burning the midnight oil (though daylight could be seen through the gaps in the blinds), to look after the needs of his constituents. Another strong message was that Dunne needed other MPs to help with the heavy workload.



Image 3.7.1: Stills from United New Zealand's 1999 opening night address.

This tied in with a verbal articulation of the party's hope that with a few hundred more votes in each electorate, Dunne could achieve some companionship:

Hello, I'm Peter Dunne, leader of United New Zealand. For the record a party vote for United will count this election. That's because, according to all the polls, we're likely to hold the Ohariu-Belmont seat, which means that the five per cent threshold will not apply. At around 400 party votes per electorate we would gain a second MP and at just over 600 party votes per electorate we would gain a third MP. Two or three United MPs in the last parliament would have made all the difference.



Image 3.7.2: Stills from United New Zealand's 1999 opening night address.

Although visually there was little to indicate Dunne's affinity with ordinary voters, Dunne's verbal rhetoric was peppered with inclusive language. His use of I-statements was negligible, only used once in the four minute opening night address. Next to the Greens, United New Zealand's verbal dialogue signified the least personally driven leader of the seven parties (see Tables 3.1, p. 47 and 3.2, p. 54). United New Zealand's usage of the inclusive pronouns we and our was average amongst the seven parties, but there was widespread use of the use of pronouns you and your. Looking down the barrel of the camera, to signify Dunne's desire to make a personal connection with viewers, Dunne frequently asked what voters wanted; a confirmation that voter needs were important to the party:

PD: How do *you* feel about student loans? How do *you* feel about settling the Treaty once and for all? Or what do *you* think about establishing a proper DNA database that catches rapists after their first offence, not their ninth or tenth. How do *you* feel? United is the party that actually wants to know.

It was a bit late to now be asking about voter needs, however; these were things the party needed to find out well ahead of the campaign!

### **United New Zealand Offer**

In exchange for the party vote Peter Dunne offered common sense and balance:

It is time to start addressing issues in a sensible and rational way.

. . . New Zealand has lost a lot of the common sense on which this country was built.

. . . . Or would you prefer the level headed common sense of New Zealand's only true centre party United New Zealand. Worth thinking about isn't it?

Like ACT and New Zealand First, United New Zealand offered to be the balance between the big parties and to keep the next government honest. While ACT offered:

to balance the excesses of the Alliance and New Zealand First and deliver a strong centre-right government with new ideas [with a preference] .... to stay on the cross benches keeping the government honest;

and New Zealand First asked voters to:

Give New Zealand First your party vote and we will keep them honest .... It's about whether you want a party of extremists to hold the balance of

power. It's about whether you want one party to have absolute power, or whether you want someone to keep an eye on things;

United New Zealand asked voters to:

Remember it's a small party that will hold the balance and keep the next government honest. So who do you want that party to be? More of the same, or the much needed common sense that comes from New Zealand's only true centre party. Make no mistake. Make your party vote a United party vote. It will not be wasted.

United New Zealand was therefore not offering voters greater value than the bigger third parties.

### **Competitor Orientation**

United New Zealand had been a loyal supporter of the National government in the period 1996-1999. In return National agreed not to stand a candidate in Ohariu-Belmont, leaving the way clear for Dunne to retain the seat in 1999. In theory, this should have been reason enough for the party to position itself as a follower to National and hope for similar or greater rewards to the ones it had achieved following the 1996 election.

However, United New Zealand went on the attack against both National and Labour parties, acting very much as a challenger. In the closing night address Dunne implied that the bigger parties had allowed parliament to degenerate:

Michael Cullen's voice: We are tired, Sir, of Tory lies.

Speaker's voice (Kidd) : Order, Dr Cullen, Resume your, resume your seat.

Peter Dunne (turning off radio): Sad isn't it, parliament has degenerated into that. Here we are, about to face the challenges of the new millennium, with our parliamentary sessions resembling an out of control side-show. It has become a trivialised play-pen where the show ponies vie to make the 6 o'clock news rather than deal with the real issues facing us all. It's time to get real. It's time to demand a parliament we can all be proud of and a government that can get things done instead of becoming bogged down in mindless debate. We need a government built on some good old kiwi common sense.



Image 3.7.3: Stills from United New Zealand's 1999 closing night address.

Dunne's verbal dialogue was anti-ideology, as demonstrated in the opening night address:

Most of us know what's wrong with this country but we seem too afraid to face up to the real issues. Instead we spend months and millions of dollars in tedious ideological argument and ceaseless debate. And the extremes hold the balance or worse, hold the government to ransom, and nothing ever happens.

Who were the extremes Dunne refers to? United New Zealand's harshest attacks were reserved for the parties that had enabled MPs Winston Peters, Tau Henare and Alamein Kopu to be elected. They were attacked in television advertising (Image 3.7.4) and newspaper advertising (Image 3.7.5).

Male V/O: Whoever makes up our next government it'll be a small party who holds the balance and keeps them on track. So, who do you want that small party to be? Make no mistake, make your party vote a United party vote.



Image 3.7.4: Stills from United New Zealand television commercial, 1999.

What was the matter with Peters, Kopu and Henare? Did they together bring down the coalition? No, there were other New Zealand First MPs that defected from the coalition when Winston Peters was sacked by Shipley, whose images did not feature. Tau Henare, although originally a New Zealand First MP, did not, in fact, leave the coalition with Peters. He remained in cabinet as Minister of Maori Affairs and continued to support the National government. In 1999 he was contesting the general election as the leader of his own party, the Mauri Pacific party. Alamein Kopu had come into the House as a Mana Motuhake member on the Alliance list. In 1997 she left the Alliance to form her own party, Mana Wahine, but consistently supported the government until the 1999 election. Although all three MPs created controversy around their behaviour, they were not alone in this. Many MPs behaved badly and had their reputations tarnished during the 1996-99 term. But common to these three MPs was that they were the only Maori MPs who were also leaders of political parties. United New Zealand's message was that these specifically Maori leaders were not to be trusted.

Not verbally stated, this message was conveyed through treatment of image. In United New Zealand's television commercial the portraits of Peters, Kopu and Henare were displayed in black and white. This was in contrast to the highly saturated colour portraits of the party leaders of European origin: Shipley, Clark, Anderton, Prebble and Dunne himself. When the two image treatments are contrasted in such a way colour becomes a signifier for good, or right; black and white for bad, or wrong. In a further contrast between right and wrong the size of the portraits of Peters, Kopu and Henare were larger, lacking enhancing studio lighting effects, and the facial expressions unsmiling, which left the impression of a more sinister set of personalities when compared to the friendly, smiling faces of the studio lit leaders of European ethnicity.

In the quarter page newspaper advertisement (Image 3.7.5) the choice between right and wrong was spelled out. The issue for voters to consider was choosing a "little guy" to keep the "big guys" honest, and voters had to choose the "right" little guy. The options presented were between balance and common sense being offered by United New Zealand in the form of the smiling Dunne, or the "ego-driven, petty, power-hungry, perk-pilfering" of the less friendly images of Peters, Kopu and Henare.

The racist attacks on political party leaders who were Maori went un-remarked on by commentators and mainstream news media, probably for the same reasons the party received little media attention overall – because it was not expected that United New Zealand would come anywhere near being a serious influence on the next government.



Image 3.7.5: United New Zealand newspaper advertisement, 1999.

### Future New Zealand

Future New Zealand is another minor party worth commenting on in this election. It is relevant to United New Zealand because after the 1999 election the two parties merged to become United Future. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, United Future's successful 2002 message was very much a combination of United New Zealand and Future New Zealand's 1999 campaign messages.

Future New Zealand was a remnant of the Christian Democrat party, a party established in 1995 by ex National cabinet minister Graeme Lee. When the party failed to win any seats in 1996 under the banner Christian Coalition, Lee retired from politics and the party was leaderless until it re-emerged under leader Anthony Walton with a new name, Future New Zealand. Unlike the Christian Democrat party, Future New Zealand did not describe itself as a Christian party, claiming to be a values-based rather than a religion-based party.

Future New Zealand received \$17,000 as its broadcasting allocation from the Electoral Commission in 1999, but no time for opening or closing night addresses. It used its allocation on a 30 second television commercial featuring the party's leader Anthony Walton (Image 3.7.6).

Recorded MP: ...a pack of lies, oh boo hoo ....

Anthony Walton: Is it too much to ask, that politicians could come together and work together for the good of this country. That politicians could offer honest, innovative, positive policies. That a team of experienced leaders with proven track records in education, business and health, would work together to promote a positive new vision for the success and prosperity of this great country. I believe Future New Zealand is that party.



Image 3.7.6: Stills from Future New Zealand television commercial, 1999.

Many elements of Future New Zealand's advertising message were similar to other parties. Like United New Zealand in the beginning of its closing night address, Future New Zealand started its television commercial with the raised voices of MPs attacking each other in the House of Representatives, both parties positioning themselves above the level of degenerate debate. Like United New Zealand and New Zealand First, Future New Zealand described itself as a centrist, not-extreme, party. Like Labour, which was offering to "give New Zealand a new start and a better future", Future New Zealand offered itself as "new generation politics", and sought to promote "a positive new vision."





Image 3.7.7: Future New Zealand brochure, 1999.

Image 3.7.8: Future New Zealand newspaper advertisement, 1999.

Labour communicated its future orientation through images of children. Future New Zealand communicated it through its graphic design. Using the typeface Helvetica Neue, and a layout featuring white space and unevenly gridded columns that at the time were frequently used in graphic communications addressed to young audiences, the party demonstrated its interest in connecting with younger voters. Future New Zealand communicated a concern for its image and a youthfulness that was cemented with images of Anthony Walton, one of the youngest party leaders contesting the 1999 election (Image 3.7.7).

The major difference between Future New Zealand and other parties claiming to be centrist was its focus upon the family as the cornerstone of its policy platform. This was stressed in its newspaper advertisement (Image 3.7.8) and brochure (Image 3.7.7). This was to prove significant in 2002.

## **Discussion**

United New Zealand only achieved one of its electoral goals – it retained the Ohariu-Belmont seat, with a sizeable majority of 12,557, representing 57.4 per cent of the electorate vote. However, it did not even achieve half the 1.3 per cent party vote it sought, gaining only .54 per cent of the overall party vote (11,065 votes). Despite the party's targeting of ethnic voters in Auckland, its party vote result in Auckland was no better than the nationwide result, leaving a big question mark over the party's assumption that absorbing a small party would bring that party's voters with it. Only in three electorates did the party gain over one per cent of the party vote: Wellington Central (1.08 per cent), Mana (1.02 per cent) and Ohariu-Belmont (2.81 per cent) (NZEC, 1999). All these electorates were in the Wellington, not Auckland, region, suggesting some residual influence of Dunne's own electorate publicity.

Ultimately United New Zealand seemed to benefit little from its merger with the three smaller parties: the 1999 result was smaller than its 1996 result, which had been one electorate seat and 0.9 per cent of the overall party vote (18,245 votes). Future New Zealand, on the other hand, won just over twice the party vote of United New Zealand, with 1.12 per cent of the party vote (23,033 votes) in 1999.

What are the political science explanations of United New Zealand's electoral outcome in the 1999 campaign? Vowles, Levine and Roberts have not published any analysis of about United New Zealand's result in this election. Peter Aimer (2003) has suggested that United New Zealand's vote was a vote for Dunne, rather than the party itself. He adds "On the face of it, Dunne's vision of a viable centre party with middle class appeal was unrealisable." (p. 295).

The party's own view is that its 1999 result was satisfactory. Stonyer (2000) writes:

With comparatively little funding, virtually no explanation from the Electoral Commission as to the way the party votes work when a party has one electorate MP, a minimal amount of media coverage during the campaign, and six fewer MPs than prior to the 1996 election, the result is, perhaps, satisfactory (p. 65).

What additional perspectives does this political marketing examination offer? Despite the party's attacks on other parties, including the National government, behaving as a follower paid off for Dunne, in the sense that he was largely unchallenged in his electorate seat, and this guaranteed United Future a continuing presence in parliament.

However, there was little indication of further voter orientation. There were no images of Dunne interacting with ethnic or other voters, and he was belatedly asking voters what they wanted. United New Zealand failed to offer greater benefit to voters than New Zealand First and ACT, which were also articulating similar messages, offering to be the balance between the two major parties, and offering to keep them honest. These parties offered more, in a policy sense, than simply to keep the big parties honest; they also had the advantage of a more established reputation (even if New Zealand First's was tarnished), and more exposure for their messages in the news media; they had greater time and funding allocations for the opening and closing night addresses; leaders Peters and Prebble took part in televised debates and frequently featured in the news media. Being a party of one MP who did not behave in such a way that caused controversy and attention, United New Zealand was not considered by the news media to be of great significance. Dunne was not featured in the debates and he received very little news media exposure. Consequently the party's message was simply not able to reach as many voters as the other two parties.

Having said that, Future New Zealand had a much smaller time and funding allocation for broadcasting than United New Zealand's; its leader was not invited to debate the other leaders; and it also received minimal media exposure. Yet its final party vote was just over twice United New Zealand's. What most differentiated Future New Zealand's message from United New Zealand's was its emphasis on an issue that no other party had signaled an interest in: the family. While United New Zealand had a similar offering to other minor parties, Future New Zealand was offering something different.

This examination is unable to resolve why United New Zealand did not do better in Auckland, as none of the party's targeted material was collected. However, the party's professed commitment to ethnic minorities in Auckland was somewhat at odds with its generic party vote advertisements which communicated a message of racial **in**-tolerance rather than tolerance. Not surprisingly, given the party's attacks on the smaller parties with Maori leaders, there was very little support for the party in the Maori electorates. The total Maori party vote for United New Zealand was 0.07 per cent (73 votes), which had the effect of reducing United New Zealand's support in the general electorates from .56 per cent to its final .54 per cent.

Using a similar format to the previous chapter, this chapter examines the 2002 advertising messages and market orientation of the electorally successful parties in order of their party vote position in the 1999 election, from highest to lowest; that is, Labour, National, the Alliance, ACT, the Greens, New Zealand First and United Future. Before moving to this analysis, some background to the calling of the 2002 election is necessary.

### **Background 1999-2002**

Together in coalition Labour and the Alliance held only 59 of 120 seats in parliament and therefore not an outright majority. With the Greens' agreement to act as a support party on confidence and supply and to work in the interests of stable and effective government, Helen Clark was able to lead what looked to be a cohesive government. The process of government formation was completed within twelve days after the election and the Alliance was rewarded for its support with the position of Deputy-Prime Minister, which went to Jim Anderton, an additional four cabinet posts, one ministerial position outside Cabinet and an undersecretaryship.

The Labour-led coalition took over a growing economy. Between 1999 and 2002 the job market strengthened, the numbers of people in work grew, and unemployment rates declined. Business confidence waxed and waned over the period, however. Wary of a centre-left coalition, business leaders initially regarded Labour policies as anti-business, especially its plan to repeal the Employment Contracts Act (Aimer, 2004). The government worked hard at trying to soothe relations with the business sector and assure them that the coalition was stable and supportive of economic growth.

Labour was also considered by many commentators as being too "politically correct". Of particular concern was Labour's targeting of its Closing the Gaps policy at Maori and Pacific people. Labour's social policy responded by shifting to address the social and economic disadvantages of all New Zealanders, regardless of ethnicity.

Over the next couple of years as the government's popularity in the opinion polls fluctuated Helen Clark's personal popularity soared. She acted quickly to deal with

problem personalities within her party. The public perceived her to be a strong leader, in touch with ordinary kiwis, and good in a crisis. National leader Jenny Shipley's ratings went in the opposite direction. The National caucus decided that it was unlikely to win the next election with Shipley as leader and in October 2001 the caucus replaced her with Bill English, a young and capable member of National's front bench. However, this did little to shift National's popularity, which also continued to decline. After nine years of being in government National did not slip comfortably into the role of effective opposition party.

Being in coalition was not an easy ride for the Alliance. Its poll ratings began to slide soon after the election, dropping below three per cent from mid-2001. Party leader Jim Anderton's strategy of compliance with government policy in the name of political stability was increasingly called into question by a strong left wing element within the party's council. The council, led by party president Matt McCarten, found it hard to accept the constraints and conventions of cabinet responsibility (Levine & Roberts, 2003). The government's decision to send troops to Afghanistan as part of the international action against terrorism after 9/11 was strongly and publicly criticised by the council. There ensued many public displays of disunity, particularly between Anderton and McCarten. Over the next six months the constituent members of the Alliance took sides. Mana Motuhake, with the exception of deputy leader Sandra Lee, sided with McCarten; the Democrats with Anderton.

Early in 2002 Anderton and his deputy Sandra Lee wrote to 3730 Alliance members seeking their support for their position vis-a-vis the Alliance council. 2121 responded, 81 per cent of whom supported Anderton and his "commitment to a constructive, commonsense coalition". Eight per cent said Anderton had lost their support (Anderton, 2002). On the basis of this survey Anderton and Lee announced in early April that they would not be standing under the Alliance banner as it was then configured at the 2002 election. That same month, cabinet minister Laila Harré was elected party leader by the Alliance council, though Anderton remained leader in parliament until its dissolution in June, a move that attracted strong criticism from opposition parties for Anderton's flouting of the Electoral Integrity Act, an act that required "party hoppers" (MPs who changed parties mid-term) to resign. In May 2002 Anderton declared his intention to contest the 2002 election under a new party banner, later named Jim Anderton's Progressive Coalition. He was not accompanied by Lee, who decided to retire from politics, but was joined by Alliance MP and Cabinet Minister Matt Robson, who became Anderton's new deputy.

The Greens' relationship with Labour cooled substantially when the government's bill to implement its response to the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification's recommendations returned to parliament in April 2002. The bill provided for the October 2003 lift of a moratorium on the commercial release of genetically modified organisms. The Greens, who had wanted this moratorium extended indefinitely, disagreed with the government's decision, and the issue received much news media attention. The Greens presented Labour with an ultimatum: if the government allowed the moratorium to expire as scheduled, the Greens would vote with the opposition parties to bring the government down. For Helen Clark and Labour this was an untenable threat. Following the collapse of the Alliance, the Greens' ultimatum, National's poll ratings in a slump and Helen Clark's personal popularity being at an all time high, media speculation was rife that the government would call an early election. Sure enough, on 11 June 2002 Clark announced that the general election scheduled for some time in October or November 2002 would be brought forward to 27 July 2002.

## 4.1: LABOUR 2002

### Context

Helen Clark claimed she was calling the 2002 election early because for a considerable period of time New Zealanders had been “indicating a good level of satisfaction and comfort with the government’s leadership, direction and management”; the split in Labour’s coalition partner, the Alliance, was causing disruption in the House; time was being wasted and many bills were being subject to undue delay. Clark wanted to restore “the sense of stability which the country has appreciated under this government ... as quickly as possible”. She said it was “time to clear the air by calling a fresh election and seeking a new mandate” (2002).

At the time Clark announced the election she denied that her high approval ratings in the opinion polls were a consideration in calling an early election. Following the election, however, Labour Party president Mike Williams (2003) acknowledged that the sustained high levels of support for the government, and for the Prime Minister, had indeed been a factor in the party’s decision to call the early election. He said Labour was also moved to act by the “continuing mayhem in our coalition partner, the Alliance, which threatened to give Labour’s opponents a platform to attack our moral authority to govern”; the “alarming wobbles on Wall Street, and the US economy in general, with their possible effects on the economic wellbeing of the country”; as well as “the state of [campaign] readiness achieved by the Labour Party, particularly when contrasted with the obvious parlous state of the National Party” (p. 104).

### Campaign Objectives

In 2002 Labour was campaigning for a second term of office, one in which it hoped to lead by majority. Labour has not explicitly stated that it was seeking a majority government. Its objectives were couched more subtly in Helen Clark’s statement that she wanted “Labour returned to office in a stronger position to take forward the many positive programmes we have begun in our first term” (2002). However, this was widely interpreted by commentators as a sign that Labour wanted to govern by majority without the need for a coalition partner. For example, a few days before the election was called, *Listener* columnist Jane Clifton wrote:

Clark wants [an election] soon, because it’s highly likely Labour’s poll standing has peaked. She wants to lead a Labour majority government, and not have to deal with tedious, grasping minority parties. She knows she won’t get lucky a second time in having a compliant junior such as the old Alliance



to make up the numbers. And, she probably figures that she **deserves** a government of her very own [emphasis in original] (8 June 2002).

### **Voter Orientation**

Labour's target audience had expanded since its 1999 campaign messages. Included in Labour television advertising were still small business owners, superannuitants, students, women, children and parents of a variety of ethnic backgrounds, apprentices and factory workers, Maori and Pacific people. In addition, Labour included images of creative people and performing artists, and military personnel.

There was also a stronger emphasis on big business in 2002 than in 1999. In Labour's 1999 opening night address Clark had met a businessman who had sold his home to finance his fruit processing factory and was having great trouble accessing the services of Trade New Zealand. Although Labour's first commitment on its 1999 commitment card was to "create jobs through promoting New Zealand industries and better support for exporters and small business", the issue did not carry pride of place in the 1999 opening night address, featuring as Clark's sixth meeting in the broadcast. Her earlier interviews had been with a student, an invalid beneficiary, two solo mothers on benefits, and a secondary school teacher.

Labour's primary message in its 2002 advertising was that it had met its promises to business. The segment in the opening night address on Labour's vision for economic growth was the longest segment in the broadcast, followed by health and education and law and order. In the latter segments Clark did not talk with anyone from, or using, the health, education or law/order sectors (a shared laugh with the parents of a visually impaired boy the only exception). Clark spent more time in the opening night address listening to businessmen than any other people.

The 2002 businessman that received the most of Clark's attention in Labour's advertising was from the firm Navman, a Trade New Zealand success story for its successful exports of GPS (global positioning systems) technology (Image 4.1.1). He was the first person Clark talked to in the opening night address, and she conducted her longest conversation with him. Implying that Labour had assisted Navman in achieving its success Helen Clark says:

As a government we've developed partnerships and programmes to help businesses like this grow and export more. We've invested more than \$300 million dollars in economic development programmes. With your support we can do more to back the innovative businesses which are key to our future.

The first of our seven commitments for the next three years is to work with all sectors to grow an innovative economy with more jobs.



Image 4.1.1: Stills from Labour's 2002 opening night address.

That Labour understood the needs of the business sector was also highlighted in its high rotation television commercial, first shown at the end of the opening night address and then regularly throughout the campaign. Comprised of 30 one second shots, there were only seven lines, or “sound-bites”, spoken; five by Helen Clark; one by US Secretary of State Colin Powell; and one by a New Zealand man wearing spectacles and a business suit being interviewed off-camera (signifying an objective live unscripted interview) in the following sequence (Image 4.1.2):

Helen Clark: The twenty first century is going to be about growth, knowledge, innovation.

Man: What government's doing is being a serious partner.



Image 4.1.2: Still from Labour television commercial, 2002.

In other words, it was not just the government claiming to be business-friendly, a supposedly real businessman was endorsing it too. Labour clearly saw its electoral fortunes linked to meeting the needs of the business sector, a voter segment more traditionally associated with the National Party. Earlier in the year in a public opinion poll leaked to the press, 39 per cent of National-leaning voters, sensing their own party in disarray, had indicated they would be prepared to switch their vote to Labour in 2002 in order to keep the Greens out of government (Church, 2002). These previous National voters represented a large pool of potential new voters for Labour. Labour's business-friendly images were a sign to National supporters that it would be safe to switch votes from National to Labour.

### **Labour Offer**

Entering the campaign on 23 June Clark was rated preferred Prime Minister by around 52 per cent of the electorate. Her nearest competitor, National's Bill English, entered the campaign rating just over 10 per cent as preferred Prime Minister. Jack Vowles (2004a) has commented that Clark "entered the election campaign more dominant in New Zealand politics than any politician since Robert Muldoon" (p. 40). Moreover, there appeared to be a correlation between Clark's high approval ratings and the party's popularity. Labour also entered the campaign period on 23 June at around 52 per cent support. In preparing for the campaign Labour was confident it had a winning formula in the image of Clark (Williams, 2003).

In its 1999 opening night address Labour had offered a leader "in touch with the realities of everyday life" and demonstrated her ability to sense and respond to the needs of ordinary New Zealanders. In that 12 minute broadcast Helen Clark was seen talking with and listening to seven ordinary New Zealanders. She visited with them in their homes, and one in his factory. The 2002 opening night address communicated a very different message. In it Helen Clark took on the role of the documentary presenter, located in the foreground of various locations around New Zealand (Image 4.1.3), informing voters of Labour's achievements in office and of Labour's vision for the future. Clark's image was largely shot at far social distance (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Jewitt & Oyama). There was space around her figure and the wide depth of field invited viewers to take in both fore- and background images. This was a much less personal social distance than in 1999 where the shots were closer up.



Image 4.1.3: Stills from Labour's 2002 opening night address.

Clark interacted with a small handful of ordinary people in the opening night address and in a television commercial shown at the end of the opening night address. But the meetings she had with these people were not to gather information, as they had been in 1999. Instead, Like National's 1999 advertisements featuring Jenny Shipley, the images featured Clark meeting people in her ceremonial capacity as Prime Minister. Labour in 2002 seemed to be less concerned with proving that its leader listened to ordinary people than demonstrating that she was popular with many different people, her smile a sign that she enjoyed their company, and enjoyed her job (Image 4.1.4).



Image 4.1.4: Stills from Labour's 2002 opening night address

Clark’s verbal dialogue signaled that Labour still shared an affinity with its audience. As demonstrated in Table 4.1 below, Labour had the highest average utilisation of the inclusive pronouns we and our of all parties in the verbal dialogue of its opening night address.

**Table 4.1: Inclusive pronouns we/our per minute in 2002 opening night address.**

Party	Total minutes	Inclusive pronouns (we/our)	Mean, ranked highest to lowest
Labour	12	89	7.41
United Future	5	30	6
ACT	8	47	5.875
New Zealand First	8	42	5.25
Alliance	6	30	5
Greens	8	39	4.875
National	12	55	4.58

A line often repeated by Helen Clark throughout the campaign in the high rotation television commercial was “We believe in looking after the many, not just the few” – reminding voters that Labour was still connected to its social democratic roots in opposition to the free-market orientation of a number of its competitors. Clark spoke many phrases of togetherness in Labour’s television advertising. In the opening night address, for example, she said:

At the dawn of the twenty-first century New Zealand has so many opportunities before it. Working together, sharing a vision, we are unbeatable as a nation. It’s about being ambitious for our country, and its future, and moving along a path which will bring greater opportunity and security for all our people.

Much emphasis in Labour’s 2002 television advertising images went on demonstrating Clark’s achievements as Prime Minister, particularly on the international stage. In a television commercial that was first screened at the end of the opening night address and then regularly broadcast throughout the campaign (Image 4.1.5), Helen Clark was visually associated with recent New Zealand international achievements – from the movie *Lord of the Rings* to the Americas Cup to peace in East Timor and a thawing of relations with the US. Like Shipley in 1999, Clark was seen meeting famous people

and politicians: including mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary, Prime Minister of Japan Junichiro Koizumi, US Secretary of State Colin Powell, Team New Zealand skipper Dean Barker, and *Lord of the Rings* director Peter Jackson.



Image 4.1.5: Stills from Labour's 2002 opening night address.

Being associated with such well-known or respected people and events connoted both Clark's competence as a leader, as well as the pseudo-endorsement of these people (pseudo in the sense that they were not originally photographed with Clark to support her election campaign though their image was being used in this campaign advertisement). The message communicated that through Clark's own actions and relations, New Zealand had earned special international rewards and recognition. The images tapped into New Zealand's history of seeking external validation (Bell, 1996). This is the notion that New Zealanders as a people can not feel they are doing well until important people from outside New Zealand acknowledge them to be doing so. It also tapped into the myth that despite being a small country located at the bottom of the world New Zealand's people are so clever and resourceful they are able to exercise a disproportionate influence on the world stage (Bell, 1996).

Although successive New Zealand governments have strived hard to cement a place for New Zealand as a responsible and capable nation in world affairs, Labour's message credited it specifically to Clark and the Labour Party. Says Clark in the opening night address:

Over the last few years we've all celebrated the success of New Zealanders on the international scene ... We've earned a reputation as a model member of the United Nations, signing up to conventions and treaties where the world community must move together.

Was the need for external validation and confirmation of international success an election need for voters in 2002? Not explicitly. There is no evidence of it in the lists of issues nominated by respondents to the NZES and Victoria University pre-election surveys as being of personal importance. But, as discussed earlier with regard to National in 1999, voters would have expected some sort of demonstration of competent leadership. In many ways these images were a reward to Labour voters for accompanying Helen Clark on her leadership journey through the challenges of the past three years. Clark acknowledges this in a television commercial soundbite: “We’re not going to run because things get hot, we can take pride in having been part of making it happen”. The images of Clark on the international stage also differentiated her from the leader of the National Party. In office only nine months, Bill English had not had many opportunities to be photographed in similar situations and so had little chance of demonstrating his competence to represent the interests of the nation.

### ***The Journey***

Clark’s verbal rhetoric alluded to Labour’s governance being a *journey* it was sharing with New Zealanders – a journey that had only just begun. This was a way of suggesting Labour had not yet reached its full potential as a government; that Labour had not offered everything it had to give; and that voters had to vote Labour again if they wanted more. For example:

Opening night address: The economy is growing, unemployment’s down and we’re investing more than ever before in health and education services, *but there’s still so much more to do.*”

Closing night address: Giving your party vote to Labour is the only way *you can be sure that we can continue* our positive programme to build a better New Zealand.

Later: *If you want Labour to be able to carry on the work we’ve begun*, then tomorrow give your party vote to Labour. [my emphasis].

Visually this was carried by the metaphor of Helen Clark walking in the New Zealand bush. She went on two different bushwalks: one in the opening night address; another in a high rotation television commercial that was screened from the middle of the campaign through to the end. In the former (Image 4.1.6), Clark walks along a path and across a swing bridge with a small group of people: leading the group in one frame, walking alongside a companion in another, and being led in another; connoting not

only her ability to lead on this journey, but her comfort in being an equal and being led by others. The accompanying dialogue refers to Labour's achievements on the environment:

Helen Clark: As a government we're investing heavily in preserving our environment and our unique bio-diversity. We've opened a new national park on Stewart Island, put much more native forest into the conservation estate and we're improving the huts and tracks in our parks for all those who love the outdoors.



Image 4.1.6: Stills from Labour's 2002 opening night address.

In the opening night address Labour's environment message followed straight after the economic growth messages – signifying that this was a priority issue for Labour, and that Labour did not need the Green Party in order to have green policies, as its leader enjoyed being in the outdoors. This was an important message for Labour to convey at a time when its environmental policies, particularly as they related to the issue of genetic modification, were being challenged by the Green Party, and when Labour was hoping to govern by majority without the need for coalition parties like the Greens.

In a television commercial that featured often during the campaign (Image 4.1.7), Helen Clark speaks to camera as she (once again) walks with, leads, and then follows, a small group of people on a bushwalk and across a stream.

Helen Clark: Since Labour came to government we've worked hard to deliver on every promise we've made. But we've done much more than that. We've been building partnerships with business and people throughout the country to build a future that's more prosperous and more caring for all. The journey's just begun and there's so much more to do. But we can't do it without your support, so this election vote Labour and let's keep a good thing going.





Image 4.1.7: Stills from Labour television commercial, 2002.

This television commercial was less an endorsement for Labour’s environmental policies than a message about Labour moving into a new stage of its journey in government. Labour’s advertising signaled a party not willing to take unnecessary risks on its journey. It was a responsible journey, not a dangerous one – Clark was dressed in appropriate clothing for the outdoors, the team was walking on a well marked track. It was a journey Labour was sharing with others – Clark was accompanied by ordinary people. It was not a journey that would end in disaster – Clark would continue to care for those in difficulty – the word *caring* is spoken in her voice-over as she helps a grey-haired woman across the stream. This advertisement continued Labour’s 1999 advertising message about a leader who would personally care for others, while at the same time remembering about business needs in the verbal dialogue.

In keeping with the message of a journey just begun, and the achievement of most of the 1999 commitments, another card was produced in 2002. This one was called “The Next Steps” (Image 4.1.8). This was also the title of the brochure sent to homes. Quotation marks suggested that the words came from Clark herself. The card contained her signature, as well as the party logo, the party’s URL and Clark’s freepost contact details at parliament. As in 1999, signaled by her large signature, smiling face and speechmarks was the message that Helen Clark could be trusted to personally guarantee the commitments.

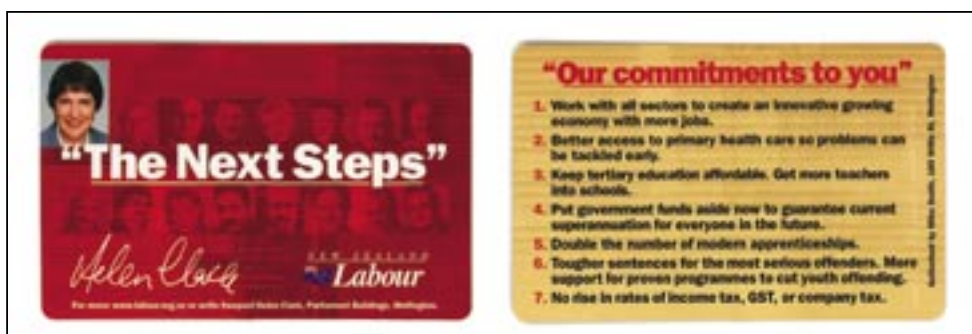


Image 4.1.8: Labour’s 2002 commitment card.

Other than a commitment to double the number of modern apprenticeships, the 2002 commitments were essentially a repeat of the commitments made in 1999. The main differences between the 2002 and the 1999 card lay in the language attributed to Clark. In 1999 the card read “My commitments are”. In 2002 this had become “Our commitments to you”, in keeping with the shared language being used by Clark in her verbal rhetoric. Reinforcing the idea that the commitments were shared amongst Clark and her cabinet colleagues, in the background of the 2002 card were screened (faint) images of the faces of Clark’s cabinet ministers. This idea was also carried through to the “NextSteps” brochure mailed to homes (Image 4.1.9). Inside the brochure were images of smiling Labour cabinet ministers engaged in ceremonial duties with ordinary people. Not to be left out, on each page was also at least one image of Clark as well.



Image 4.1.9: Labour’s 2002 policy brochure.

Despite the inclusion of Labour’s cabinet ministers in some of Labour’s 2002 campaign material (in 1999 no other Labour candidates had featured), absolutely core to Labour’s message was the offer of continued strong leadership provided by Helen Clark as Prime Minister. She was still the party’s main offering to voters in exchange for the party vote. For example Clark speaking in the closing night address says:

But we can only achieve our goals with your support. *If you want me* to lead the next government, if you want Labour to be able to carry on the work we’ve begun, then tomorrow give your party vote to Labour [my emphasis].

Labour was very focused on this exchange in not only its television advertising but also its billboard and print advertising. Labour's billboard messages loudly asked voters to give Labour their party vote in exchange for Helen Clark's leadership, with the words Labour and Party Vote standing out in a heavy (very bold) sans serif type (Franklin Gothic Heavy) on a saturated Labour-red background. Labour's type treatment conveyed a confidence and boldness about its message (Image 4.1.10).



Image 4.1.10: Labour's 2002 party vote billboard.

As in 1999, the 2002 campaign image of Clark was digitally manipulated, although not quite to the same extent – Labour clearly did not want to encourage similar levels of controversy about photo manipulation as it had in 1999. Clark's wrinkles were once again flattened out, the mole on her chin was removed, her teeth were slightly straightened and whitened and the green (in 1999 they were blue) of her eyes was brightened (Image 4.1.11). The overall effect was of an attractive and friendly leader. Shot at close personal distance (head and shoulders), the image act demanded of the viewer was to like and therefore trust Clark.

The image, colour, and type-style were consistently applied to all of Labour's advertisements, printed material, the party's website, and the 2002 commitment card, giving the party a unified and recognisable identity and offer. Clark's image was the main feature on the newspaper advertisements (Image 4.1.12). In terms of information hierarchy, her image was of equal importance to the slogan "Party Vote Labour. For strong, stable government." Not only were these words set in a Franklin

Gothic Heavy typeface to ensure their impact, they were also underlined, to make doubly sure voters received the strength and stability message. The message carried by the billboard and print advertisements: give your party vote to Labour because Helen Clark is the leader – *she* is strong and stable.



Image 4.1.11: Labour's images of Helen Clark in 1999 (left) and 2002 (right).

**Party Vote  
Labour.**

**For strong,  
stable  
government.**

- Continuing to create more jobs.
- Doubling the number of Modern Apprenticeships to 8000 next year.
- Tougher sentences for the most serious offenders and more support for proven programmes to cut youth offending.
- Keeping tertiary education affordable and getting 3000 more teachers in schools.
- £400 million in primary healthcare to tackle problems early.
- Securing superannuation for everyone in the future.

[www.labour.org.nz](http://www.labour.org.nz) WORKING FOR TOMORROW, TODAY.

Image 4.1.12: Labour newspaper advertisement, 2002.

## *Mandate*

Labour also sought a mandate to govern again. The word mandate had not been verbally articulated in Labour's 1999 advertising. But seeking a new mandate was one of the reasons Clark gave on 11 June for calling the early election. It was also voiced in the first few minutes of Labour's 2002 opening night address:

Helen Clark: On July 27 you have a very important decision to make. I'm asking you to make it in favour of Labour, continuing to build a more prosperous, confident and decent nation. By giving Labour your party vote you will give us that mandate.

It was later repeated in the closing night address:

Helen Clark: Tomorrow you have a very important decision to make. I'm asking you to make it in favour of Labour, and of continuing to build a more prosperous, confident, creative and tolerant nation. We need your party vote to give us that mandate. It's a very serious choice.

The concept of the mandate is generally vague. It is sometimes used by governments to justify the pursuit of specific policies on the grounds that the majority of the electorate gave its endorsement to those policies in an election. At other times it is used by governments to argue the legitimacy of all their actions on the grounds that they won a majority in the preceding election. The latter view sees the primary role of elections as determining *who* is to govern rather than *what* policies are to be pursued (Goot, 1999; Steger, 2000). Although Clark did not explain what the term *mandate* meant to Labour, the advertising message requested voters to believe that Clark, and through her the party, was a competent leader who could be trusted to continue "to build a more prosperous, confident and decent nation" in whatever way deemed by Labour. It seems, therefore, that Labour was seeking a general commission by the people of New Zealand to act on their behalf.

We have already seen Labour rewarding its 1999 supporters with images of Helen Clark succeeding on the world stage; images acknowledging the importance of traditional Labour people and sites; and rhetoric using words and images of inclusion. Labour also demonstrated that it had met its 1999 commitments to voters. This was done in graphically simple 15 second television commercials featuring type and tick symbols covering the meeting of Labour's law and order, education, GE and superannuation commitments. For example, this television commercial on Labour's 1999 law and order commitment (Image 4.1.13):

Male voice-over: Has Labour kept its promise and cracked down on burglary? (Tick). Is Labour increasing the non-parole period for aggravated murder? (Tick). So this election, please give your party vote to Labour. We keep our word, and we're working for tomorrow today.



Image 4.1.13: Stills from Labour's law and order television commercial, 2002.

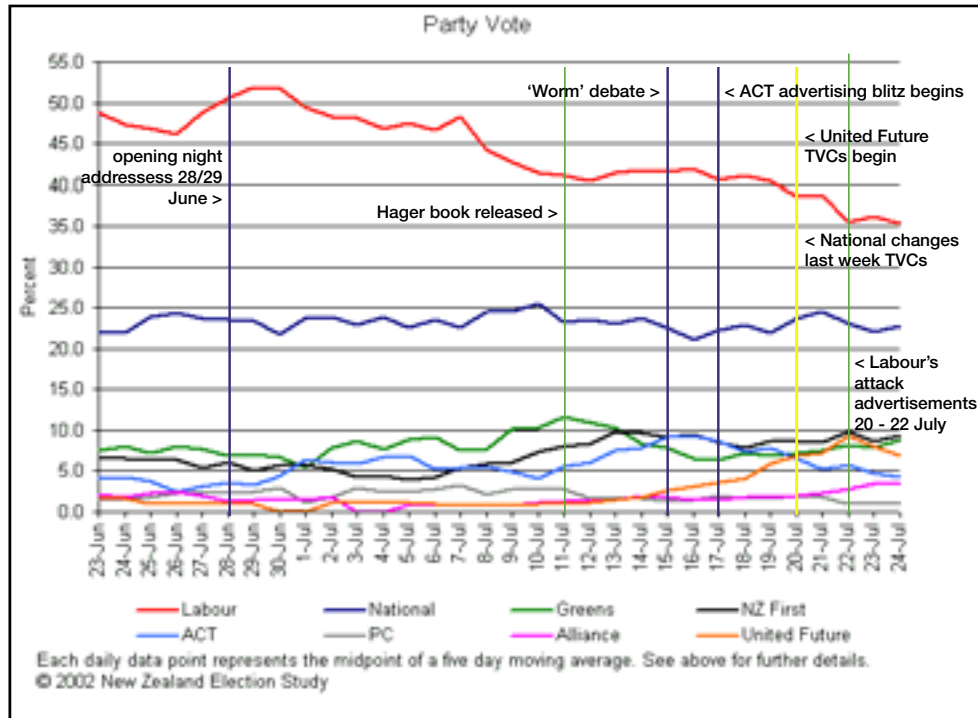
### Competitor Orientation

Labour had been the major coalition partner in government since 1999 and was unequivocally market leader going into the 2002 campaign, entering NZES campaign tracking at 52 per cent on 23 June with enough support, it seemed, to govern alone had the election been held then (see Figure 4.1, p.179). Labour was alert to the dangers of entering the campaign on a high, however. With widespread public anticipation of a Labour win Labour knew there was a risk that its supporters would take a Labour victory for granted and not bother to come out and vote (Williams, 2003).

For the first three weeks of the campaign Labour had been pushing a largely passive but confident and positive message. However, during this period Labour's support in the polls declined in apparent reaction to a number of events played out in the news media. These included Clark's adverse reactions to "Paintergate" – an incident in which she had earlier signed her name to a painting she had not in fact painted – and "Corngate" – accusations that Labour had allowed some genetically contaminated corn to be planted, despite claiming a zero tolerance policy on GE material. There were also a small number of television interviews in which, as political scientist Jon Johansson (2003) puts it diplomatically, Clark "seemed intemperate ... especially whenever her or her government's integrity was questioned" (p. 67). These events highlighted a gap between Clark's public image and a less than angelic image being exposed in the news media. Over the month of the campaign Clark's personal popularity went down quite dramatically from 52 per cent on 23 June to 42 per cent on 24 July (Vowles, 2004a, p. 41). The party's popularity also declined fairly consistently throughout the

campaign. Having entered the NZES tracking at around 52 per cent on 23 June 2002 (Vowles, 2004), it had dropped to 41.5 per cent on 20 July.

Figure 4.1: NZES tracking poll, 2002.



\*Lines and events have been added by me to the original NZES chart.

One week out from the election Labour went on the attack. It produced attack advertisements for television and newsprint, in the form of a full-page newspaper advertisement that featured in the major daily newspapers between Saturday 20 and Monday 22 July and a television commercial that was aired on the same days, that focused on employment and the stock markets. As in 1999, the newspaper advertisement utilised newspaper headlines to warn voters of the threats posed to economic growth by New Zealand First and the Greens (Image 4.1.14).



Image 4.1.14: Labour newspaper advertisement, 2002.

In the television commercial (Image 4.1.15) Labour reminded voters of the backroom deals and compromises expected by New Zealand First and the Greens:

Male V/O: If you're thinking of voting for New Zealand First it would pay to think again. Remember how Winston betrayed you last time and hooked up with Bolger? Remember when his party all fell apart? If you remember that you should forget them now.

Of course with the Greens holding the country to ransom over one single issue we'd never get anywhere. It'd be hard to compete in the third world, let alone the first. It's a serious choice and it's up to you. So this election do the wise thing and give your party vote to Labour, for strong stable government you know you can trust.



Image 4.1.15: Stills from Labour's 2002 attack television commercial.

The graphics of the television commercial were abstract. Black lines represented New Zealand First, the colour green represented the Greens. It would have cost very little to make. If public outcry at the tone of the message had become too great, Labour



could have pulled the television commercial and not have invested too much money in the exercise.

The attacks did not seem to be targeted at voters considering giving their vote to New Zealand First and the Greens so much as Labour and National supporters, warning them of the consequences of them staying away from the polls and Labour having to go into coalition because it had not received enough votes. It was notable that Labour refrained from specifically attacking National in its advertising messages. It did not mention National by name in any of its television or print advertising. Instead Labour used these advertisements to attract National's voters. The reference in the television commercial to "Bolger", who had been leader of the National Party in 1996, was a sign to National voters that Labour empathised with the way New Zealand First had ruined things for National back then. The message to National voters: consider us as a serious alternative for your party vote and keep the small parties out of coalition.

The attacks were, unsurprisingly, panned by the leaders of the Greens and New Zealand First who accused the Labour Party of pursuing power at all costs over principle (Maling, 2002). Labour's support continued to decline while the advertisements were in the public arena, dropping from 41.5 per cent on 20 July to 38 per cent on 22 July (see Figure 4.1, p. 179). This was the lowest level of public support achieved by Labour during the campaign. Levels of support for those mentioned in the attacks rose. Support for the Greens rose from 7.5 per cent to 8.5 per cent between 20 - 22 July. Support for New Zealand First rose from 9 per cent to 10.3 per cent. The messages made no dent in support for National which remained at around 25 per cent (Vowles, 2004a, pp. 35-37).

The day after the advertisements stopped, however, Labour's support started to rise again. Coincidence or delayed result? It is hard to assess. In the last few days of the campaign Labour returned to its message asking for trust and a continuation of the status quo in the television commercials featuring Clark on the bushwalk, Clark meeting famous people, and the two-ticks series.

## **Discussion**

Overall the Labour Party was electorally successful in 2002. It increased its share of the party vote after the election to 41.3 per cent, up from 38.7 per cent in 1999. This was only the fourth time since the election of the first Labour government in 1935 that a second term government had increased its percentage of the vote, and the first time under MMP (Levine & Roberts, 2003). Labour was, as it had hoped to be, returned

to office in a stronger position than before, and the party was pleased with the result. Of Labour's 2002 success party president Mike Williams (2003) has written:

Labour was returned with an increased share of the vote. Unlike the party's winning of a second term in 1987, its reelection in 2002 was accomplished while it remained true to its social democratic heritage. In this achievement, the Clark-led Labour administration clearly captured and reflected the aspirations and imagination of middle New Zealand (p. 109).

However, the election did not give Labour the majority it sought when it entered the campaign. In hindsight, it seems its earlier sense of confidence lulled the party into a false sense of security that left it vulnerable during the campaign.

What are the political science explanations of Labour's electoral outcome? Stephen Levine and Nigel Roberts point to the high levels of satisfaction in the electorate with the Labour-led government of 1999-2002. 90 per cent of those surveyed in the Victoria University pre-election survey approached the election with a broadly favourable assessment of the government. Levine and Roberts argue there was simply not enough anger within the electorate to cause a change of government (2003, p. 329).

Jack Vowles credits Helen Clark for Labour's success at the polls. From the NZES he found that a liking of Helen Clark made it easier for both Labour-inclined and uncommitted voters to vote Labour (2004). However, Vowles also blames Labour's campaign not going to plan on Clark losing personal credibility over the span of the campaign, particularly over paintergate and following the "worm" debate on Television One (discussed in Section 4.7). In addition he identifies weak issue mobilisation as a problem for Labour: that is, Labour was only identified as closest on 6 of the 14 issues of most importance to voters. He says that Labour only came out of the campaign well "because it began the campaign from a peak and could therefore afford its losses" (2004, p. 46).

What additional perspectives has this political marketing examination offered? Labour's voter orientation, though not as strong as it had been in 1999, was strong enough in 2002 to help it to a second victory. Labour still demonstrated a degree of ability to sense and respond to the needs of ordinary voters. There were plenty of images of Clark interacting with ordinary New Zealanders, including Labour's core target voters from 1999, and many new ones. Images of Clark succeeding on the international stage and meeting famous people rewarded core voters for their support. Labour seemed conscious of the importance of meeting its promises to an untrusting

electorate and placed a lot of emphasis on reassuring voters that it had met its 1999 promises. There was a consistency of style and offer in its messages: including Clark as the central offer and a commitment card to cement the loyalty of its core supporters and grow its share of the market.

In terms of its competitor orientation Labour also made an effort to grow its share of the vote by reaching out to business sector voters, who traditionally voted National. There is evidence that Labour succeeded in attracting a significant number of new voters. 40 per cent of Labour's 2002 support came from voters that had not voted Labour in 1999. Significantly 13.9 per cent of Labour's 2002 voters had voted National in 1999 (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22), suggesting that Labour's pro-business, anti-New Zealand First/Greens message may well have attracted some of these voters to give Labour a try.

However, Labour misread the competitive environment and the challenges it faced from other parties. It had assumed that National was its main competition (Williams, 2003) and was unprepared for challenge from the smaller parties on the right. New Zealand First and United Future, and to a lesser extent ACT challenged Labour with anti-establishment messages. Labour was able to retain only 60 per cent of its 1999 supporters – not the overwhelming endorsement Williams was celebrating above. The remainder of Labour's 1999 voters either did not vote at all (19.7 per cent), or voted New Zealand First (6.7 per cent), National (4.9 per cent), the Greens (3.8 per cent), and United Future (2.6 per cent) (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22).

Philip Kotler (2003) considers the most constructive response to terrain defence by market leaders to be *continuous innovation* – the development of new products and services in order to increase competitive strength and value to customers. This is perhaps where Labour let itself down in a marketing sense. Labour had little new to offer core voters in its party controlled messages in 2002. The commitment card was a re-hash of the previous one; the campaign image of Clark was a variation on the previous; the policies proposed were a continuation of Labour's earlier policies; the party's core message promised a continuation of what had gone on before. In Labour's desire to maintain its existing relationship with voters Labour's messages emphasised past achievements but did not offer many improvements in value offerings, other than a few images of cabinet ministers enjoying their duties. In other words Labour failed to upgrade its product and in so doing successfully maintained, but failed to enhance, relations with its existing voters.

Moreover, the images of Clark with ordinary people did not demonstrate Clark's ability to empathise so much as demonstrate Clark's popularity and competence as a leader. This was a shift from Clark's 1999 message, but not necessarily an innovation. The listening, caring images Clark had offered in 1999 had been replaced in 2002 with a more detached observer enjoying being part of the establishment.

Voters seemed to notice the change in Clark's overall media image. Although most of Clark's personality indicators in the last TV3/NFO opinion poll before the election remained largely unchanged from three months earlier, the number responding that Helen Clark "tends to talk down to people" had risen from 36 per cent in the week 8 - 14 April 2002 to 47 per cent in the week 21-24 July 2002 (a rise of 11 per cent). Those agreeing with the statement that she is "out of touch with ordinary people" increased from 30 per cent in the week 8-14 April 2002 to 32 per cent in the week 21-24 July 2002. Although it was only a two percent increase from three months earlier, it was 9 per cent up on the 23 per cent agreeing with this statement in the last poll taken before the 1999 election (18-24 November 1999). Significantly the number of respondents in the TV3 NFO opinion polls agreeing with the statement that Clark "is more honest than most politicians" declined from 61 per cent in the week 8-14 April 2002 to 47 per cent in the week 21-24 July 2002. Her rapid drop in popularity following the challenges to her integrity during the 2002 campaign highlighted, in marketing terms, what happens when consumers find a product on the supermarket shelves not living up to its promise.

## 4.2: NATIONAL 2002

### Context

In 1999 National finished second to Labour with 30.5 per cent of the party vote compared to Labour's 38.7 per cent. This was the worst result ever achieved by National and in the two years following the 1999 election "heads rolled" as the party sought to rejuvenate itself (Wood, 2003). Party president John Slater was replaced in the middle of 2001 by Michelle Boag, party leader Jenny Shipley was forced out of the leadership by Bill English in October 2001, and some of National's longer serving MPs were asked to stand aside to let new "talent" emerge. Political scientist Antony Wood (2003) has observed that these changes "left scars within the party and it was not well prepared for the snap election of July 2002" (p. 254). The 2002 election presented National with another difficulty. Its traditional competition – the Labour Party and its leader Helen Clark – had been performing so well in public opinion polls that most commentators and voters, including National voters, were convinced well out from the campaign that Labour would win again in 2002.

### Campaign Objectives

Like Labour in 2002, National never publicly announced before the election its numerical goal for the party vote. It has to be assumed that as Labour's main competition, National's goals would have been to try and win back the Treasury benches, or at the very least improve on its 1999 election result. After the election chief adviser to Bill English Tim Grafton (2003) confessed that, like most of the rest of New Zealand, the National Party had not expected to beat Labour in 2002 and admitted that National's primary campaign objectives in 2002 had been to:

- promote its new leader;
- promote policy which had not been made public; and
- establish relevance in voters' electoral calculations.

### Voter Orientation

National did not have a very broad target audience for its advertising messages. Eleven minutes of the twelve minute opening night address focused on Bill English speaking to a hall of largely indistinguishable people. The only voters English interacted with in the one minute opening sequence were a makeup artist, English's wife Mary and one of his sons, and some well-wishers shaking his hand as he walked into the hall to address the audience (Image 4.2.1)



Image 4.2.1: Stills from National's 2002 opening night address.

Only one television commercial of National's eight televised political advertisements featured English meeting people that were not his family, staff or other MPs. In a television commercial conveying National's education views English is seen visiting a school and talking to teachers and children (Image 4.2.2). He reflects:

As a parent I've had ten years of kids at school and I've got another fifteen to go. Teachers feel overworked and underpaid so we have a real problem for our children. We'll put principals and parents in control of their schools, not politicians and bureaucrats. And we'll reward hard work. We'll pay good teachers more and we'll increase bursaries because students deserve to have their aspirations encouraged.



Image 4.2.2: Stills from National's Education television commercial, 2002.

Parents and teachers were one of National's key target audiences in 2002. National's target audience also included small business owners and people who wanted to get tougher on crime. In the opening night address English mentions that he had been listening to these groups of people:

And that's why we've got a plan to get behind business. I've visited hundreds of them. I've run one myself. And if you haven't done that you have no idea how much hard work it is ...

He spoke of sensing and responding to the needs of the police, having experienced a night out with them:

A couple of weeks ago I spent a night out with the police in one of just five cars covering an area with three or four hundred thousand New Zealanders. By half past eight at night they were having trouble finding a car to go to a house where there was a woman upstairs on the phone and an intruder downstairs. That's why I've committed to 500 more police.

He also acknowledged the needs of those who voted for a tougher response on crime in the 1999 referendum:

Back in the last election, 92 per cent of us voted for action on crime. That was the clearest message the new government had, but they haven't heard the message. And I'll tell you what they have done. They've changed our parole laws so that a violent criminal can be back out on the streets after one third of their sentence. A rapist who gets nine years can be back out on the street after three, just three years, and that's wrong. We will change it.

One early television commercial featured English talking on the phone to a small-business constituent (Image 4.2.3). His conversation on the phone (in italics below) is interwoven with excerpts from his opening night address address.

***Who actually does the paperwork. Do you do all that yerself?***

Look we have a choice in this country. We can run it on envy, or we can run it on aspiration and achievement.

***I mean you've got all these people out there who are running the business overdraft secured against the house.***

We're totally committed to our small businesses and to the people who work in those small businesses.

***Well, yeah, that's my job Dean, that's my job. We got to sort some of this stuff out!***



Image 4.2.3: Still from National Small Business television commercial, 2002.

The image of English on the telephone was a visual theme throughout the campaign. One featured on the cover of National's manifesto, communicated in a magazine format under the banner National Times (Image 4.2.4). An extreme close-up image of English's mouth while talking on the phone also opened the opening night address (Image 4.2.5). The images of English listening on the phone indicated National's awareness of the need to be seen listening to voters, although it was a more impersonal response than, say, Clark's more physical interaction with voters in 1999.



Image 4.2.4: *National Times* cover, June 2002.





Image 4.2.5: Still from National's 2002 opening night address.



Image 4.2.6: Stills from National Education television commercial, 2002.

However, the message that National had been listening to voters' concerns was only a minor part of National's message. Of more importance was the message that Bill English understood the needs of voters because they were his needs too, especially as a parent. English spent more time in the company of and talking to his family than he did with any other people in National's television commercials. For example, in the television commercial conveying National's education message, images of

English talking to children at school were interwoven with images of family life in the English household. There were images of English playing, reading and showing affection to his children, participating in routine domestic chores, and working at the kitchen table (Image 4.2.6). The overall message was that English was a caring family man and shared the interests of other parents in wanting a good education for their children.

In another television commercial focusing on education English is seen in a dimly lit hotel room, taking off his tie, sitting down on a chair and placing a phone call to his family (Image 4.2.7).

English V/O: An inspired teacher and an enthusiastic student are at the heart of our education system...

***On phone: Good. I just got back. How d'ya get on last night.***

That to get them to do a hard job but an inspiring job we have to make the pay and conditions attractive...

***On phone: Kids'll be in bed. Where are all the other kids? And did Mum help you?***

And we will change whatever we have to, to give our young people an excellent education...

Hanging up phone: Poor little buggers. Now what's goin' on.



Image 4.2.7: Stills from National Education television commercial, 2002.

This message was similar to the other education television commercial: that education was a priority for National because English was a caring family man and shared the interests of other parents in wanting a good education for their children. Another message was that English was a good guy because he put his family before party. Yet another message was that English was a hardworking campaigner.

Just as Jenny Shipley's husband Burton had featured in National's 1999 visual message, Bill English's wife Mary was an important component of National's 2002 message. There were more images of her in the opening night address receiving the well wishes of the crowd than Bill English himself (Image 4.2.8). National clearly wanted voters to warm to Mary English, and to feel more positively about National's broader message because of her involvement.



Image 4.2.8: Stills from National's 2002 opening night address.

Mary English was mentioned frequently in her husband's dialogue and she featured on the front of the May 2002 *National Times* magazine cover (Image 4.2.11). The strong message was that Bill and Mary were a team; and that National was a family-oriented party. This was a point of differentiation with Labour. Helen Clark's husband did not feature in any of Labour's television commercials in 1999 or 2002.

That English's personal needs informed National policy was consistently highlighted throughout National's advertising messages. National's 2002 manifesto commenced with the following statement from English:

If you want to know why you should vote National, then you need to know what motivates me. This election is about the key issues facing New Zealanders and their families. It's about the right to better schooling, better public health services, security on the streets, and an opportunity to get ahead. We're a small country that has to work hard to earn prosperity, because it doesn't come easily. I'm ambitious for New Zealand, and like most parents I'm ambitious for my children too. Mary and I have six children who will be going through the State school system over the next 15 years. Making our schools better matters a lot to me, but it matters more for our country's future [my emphasis].

This was also the core message of English's address in the opening night address:

If you'd been watching education lately, you'd think that the politicians didn't care about it. Well I do. I've been a parent of school children for ten years, along with my wife Mary, and we've got at least another fifteen years to go, so we've got a stake in the schools working for children. That's years of standing in the queues at parent-teacher interviews, standing on the sidelines at the games, talking to the parents ...

English's commitment to fighting crime was also based on his concerns for his own family's security:

I want a police force you can see and criminals know they'll get caught. Because I want a country where my children can walk to school and I know they'll return unharmed; where a woman can go for a walk in the weekend and know that she will return unharmed; where older women like my mother feel safe in their beds at night. That's a right of New Zealand citizens.

In the opening night address English used an I-statement 33 times (see Table 4.21 below), talked of his family six times and mentioned the name of the National Party three times only. This was the lowest mean mention of party name of all parties (Table 4.3. p. 213). In contrast Helen Clark did not mention her family at all in Labour's opening night address, and only used the word I five times, using the words we and our and Labour more frequently (Tables 4.1, p. 169 and 4.2 below).

**Table 4.2: I-statements per minute in 2002 opening night address.**

Party	Total minutes	Total personal pronoun spoken by party leader	Mean (ranked highest to lowest)
National	12	33	2.75
ACT	8	20	2.5
Alliance	6	3	.5
Labour	12	5	0.41
New Zealand First	8	3	0.375
United Future	5	-	0
Greens	8	-	0

What is the significance of this? Labour's verbal message demonstrated its desire to show an affinity with the interests of ordinary voters, while National's verbal

message was more concerned with building up the credibility of its leader. National's widespread use of I-statements in its verbal dialogue may thus be seen in the context of National wanting to have English putting his stamp on the party (Grafton, 2003). National would have hoped that voters would judge English's views as being of some significance.

### **National Offer**

Bill English was the main offer of National's 2002 opening night address. The broadcast images set the scene for English's address as an event of some importance. He was located on stage in a public meeting at the focal point of an audience that had supposedly gathered there to see and hear him. An image of Mary English and his chief press secretary Sue Foley cheering him on at an earlier boxing event (Fight for Life), followed by cheerful supporters shaking Bill and Mary English's hands as they walked into the hall, signaled that English was charismatic enough to whip up the enthusiasm of a crowd. Clapping soundclips were interspersed with English's address, suggesting crowd support for the points he was making. Televisual techniques of low camera angles, closeups and hard lighting were employed to convey the message that he was an articulate and commanding speaker (Image 4.2.9).



**Image 4.2.9: Stills from National's 2002 opening night address.**

Anticipating that the 2002 campaign would be “presidential”, primarily focused on party leaders, National was particularly concerned at English's lack of experience in campaigning as a leader (Grafton, 2003). Helen Clark was onto her third campaign as leader of the Labour Party, and was riding high in public opinion polls as Prime Minister. National therefore had a lot of catching up to do if it wanted to be competitive in its leadership messages. It heavily promoted Bill English as the face of National in all but one of its eight television commercials, on its party billboards, in its newsprint advertising, and mailouts to homes.

Part of that message was to show that English was listening, another was to show him as a leader worthy of applause, another was to show that voters' needs were his needs too, while another was to show how he was just another ordinary guy. National named its TV campaign "Unguarded Moments". Exposing English's "everyman" qualities, viewers were invited to peek in on selected parts of Bill English's day. The camera was present in the English's living room and kitchen viewing the family's private domestic moments; it was present in his hotel room, eavesdropping on a personal phone conversation with his family; it peered down at him in his office as if it was a fly-on-the-wall security camera out of a reality TV show like *Big Brother*; it witnessed his pre-opening night address address nerves; it captured a poignant moment with his youngest son (Image 4.2.10). The message was that this was a very "authentic" Bill English, a message to differentiate English from Labour's message of the professional competence of its leader. Rather than focus on English's Southland farming roots as National's 1999 television commercial had done, which had been in keeping with National's core rural voter interests, English in 2002 was rebranded as "everyfather" – someone who might engage the interest and affinity of voters recognising themselves to be in similar family circumstances.



Image 4.2.10: Still from National's 2002 opening night address.

Print advertising featuring English also carried the message that he was an ordinary guy. Two editions of the *National Times* were published, one in May and one in June 2002. The cover of the May edition (Image 4.2.11) featuring a relaxed looking English

dressed in an orange shirt and cooking sausages on a barbeque, wife Mary draped around him, one of his sons in the background eating a sausage. The message was that he was a good kiwi bloke who is not too carried away with status to be able to cook “snarlers” on the “barbie”. The implication was that this was a photograph taken at an ordinary family occasion. The barbeque metaphor is obviously an important one for National. In 1999 National’s Minister of Social Welfare was seen barbequing sausages in a television commercial, conveying National’s message about the ordinariness of its frontbench (Image 3.1.11).



Image 4.2.11: *National Times* cover, May 2002.

### *'New' National*

In political marketing theory it is expected that a party with a political marketing orientation will have existing voter satisfaction as one of its key goals, on the grounds that satisfied voters are more likely to vote repeatedly for a party. Did National demonstrate an awareness in its advertising of the need to maintain and enhance relationships with existing voters? Not when it was so intent on demonstrating that the National Party under English’s leadership was *not* the National Party that had been rejected by voters in 1999. Earlier in the year, before the early election was

called and after the party had purged itself of what party president Michelle Boag termed its “dead wood” MPs associated with the tarnished reputation of the old party, National had commenced a re-imagining exercise. It differentiated itself from the image of the old party by referring to itself as the “New National” party and using brighter colours, graphic symbols and images of its younger MPs on its revamped website and in its *National Times* publication in May 2002. The utilisation of the lower case n in the publication’s title was a symbol of the party’s desire for a more youthful, playful image.

An important element of this re-imagining was the party’s offer of Bill English as a fresh and energetic leader. This was largely achieved through the visual metaphor of the business shirt. The jacketless look was another defining feature of English’s image up until the last week of the campaign. Both editions of the *National Times* featured a jacketless English. He was also jacketless in the television commercial featuring him in the hotel room (Image 4.2.7); in the fly-on-the-wall small business television commercial (Image 4.2.3); and in a law and order television commercial (Image 4.2.12). In addition he was jacketless in National’s newspaper advertisements, and on its billboards (Images 4.2.13 and 4.2.14).



Image 4.2.12: Still from National Law and Order television commercial, 2002.





Image 4.2.13: National Party Vote billboard, 2002.



Image 4.2.14: National newspaper advertisement, 2002.

When men take their jackets off in an office environment the message is that they are getting down to work, down to the “nitty gritty”. National’s message in these images was that Bill English was a leader who was happy to get down to his shirtsleeves to work hard. This image differentiated English from Clark, who was communicating a more formal message of competence in office and wearing a tailored jacket. However, given English’s inexperience as a leader it may not have been the most appropriate dress to convey his maturity and readiness for the serious role of Prime Minister. The images could also be read as representing a party still in preparation for the big event. There was also little chance that these images would be able to compete with Clark’s image on the issue of credibility. Not when the competition was shaking the hands of the Japanese Prime Minister and laughing with her “close friend” US Secretary of State Colin Powell.

### ***Don Brash***

Don Brash was the only other National candidate to feature in National advertising. Brash had recently resigned from his high profile position as Governor of the Reserve Bank in order to stand for National as a list MP in 2002. Brash had been recruited by then party president Michelle Boag, and his high list ranking caused controversy within National ranks after a few long serving National MPs had been asked to step down to make way for new blood as the party attempted to revitalise itself. The politically inexperienced Brash leaped ahead of other longstanding MPs to be ranked third on National’s list. Brash had a television commercial of his own, and he was the only candidate to be seen sitting on stage in the opening night address. National seemed to consider Brash a sign that would, by his very presence, communicate the party’s ongoing commitment to business and economic growth.

Somewhat unexpectedly then, Brash was not photographed in the business world. Instead Brash was photographed in a domestic environment (Image 4.2.15). The setting of the television commercial was a domestic kitchen, and Brash was preparing himself a cup of coffee and sitting down at a table to chat to viewers. This was an attempt to humanise and soften the image of a man previously identified as an aloof intellectual, part of the inner circle of the Wellington policy elite and perhaps also to defuse ill-feeling towards him following his rapid promotion up National’s list. It was also in line with National’s message that its MPs were ordinary in a continuation of the messages of 1999. It was quite different from the setting of Labour’s messages of support for business, in which Clark was located inside the factories and workplaces where economic growth would take place.

Despite the domestic setting, Brash did not look or sound entirely at home in those surroundings. His verbal dialogue was hesitant as he explained to viewers why he was backing National:

I used to have the job of controlling inflation. But I quit that job because I'm absolutely convinced we must have faster growth if we are to survive. We need our economy to grow at four per cent or better if we want good quality health and education. Labour's policies simply won't deliver that, and that's why I'm backing Bill English. National's policies will achieve the growth we need.

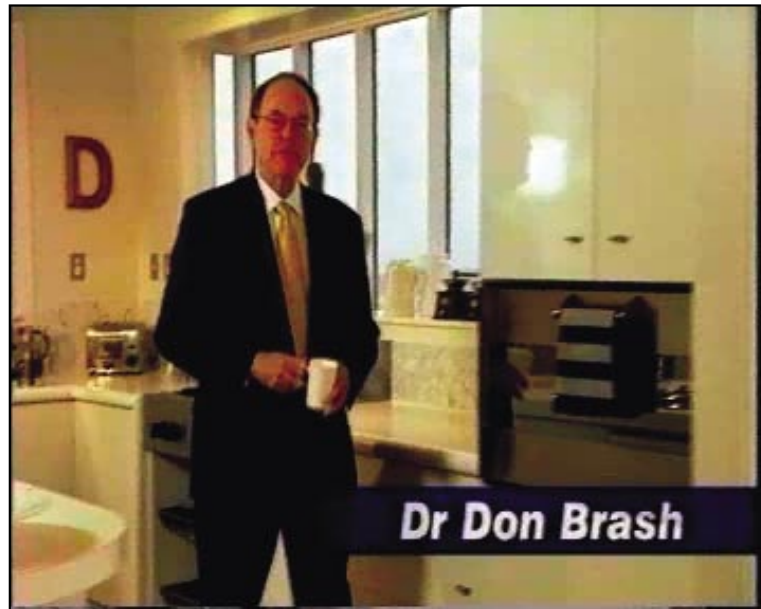


Image 4.2.15: Still from National Economic Growth television commercial, 2002.

### ***Party Vote***

Labour's offer of strong and stable leadership by Helen Clark in exchange for the party vote was visually and verbally confident, and demonstrated the party's good understanding that the party vote was the most important vote under MMP. National did not demonstrate the same degree of confidence or understanding of the importance of the party vote. Not once in National's twelve minute opening night address were the words party vote spoken. In contrast, Clark specifically asked for the party vote twice in Labour's opening night address. Nor did National's broadcast end with a visual asking for the party vote. Instead the voiceover and end visual announced

“National. Get the future you deserve” (Image 4.2.16). But in exchange for what it did not say. In contrast, Labour’s end of television commercial visual included its logo, its campaign slogan and the words party vote (Image 4.2.17).

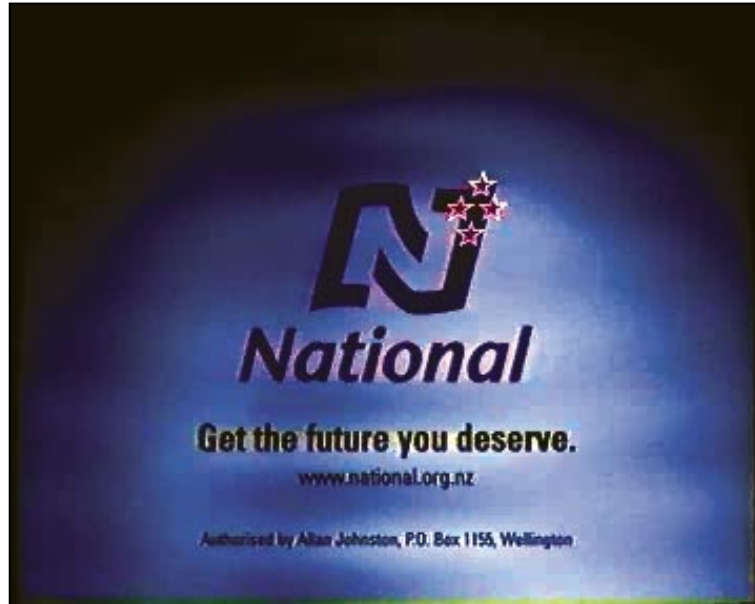


Image 4.2.16: End visual, National television commercial, 2002.



Image 4.2.17: End visual, Labour television commercial, 2002.

Not until the final week of the campaign were the words party vote uttered in any of National's televised advertising. None of the party's newspaper advertisements or billboards included the words party vote either, instructing voters instead to get the future they deserved. To be fair, they did contain the party logo alongside two tick symbols, or the words "two ticks National", but it was a much less assertive request than Labour's, and could have been read as a vote for any other party, not just for National. Set in the sans serif typeface Futura Condensed Bold, a restrained corporate German typeface from the early twentieth century (Nesbitt, 2001), the message lacked the typographic confidence of Labour's party vote message.

### **Competitor Orientation**

In theory a challenger party is one that has chosen to attempt to depose the market leader, and their strategic objective is to attack, in the form of direct attack on the market leader, attack on competitors of their own size or attack on small and regional competitors (Collins & Butler, 2002). As the runner up in 1999, and traditionally the main opposition to Labour, National should have been the challenger in the 2002 electoral competition. However, National seemed to have no expectation of being able to depose the market leader.

A poll published in the news media earlier in the year showed 39 per cent of voters willing to vote Labour to keep the Greens out of coalition (Church, 2002, p. 36). As challenger National's response may well have been to attack Labour and the Greens. In stark contrast to 1999, however, National had no attack advertising directed at the market leader. Nor did National anticipate the attacks of smaller competitors on its own policy terrain, and the need to differentiate itself from these parties' messages. For example, National, New Zealand First and ACT all promoted similar Law and Order and Treaty of Waitangi policies. The two smaller parties refined their messages in these areas down to simple, catchy slogans. In contrast, National's were wordy and requiring more interpretation. For example, Bill English's "I'll settle past Treaty claims by 2008. Then we can all paddle in the same waka" in a June 2002 newspaper advertisement (Image 4.2.18) simply did not have the same heuristic clarity as ACT's much shorter "One Law for All" slogan. The copy of this advertisement suggests that English would be personally responsible for this policy in accord with the party's need to build up his leadership profile. The use of the typeface American Typewriter suggests the audience for the message was young. It was the same typeface used by the Greens in their 1999 opening night address (Image 3.6.1).

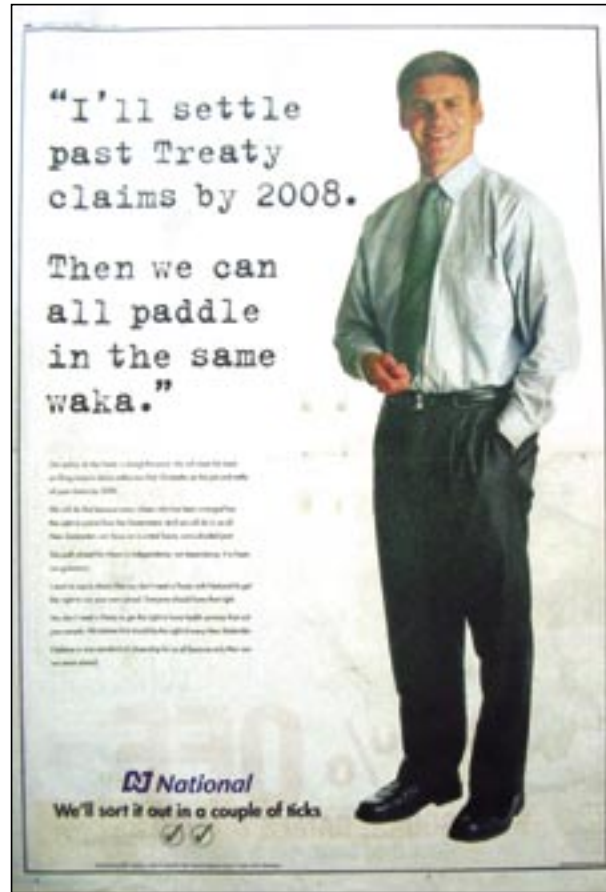


Image 4.2.18: National Treaty newspaper advertisement, 2002.

Nor did National seem to anticipate the coalition opportunities that might have arisen in the (admittedly unlikely) event of Labour's self-destruction. There was no mention in National's advertising messages of working in cooperation or coalition with any of the minor parties. The lack of early mention of a National *led* government was a sign that National was still thinking in FPP terms about its own electoral needs to be a majority party, rather than the electorate's needs or desires for a coalition government in 2002. Only in the last few days of the campaign did English float the idea of a centre-right coalition in news media interviews, as Labour's decline in the polls continued and the combined centre-right vote began to add up to a potential coalition arrangement. On the day before the election *Dominion Post* reporter Tracy Watkins reported:

He [English] also remained hopeful of stitching up a four-way deal between the centre-Right parties and said he would be calling all of them over the next 48 hours. "I'm just saying one thing to the leaders of the like-minded parties, to keep their options open" (26 July 2002).

Floating this idea only days before an election seemed an act of desperation, coming so closely after what seemed to be another act of desperation. On Sunday 21 July English pulled the party's earlier television commercials off air and replaced them with a new television commercial stressing his beliefs. That day he explained on TV One News: "I have told them [the party] to change the advertising so I can talk directly to the voters about the issues that are affecting them". Apparently English believed the earlier television commercials "were not focused on issues of concern to voters" and that a solution was "to look New Zealanders in the eye" (cited in Berry, 2002b, p.2).

The new television commercial featured a now jacketed and sombre Bill English trying to convey more maturity while reducing the physical gap with voters by standing beside the lectern rather than behind it, in a parliamentary office with traditional conservative symbols – editions of Hansard and the New Zealand Standard – behind him (Image 4.2.19). The camera closes in on him as he speaks fervently about his beliefs (so fervently that he can be seen spitting):

I believe we need to back small business by cutting red tape and taxes, because a strong economy is the best hope for our families. I believe we need to give our schools back to parents and teachers. I believe we can reverse the brain drain by writing down loans for those who can stay and work here. I believe in getting young people off welfare. I believe we need a police force that we can see. I believe that for the worst, life should mean life, and when 92 per cent of us vote to get tough on crime we should be listened to. Stand up for what you believe. Give your party vote to National.



Image 4.2.19: Stills from National's 'I Believe' television commercial, 2002.

In conjunction with the new television commercial was a newspaper advertisement that featured the now serious and jacketed Bill English, waving an active hand, rather than the passive pocketed hand of the earlier advertisements (Image 4.2.20). Neither

the television commercial or the newspaper advertisement seemed to help National. The screening of the commercial corresponds with a dip for National in the opinion polls from just over 25 percent on 21 July from which it was unable to recover before the election, where it ended at 20.9 per cent on election day (Figure 4.1, p. 179).



Image 4.2.20: National newspaper advertisement, last week of 2002 campaign.

## Discussion

The NZES tracking poll shows National entering the 2002 campaign at around 23 per cent on 23 June (Figure 4.1, p. 179). According to Jack Vowles (2004a) this was the lowest campaign entry point for National since the early 1990s. Most political commentators anticipated that National would rise from this point. As it transpired, however, National defied predictions and ended up with fewer, rather than more, votes on election day. National's party vote dropped 9.6 per cent from its 1999 outcome to 20.9 per cent. Although National remained the second highest polling party in 2002, the election proved to be a greater disaster for National than the 1999 election.



In reviewing reasons for its electoral failure in 2002 National focused largely on infrastructural issues; including a lack of clarity in its organisational mission – it had no mission statement, or strategic plan – and this meant members did not have a unified understanding of what the party stood for. The party also felt its governance and organisational structure and processes were too complicated and not sufficiently focused on effective campaigning and administrative efficiency (National Party, 2002).

What are the political science explanations of National's electoral outcome? Jack Vowles (2004) points to National's failure to mobilise voters with the policies it put forward. In the NZES National was recognised as being closest to voters' issues of concern on education and defence, the latter an issue of low importance to voters. It was second to Labour on health, the economy, and unemployment. It was second to ACT on law and order and tax. It was third to New Zealand First and ACT on the Treaty of Waitangi, third to Labour and New Zealand First on superannuation. In summary Vowles argues that "National failed to mobilise voters on any issue whereas its centre-right rivals succeeded in this" (p. 46).

Stephen Levine and Nigel Roberts (2003) note that a mere five per cent of National voters saw the government's performance as very poor – "not nearly enough", they say, "to sustain the level of partisanship needed to unseat a government" (p. 330). With the majority of voters comfortable with the government's performance and 90 per cent of Victoria University pre-election survey respondents expecting a Labour win (p. 311), the question for voters was which party was the best coalition option, and it was the minor parties that attracted the votes that might in other circumstances have gone to National.

What additional perspectives are offered by this political marketing examination? Fundamentally National was not oriented towards the needs of voters in 2002. Its goal to persuade voters it had a credible leader was product- rather than market-oriented. National tried to differentiate English from Clark, and to make up for English's lack of party leadership experience. But English's I-believe message was not helped by the party's lack of self-belief in its ability to win the election. Furthermore, if strength in leadership and trustworthiness are the qualities voters respect in their political leaders (Banducci, 2002), then trying to sell English as an ordinary hardworking guy motivated by the needs of his friends and family and his own beliefs was never going to be enough to turn English into an alternative leader to Clark. This was especially so when Labour's message repeatedly stressed Clark's successes as Prime Minister on the international stage, and reminded voters through her inclusive language, images

of her cooperating with others, and her signature on the commitment card, that she understood and could be trusted to deliver on voters' needs.

The focus on English's family was a point of difference between English and Clark. But Clark's childless-ness was a dead issue as the previous two and a half years had demonstrated that Clark was a popular and competent leader despite not having children of her own. Moreover, the images of a grinning Bill English in his shirtsleeves only confirmed that National and its leader were not quite ready to compete in 2002. It seems this is how the public interpreted the message. In the last TV3 NFO poll before the election the number of respondents agreeing that Bill English "is rather inexperienced" rose from 52 per cent in the week 8 - 14 April 2002 to 66 per cent in the week 21-24 July 2002 (a rise of 14 per cent).

There is evidence from that same TV3 NFO poll that the public picked up on the message about English's ordinariness, however. Although he had improved on most of his personality indicators by around 4-11 points from three months earlier (which would be expected given that he had a much higher media profile in general) the most dramatic movement was in response to the question whether Bill English "is down to earth". This rose from 49 per cent in the week 8 - 14 April 2002 to 74 per cent in the week 21-24 July 2002 (a rise of 25 per cent). The number of people agreeing that English was "out of touch with ordinary people" decreased from 35 per cent in the week 8 - 14 April 2002 to 27 per cent in the week 21-24 July 2002 (a decrease of 8 per cent). With regard to this measure, National's imaging strategy was slightly more successful than Labour's. The number agreeing that Helen Clark was "out of touch with ordinary people" increased from 30 per cent in the week 8 - 14 April 2002 to 32 per cent in the week 21-24 July 2002.

National did not demonstrate an awareness of the need to maintain or enhance its relationships with existing voters. In theory those parties demonstrating voter satisfaction as a goal should expect loyalty back. However, in offering itself as new, in an attempt to avoid its recent past, there was little familiar left of the old National for existing supporters to retain loyalty to. In its leadership images National ignored Bill English's family connections with rural Southland. There was no inclusion of its core voters in its advertising images. There was no celebration of the history or mythology of the party to maintain the bond between the party and its supporters. National paraded a controversial candidate in Don Brash for whom longer-serving National MPs had been asked to step down for, causing some resentment within the party.

National did not appear to understand how to compete in the MMP environment. Not asking for the all-important party vote while asking voters to get the future they deserved was an open invitation to voters to experiment elsewhere. Ordinarily National leaning voters may well have translated this invitation into a vote for the other minor parties on the centre-right who were displaying a greater desire to succeed electorally in 2002. For if there was one lesson both major parties would have learned in 2002 it would have been not to take the minor parties for granted. Their competition was no longer simply the other main opposition party but *all* the minor parties, *especially* the other parties sharing the same side of the political spectrum.

The statistical evidence points to low levels of party loyalty amongst National voters. According to the NZES (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22), only 45.4 per cent of National's 2002 voters had voted National in 1999, leaving around 55 per cent of National's 1999 supporters looking for other alternatives. 17.8 per cent of National's 1999 voters switched their vote to Labour in 2002. Non-vote attracted 11.5 per cent of National's 1999 support; New Zealand First attracted 9.7 per cent of National's 1999 support; ACT attracted 7.4 per cent; and United Future attracted 5.9 per cent.

When National was unable to make traction with its early advertising messages it changed the style of its advertising, leaving the message unchanged. Having English speak to voters directly on the importance of his beliefs was a continuation of the wrong product the party had been trying to sell all through the campaign. Come the last week of the campaign National still did not understand that voters were not interested in hearing about Bill English's needs, they wanted their own needs addressed, and the electorate showed this through diminishing support in the countdown to the election. Not even when the news media was reporting three days out from the election that National was heading for its worst defeat ever with a 21 per cent party vote (*Dominion Post*, 26 July 2002) did previous National leaning voters feel obliged to come back to the party. National's offer was simply unsatisfying.

### 4.3: THE ALLIANCE 2002

#### Context

In his 1999 campaign report in *Left Turn*, Alliance campaign manager Matt McCarten (2000) predicted: “If we cannot differentiate ourselves from our coalition partner over the next three years, then we will be in grave trouble at the next election” (p. 40). This was to prove a most prescient comment.

As part of the 1999 coalition government the Alliance contributed to a number of significant changes, including the establishment of the Government-owned Kiwi Bank and the introduction of 12 weeks paid parental leave. However, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the strains of being in coalition impacted heavily on the Alliance. Many Alliance supporters felt that the leadership of the parliamentary caucus was putting the interests of Labour ahead of Alliance policies and its constituency. The party’s internal squabbling spilled over into the public arena and was the focus of intense media attention at the beginning of 2002. By the time of the election campaign the party had effectively split in two. Some sitting MPs had left the Alliance to form the Progressive Coalition under the leadership of Jim Anderton. Others stuck with the Alliance under the leadership of Laila Harré. Voters showed their displeasure with the party in public opinion polls. At the commencement of the 2002 campaign the Alliance was polling at under one per cent.

#### Campaign Objectives

According to the Alliance’s new leader Laila Harré (2002), the party’s campaign objectives were to:

- win an electorate seat;
- make it over the five per cent threshold; and
- get back into government.

#### Voter Orientation

In broad terms, the Alliance pitched its 2002 message to a similar audience to the one it targeted in 1999. This included university students, public health system users, families with children, working and retired New Zealanders. Images of these groups featured inside and on the cover of the party’s brochure mailed out to homes (Image 4.3.1) and in a broadsheet newspaper entitled the *Alliance Report*.



Image 4.3.1: Alliance Party Vote brochure, 2002.

The only target voters to feature in the opening night address, however, were a bunch of secondary school students standing around Harré in a school playground, looking very much like kids crowding around a celebrity in order to be seen on TV (middle, Image 4.3.2). Students, their parents and education was the Alliance’s priority in 2002, with an end to the student debt crisis the party’s “bottom line”. In the opening night address Harré says:

Only the Alliance is drawing a line in the sand over student debt and saying enough is enough. When you’re paying back a student loan of up to 100 thousand dollars at the compulsory payback rate of ten percent of your income how on earth do you put a deposit on a house, start a family or begin to save for your retirement.

V/O: The Alliance will stop new debt by making tertiary education free. We will reintroduce a universal student allowance so students don’t have to borrow money for their food and rent. Over three years we will abolish university and polytech fees. We will forgive all interest payments on existing loans.

Most of the opening night address was taken up with Harré speaking direct to camera in the schoolyard, in a street full of state houses and in a vineyard. The state house backdrop implied the party's identification with the needs of the working class and state house tenants. However, Harré did not meet with any state house tenants. In fact there were no images of Alliance MPs meeting with or listening to voters in any of the party's television advertising messages.

Not fitting entirely comfortably with the idea that the party identified with working-class New Zealanders were images of Harré walking in a vineyard (far right, Image 4.3.2). Viticulture is not a symbol automatically associated with social democracy or the working classes. The choice of setting could be viewed instead as a signifier for the electorate she was standing as a candidate in – Waitakere – where there are many vineyards. With the vines symbolising consumption in the globalised economy, the setting was used to demonstrate the far-left's take on GE, the combination of word and image communicating: Keep GE in the lab so that our wine industry will not be harmed:

Harré: Labour will lift the moratorium that is keeping GE out of our environment. The Alliance insisted on the current moratorium and we want to be back in government to keep GE in the lab until its safe. if you are a Labour supporter you should split your vote to get the things you know are most important.



Image 4.3.2: Stills from Alliance 2002 opening night address.

The opening night address also featured the two remaining Alliance MPs, Liz Gordon and Willie Jackson, and the party's president Matt McCarten, all speaking direct to camera (Image 4.3.3).



Image 4.3.3: Stills from Alliance 2002 opening night address.

Like New Zealand First in 1999, the Alliance avoided mention of its failure to live up to the promises it had made in the previous election concerning its competence and maturity to handle the responsibilities of coalition government, nor did it explain why there were only three Alliance MPs left in the party. The closest thing to an acknowledgement of the split with Jim Anderton came from McCarten in the opening night address when he casually remarked that “It has been a testing time for the Alliance”. Instead the opening night address reminded voters of the things the Alliance had achieved in coalition:

Harré: Last election enough people voted Alliance to put us into a coalition government with Labour. We’ve been able to achieve many of our urgent priorities.

V/O: Increasing and guaranteeing superannuation, a much higher minimum wage especially for young workers, 12 weeks paid parental leave, income related rents in state houses, repealing the Employment Contracts Act, a Kiwi Bank, and more jobs.

Harré: Take it from me, none of this would have been possible without the Alliance and the people who voted for us.

### Alliance Offer

Laila Harré was the party’s main offer in 2002. She took the main role in the opening and closing night addresses, and she featured in two television commercials. She was on the cover of the *Alliance Report* and on the party’s mail-out to homes. She was the face of the party vote billboard. This was a significant shift in offer from 1999 when Anderton had dominated the party’s advertising. Having only been leader of the party since April, introducing Harré to voters as a party leader of equal status to other minor party leaders like Peters, Prebble and Anderton was even more of a challenge for the Alliance than it was for National introducing Bill English, who had

been in the public spotlight as a senior National cabinet minister for much longer. Harré had been a junior cabinet minister in the Labour-Alliance coalition since 1999, but was still relatively unknown.

The party's billboards and print material all featured a black and white photographic image of Harré wearing a leather jacket (Image 4.3.4). This was a nod to Harré's "westy" constituents, the colloquial description for people living in the Waitakere area known for their wearing of leather jackets. But it was also a signifier for Harré as a politician with a difference. Voters who have seen party leaders in the flesh or on television will know that their business dress is more formal. Harré's dress signified her as anything but formal. She appeared relaxed and casual. Her widely smiling face signified a warmth, friendliness and youthfulness about her character. So appealing to youth was the "pin-up" campaign image, it was reported in the media that within a week of the billboards going up they were disappearing into student flats (Berry, 2002a).



Image 4.3.4: Alliance Party Vote billboard, 2002.

The Alliance's party vote television commercial and the closing night address featured a more sombre Harré (Image 4.3.5), wearing a formal jacket to signify her ability to be a serious party leader, seated on a leather couch in a domestic interior with a sea view through the window. This was not a setting representative of her electorate, or common to working class voters and exposed her own wealthy Waiheke Island origins. "We're wealthy compared to your average working class family in West Auckland" she acknowledged about her family circumstances during the campaign (quoted in Milne, 2002, p.2).





Image 4.3.5: Stills from Alliance Education television commercial, 2002.

The mean number of we and ours and I-statements featuring in the Alliance’s opening night address were average (see Table 4.1, p. 169 and 4.2, p. 192). But where the party did stand out was in its mention of its own party name (see Table 4.3 below). In 2002 the Alliance had the highest mean use of its own party name per minute in its opening night address, evidence of a party concerned with product recognition. The logo featured prominently in all the party’s advertising. In the 40 second sequence featuring Matt McCarten (Image 4.3.6) the logo appears three times, the party’s name appears three times, the image of the leader and president are featured, the name Alliance is spoken three times, and the name Harré spoken twice. Such repetition would have been designed to aid recognition and recall amongst audiences in receipt of the Alliance’s message at a time when a big chunk of the Alliance’s earlier brand image had been taken off it by Jim Anderton.

Table 4.3: Party name mentioned per minute in 2002 opening night address.

Party	Total minutes	Total party name	Mean (ranked highest to lowest)
Alliance	6	18	3
ACT	8	11	1.375
Labour	12	16	1.333
United Future	5	4	.8
New Zealand First	8	5	.625
Greens	8	4	.5
National	12	5	.42



Image 4.3.6: Stills from Alliance 2002 opening night address.

### Competitor Orientation

As it had done in the previous campaign, the Alliance behaved like a follower in 2002. One of its electoral objectives was to be part of the next government, and so it refrained from attacking the government in its advertising messages. Harré was conciliatory and constantly referred to “our government” in her verbal dialogue. She talked, like Helen Clark, of the jobs not yet done that the Alliance would do in coalition with Labour in the next government’s term.

In theory, follower parties need to watch their backs for attack from challengers. The greatest challenge to the Alliance in 2002 came from Jim Anderton’s Progressive Coalition, formed when Jim Anderton and Matt Robson left the Alliance. Both the Alliance and Progressive Coalition claimed credit for paid parental leave, the reintroduction of income related rents in state houses, an increase in the minimum wage, an increase in the married rate of superannuation, the establishment of the Kiwi Bank, and the creation of more jobs. Both parties were open in their desire to form another coalition with Labour.

The Progressives had an advantage over the Alliance, however, in Jim Anderton. His image had embodied the Alliance brand since its inception and he would have carried many Alliance values over into people’s perception of the Progressives. As it had done with the Alliance in 1999, his face framed the Progressive Coalition’s print material (Image 4.3.7). This time there was added value – he had a bigger smile in 2002, and he looked more relaxed. He could afford to be – he had such a majority in the Wigram electorate it was never doubted he would make it back into parliament. While Harré used the term “our government”, Anderton was able to use the term “Clark-Anderton” government, to remind voters of the close personal relationship he had with the Prime Minister, something not matched by Harré. Anderton was even brazen enough to suggest in a newspaper advertisement published the day before the election that a vote for the Progressives was a vote for “partnership not conflict”, also ignoring his recent association with the conflict-ridden Alliance (Image 4.3.7).



Image 4.3.7: Progressive Coalition newspaper advertisement, 2002.

Not having been a registered political party for more than three months, the Progressive Coalition was not eligible for a broadcasting allocation. The Alliance, on the other hand, received an allocation of \$100,000, six free minutes for its opening night address and two minutes for its closing night address. This should have given the Alliance more access to voters for its message. However, the Alliance did little to demonstrate that it would offer greater benefits to voters than its primary competition, other than Laila Harré and a bottom line commitment to students. Given Harré’s short time in parliament, and her lack of exposure in previous election campaigns it was always going to be hard wresting the mantle of saviour of the left off Anderton in the space of a short election campaign, although the Alliance made an attempt to do this with its “only choice left” billboards (Image 4.3.4) – a message that intimated that others (read Anderton) had sold out.

Of interest in that image is the late campaign sticker request to vote Alliance in order to keep Labour honest, surely by now one of the most overused slogans in New Zealand electoral campaigning in recent years. The message was that Labour needed

a party on the left in order to keep it true to its left wing roots, and only the Alliance could do this. The difficulty inherent in identifying so blatantly with the left was the potential to alienate many of its 1999 voters who had been attracted to the Alliance's more mainstream message. In 1999 the Alliance had moved in on the audience traditionally targeted by Labour's messages, and achieved some success attracting voters away from both Labour and National. These voters were not necessarily going to stay loyal to a party that changed its core offering once again.

### ***Other Competition***

The Progressive Coalition was not the only immediate competition faced by the Alliance. In 1999 the Greens had increased their share of the party vote by appealing to voters that might otherwise have been attracted to the Alliance's message. The potential existed for them to do the same in 2002. What did the Alliance do? Very little, other than encroaching on the Greens' youth target audience with its bottom-line policy commitment to students, and its promotion of the youthful Harré as leader. The reality was that the task at hand for the Alliance was not to compete against these parties for the party vote. It was going to be very hard reaching the five per cent threshold from a starting point of around 1 per cent in the public opinion polls.

As a consequence, the Alliance turned its attention away from its immediate party vote competition, and towards the electorate competition in the Waitakere and Tainui seats where Laila Harré and Willie Jackson were standing as candidates. For if the Alliance was to win an electorate seat it would not have to reach the five per cent threshold to be assured of an on-going presence in parliament. Both of these electorates were new in 2002 and consequently were "up for grabs". Both were working class electorates – Waitakere to the west of Auckland; Tainui a Maori seat just to the south – where it was hoped traditional Alliance support could be found. Although the party claimed that Tainui was a focus, early signs were that Labour's candidate, Nanaia Mahuta, was going to sail in there. It was to the Waitakere electorate that the party looked for its salvation. Most of the Alliance's newspaper advertising mentioned Waitakere. In the national newspaper advertisement below (Image 4.3.8), for example, the message was that neither an electorate nor a party vote for the Alliance would be wasted because Laila Harré seemed likely to win. The language was not entirely convincing, however, using the words "if" instead of "when" Harré wins Waitakere; and "many" rather than "most" voters in Waitakere supporting Harré. There was an element of self-doubt communicated in these advertisements.



Image 4.3.8: Alliance newspaper advertisement, 2002.

## Discussion

It was not a message that convinced sufficient numbers of previous Alliance voters to stick with their party in 2002. The Alliance won only 1.3 per cent of the party vote (25,888 votes). The Progressive Coalition won 1.7 per cent of the party vote (34,542 votes). Together they accounted for three per cent of the party vote – a drop of more than 50 per cent of the Alliance’s 1999 party vote. So the Alliance did not achieve its party vote goal. Nor did it win an electorate seat. Although Laila Harré and Willie Jackson came second to the winning candidates in their electorates, they were well behind the winners in total votes cast. Thus ended the Alliance’s parliamentary term.

Peter Aimer and Jack Vowles (2004) believe the Alliance fell “victim to the demands of MMP politics, specifically the unfamiliar stresses and strategic challenges of coalition government” (p. 17). Levine and Roberts (2003) view both the Alliance’s and the Progressive Coalition’s results as a “decisive rejection of their former party in 2002” (p. 315). What does a political marketing perspective add to this analysis?

The Alliance demonstrated an almost complete lack of market orientation in its 2002 advertising messages. There was no interaction between Alliance MPs and voters. The party demonstrated little awareness of the need to maintain or enhance relationships with existing voters. There was no acknowledgment of the circumstances that had altered the leadership structure of the party and no apology for breaking the promises the party made to voters in 1999 in terms of its stability, maturity and competence for office. From tried and true Anderton to a completely new and untested leader who promised youthfulness rather than maturity, the party had changed its core product from the one it offered voters in 1999. Students were now a primary target audience; and student debt had become its bottom line. In 1999 there were no bottom lines for the Alliance and students were one of many groups targeted by a broad set of Alliance messages. In 1999 the party had made its message more mainstream and attracted mainstream voters. In 2002 the party signaled a move back to the left. While this may have appealed to the Alliance's earliest supporters, it nonetheless constituted a change of orientation that may not have appealed to some of its newer mainstream voters. In the end a paltry 5.7 per cent of the Alliance's 1999 vote remained committed to the Alliance in 2002 (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22).

The Alliance demonstrated little competitor orientation. With its focus turned towards the voters of Waitakere and Tainui, the competition for the party vote was largely abandoned. Constant repetition of party name and logo may have aided recognition but were, on their own, insufficient reason to mobilise party vote support for the Alliance over other parties. In ignoring the competition they, in effect, gifted the Greens 7.1 per cent of their 1999 vote and the Progressive Coalition a considerable 15.7 per cent of their 1999 vote. 18.8 per cent of the Progressive Coalition's 2002 vote came from previous Labour supporters (compared to 10 per cent of the Alliance's). Many of these votes were the Alliance's for the taking, had they been sufficiently focused on the party vote competition. That is not to say the Progressive Coalition were ultimately a great deal more successful in retaining Alliance voters and attracting new ones. But considering it had no broadcasting time or funds, the Progressive Coalition achieved a reasonable level of party vote support.

The Alliance also positioned itself poorly in the campaign in terms of its coalition options. Its objective to stay in coalition with Labour following the election meant it did not attack Labour in its advertising messages. Yet, this passivity was at complete odds with the circumstances that caused the tensions to occur earlier in the year when the McCarten faction were disappointed that Anderton had sold the Alliance's soul to Labour. Not three months later, the Alliance's campaign messages were so conciliatory

to Labour an outside observer would have trouble guessing this was the same party! Alliance voters unhappy with Labour would have had to turn their attention to other parties attacking Labour in order to find a party sharing in their frustration. So passive were the Alliance's campaign messages towards Labour that they gave voters little reason to vote Alliance over Labour. Between a party that had broken its promises and changed its core product considerably in the past three years and a party that demonstrated stability and strong leadership and had kept its promises, the choice for many voters would not have been difficult. 42.9 per cent of the Alliance's 1999 vote switched to Labour in 2002 (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22).

#### 4.4: ACT 2002

##### **Context**

Six months out from the 2002 election ACT's opinion poll support was averaging five per cent and had fallen below the threshold to three percent a number of times. With the electorate seemingly content with the centre-left Labour government, there had been little opportunity for ACT to demonstrate its relevance and commentators were predicting a rough ride for ACT in 2002 (Venter, 2002). Aware of the challenge it was facing, ACT had to make a decision early in 2002 about whether it would try and contest some electorate seats, or put all its effort into clearing the party vote threshold. After considerable internal debate, ACT decided to run a party vote only campaign so that ACT's two most high profile MPs, Richard Prebble and Rodney Hide, would be free to campaign nationwide (Kriha, Nicolle & Watson, 2003).

##### **Campaign Objectives**

ACT's objective entering the 2002 election campaign was to:

- achieve 10, preferably 15, per cent of the party vote (Kriha, Nicolle & Watson, 2003; Roger Douglas, speech to ACT 2002 conference, 22 March 2002).

This latter objective was somewhat optimistic given its pre-election poll results, but ACT claimed it could achieve its goals. In his speech launching ACT's election campaign on 7 July 2002 party leader Richard Prebble predicted "that on election night ACT will be the third party in Parliament. ACT is on track to again increase the number of MPs we have in Parliament". In 1999 ACT had been the fourth highest polling party. Prebble's optimism was based on ACT's "issue-based campaign....the sort of campaigning we used to have when parties had manifestos, not meaningless credit-card slogans". Ironically, ACT was the party that would most successfully turn its issues into credit card slogans in 2002!

##### **Voter Orientation**

As in 1999 the party made a special effort to court female voters with a number of television commercials aimed at a female target audience and prominently featuring female ACT MPs, candidates, and party members (Image 4.4.1).





Image 4.4.1: Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.

The opening night address featured images of female candidates and sitting MPs like Muriel Newman (left) and Deborah Coddington (right) above; female MPs walking together ahead of the male members in the corridors of parliament and just behind the leader walking up the steps of the old parliament buildings (Image 4.4.2). In these images location in relation to the party leader signified the respect accorded female MPs by the party, and served to remind voters that ACT had many female MPs. The implication was that because the party had so many female MPs it was qualified to represent the interests of female voters.



Image 4.4.2: Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.

In addition there were images of women at a party conference (Image 4.4.3). Special attention (signified by close-up images) was paid to the Asian, young, and Pacific women at the conference, demonstrating that ACT had a broad support base.



Image 4.4.3: Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.

There were also a number of television commercials screened during the campaign targeted at working mothers. A 15 second television commercial on ACT's tax policy featured a woman filling her car boot with supermarket shopping bags (Image 4.4.4). In a reasonably broad New Zealand accent signifying the party's desire to identify with working New Zealanders a female voice-over says:

We're all working *really* hard, but there doesn't seem to be much to show for it on payday. It'd be nice just to pay a little less tax. It'd make a big difference to a family like mine.

Female V/O 2: If you want a tax cut for every worker, this time make your party vote ACT.



Image 4.4.4: Stills from ACT Tax Cut television commercial, 2002.

Another 15 second television commercial, targeted at parents, closes in on the windows of a suburban villa at night, a picket fence and wooden letterbox in the foreground. In the background a baby's cot lullaby is heard (Image 4.4.5). This appears to be the view of some kind of peeping-tom. The advertisement draws on people's concerns about crime and fear of not being safe in their own homes. A male voice-over, representing the voice of fathers concerned for the safety of their families, says:

Male V/O: There's too much violent crime in this country. A couple of years inside and they're back out. I'm sick of it. This time my party vote's for ACT. If they do the crime, they should do the time.

Female V/O: If you want zero tolerance for violent crime, this time make your party vote ACT.



Image 4.4.5: Stills from ACT Zero Tolerance For Crime television commercial, 2002.

Of note is the repetition of the phrase “this time” in ACT’s television commercials. Voters were being urged to vote ACT *this time*. These were messages targeted at first-time ACT voters rather than core party supporters.

ACT targeted its messages at Asian families too, demonstrating it understood their needs in a segment of the opening night address featuring ACT party member Alex Wong and his family walking in a suburban play area (Image 4.4.6). The images signified that they were just like any ordinary New Zealand family, spending leisure time together. Wong says:

I want my boys to be happy. I want them to have a good start in life. I want them to live in a safe society, without the threat of crime everywhere, and I want them to live in a tolerant liberal society. I don't want to be treated as an ethnic minority. I don't want to be treated as a privileged sub-class. I just want the same opportunities and the same rights as everyone else.



Image 4.4.6: Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.

In specifically targeting Asian voters in its campaign message ACT differentiated itself from all other parties. Chinese subtitles were added to all billboards, and visitors to its website were greeted in Chinese (Image 4.4.7).



Image 4.4.7: Still from ACT's 2002 opening night address (left); ACT billboard (right.)

The courting of the Asian vote tied in with ACT's "One law for all New Zealanders" policy. ACT had modified its 1999 Treaty of Waitangi grievance industry focus to a broader concept recognising the rights of all New Zealanders regardless of ethnicity. A television commercial featured children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds posing for a soccer team photo, to communicate the multicultural character of contemporary New Zealand culture – soccer is played by more cultures internationally than rugby, New Zealand's more stereotypical sport. The image draws on New Zealand's egalitarian myth that we are all equal and deserve the same rights and opportunities as the next guy (Image 4.4.8).

Male V/O: We're all New Zealanders here. It's a multicultural society. So why should there be different laws based on your race? I don't believe in that at all. ***This time*** I'm giving my party vote to ACT. They'll sort it out.

Female V/O: If you want one law for all New Zealanders, ***this time*** make your party vote ACT.



Image 4.4.8: Stills from ACT One Law for All television commercial, 2002.

In ACT's closing night address Richard Prebble stops his campaign bus especially to visit and empathise with an Asian small business owner who had recently been attacked (Image 4.4.9).

Richard Prebble: I met this dairy operator. He and his family have been terrorised.

Dairy owner: Two robbers wear mask. We don't know what they're going to do, so I have to protect ourself (sic).



Image 4.4.9: Stills from ACT's 2002 closing night address.

Following a similar pattern to 1999, this was one of many images of ACT MPs meeting with, listening to, and empathising with voters. In a pitch for the youth vote in the opening night address ACT MP Muriel Newman is seen consulting with a small group of young people and talking about their personal security concerns (Image 4.4.10):

Muriel Newman: New Zealand is becoming increasingly unsafe isn't it? I don't know about you but I'm afraid to go for a run in the morning before daylight"

Young woman: I used to go for a run in the morning and Mum bought me rowing machine cos she didn't want me going out, in Epsom.

MN: Is that right?

Young woman: Mmmm

MN: See, its hopeless isn't it?



Image 4.4.10: Still from ACT's 2002 opening night address.

ACT MP Donna Awatere-Huata is also seen consulting with a group of secondary school students on their views about the introduction of the new National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) (Image 4.4.11):



Image 4.4.11: Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.

ACT also made a special effort at demonstrating it cared for the needs of working class voters. In ACT's opening night address MP Rodney Hide was seen talking and listening to builders on a building site (Image 4.4.12):

Builder: I wouldn't mind paying taxes, fair taxes, but this thing is getting out of hand.

Rodney Hide: It's getting out of hand. The key to doing better is to get the economy going stronger, to get more jobs, to get more wealth in people's pockets, and the way we believe that we have to do that is to unshackle working people, and that means lower taxes, so that when you're earning you get to keep all...

Builder: That would be nice

RH: You like lower taxes?

Other builders: Yeah yeah

RH: In fact for someone on \$40,000 a year we're saying a tax cut will put an extra \$670 in their pocket a year, just like that. [In a whisper and off-camera] These are the people that are the backbone of New Zealand. Here they are, they create everything that we have. It's not politicians, it's not bureaucrats, it's actually working New Zealanders who work hard and create. And what do we do as a government and society? We hammer them!



Image 4.4.12: Still from ACT's 2002 opening night address.

Women, Asian voters, working New Zealanders and first-time voters. The target audience for ACT's 2002 campaign message seemed to be anyone *but* the group of core supporters it started out life with; that is, middle aged, high income earning male voters who strongly supported neo-liberal economic policies and thought the government was doing too much for people in need. In 2002 the party was targeting a very different set of people in its advertising messages.

Hard as it tried to intimate that ACT was a party that identified with the interests of ordinary New Zealanders, the party could not hide the reality that its MPs were far from ordinary, however. Muriel Newman's concern was for a young woman who could no longer jog in Epsom, hardly a working class suburb or activity! Rodney Hide may have been getting down on the building site, but he was not getting dirty. Dressed in a formal suit with white shirt and tie, Hide looked very much like the bureaucrats he was trying to denounce. And he was not the only one. The opening sequence of the opening night address showed party leader Richard Prebble walking along a beach, sharing a leisurely moment with his wife, a child and a dog. When he stopped to talk about his pride in being a New Zealander he was seen wearing a blue and white striped business shirt under his polar fleece (Image 4.4.13). MP Stephen Franks, portrayed to be equally at home on the Terrace and on a farm, was also wearing a blue and white striped shirt under his windbreaker when interviewed on the farm (Image 4.4.14). The underlying business clothing worn by the MPs betrayed any notion that they personally identified with working class or farming New Zealanders.





Image 4.4.13: Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.



Image 4.4.14: Stills from ACT's 2002 opening night address.

Even the music track of the opening night address featured a saxophonist and a DJ playing a jazz tune, signifying the party's more sophisticated taste for music – not the sort of music ordinary punters might hear on commercial radio.

While ACT had the second highest (to Labour) mean use of the words we and our in its 2002 opening night address (see Table 4.1, p. 169), it also had the second to highest mean use of I-statements in its 2002 opening night address (see Table 4.2, p. 192). Like National ACT MPs used the word I to describe their own personal visions, signifying ACT as a party of self-interested MPs. For example:

Deborah Coddington: As a woman and a mother I am concerned about the large number of children in New Zealand society who are abused and neglected...And I know other women are concerned about those things for their own children and for their children's' future too. And ACT is the only party with meaningful solutions to those problems, and that's why I'm standing for ACT.

When the party advertised its team, it was also with considerable pride at them being anything but ordinary. The party's advertising frequently featured leader Richard Prebble, but it was not dominated by him – a marked contrast to the advertising of the other major parties, except for the Greens. In the opening night address Richard Prebble explains:

We've gone out to select men and women of real ability, and all parliamentarians agree that the party, man for man, woman for woman, is the most able in Parliament. That's given us enormous credibility.

Two 15 second television commercials focused specifically on the competence of the team. One featured the three most outspoken ACT MPs, Prebble, Hide and Newman, formally dressed and striding purposefully up an Auckland street (Image 4.4.15). Another featured all the members of the parliamentary party, immaculately and formally dressed, also striding purposefully up the steps of parliament accompanied by the voiceover: "If you want up front and straight talking MPs, on Saturday party vote ACT, the real alternative"; the verbal and visual message were unable to deny the party's pride and self-identification as an elite team, different from the rest.

Male V/O: This election, ensure the things that are important to you are represented in parliament – zero tolerance for crime, a tax-cut for every worker, world-class education standards. If you want up front and straight-talking MPs, on Saturday party vote ACT, the real alternative.

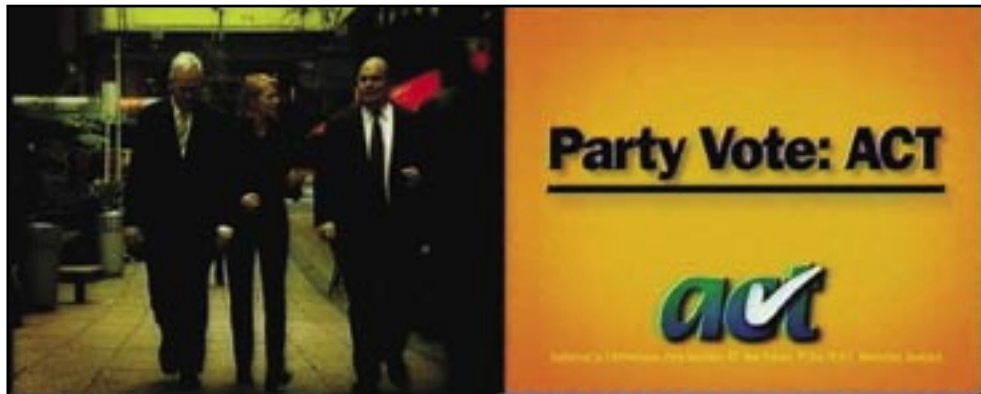


Image 4.4.15: Stills from ACT Party Vote television commercial, 2002.

## ACT Offer

As well as up-front and straight-talking MPs ACT was offering what Richard Prebble (2002) described as “issue messages” on billboards, newspaper and television advertisements, in exchange for the party vote. Although at the beginning of the campaign Prebble had decried parties turning their policies into credit card slogans, that is just what ACT excelled at in 2002, only ACT’s slogans fit on billboards instead of credit cards (Image 4.4.16). Using bold black sans serif typography on attention-grabbing yellow billboards to guarantee visibility and quick readability, the issues were reduced to slogans that were easy to understand. Of note was the way the slogans suggested ACT’s concern with the collective need of the people. For example., ... healthcare for *all*, tax cut for *every* worker ..., one law for *all* .... With policies for all, ACT was clearly not positioning itself as a niche party.



Image 4.4.16: Selection of ACT billboards, 2002.

On many advertisements the party included its URL, an invitation for voters wanting to know more to go the website where ACT’s policies were outlined in more detail. On the website was a statement about the party’s liberalism:

A Vision for New Zealand

We believe people flourish and prosper when they have control over their own lives, and that individuals – not governments – know best how to lead their lives and spend their money (ACT, 2002).

The message about individualism contained on the ACT web site was somewhat contradictory to the promise to address collective needs in the billboard messages, but it was fully in accord with the goals of the party's "Liberal project", a product-oriented vision the party wanted to sell to voters. In her first major speech to ACT's 2002 party conference new president Catherine Judd explained the Liberal project:

We must be educators. We must paint and advance the liberal vision - of society organised from the bottom up, with individuals, enterprises and organisations as its driving force, not the state. We must explain why this is the surest way to achieve the full potential of our society and enrich the lives of all its members.

...We must also be the day-to-day champions of freedom, the guardians of the rights of individuals - ever watchful of, and forever challenging the never-ending attempts of the government to take that freedom away (2000, p.2).

Judd acknowledged that the party faced a hard job selling this liberal message to people cynical about politicians because they didn't deliver; "people who have no real interest in politics" (2002, p.11). It was in order to appeal to these voters that ACT reduced its policy platform down to the issue messages that appeared on the billboards.

### **Competitor Orientation**

ACT entered NZES campaign tracking on 25 June 2002 at just over four per cent (Figure 4.1, p. 179). That support had declined to 3.5 per cent by the time of its opening night address on 28 June. Subsequent to the broadcast it rose steadily, peaking on 16 July at 9.2 per cent. After that ACT's support declined again. In a similar pattern to 1999, ACT came close to its ten per cent objective in the middle of the election campaign but was unable to sustain that level of support through to election day.

ACT strategists were prepared for the drop in support mid-way through the campaign. In 1999 and 1996 they had observed that the party entered a "coverage desert" in the last fortnight of the campaign, when mainstream media coverage focused on the two major parties. In 2002 the party "concentrated advertising in mainstream broadcast and print media in the final ten days of the campaign, to compensate for the anticipated drying up of media coverage" (Kriha, Nicolle & Watson, 2003, p. 94). Despite the advertising blitz, however, the party's support declined. Party strategists say this was because media attention turned to New Zealand First and United Future

following the worm debate (discussed in Section 4.7). While there is no doubt the media paid increased attention to those parties at that time, a further explanation for ACT's demise may come from the party's lack of attention in its advertising messages to its own competitive relationship with those parties.

ACT had been aware that its main competition for the third party vote was "populist parties" such as New Zealand First, and United Future (Kriha, Watson & Nicolle, 2003, p. 88). This placed ACT as a challenger for the third party vote. In theory such a party would have attack as its basic strategic objective, taking the form of either direct attack on the market leader, attack on competitors of its own size or attack on small and regional competitors. Perhaps the demise of the Alliance lulled ACT into a false sense of security regarding the effort that was going to be required to challenge another party for the position of third highest polling party in 2002, because ACT did not engage in direct attack on any of its competitors. Neither New Zealand First, the Greens, or United Future fielded advertising barbs from ACT in 2002, before or after the worm debate. Instead ACT used its advertising campaign to present its policy and team messages to voters. It seemed to be hoping people would be attracted by its wisdom, competence and attention to issues, without feeling the need to contextualise the benefits it was offering in relation to other parties. New Zealand First and United Future were not afraid to attack other parties in order to gain ground: New Zealand First attacked Labour and National, United Future attacked the Greens. Both sustained significant electoral gains throughout the campaign.

Nor did ACT try to gain advantage by attacking its competitor on the right, National. As in 1999, ACT wanted to appear independent of National, concerned that the party not be seen as a "tactical appendage" to National rather than a "force of its own" (Kriha, Nicolle & Watson, 2003, p. 91). In 1999 ACT had targeted soft National voters who were leaning towards National but might still have voted elsewhere, and attacked National in its advertising messages. This, ACT felt, was not an option in 2002. The party anticipated that the soft National voter was likely to stick with National the worse National polled in order to keep it afloat (Kriha, Nicolle & Watson, 2003). ACT therefore largely ignored National. There was no agreement between the parties to support each other. There was no sign that ACT needed or wanted a National victory.

## **Discussion**

ACT did not achieve its party vote objective to gain 10-15 per cent of the party vote. Instead it ended up with a very slight increase on its 1999 vote, from 7.04 per

cent, to 7.14 per cent. ACT campaign strategists Thomas Kriha, Brian Nicolle and Graeme Watson (2003) consider the fact “that ACT managed to hold its support, let alone increase it, was a remarkable accomplishment” following a campaign in which ACT had little opportunity to affect the outcome of the election; when issues that it had successfully put on the agenda – such as crime and one law for all New Zealanders – had been adopted by other opposition parties; and when voters were generally content and expected the government’s return (p. 97).

How do the political scientists account for ACT’s outcome? Jack Vowles (2004a) thinks ACT succeeded because it was effective at issue mobilisation. In terms of issues closest to voters’ personal concerns, the NZES found ACT leading on two issues – tax and crime/law and order. It also came second on Maori issues, and second on welfare. On the question of why ACT did not do better, Levine and Roberts’ (2004) view is that with voters largely comfortable with the government’s performance and expecting Labour to win the election, the question that came increasingly to dominate the campaign was one of coalition options, and for this National and ACT “were wholly unsuitable ” (pp. 330-331).

What about from a political marketing perspective? Did ACT demonstrate a market orientation? Yes, in the sense that it was able to demonstrate through many images of ACT MPs and candidates interacting with voters that it was a party that had the ability to sense and respond to voters. Yes, in the sense that targeting its messages at women (using more role models this time than stereotypical images) paid off with higher numbers of female voters than in the previous two elections. In 1999 only 21.7 per cent of ACT voters were women according to the VUW pre-election survey. In 2002 this had grown to 30.2 per cent (Levine and Roberts, 2003, p. 327). Yes, in the sense that ACT understood that it had to expand its range of policies if it wanted to increase its share of the market. There is evidence that ACT succeeded in attracting new voters. According to the NZES, 55.9 per cent of ACT’s 2002 voters had not voted for the party in 1999; they were first time voters who decided to give their party vote to ACT *this time*, as ACT had requested, 40.2 per cent of whom had not voted at all in 1999 (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22).

But ACT’s demonstrated voter orientation was deficient in the area of keeping promises. In its advertising messages its MPs were delivering a mainstream message, but demonstrating a liberal message. Their clothes, behaviours and dialogue belied any notion that they truly identified with their ordinary or mainstream vision. Though the party tried to straddle both niche and mainstream worlds, the lack of commitment to one or other meant that ACT was in effect unable to reassure core supporters that

existing customer satisfaction was a fundamental party goal. The neo-liberal message to which ACT's original supporters were once attracted was no longer ACT's core party vote message. It had not disappeared entirely; it was still available on the party's web site. But it did not make it into the party's main TV, newspaper or billboard advertisements. The NZES found ACT only able to retain 41.3 per cent of its 1999 vote (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22). This was the second lowest retention rate of all the parties returned to parliament. Only the Alliance had a worse retention rate. In 1999 ACT had ignored this core constituency too, in an effort at demonstrating that it understood the needs of ordinary New Zealanders, and had retained less than half of its 1996 support.

ACT wanted to become third highest polling party, but there was no sense that it felt it ought to challenge another party for the role. ACT was so intently focused on presenting its message, it largely ignored the competition. Meanwhile the competition were assertive in their advertising attacks. When it came down to voters selecting the third party offering the most value in exchange for the party vote, there was a crowded market. New Zealand First ended up occupying the slot of third highest polling party. ACT remained fourth.

The one party that ACT attracted the most voters from was National. The irony is that ACT had decided to ignore National voters in its advertising messages because it had assumed National voters would not flee a sinking ship. Nevertheless it seems that some National voters were more attracted by what ACT was offering than their own party, suggesting that had ACT put more effort into targeting these voters, it might have done even better. 33.9 per cent of ACT's 2002 vote came from previous National voters. On the other hand, an almost equal proportion of voters went from ACT to National (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 23). In fact this was the story of ACT's election campaign. Having reoriented itself from a niche party to being a challenger in the two last elections (while avoiding entirely the question of being a follower to National) ACT gained new voters each time, only to lose a similar amount of old voters. Despite its origins in free-market thinking, ACT did not demonstrate a strong market orientation in 2002.

#### 4.5: THE GREENS 2002

##### Context

Although not in coalition with Labour, the Greens had informally been supporting the Labour-led government since the 1999 election, giving Labour supply by voting for their budgets, backing them on confidence motions, and supporting them on most of their bills. In return the Greens received more privileges than other minor parties in the form of ministerial consultation and briefings on selected policy issues (Aimer, 2004).

On 22 May 2002, without informing Labour, all Green MPs walked out of the House in protest at the final reading of the bill fixing the end of the GE moratorium. The party declared it would withdraw support from any future government that was not prepared to extend the GE moratorium beyond October 2003, and that an extension of the moratorium beyond 2003 would be a condition of any coalition agreement between the Greens and Labour after the 2002 election. A few days later, on 26 May 2002, the party published the newspaper advertisement below (Image 4.5.1) in the Sunday newspapers. The advertisement denoted a reasonably lavish table setting for a guest named GE, and intimated the imminent arrival of a surprise visitor; someone who was expected to be one thing, but would turn out to be completely different and unwelcome. The question *Guess who's coming to dinner?* originated from a 1967 movie *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* which tells of a dinner party given by a bride's wealthy parents to meet her fiancé and his parents; the bride's white parents are astonished to find that the groom is black and the groom's parents are equally concerned when they discover that the bride is a white girl. It has since become a colloquial phrase signifying the imminent arrival of a surprise guest.

The advertisement proved to be an important statement of the Greens' campaign intentions. Although not yet the official campaign period (the early election would be announced two weeks later), it was clearly an early campaign advertisement. This was denoted by the statements "Only a vote for the Green Party can keep GE in the Lab" and "This election is your last chance to vote for a GE Free Future." The advertisement blamed the Labour government for the imminent arrival of the unwelcome visitor and confirmed that the Greens would be challenging Labour on this issue in the upcoming election.





Image 4.5.1: Green newspaper advertisement, May 2002.

The Labour government was upset at the Greens' surprise action and ultimatum. But there was public support for the Greens' position. Public opinion polls had found a majority of New Zealanders uncomfortable with the prospect of the moratorium being lifted. An early June public opinion poll measured Green Party support rising to 7.2 per cent, nearly two percentage points up on the previous month (NBR, 7 June 2002).

### Campaign Objectives

The 2002 election was the Greens' second MMP campaign as a standalone party. In 1999 it had won 5.2 per cent of the party vote. The party's 2002 goals were more ambitious. It sought to:

- achieve at least 10 per cent of the total party vote, preferably 12 per cent;
- retain the Coromandel seat;
- come a credible second in one or two other electorate seats; and
- be part of the next government (Donald, 2002; Faehrmann, 2002).

### Voter Orientation

At the beginning of 2002 the party researched the reasons for the lack of support in 1999 and discovered that although many voters liked their policies and were

concerned about the environment, they did not give the Greens their party vote for a variety of reasons including the party's perceived lack of influence; their reputation as troublemakers; that they were a single issue party; that they were not serious enough and were too flaky (Faehrmann, 2002). The Greens decided to position the party in 2002 as "adding value" to a Labour led government. The party identified soft Labour voters as a target market. These voters were considered close in outlook to the party's Values-generation target voter group. The Greens were determined to prove to soft Labour voters that the Green Party could be relied on to be a stable and responsible partner for Labour (Faehrmann, 2002).

Green advertisements targeted these voters through mainstream media. The print advertisement below from the *Listener* (Image 4.5.2, left) starts by acknowledging the party's roots in the protest movements and lifestyles of the 1960s. The image of the daisy evokes memories of "flower-power" idealism; the petals have the words "can" and "can't" imprinted on them. The scattered petals signify the cynicism felt by this group of voters who once upon a time felt they could change the world (and who have now become *Listener* readers instead!). The text goes on to list the party's achievements in the last three years working with the government. The suggestion is that the new way for the flower-power generation to effect change was from *within* the corridors of power, and by voting Green who were already "in".

In an appeal to the soft Labour voter the party also appropriated the idea of the commitment card that had worked so well for Labour in 1999, in a print advertisement published in the major daily newspapers two days before the election (Image 4.5.2, right). The guarantees are sealed with the signatures and the smiling faces of Rod Donald and Jeanette Fitzsimons. The appropriation from Labour of the visual image of the credit card, a strong symbol of capitalism, is an unlikely metaphor for a party with a strong anti-globalisation/free trade ethos.

In 2002 a strong pitch was made to a youth audience. This was signaled in the opening one minute forty second MonstaCo segment of the opening night address. Focused on GE, its ironic tone, both visual and verbal, targeted an educated urban youth audience familiar with the international culture jamming movement. Culture jammers seek to weaken the power of corporate advertising campaigns using various methods like "subvertisements", or advertisement parodies, that alter advertising messages and manipulate slogans in order to alert viewers to their media and corporate controlled lives, with the long term objective of dismantling consumer culture.



Image 4.5.2: Green newspaper advertisements, 2002.

The MonstaCo segment (Image 4.5.3) was set in the year 2010 and opened with a sunglass-wearing newsreader covering an item of absolute trivia, poking fun at New Zealand’s obsession with America’s cup yacht racing. It then moved on to the type of story that could make the 6 o’clock news in 2010 if GE had been introduced:

Female newsreader: SonnyCorp captain Francisco Centre joked “we’ve no ice for our drinks, victory seems foregone”. In other news AgriMinister Brown again reassured worried shoppers “everything’s fine”, he says, as fears grow. Since most products are not labeled, shopping has slowed down. Farmers ordered to destroy their crops have been unable to claim insurance for soil contamination. And that’s the news.”

Male V/O: We are the news, you’d better believe it.



Image 4.5.3: Stills from Greens’ 2002 opening night address.

In essence, the MonstaCo segment likened voting for the Greens to an exercise in culture jamming. It parodied the notion of corporate sponsorship and advertising: the news was sponsored by the fictitious SonnyCorp, whose brand slogan was “we are the world”. The focus went onto MonstaCo, a jibe at the multinational corporation Monsanto, major producers and distributors of genetically modified seed. The broadcast depicted a world taken over by unscrupulous multinational corporations. Featured was a mock advertisement for a shower gel made from genetically modified strawberries by MonstaCo:

Jingle: Always sunny at Sonnycorp, blah blah.

Male V/O: Today it's worth coming down to MonstaCo for BionInc strawfruit. Bion strawfruit; any better and they'd be natural! And now, free, Bion strawfruit shower gel with added fish genes to soften skin and fend off weather. BionInc, making nature work.

Do not use while pregnant, if swallowed see your doctor.

Although the message of this opening sequence was largely anti-bio-technology, its construction was pro-technology, the image treatment sophisticated and typography digitally manipulated. The Greens 2002 broadcasting allocation was \$166,300, a significantly greater amount than in the previous election. This meant the party was able to produce a wider range of television commercials with an added level of technological sophistication they had not been able to fund in 1999. It is also one of the ironies of the culture jamming movement that they were not averse to using the tools and techniques of advertising to critique advertising.

Another code communicating with the youth audience was the widespread use of the underscore and the italic sans serif Helvetica Bold Condensed Oblique in the advertising typography (Image 4.5.4). The underscore is an intertextual reference to hypertext transfer protocol (http) language, a set of instructions enabling a computer to connect with an internet document. The italic sans serif is a type treatment frequently found in magazines and web sites targeted at a youth audience. The advertisements spoke in a typographic code addressed to an internet savvy, “zine” or street magazine reading youth audience. All the party’s print advertisements and brochures were available for downloading from the Greens’ web site.



Image 4.5.4: Close-up of Greens' 2002 typography.

The image of Green MP Nandor Tanczos featured more widely in Green Party advertising than it had in 1999. An image of him riding a skateboard, dreads flowing, urged young voters to get on the electoral roll. The poster used a contemporary distressed typeface, signifying once again that the Greens understood the youth culture aesthetic. Tanczos' image also featured on a poster announcing that “Everything you do is political: What you buy, how you travel, what you challenge, if you dance, how you vote” (Image 4.5.5). The poster used the same typeface as the get on the roll poster and added a Dymo typeface, another contemporary typeface based on found objects from 1970s print culture. The message suggested that the Greens understood the things that motivate youth voters - consumption, travel, challenging the establishment and entertainment; and that if these were the needs of voters then Tanczos and the Greens would be their advocate.



Image 4.5.5: Green posters featuring Nandor Tanczos, 2002.

In the opening night address, and in a separate television commercial, Tanczos promoted the Greens policy advocating a universal student allowance. He is seen walking around the Otara market with a taro in his hand (Image 4.5.6). The message was that he was still in touch with grassroots community events in his area (Auckland). He chants the phrase “The Greens say – let people repay their debt with work, here, in Aotearoa” in a rapper rhythm, and hand gestures as if he was a hip-hop artist, a

salute to his interest in contemporary music. This was also communicated through the release of the *Green Room* CD, a collaborative effort between the Greens, young New Zealand music artists and an independent recording label.



Image 4.5.6: Still from Greens' 2002 opening night address.

The Greens also targeted new messages at young urban Maori through the image of Metiria Turei, ranked eighth on the Green Party list. She was the only non-MP and Maori woman to feature in the Greens' opening night address (Image 4.5.7), and she spoke in Maori before speaking in English. Standing in front of contemporary Maori carving and with children alongside, she talked of GE as colonisation, signifying the party's interest in both GE and Maori sovereignty issues.

The commercial release of GE into te tai ao is a modern day colonisation at work and we must not let that happen again to our whenua and whakapapa.



Image 4.5.7: Stills from Greens' 2002 opening night address.

As well as occupying a high position on the Green list, Turei stood as a candidate in the Auckland Maori electorate of Tamaki Makaurau in competition with Labour's

high profile MP John Tamihere. Turei placed billboards in the electorate in Maori that stated: “GE. Kaua e whakatoī” (Image 4.5.8). Roughly translated this reads “GE. Don’t play with god”. No other party produced billboards in Maori. The Green Party was also the only party to greet visitors to its web site in Maori (Barker, 2004). The party demonstrated more of an interest in communicating with Maori issues than all other parties except for maybe New Zealand First.



Image 4.5.8: Green party vote billboard, 2002.

### Green Offer

Much of what the Greens were offering in 2002 was visually akin to their 1999 offering. The colour green remained the visual anchor for all Green advertising, and the party logo was unchanged. The slogan had changed, however, from “Go Green” in 1999 to “Party Vote: Green” in 2002, suggesting that the party was more aware of what it was seeking in an MMP competition. The messages were also now typeset in hard-edged sans serif capital letters, a more assertive typeface than the softer, rounded cornered face used in 1999 (Image 4.5.9).



Image 4.5.9: Green party vote billboard, 2002.

As in 1999, the party claimed to be future oriented. In the excerpt below from the Greens' opening night address on 28 June 2002 (Image 4.5.10, left) Jeanette Fitzsimons alludes to the uncertainty of an industrialised future, and suggests it is not the sort of future to pass onto future generations. Her image is ghostly and transparent. Behind her other ghostly, anonymous figures walk quickly on an inner city street. Busy road sounds are heard in the background. The colours are muted, consisting of greys, browns and blacks. The image treatment connotes an urbanised present that is rapidly disappearing, its life force fading, much like a holographic message disappearing in a science fiction movie or computer game.

Fitzsimons: "In this polluted, uncertain and anxious world a green economy is our only secure future, the sort of future we would want to hand on to our children.



Image 4.5.10: Stills from Greens' 2002 opening night address.

Co-leader Rod Donald's voiceover is then heard, as the words *100 per cent pure* count backwards to 35 per cent to the sound of a mechanical counter (Image 4.5.10, right). When they reach 35 per cent a warning horn is heard:

Parp, parp, parp.

Donald V/O: One hundred per cent pure, that's how Tourism New Zealand sells us to the world. A Ministry for the Environment report reckons our clean, green image is worth around a billion dollars a year to our economy. Instead of undermining our image we should be living up to it. Lose it, we lose our opportunity to be outstanding.



The message offered up the Green Party as the difference between a similar idealised and mythical past the party had invoked in 1999 – a time when children could play outdoors in the clean, green environment that made New Zealand unique in the world – and an uncertain and gloomy future. The Greens positioned themselves as preservers of a past that was rapidly disappearing for future generations.

As in 1999 the Green Party also emphasised in its advertising messages the strength of its parliamentary team. Communicating the Green culture of inclusiveness, all of the sitting Greens MPs featured on party vote billboards (Image 4.5.11) and in the opening night address. This was a point of difference for the party. It was the only party to put a photographic image of their team on party billboards, and only two other sitting parties, ACT and the Alliance, included MPs other than their leaders in their television advertising. Being able to include all sitting MPs in an opening night address is an option available to smaller parties that, because of the limited time available for party political addresses, is not so practical for larger parties with bigger teams.



Image 4.5.11: Green Team billboard, 2002.

Focusing on the members of the Green team also enabled the party to demonstrate the breadth of its policies and the interests of its candidates. For example, in the opening night address Keith Locke (Image 4.5.12, top left) talked of the party's foreign policy, Sue Kedgley (top right) talked about safe food, Sue Bradford (bottom left) talked of the party's welfare and justice policies, and Ian Ewen-Street (bottom right) talked about the party's organics policy. In contrast to 1999 when the spokespeople spoke off-camera, the 2002 spokespeople spoke direct to camera in an attempt to create a more personal connection with voters.



Image 4.5.12: Stills from Greens' 2002 opening night address.

In terms of verbal signs of togetherness Labour, New Zealand First, ACT, the Alliance, and United Future all had a higher mean use of the inclusive pronouns we and our, and a higher use of their party name, in their opening night addresses (see Tables 4.1, p. 169 and 4.3, p. 213). However, as in 1999 the personal pronoun I was not uttered by anyone in the Greens' 2002 opening night address (see Table 4.2, p. 192), not even by leaders Rod Donald and Jeanette Fitzsimons. Once again, the underlying message was that Green candidates were not in politics for personal gain.

There were still some differences between the Greens' 2002 and 1999 advertising campaigns. Notably there was a much stronger emphasis on the GE issue in 2002 than there had been in 1999. It was the only policy issue to be addressed by two Green television commercials. Other Green policy issues like emissions and pollution tax had only one television commercial. GE also had its own party vote billboard and numerous print advertisements. Below is one of a number of print advertisements published on the Greens' GE policy position (Image 4.5.13).



Image 4.5.13: Green newspaper advertisement, 2002.

Designed as a ransom note, the advertisement argued that the release of genetically modified organisms into the environment was akin to an act of terrorism. The advertisement sought to activate in voters a fear of the unknown. It was yet another challenge to the Labour government, and implied that Helen Clark was being dictated to by corporate agendas rather than the people of New Zealand. Not subtle was the inclusion of the first three letters of the word Labour in the Labour Party logo inside the word “Unlabelled” in the bottom line, a gestalt placement associating this terrorist threat with the Labour Party.

There were two television commercials devoted specifically to the GE issue (Images 4.5.14 and 4.5.15). They featured American farmers warning against the release of genetically modified organisms into the environment.

Woman: The effect of being shut out of the European market is directly attributable to the fact that we don't know where GMO is in this province any more.

Man 1: Economically it's a disaster for North Dakota.

Man 2: Puttin' a gene in doesn't make it more nutritious, it wasn't a bigger yield, in fact in many cases it was poorer quality and less and most of all farmers tell me now they've been using from six to ten times more chemical to try and get rid of it because now it has become a super weed.



Image 4.5.14: Stills from Greens' GE television commercial, 2002

Man: We raised these crops to sell to foreign nations. They will not accept GMO. What do we do now when they've contaminated our entire soy bean industry?

Woman: There are a great many of us who are fighting hard against these companies and feel like we are fighting for our lives.

Man: I would say any country that's free of GMO, keep it out of there until it's tested that it's proven as safe as all the conventional. No matter how long it takes. Don't let it into the country, 'cos once you do your entire food chain's gonna be contaminated.



Image 4.5.15: Stills from Greens' GE television commercial, 2002.

The strong impression left by the commercials was that the farmers were speaking from personal experience, freely giving of their time and advice in the hope that others would not make the same mistake they did.

## Competitor Orientation

In 2002 the Greens sought to expand beyond their environmental niche. To do this the Greens tried to argue that although they were a single issue party, that single issue was not GE alone but the future of New Zealand, despite their actions and images being strongly oriented around the GE issue. This was communicated through many different print and television advertisements and billboards. Although sharing a stylistic consistency in terms of logo design and placement, colour tone and typography, the visual and verbal content of the advertisements changed from one advertisement to another. Unlike the reductionist campaigns run by New Zealand First and ACT with their simple slogans, the Greens went the other way, demonstrating a broad range of socio-economic policies aimed at the future of New Zealand, and a wide variety of slogans.

There were no images of Green MPs engaged in activism in 2002 as there had been in their 1999 print and TV advertising. The culture-jamming MonstaCo segment was not broadcast again after the opening night address; the remaining 6 minute, 20 seconds of the broadcast and all other television commercials were more restrained in content, design and attitude. Rod Donald and Jeanette Fitzsimons, now wearing more formal attire, closed the opening night address standing outside the Beehive with a message about their maturity and readiness for government (Image 4.5.16).

Donald: We've proved our worth in the last three years. Now the Greens are ready for the responsibility of government. We'll put the brakes on Labour where we need to, strengthen their resolve where it counts and steer Labour in the right direction on crucial issues.



Image 4.5.16: Still from Greens' 2002 opening night address.

However, there was a conflict between the Greens' claims to be supportive of the Labour government and the party's actions and messages over GE. Rather than supporting Labour, the party was directly challenging them. On the one hand the Greens threatened to take the government down if it did not extend the GE moratorium. On the other, they claimed to be ready for the responsibility of government. The party seemed to be hoping it could have its greens and eat them too!

Over the course of the 1999 election campaign the Greens had moved from niche party to challenger to the National government. In 2002 a similar thing happened with the challenge to the Labour-led government on GE. Like National had done in 1999 Labour took the Greens challenge as a full frontal assault. Labour gathered its resources and fought back on a number of fronts, including (i) refusing to suggest that Labour voters in the Coromandel give their vote to Jeanette Fitzsimons, something the Greens had been counting on to get Fitzsimons re-elected (Faehrmann, 2002); (ii) accusing the Greens of being in collusion with Nicky Hager over the book that alleged a government cover-up of the existence of generically modified corn seeds and set off the corngate episode; and (iii) television and print advertisements accusing the Greens of causing job losses by their demands and holding the country to ransom over one single issue (Images 4.1.14 and 4.1.15). Just as the Greens had been unprepared to respond to the 1999 counter-attacks with controlled messages, so the Greens were unprepared to respond with advertising messages to Labour's counter-attacks in 2002. The Greens were hoping for positive news media coverage of their policies but ended up being frustrated at the news media's attention to whatever conflict they were involved in (Faehrmann, 2002).

At first glance it appears that Labour's 2002 attacks did not harm the Greens to the same extent as National's attacks in 1999. During the two day period that Labour was attacking the Greens in newspaper and television advertising, Green support rose one per cent in NZES tracking (Figure 4.1, p. 179). However, the Greens' final party vote ended up at the level it was when Labour's attacks commenced on 20 July. It is possible that Labour's attacks helped prevent the Greens from rising further or quicker.

The Greens were not only subject to attack by Labour; they also found themselves under attack by another smaller party. United Future clearly judged the Greens to be its major threat. Understandably, given that United Future had not appeared on anyone's radar as being a serious challenge before then, the Greens had not factored on United Future being theirs. However, United Future's advertising attacks on the Greens (see Section 4.7) were strong and concentrated on television in the last

week of the campaign. The Greens had no response. They did not refute Dunne's allegations about cannabis use and youth suicide in their controlled advertising messages. Furthermore, while Dunne was presenting himself as the voice of common sensibility, the Greens were not so clear about what they were offering. On the one hand they claimed they had no single issue, on the other their single issue was clearly opposition to the government's position on lifting the GE moratorium; on the one hand they wanted to demonstrate their maturity to work with Labour in government, on the other they were threatening to bring the government down; on the one hand they wanted to appear hip in order to appeal to disaffected youth voters, on the other they wanted to prove their maturity and readiness for office. The Greens were experiencing something of an identity crisis.

What did this paradox mean for the Greens electorally? The Greens did have success appealing to soft Labour voters – 24.1 per cent of Greens 2002 support came from Labour voters in 1999, representing 3.8 per cent of 1999 Labour voters (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22). But United Future also took a further 2.6 per cent of Labour's 1999 voters. Had the Greens been able to attract these voters, their party vote percentage in 2002 would have neared their party vote objective. So the Greens' lack of response to United Future's challenge may have had significant results.

## Discussion

The Green Party entered NZES tracking at around 7.6 per cent on 23 June 2002 (see Figure 4.1, p. 179). Although it tracked downwards to 5.5 per cent on 1 July, it then started to rise, reaching a peak of 11.7 per cent on 11 July. At that point it appeared the Greens' party vote objective was achievable. By the end of the campaign, however, the Greens' party vote percentage had dropped back to seven per cent.

The party achieved electoral success in that it increased its overall share of the party vote from 5.2 per cent in 1999 to seven per cent in 2002. But it was not successful in achieving its 10-12 per cent goal. Nor did it hold onto the Coromandel seat, coming third in that contest; and it only came a distant second in one seat – Tamaki Makarau. Nor did the Greens become part of the next government, having to be content with a cooperation agreement instead. What was it about the Greens' 2002 message that may have contributed to their re-election with increased support, but may also have contributed to the party's inability to maintain the high level of popular support it gained midway through the campaign?

Jack Vowles (2004) blames the Green Party's drop in support midway through the campaign on the strength of the government rebuttal of Nicky Hager's accusations

that Labour had allowed some GE contaminated corn to be planted, despite claiming a zero tolerance policy on GE material; and questions over the way the party handled the matter. Although the Greens' immediate response had been to give credence to Hager's allegations, it soon transpired that the party had been in receipt of information much earlier to show that the allegations were inaccurate (Aimer & Vowles, 2004). Green campaign manager Cate Faehrmann (2002) agrees the party did not handle the matter well. She says:

'Cornfusion', as we lovingly dubbed it, reigned – in the media, in the public and within the party itself. The party didn't know about the book, but we began to look like we were doing what our voters despise – playing dirty politics. With the book's publisher, Craig Potton, a candidate on the party's list how on earth did we not know about it? The GE issue became sullied. It was suddenly seen by some as simply a political tool instead of an issue that made people take principled stands and fight passionately for.

Peter Aimer and Jack Vowles (2004) also think that “despite the importance of the Green vote in the 2002 election, the environment remained one of the issues of least concern to voters. In the end, the Government could afford the conflict with the Greens” (p. 46). In the Victoria University pre-election survey the environment was found to be only the 12th most important issue to voters (at 2.9 per cent) (Levine & Roberts, 2003).

What additional perspectives has this political marketing examination to offer? The Greens' market orientation in 2002 was still strong. The Greens demonstrated their ability to sense and respond to the needs of their core voter groups. They stayed true to much of their core message from 1999 and there was an improved value offering in their message standing up to the government on GE. They also expanded their voter base with concentrated messages to youth and Maori. This appeared to result in positive electoral outcomes. Their youth vote was a significant influence on the final party vote percentage, with strong showings in both Auckland Central (15.8 per cent) and Wellington Central electorates (16.25 per cent). These are university cities which have high numbers of student voters, and a disproportionate share (11.5 per cent) of the special vote which is also disproportionately a youth vote. This was an increase of 3.5 per cent on their 1999 special vote.

Also significant was a major shift in support for the Green Party from Maori voters. In 1999 the party vote from Maori voters was 4.96 per cent, just under the nationwide party vote percentage. In 2002 it was 10.70 per cent - considerably higher than the



nationwide party vote. While Metiria Turei was the only Green candidate to come second in an electorate seat, it was a distant rather than credible second, credible being the party's goal. Nonetheless Turei's 12.82 per cent was above the Greens' optimistic party vote expectations (Electoral Commission, 2005b).

With a new offer of maturity the Green Party was able to attract voters from all over the political spectrum. The percentage of the final vote taken from 1999 Labour voters has already been mentioned. According to the NZES a further 9.3 per cent of their 2002 party vote came from voters who had supported the Alliance in 1999; and 5.6 per cent came from each of National, ACT and non-voters. But the downside was that the Green Party held on to less than half of its own voters from 1999. Only 40.7 per cent of its 2002 voters had voted Green in 1999 (representing 45.8 per cent of 1999 Green voters). The Greens bled 1999 votes to: non-vote (8.3 per cent of their 1999 vote) 16.7 per cent went to Labour; 8.3 per cent went to National; 6.3 per cent to the Alliance; 4.2 per cent to New Zealand First, ACT and United Future (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22). That it was only able to keep less than half of its 1999 voters suggests that the Green Party's conformist message may no longer have met the needs of many voters who had supported it previously.

The Greens' success in 1999 was as both a niche party and a challenger. In 2002 the situation was similar. The party was able to appeal to its niche, while challenging the government on GE. In terms of the competitive positioning typologies, however, the strategic option that would seem to have most suited the Greens' goal to be part of the next government would have been to act as a follower party. This would have required coming to a more formal campaign arrangement with Labour, much like the Alliance in 1999 and the Progressive Coalition in 2002, to support Labour's policies, not attack them, maintain their niche and be rewarded in office. However, the Greens' May 2002 announcement that an extension of the moratorium on the release of genetically modified organisms into the environment beyond 2003 would be a condition of any coalition agreement between the Greens and Labour essentially ruled out such an agreement from taking place. Clark signaled that Labour was unlikely to entertain a coalition agreement on the basis of such a non-negotiable ultimatum (Aimer, 2004). On the other hand, had they entered, prior to the campaign, a non-aggression agreement with Labour, it may not have resulted in the electoral outcome the Greens were hoping for. To enter such an agreement would have meant the Greens would have had to give ground on their anti-GE policy, and this could have lost them much of their niche support in 2002.

## 4.6: NEW ZEALAND FIRST 2002

### Context

In 1999 New Zealand First had been the sixth highest polling party, achieving 4.3 per cent of the party vote and one electorate seat. Having won a seat the party did not have to cross the five percent threshold to get back into the House. The 1999 election had been a serious wake-up call for New Zealand First, however. In the words of the coordinator of the party's 2002 campaign, Brian Donnelly (2003), "in the 1999 election, the voters kicked New Zealand First's backside" (p. 118). For most of the period between the 1999 and 2002 elections New Zealand First languished in the public opinion polls at between two and three percent, a figure superseded by the Greens, ACT and the Alliance, as it deliberately kept its profile low in order to restore credibility. Donnelly explains:

We had to re-establish credibility as a party and ... this meant the credibility of the caucus. Our behaviour had to be impeccable and we needed to demonstrate constructive responsibility, both in the House and in select committees. That meant doing our penance without complaint and working hard in Parliament (p. 118).

### Campaign Objectives

In addition to restoring credibility, New Zealand First's 2002 election goals were:

- to regain the reputation of Winston Peters as an electorate MP;
- to position the party as a potential coalition-maker in the next election; and
- to lift its party vote as high as possible (Donnelly, 2003).

### Voter Orientation

Most of the party's visual message was targeted at its elderly core support base. In the party's opening and closing night addresses a formally dressed Peters was seated at a desk surrounded by antiques. This was a domestic but nonetheless formal setting reassuring voters of the social conservatism and traditional values of the party's leader. Peters spoke direct to camera in order to make a personal connection with voters. He had not done this in the party's 1999 opening night address. As the addresses progress, the camera closes in on Peters' face to confirm the seriousness of his message (Image 4.6.1).



Image 4.6.1: Stills from New Zealand First's 2002 opening night address.

Peters' verbal message reminisced of an idealised and nostalgic past in order to paint a picture of a better future. It drew upon a number of longstanding New Zealand political myths, including the egalitarian myth:

We dream of a country where all New Zealanders of all backgrounds are able to live in safety, be treated as equals and not be swamped by a flood of immigration;

the myth of popular sovereignty:

We want parliament to listen to the people;

and the myth of a golden past that was more caring:

We're going to rebuild a country about which people will later say – they fixed crime and violence, they fixed the Treaty industry and they ended the divisions in their society, they fixed the immigration problems and returned to investing in their own young people providing them with education and training and a good start to life.

### **Maori**

There were visual and verbal signs that Maori were once again target voter group for New Zealand First. One such sign was Peters himself, his image alone a strong symbol of Maori success in an assimilated New Zealand. The other was the white feather, or *raukura*, seen on the left of his desk in the opening night address. The *raukura* is a symbol of peace dating back to the 1870s and the peaceful resistance at Parihaka of Maori chiefs Te Whiti and Tohu, who shared a utopian dream of a new social order for Maori and Pakeha based on respect, equity, peace and harmony (Image 4.6.2).



Image 4.6.2: Still from New Zealand First's 2002 opening night address.

By displaying the *raukura* the party was signaling that it shared these ideals. This was also confirmed in Peters' dialogue, as in this excerpt from the closing night address:

Whilst we are many peoples with different customs we are all New Zealanders first. Over the next three years New Zealand First will pursue policies that promote social cohesion and unity.

Peters' attacks on the Treaty industry were justified in terms of New Zealand First's support for broader Maori issues. This represented the most words *any* party spoke about Maori concerns in their nationwide campaign messages in the two elections studied here:

And the real tragedy of the Treaty industry is that it rides on the back of a genuine issue, the economic plight of Maori. Anyone with the slightest concern for Maori can see that the Treaty industry has bought most Maori absolutely nothing. It has diverted attention from the real issues, educational, employment, housing and health status of Maori. The state spends on average \$23,000 a year per Maori, but most of it isn't reaching Maori at all, certainly not those who need it. Some local councils are setting up special seats for Maori. In South Africa this was called the politics of apartheid. Maori don't need this, New Zealand doesn't need this.

### *Sense and Respond*

In 2002 New Zealand First acknowledged the importance of listening to voters. Brian Donnelly (2003) explains:

We assiduously listened. We listened to what people were saying. New Zealand First does not have the resources to do sophisticated polling like National and Labour. However, polling results can only give surface information. We tried to get below the surface – to the visceral level if you like – and we carefully analysed what we were hearing across the country (p. 119).

There were no images of the party listening to ordinary people in any of New Zealand First's television advertising. But unlike 1999 there was more evidence of the party *responding* to voter needs. The verbal dialogue in the opening night address indicated the party's understanding that the election was about voter wants and rights. Winston Peters starts the broadcast saying:

This winter election is about the sort of government ***you want*** for the next three years. It's about whether ***you want*** a party of extremists to hold the balance of power. It's about whether ***you want*** one party to have absolute power, or whether ***you want*** someone to keep an eye on things. It's about ***your rights***, the right to walk our streets and live in our homes safely, the right to stop being swamped by a flood of immigrants and the rights of all New Zealanders to stand together as equals [my emphasis].



Image 4.6.3: Stills from New Zealand First's 2002 opening night address.

The emphasis on the word “you” was reminiscent of National's campaign slogan from 1975: *New Zealand the way you want it*. New Zealand First's opening night address dialogue was also full of the inclusive pronouns we and our (see Table 4.1, p. 169). The party's often repeated campaign slogan “Can we fix it? Yes we can” also contained two inclusive pronouns. In contrast to the party's use of the word we in 1999 which had been largely we the New Zealand First party, in 2002 the word we was very much used in the sense of togetherness with voters.

Labour in 2002 used inclusive pronouns to demonstrate a sense of collective unity between party and voters. In its opening night address New Zealand First used inclusive pronouns to set up which side it was on. Peters referred to “our young”, “our citizens”, “our way of life and our values”, “our first duty” and “our own people”, in so doing distinguishing New Zealand First voters from an enemy in “they” – in particular the government [my emphasis in italics]:

Last election you sent a clear message to the government - crack down on crime. **They** didn't hear. **They** play with words on crime levels, clearance rates, percentages and perceptions, but nothing has changed;

criminals:

Why should the criminal minority threaten you? Why should victims be treated worse than offenders? **They** have tried all the soft options and it's now time for some tough love;

the Labour and National parties:

Labour and National have been giving our country away. **They**'ve handed out citizenship like lotto tickets. **They**'ve done nothing to stop the immigration scams and marriages of convenience;

lawyers:

It should have been our Magna Carta but it has become a multi-million dollar industry that works to the advantage of a few. If other New Zealand industries had expanded like the Treaty industry we would be at the very top of the OECD. Over the past fifteen years the Treaty has become a gravy train for a lucky few;

and immigrants:

We will put all immigrants on probation and if **they** commit crimes during the probationary period **they** will be sent home. It will be as simple as that.  
Can we fix it? Yes we can ...

In addition to the references to “our people”, Peters also spoke of a united people and about ordinary people. For example,

For many years my critics have called me a Maori basher and a racist. Well if standing up for ordinary New Zealanders, no matter what race, is Maori bashing and racist, I plead guilty. If standing up for our society, our values

and traditions and a united country is Maori bashing and racist, I plead guilty. If saying that the Treaty industry has to stop is Maori bashing and racist, again I plead guilty. For the road that New Zealand First is taking goes in the opposite direction to the prevailing political correctness and we make no apology for that. It's not a time for apologies, it's not a time for cringing in front of the world, but it is time to hold our heads up as one people and make New Zealand a better place.

### **New Zealand First Offer**

In 1999 New Zealand First had not acknowledged or apologised for the difficulties it had caused for voters, and for itself, by its behaviour following the 1996 coalition agreement. In 2002 it displayed more humility. In the opening night address Peters announced that the party had learnt from past experiences and had gained vision out of the experience:

New Zealand First in its tenth year has learned from the past which is why we're not promising you the earth, but we do have a vision.

The party offered a simple policy platform containing three key issues only: the need to get tough on crime; reducing immigration; and stopping the Treaty of Waitangi industry. Winston Peters in the closing night address says:

Our message is simple. In or out of government we have promised to fix three things in three years, for it's not power we seek but a better New Zealand.

Its television commercials were short (only 15 seconds long), and reduced what were otherwise complex issues down to essentially a statement of grievance and the offer of a solution in exchange for the party vote.

Peters: The Treaty of Waitangi is a billion dollar industry benefitting just a small group. The greed of the few means the mass majority of Maori get nothing, and the taxpayer keeps on paying. Can we fix it? Yes we can.



Image 4.6.4: Stills from New Zealand First Treaty television commercial, 2002.

Peters: Criminals now use prisons like a revolving door that allows them out to reoffend. Last election New Zealanders spoke with one voice - get tough on crime. The government ignored us. Can we fix it? Yes we can.



Image 4.6.5: Stills from New Zealand First Law and Order television commercial, 2002.

Peters: 53,000 immigrants pour into New Zealand each year. Over seven times more in real terms than Australia lets in. That means less education, less medical resources and fewer jobs. Can we fix it? Yes we can.



Image 4.6.6: Stills from New Zealand First Immigration television commercial, 2002.

The commercials were effective heuristic devices. They shared a stylistic consistency which gave the impression that New Zealand First had a simple but unified and coordinated set of messages. All simplified their content down to symbolic images: a money stacking machine connoting the greed of lawyers who become wealthy out of the Waitangi land claim process; a rotating turn style suggesting the ease immigrants have getting into New Zealand; and a revolving door signifying the ease at which criminals get in and out of prison. They all started with Winston Peters' voice over, and ended with a formally dressed Winston Peters walking on and addressing the audience at the end. They had a similar colour tone and they were the same length, employed similar type treatments, all commenced with the word "fixing" typed on a screen, and



all ended with the same visual asking for the party vote. All had an ominous sound effect in the background: a squeaky gate noise for the crime television commercial; the sound of money being stacked for the Treaty television commercial; and the sound of rotating turn styles for the immigration television commercial. All ended with the slogan “Can we fix it? Yes we can”. Appropriated from the children’s television show *Bob the Builder* the slogan became a code shared between New Zealand First and its target audience – an in-joke with grandparents and parents who were familiar with Bob, a kind, resourceful and extremely trustworthy animated character who, although never physically used in the advertisements, became a virtual endorsement for Winston Peters in the campaign.

The television commercials shared a stylistic and thematic consistency with New Zealand First’s newspaper and billboard advertising. From the start of the campaign through to the end New Zealand First consistently and steadfastly promoted three issues in its television, billboard and newspaper advertising, alongside an image of party leader Winston Peters holding up three fingers. The decision to go with three issues appears to be a late decision rather than the result of strategic planning. Earlier in 2002 the party had been planning to promote six issues in the campaign. However, faced with the early election, and wanting to get a jump on the competition, particularly the Green Party, the decision was made to reduce the issues down to three and launch them before any other party had had its campaign launch (Donnelly, 2003). As it happens, Bill Clinton campaign strategists James Carville and Paul Begala (2002) maintain that ideas should be communicated in groups of three as people remember information presented that way. The half page black and white newspaper advertisement confidently asked for the party vote in exchange for three promises, which it would fix in three years (Image 4.6.7).



Image 4.6.7: New Zealand First newspaper advertisement, 2002.

The party vote billboard used the same image and request for the party vote, but added the statement “Your Country Needs You”, in speech marks to connote that the message was spoken by Peters himself.



Image 4.6.8: New Zealand First party vote billboard, 2002.



Image 4.6.9: Alfred Leete poster (left); Winston Churchill (right).

“Your Country Needs You” was a reference to a famous British government recruitment poster from the First World War, designed by illustrator Alfred Leete and featuring the face of Lord Kitchener, then British Secretary of State for War (Image 4.6.9, left).

The three fingered salute referred to images of Winston Churchill in World War Two, who was frequently photographed holding up the two fingered victory sign (Image 4.6.9, right). These commonly recognised signs were suggested that New Zealand was facing a crisis, and that voters should mobilise in active defence of the heartland and support New Zealand First's offer to fix a situation on the edge of disaster.

### **Competitor Orientation**

In theory the role for a party desiring to become a potential coalition-maker in 2002 was as follower. For New Zealand First, this would have meant working to maintain its core support; protecting its flank from any attack to its core support base; and aligning its policy platform with, and refraining from attacking, Labour in anticipation of Labour having no alternative but to ask it to enter a coalition. Given the absolute rejection by New Zealand First's 1996 voters of its coalition arrangement with National, there would have been little advantage proposing another coalition with National.

However, while New Zealand First did put effort into maintaining its core support base, it did not align its policies with, or refrain from attacking, Labour. In the opening night address it blamed both Labour and National for society's ills:

Peters: Last election you sent a clear message to the government - crack down on crime. They didn't hear. They play with words on crime levels, clearance rates, percentages and perceptions, but nothing has changed...There'll be no more soft options. The government ignored your message last time. We won't.

Over the past fifteen years the Treaty has become a gravy train for a lucky few. A gravy train built by Labour and with extra carriages added on by National...With no mandate from the people Labour and National have been giving our country away. They've handed out citizenship like lotto tickets. They've done nothing to stop the immigration scams and marriages of convenience. Our laws are a joke.

Nor did New Zealand First signal its desire to be part of a coalition. In none of its advertising messages was this communicated. Instead the impression given was that New Zealand First was *not* interested in being in coalition; that it was above the business of coalition negotiation and could do its job perfectly well out of government. For example, Winston Peters in the closing night address:

In or out of government we have promised to fix three things in three years, for it's not power we seek but a better New Zealand.

## Discussion

The NZES tracking poll shows New Zealand First entering the 2002 campaign at around seven per cent on 23 June, but unlike 1999 when its support declined shortly after, in 2002 it was to rise even further (see Figure 4.1, p. 179). In a major turnaround from 1999 New Zealand First was one of the success stories of 2002, more than doubling its 1999 result and finishing the election as third highest polling party with 10.4 percent of the party vote. The number of New Zealand First MPs in the House went up from five to 13. However, the party was unable to achieve its goal to become a coalition-maker.

Political scientist Raymond Miller (2003b) credits the party's 2002 electoral success to the party's populist agenda and party leader Winston Peters' ability to tap into growing public concern over a range of social issues, in particular the state of race relations, immigration and the growing incidence of violent crime. Jack Vowles (2004a) considers New Zealand First to have been effective at mobilising issue effects, leading on two issues of personal concern to New Zealanders – immigration and Maori issues. He has also found the worm debate having a negative effect on New Zealand First. It provided voters to the right of Labour with a viable alternative in United Future that was more consistent with their policy preferences. Vowles and Aimer (2004) write that the reconstitution of all the smaller parties was primarily a function of "National's deflation", but that New Zealand First's specific success was due to Winston Peters' "effective electioneering" (p. 185).

What additional perspectives has this political marketing examination offered? New Zealand First's 2002 campaign had more of a voter orientation than it did in 1999. It was visually and verbally consistent in what it was offering in exchange for the party vote – not only a charismatic leader who had been there through thick and thin, but a set of policy issues that addressed issues of personal concern to many voters. The party was focused on demonstrating it had the satisfaction of both its core Maori and elderly support base as a goal through its use of a wide range of visual symbols that communicated a shared nostalgia and sense of humour. Since 1999 it had largely stayed out of the media spotlight as it worked to get its house back in order, and as a result it did not have broken promises to justify in 2002. New Zealand First's advertising messages demonstrated an awareness of the need to maintain and enhance relationships with existing voters.

The party was successful in retaining a significant number of voters from 1999. According to the NZES New Zealand First had the highest retention rate of 1999

voters of all the parties. 66.7 per cent of its 1999 voters also voted for the party in 2002 (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22). However, given that it was coming from a low support base in 1999, of more importance was its ability to attract new voters with its campaign message. It attracted a substantial number of voters who had voted for the two mainstream major parties in 1999: 25.8 per cent of its 2002 support had voted Labour in 1999; and 29.2 per cent of its 2002 support had voted National in 1999 (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p.22). It also increased its Maori party vote percentage, up from 13.2 per cent in 1999 to 14.9 per cent in 2002. This suggests that New Zealand First had improved its value offering for both new and existing voters .

Demonstration of a strong market orientation in the areas of response to need and concern for long-term core supporter satisfaction may well account for the significant rise in support New Zealand First received in 2002. In terms of numbers this left New Zealand First in position to become coalition-maker. However, New Zealand First did not shy away from biting the hand that was to feed it in coalition. It did not signal its desire to be part of a coalition. Nor did it align its policies with, or refrain from attacking Labour, as it might have done if it was serious about wanting to be in coalition. Nor did New Zealand First protect its flank from attack. It had no messages of attack or defence with regard to other smaller parties, especially those articulating similar messages, and ultimately this left the way open for United Future to become the queen-maker that New Zealand First had wanted to be, and New Zealand First out of coalition.

#### 4.7: UNITED FUTURE 2002

##### **Context**

The 1999 election had not been a great one for United New Zealand. It had failed to make a significant impact with voters, had been largely ignored by the news media during the campaign, and strategies for gaining voter support from ethnic communities in Auckland had not resulted in the anticipated increase in its party vote. It had, nonetheless retained one electorate seat, and this gave the party an on-going presence in parliament.

In November 2000 United New Zealand merged with Future New Zealand to form a new party, United Future New Zealand, led by Peter Dunne. Both parties felt they had policies that were similar and recognised that their combined vote in 1999 would have been enough to get a second MP into the House (Stonyer, 2003, p. 125). The merger did not result in an instant increase in public opinion support. Through 2001 and into 2002 United Future averaged less than one per cent of the intended party vote in opinion polls (Aimer, 2003). Entering the campaign period on 23 June 2002, the NZES recorded support for United Future at below .5 per cent.

##### **Campaign Objectives**

Nonetheless, the party was still confident it would meet its goals for the 2002 campaign, which according to the party's 2002 election coordinator, Mark Stonyer (2003), were to:

- retain the Ohariu-Belmont electorate seat; and
- gain a second, preferably third MP, through a small increase in the party vote.

##### **Voter Orientation**

The party's confidence with regard to its electoral goals was the result of two public opinion polls undertaken in Ohariu-Belmont in 2002 testing levels of support for Peter Dunne. Both polls showed that, even with a National candidate standing for the first time since 1993, support for Dunne remained constant at 55 per cent. The party also had access to other parties' private polling which indicated that its level of voter support was hovering around 1.5-1.7 percent early in 2002 (Stonyer, 2003).

Given the pivotal role the Ohariu-Belmont electorate played in United Future's electoral fortunes, the party's target audience in 2002 once again comprised the voters

of that electorate. The party also targeted its messages at a core group of Christian supporters that had previous allegiance to Future New Zealand. The party was still hoping for additional support from ethnic minorities. This was because, according to Stonyer (2003),

anecdotal evidence suggested that some of [the party's] target markets were listening [in 1999] but, being somewhat cautious, they were waiting to see if we were staying 'on message'. These voters, mainly Asian new migrants, wasted no time after the election telling us to persist in our efforts, and we would be sure to gain more of their support in 2002 (p. 123).

Images targeting these three target groups featured in United Future's campaign brochure (Image 4.7.1). Introducing the people behind the party were images of six key party personnel: Dunne and Inky Tulloch representing the United New Zealand/Ohariu-Belmont constituency; Anthony Walton and Marc Alexander representing the Future New Zealand constituency; and Kelly Chal and Dr Aditya Kashyap representing the ethnic minority constituency. Only three of the people featured were standing for parliament in 2002 (Dunne, Chal and Alexander); the others were officials with the party. Kashyap had stood for United New Zealand in 1999.



Image 4.7.1: United Future brochure, 2002.

The party's demonstrated commitment to ethnic minorities ended at the images of Chal and Kashyap – there were no other party vote messages that addressed this audience. Instead the primary emphasis of the party's message was on the issue that

had been the cornerstone of Future New Zealand's 1999 campaign message: the family. Peter Dunne spells it out in the opening night address:

The only way forward is to recognise that the family is the cornerstone of our society, and that when things are going well for the family, things will go well for the country.

The message was that family breakdown was the cause of many of society's ills and that the government needed to give more attention and resources to re-strengthen the institution of the family: "We want New Zealand to be the best country in the world in which to raise a family. Again" read the cover of the party's campaign brochure, asking voters to cast their imaginative glances backwards in an attempt to construct what had been lost by the present. A vote for United Future was a vote to restore the nostalgic vision that New Zealand used to be a great and safe place to raise a family.



Image 4.7.2: United Future brochure, 2002.

Much of United Future's message concentrated on providing evidence of the problems caused by the lack of government attention to the family. The party called these "Hard Facts", and they were listed in the party's campaign brochure (Image 4.7.2) and in the party's television advertising (Image 4.7.3). In the party's television advertising the facts were written in an black sans serif typeface on the plain white screen. This unemotional type treatment disguised the arbitrary and somewhat alarmist message on offer. For example, the image below from the opening night address announces



that youth suicides are up 700 per cent since 1968. There is no indication of the significance of 1968; there is no indication of whether that is more or less than before 1968. There is no indication of what the levels were in 1968. The number 700 percent, however, is emotionally charged. By anyone's measure a 700 percent increase signifies a very large increase on whatever was going on before.

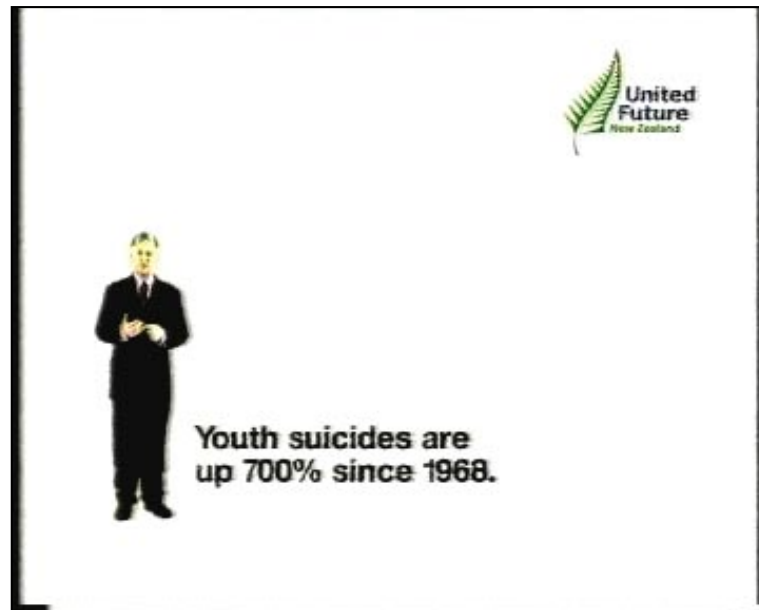


Image 4.7.3: Still from United Future's 2002 opening night address.

To low involvement voters viewing these messages, the accuracy of the facts might have mattered less than the emotional appeal of the message and the credibility of the source. Dunne's credibility was enhanced by his image treatment. Formally dressed in a dark suit and tie, Dunne (the only United Future member to feature in the television advertising) featured against a white backdrop, talking direct to camera. The colour white strongly connotes honesty and purity. When the statistics featured the camera pulled out to reveal the small figure of Dunne beside the evidence. As Dunne discussed the issues in more depth the camera closed in on his face to capture his earnestness. Placing Dunne and the evidence on the white background meant there was no other visual material to distract from the seriousness, and supposed honesty, of the message. Stonyer (2003) has described the image treatment as the "no bullshit' approach" (pp. 129-130).



Image 4.7.4: Stills from United Future television commercial, 2002.

The image treatment also worked to differentiate United Future’s message from other television advertisements. In visual communication design “white space”, or large areas of the colour white, is used to create areas of visual calm in otherwise information-crowded environments, and to draw the eye to important pieces of information. Similarly United Future’s advertisements created a visual break from the intense and busy product advertisements screened before and after them (Image 4.7.4).

Interestingly, although Peter Dunne was the only candidate to feature in its television advertising, overall United Future’s verbal rhetoric indicated the least personally concerned leader of the major parties contesting the 2002 election. United Future had the second to highest mean use of inclusive pronouns we and our in its opening night address. In addition United Future was the only party alongside the Greens to have no I-statements in its opening night address dialogue; suggesting a party more concerned with the needs of voters, rather than the career needs of its leader (see Table 4.1, p. 169 and Table 4.2, p.192).

### United Future Offer

While the emphasis on the family was carried over from Future New Zealand’s 1999 message, elements of United Future’s 2002 message were also carried over from United New Zealand’s 1999 message, including its offer to rise above the “degenerate” level of party politics:

Dunne: The election should be about these issues, yet the tired old parties are too interested in trivia, playing their silly games. United Future has had enough, and that’s why we’re fronting up now.

The same photographic portrait of Peter Dunne used in United New Zealand’s 1999 campaign (Image 4.7.5) was used in 2002. Similar verbal rhetoric to 1999 was also used. Dunne repeatedly offered to bring “common sense” back to government:

We’ve had too much of small parties holding the government to ransom in recent times. And United Future will bring some much needed common

sense back to government. Our 63 candidates are drawn from all walks of life. They are enthusiastic, practical, common-sense people, all passionately committed to their families and to making New Zealand a better place. So tomorrow, make your party vote a United Future party vote. A vote for families, a vote for common sense and a vote for stable government.

**Vote for some much-needed common sense**

**It's a Dunne deal!**

Recent polls show that United Future will gain several seats on Saturday and will contribute significantly to our next Government.

What we need now is a stable Government: a big party working co-operatively with a smaller party.

United Future is that party, a party built on common sense.

And with a United Future Party Vote you can help bring that much-needed common sense to Government.

Remember, without United Future's voice of reason it is likely that New Zealand will end up with yet another disparate, unworkable coalition and that's the last thing we need for the next 3 years.

So make your Party Vote a United Future Party Vote - a vote for families and a vote for common sense.

  
**Peter Dunne, MP  
Leader**

  
**United  
Future  
New Zealand**

[www.unitedfuture.org.nz](http://www.unitedfuture.org.nz)

**Party Vote: United Future**

References to M. Dunne, MP, May 11/02, Wellington. 9802716

Image 4.7.5: United Future newspaper advertisement, 2002.

While neither United nor Future New Zealand changed their message a great deal from the previous election, the merger of the parties and amalgamation of the messages meant, in effect, that they were both offering greater benefits to core supporters than they before.

### Competitor Orientation

In 2002 United Future acted in follower mode, not challenging either of the National or Labour parties in its campaign message. Instead it turned its sights on its main

competition as a potential coalition partner for Labour, the Green Party (Image 4.7.6):

Dunne: For many this election is a bore; the prospects for the next parliament not much better. Unless there is a strong middle party, we'll simply carry on the way we are until the Greens decide it's time to throw their toys out of the cot and force another election. It's no wonder people are switching off politics in droves ...

It's time for government to face up to some hard facts. Like the fact that every day kids are getting stoned at school. Parties like the Greens seem to have no problem with this, despite the fact that drugs addle young minds and cause depression. Could the fact that youth suicides are up 700 per cent in the last 30 years be related?



Image 4.7.6: Stills from United Future television commercial, 2002.

Reminiscent of United New Zealand's 1999 attacks on the Maori leaders, United Future's attacks on the Green Party were the most negative of the entire campaign and used harsh words in their denigration of the competition. In the brochure to homes below, for example (Image 4.7.7), Dunne describes the Greens as a bunch of idealistic fanatics and lacking in common sense. Although the tenor of the attacks seemed somewhat un-Christian, assigning those negative qualities to the competition implied that United Future was quite the opposite and could be trusted to be sensible. As in 1999, the attacks went largely under the news media radar, and were not commented upon during the campaign. This time, however, they were likely to have been ignored not because United Future was an insignificant contender, but because the news media was quite enamoured with the party this time around, thanks to the "worm".



Image 4.7.7: United Future brochure, 2002.

The worm featured as part of a Television One leaders' debate that Dunne was able to take part in for the first time since becoming a leader of a political party. Stephen Church (2004) describes the circumstances leading to Dunne's inclusion:

In 2002, the split of the Alliance created a problem for TVNZ when it planned to stage a debate for the leaders of the six parties in parliament, except for the single United Future MP, Peter Dunne. The inclusion of Anderton, who had recently become leader of a new party, the Progressive Coalition, led the Alliance to demand that their new leader, Laila Harré also be included in the debate. Having agreed to this, TVNZ felt obliged to ensure that the leaders of all parties in parliament would appear, and so Dunne joined what then became an eight-leader panel (p. 162).

In the audience for the debate, staged mid-campaign on 15 July 2002, were 100 undecided voters. Each held an electronic dial which measured their reactions to what the leaders were saying and doing. The results were averaged and plotted as a moving line on a graph. Hence the term worm. The worm was not seen by viewers during the debate, but was seen a few hours later as part of a TV One expert analysis of the debate. The worm showed the audience approving of Dunne's debate message. At the end of the debate the audience was asked who had performed the best: only Winston Peters and Peter Dunne received a positive response. TV One's expert commentators – political editor Mark Sainsbury, political commentator Chris Trotter, and journalist Colin James – endorsed Dunne's performance as being one of the best. United Future's

poll ratings subsequently jumped from an average of about one per cent to 6.6 percent in a snap poll taken in the weekend following the debate (Church, 2004, p. 167). Following this, the news media attention paid to United Future increased.

United Future booked all of its television advertising in the last week of the campaign (Stonyer, 2003), a period of significantly increased voter attention to televised political advertising. On top of the attention Dunne had received for “winning” the worm debate, this last week advertising kept United Future’s message in the public’s eye. It is hard to assess the effect of the messages on levels of Green support, but it may have had some. While Green support continued to rise during the last week of the campaign, it did not regain the same levels it had peaked at earlier, and ended the campaign on 7 per cent support. On the other hand, although the NZES tracking shows United Future support rising during the last week of the campaign, come election day it had returned to the same level it was at when the last week advertising blitz commenced.

## Discussion

After 18 years in Parliament Peter Dunne becomes an overnight success  
(New Zealand Votes book jacket, 2004).

In 2002 United Future achieved its electoral goals and much much more. The party’s share of the party vote rose from .54 per cent and one electorate seat in 1999 to 6.7 per cent in 2002 and one electorate seat. This gave it seven list MPs and one electorate MP. Dunne’s majority was virtually unchanged from the previous election. After the election the party was widely considered by commentators to be the success story of the 2002 campaign. Peter Aimer (2003) writes:

While Dunne’s return as the MP for Ohariu-Belmont was a status-quo result, the sudden movement of electoral support towards United Future was a surprise, and stands as one of the signature outcomes of the 2002 election (p. 296).

What have political scientists said of the outcome? Most attribute the party’s success to the news media’s reaction to the worm. Stephen Church and Joe Atkinson argue that it was not the worm alone that improved the party’s fortunes, as the viewing audience for the worm analysis was quite small, but the subsequent news media attention to Dunne’s performance. This ensured continued attention by a much larger audience to Dunne’s performance as the surprise “underdog”; the “come-from-behind contender” (Atkinson, 2004, p. 60), who won the debate “for doing or saying something different (and new)” (Church, 2004, p. 174).

Tim Bale (2003) has proposed that voters voted for United Future from a tactical consideration:

While the rise of United Future may have been media assisted, it had equally (if not more) important foundations in 'real' concerns among many centre and centre-right voters. These concerns presumably centred, first, on whether there was any point voting for a National Party so clearly out of contention; and secondly, on the need to supply a 'safe' (that is non-Green) coalition partner for a Labour Party no longer likely to win an overall majority (p. 232).

From a political marketing perspective United Future's 2002 electoral outcome may also be explained by its market orientation. Although there were no advertising images of Dunne interacting with ordinary voters, there was evidence of United New Zealand's willingness to sense and respond to the needs of voters, especially the need to remain true to its core constituencies for whom its 2002 messages remained largely unchanged from their previous iteration. Essentially the offer presented to voters by the United Future party in exchange for the party vote was the same as what had been offered by the two separate parties in 1999: the focus on the family had been Future New Zealand's 1999 offer; the offer of common sense had been United New Zealand's. Significantly, however, the merger of the two parties meant the party was able to offer a greater benefit than previously to both its core support groups. That the party remained true to its core supporters from both United New Zealand and Future New Zealand can be seen in the NZES findings. 83.3 per cent of those who voted Future New Zealand in 1999 stayed with the party in 2002. This was the highest retention rate of all parties. United had a lower retention rate – 33 per cent of United New Zealand's voters stuck with the party in 2002 (although the sample size was very small, so these statistics may not reflect the actual situation) (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22).

The worm debate was not a cause, but a conduit for the party's message. It, and the subsequent media attention paid to it, enabled United Future's message to reach a wider audience than the party had access to in previous elections. It also minimised the advantage that the party's competitors, particularly New Zealand First and ACT, had in terms of free access to the public for their messages. An almost doubled broadcasting allocation from the Electoral Commission (\$75,000), the engagement of attention-grabbing persuasive advertising techniques and judicious media buying in the last week of the campaign ensured that United Future's message remained in the public eye through the important last week of the campaign.

United Future's stress on the family was considered by commentators to be a moral message derived from the interests of Future New Zealand's core Christian constituency. Certainly a considerable proportion of its voters were Christians. According to Aimer and Vowles (2004)

only 8 per cent reported having no religious beliefs, and 39 per cent described themselves as 'very religious' (compared to the average of all electors of 12 per cent). They were not passive believers, half attending religious services 'at least once a week' (a rate matched by only a tenth of all other electors) (p. 29).

But it is also important to recognise that the party's concern with "the moral fabric of society" spread much wider than the party's Christian constituency. Having been exposed to United Future's message, a significant 62 per cent of NZES respondents agreed that United Future was closest to their own views in this area. In other words, United Future had a sound understanding of the needs of a majority of voters on this issue, and used this to appeal to new voters from all over the political spectrum. According to the NZES, 28.1 per cent of its voters had voted National in 1999, 15.8 per cent had voted Labour in 1999, 8.8 per cent had voted the Alliance in 1999, 8.8 per cent had voted Christian Heritage, and 3.5 per cent had come from each of the Green Party, ACT and non-vote (Aimer & Vowles, 2004, p. 22). Without the attacks on Maori MPs this time the party even increased its support in the Maori electorates from 0.07 per cent in 1999 to 2.46 per cent in 2002, although this was still much lower than its nationwide party vote percentage.

Lastly, United Future played the competition well by targeting its last week attacks towards the party it perceived to be its main competition as potential coalition partner, the Greens. This may have worked to prevent the Green Party from gaining a higher party vote than it ended up with. United Future also successfully behaved like a follower, and did not attack either of the parties it stood to benefit from, both in a future coalition arrangement as well as in terms of potential voters. As a consequence it was in a good position to enter into an arrangement with Labour following the election.



Political marketing scholars consider that adoption and implementation of the marketing concept, a business management philosophy based on a company-wide acceptance of the need for customer and competitor orientation and a coordinated response to customer need, will bring advantages to parties in a competitive and volatile electoral environment. These scholars have not yet been able to determine a direct link between political market orientation and electoral success, however. I have argued that this may be because much of their focus to date has been on market orientation as a management function. It is hard to establish a causal link between a management or operational process and an election outcome. I have proposed another way for establishing a link between market orientation and electoral success that focuses on market orientation as a *message*.

Using interpretive textual analysis, and an original analytical framework derived from key political marketing concepts (Table 2.1 reproduced below), this thesis examined the advertising messages of the highest polling political parties in the 1999 and 2002 New Zealand general election campaigns for evidence of voter orientation and competitor orientation. Relating manifest market orientation to a number of statistical indicators of electoral success, the thesis looked for plausible associations between the visual manifestation of market orientation in political advertisements and parties' achievement of their party vote goals in the two elections. It sought to offer party-focused explanations for electoral outcomes that would complement existing voter-centric explanations, and add another level of scholarly understanding of recent electoral outcomes in New Zealand.

This chapter draws conclusions from the research. It summarises the original contributions to theoretical and applied knowledge made by the thesis, and suggests areas for further research.

**Table 2.1. Visual criteria used to identify market orientation.**

Behaviour	Criteria
<b>Voter orientation</b> (i) <i>Target audience identified</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• images of target audience and environment included in advertisements</li> </ul>
(ii) <i>Sense and reponse to voter needs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• images of party and/or leader interaction with voters including images of listening (nodding, laughing, touching) and words of togetherness (in particular the inclusive pronouns <i>we</i> and <i>our</i>)</li> <li>• images or words of care for core supporters</li> </ul>
(iii) <i>Voter relations management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evocation of party history and myth – acknowledgement of shared characters, leaders, themes and stories</li> <li>• intertextuality – the co-presence of other recognisable texts</li> <li>• kept policy promises</li> <li>• consistent leadership offer of person and leadership characteristics</li> <li>• messages that maintained (or violated) understandings from one campaign to another</li> </ul>
(iv) <i>Offer in exchange</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whether they asked for the party vote, and what policy and leadership they were offering in exchange</li> <li>• policy and leadership qualities not promoted by other competitors</li> <li>• something in addition to previous election offering</li> </ul>
<b>Competitor orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whether the party behaved as market leader, challenger, follower or nicher</li> <li>• competition is identified and targeted in attack messages</li> <li>• policy appropriated from smaller niche parties</li> <li>• demonstrated open-ness to coalition arrangements (including evidence of the benefits of coalition)</li> </ul>

## 5.1: ADVERTISING AND ELECTORAL OUTCOMES

New Zealand political scientists have largely looked to voter opinions and responses to news media reported events when accounting for the 1999 and 2002 electoral outcomes. This is in line with traditional methodologies for explaining New Zealand electoral outcomes, discussed in Chapter 1. My analysis of advertising and market orientation, discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, adds a party behaviour perspective to this understanding, enabling a fuller picture of what contributed to those electoral outcomes.

Despite the ubiquity of political advertising in New Zealand campaign practice, this thesis is the first academic study to examine the role of political advertising in election outcomes. During my investigation I gathered new information on the high levels of attention paid to television advertising in the 2002 campaign (see Figure 1.1, p. 16). This was a question included in the 2002 NZES at my request and is the first evidence of its kind in New Zealand. I also calculated, from 2002 NZES statistics, that a substantial 27.3 per cent of voters could be categorised as late-deciding, low-awareness. These are voters who are most likely to be receptive to the content of campaign communications. These figures have not been published before and will be of interest to electoral scholars and to political parties.

From the evidence it can be concluded that the messages contained in political advertisements are received by a substantial number of New Zealand voters, just over a quarter of whom are open to being affected by the content. This does not mean that their voting behaviour is necessarily influenced by the messages received. However, I did find correlations between key moments in the 1999 and 2002 NZES tracking polls and advertising events (see Figures 3.1, p. 58 and 4.1, p. 179) that have not been identified in other post-election analyses. That the advertising events correlate with changes of voter direction in both election campaigns suggests that advertising messages and events may well be causing voters to pause and reflect on their voting preferences during campaigns. It will be important for future electoral analyses to include advertising in addition to other media events when seeking to explain voter volatility.

Looking at election outcomes from a party behaviour perspective swings some of the responsibility for outcomes away from voters and back onto parties. When explaining the major parties' electoral outcomes in 1999, political scientists have concluded that it was National that lost, rather than Labour that won the election. My voter orientation analysis contributes an alternative understanding to this outcome, crediting Labour for more influence on its own electoral success than has been previously acknowledged.

Labour had a greater understanding than National of the needs of its target voters, and how to respond to them. In its messages Labour offered a leader who cared and could be trusted, while National did not demonstrate this. Although National still demonstrated a strong connection with its core voters, National offered little in addition to that other than a handful of fresh cabinet ministers promising stability and a continuation of what had gone on before. This was not enough to attract new voters at a time when Labour was offering greater benefits than National in exchange for the party vote including relevant policy commitments, a compassionate and trustworthy leader and hope for the future. Viewed from a political marketing perspective Labour had a much stronger voter orientation than National in 1999, and this would have contributed to its election outcome.

Political scientists and parties often blame the news media for changes in voter preferences during election campaigns. This is particularly so with minor party fortunes. In both 1999 and 2002 a lack of news media attention was blamed for minor party support drying up midway through the campaigns. And while there is no doubt some truth in this, it is a position that also absolves the minor parties from blame for electoral failure, in effect faulting the messenger, not party policy and leadership offerings. My political marketing perspective reorients the blame for minor parties' inability to sustain high levels of voter support away from the news media and back to the party.

In 1999 and 2002 the major parties did not unleash their attack messages until midway through the campaigns. Perhaps the clear air this gave minor parties at the beginning of the campaigns gave them a false sense of confidence and independence as they also saw their support in public opinion polls rise. When faced with stronger competition from the major parties two weeks out from the election, however, it transpired that most of the minor parties did not possess the message or resources to compete in the same ball park as the major parties. If the smaller parties had understood that in their competitive position they needed to consciously prepare for counter attacks and policy appropriations, they may have had more satisfying messages, and may have been able to sustain higher levels of popular support throughout the length of the campaigns.

My market-orientation perspective has also answered questions that a more traditional political science perspective has not. For example, although it was one of Labour's 2002 goals to be returned to office in a stronger position than in their first term, political scientists have not tackled the question of why Labour did not do better in 2002. No doubt this is in part due to the conventional expectation that as a matter

of course incumbent parties lose votes over subsequent elections. But with National in a parlous state of campaign readiness and so many uncommitted votes up for grabs, this was a question that deserved to be asked. Political scientists have been able to account for Labour's continuing success, pointing to very high levels of satisfaction in the electorate with the Labour-led government of 1999-2002 and with Helen Clark as Prime Minister, but not why it did not do better. All that has been offered is that with the majority of voters expecting a Labour win, the question for voters was which party was the best coalition option for Labour, and it was the minor parties that attracted the votes that might in other circumstances have gone to National.

My political marketing examination offers some answers. It confirms that National was barely oriented towards the needs of voters in 2002. Its goal to persuade voters it had a credible leader was product rather than market oriented, promoting a leader who could not yet compete with Clark in the areas that voters admired Clark for, particularly trust and care for voter needs. National tried to offer itself as new, in an attempt to avoid its recent past, but in doing so neglected to maintain the bond between the party and its core supporters. Not asking for the all-important party vote while at the same time suggesting that voters get the future they deserved was an open invitation to voters to look elsewhere for parties that were going to satisfy their needs. These votes were indeed up for grabs. But Labour could not win more of the vote because it only offered enough to sustain its 1999 vote. Labour demonstrated a degree of ability to sense and respond to the needs of ordinary voters. It was conscious of the importance of reassuring voters it had met its 1999 promises, policy, party behaviour and leadership. However, it did not offer much that was new in these areas and so maintained, but failed to enhance, relations with its existing voters. Not surprisingly its election outcome was also maintained but not enhanced.

## **5.2: THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION**

My application of political market orientation theory to the visual messages demonstrated in political advertisements is new and innovative in an international context. One of the weaknesses of existing analyses of political advertising is that they are not underpinned by a methodology that connects forms of political communication with electoral outcomes. Advertisements tend to be assessed as independent variables and quantified, categorised, described, or speculatively employed to explain a particular electoral outcome. What is missing in these analyses is a theory that links the content of political communication with electoral success. By applying a market orientation communication framework to the visual messages

demonstrated in political advertisements, as I have done in this thesis, I have found there to be a plausible relationship between the content of political communication and electoral outcomes.

### **Voter Orientation**

In the two elections studied here it was certainly the case that parties that demonstrated a strong *voter orientation* in their political advertisements also achieved their electoral goals. The parties that achieved their party vote goals in 1999 and 2002 tended to demonstrate an affinity for their target voter groups by showing images of voters and their environments and images of party leaders interacting with voters. They demonstrated concern for the satisfaction of the needs of existing voters by using words of togetherness and indicating they had met their previous promises. They did not change their policy or leadership messages dramatically between campaigns. There was a visual consistency to their television, print and billboard advertising messages that rendered the messages easy to recognise and remember. These parties were clear about what they were offering in exchange for the party vote and offered something over and above previous campaign offerings in order to attract new voters.

The research found that parties that demonstrated in their advertising a care for core supporters but not new voters either failed to achieve their party vote goals or only partially achieved them. Those parties that worked hard to attract new voters while taking old voters for granted tended to gain new supporters, but lost old supporters, and were unable to expand their overall share of the party vote. Parties that demonstrated more of a product orientation, trying to sell a remarkable rather than a responsive leader, tended to have less electoral success. Of course a party's ability to achieve its party vote goals is dependent on how realistic those goals are in the first place. This study has found that some small parties were often over-ambitious in this regard.

### **Competitor Orientation**

While most New Zealand political parties demonstrated at least some degree of voter orientation (though not strong enough in some cases to achieve their party vote goals), the same cannot be said for competitor orientation. Most parties' advertising messages were not consciously differentiated from their competition, if they even recognised the competition at all. There is little evidence of party understanding of the competitive positioning strategies they needed to adopt in order to achieve their party vote objectives. It is difficult to state with any assurance that there is a relationship between a deliberate demonstration of *competitor orientation* in political

advertisements and electoral success. That is not to say that demonstration of competitor orientation is not significant; just that New Zealand political parties do not seem to be aware of its importance, yet; and that there is more work to be done developing the competitor orientation criteria in my framework.

My framework relied heavily on the competitive positioning model developed by Collins and Butler (1996, 2002) that drew on the four well established typologies for the classification of firms in the commercial market (market leader, challenger, follower, nicher). This model had some normative utility in my analysis – it was helpful when looking at the strategic directions open to parties given their market share. However, I did not find it sophisticated enough to provide for the myriad of competitive and collaborative positions open to parties in the New Zealand electoral context. For example, assessing market share on the basis of previous election results (as Collins and Butler have recommended) did not allow for different party positioning when entering campaigns. A good example of this was the 1999 election in which Labour would normally have been categorised a challenger as the second highest election polling opposition party after the 1996 election. However, it found itself in the position of market leader as the highest *opinion* polling party entering the 1999 campaign. In terms of the competitive positioning typologies, as challenger Labour could have been expected to have attack as its strategic objective. However, as market leader entering the campaign three percentage points higher than the incumbent National party, it engaged in a different set of behaviours and messages. This situation was made even more complex for both parties because National's leader Jenny Shipley was still market leader in the "preferred prime ministership" stakes. Both parties straddled complex competitive positions in 1999 that were not neatly accounted for by the Collins and Butler model.

It is clear that the market share criteria of the Collins and Butler model need to be modified if it is to be of use in the identification of market orientation in political messages. Also needed is more allowance for degrees of ambition or aspiration in positioning strategies. Although the competitive positioning model is based on an assessment of market share, this research has shown that regardless of what their actual share might be, political parties do not find it satisfying to sit still. In this study I found that parties often created messages that reflected their political ambition even though a rational assessment of their market share would have had them promoting a different set of messages. This seemed especially so in relation to niche parties. None of the minor parties were content remaining as niche players in 1999 and 2002. Regardless of their size and origin, their desire to increase their market share

after being in parliament for a short amount of time was strong. Many were aiming for the spot of third highest polling party. In terms of MMP this is understandable – the third highest polling party is often in the most advantageous position to form a coalition with the highest polling major party. However, there is no provision in the model for a niche party to expand unless they decide to become a follower.

Even then, the Collins and Butler criteria for follower parties do not fit comfortably in an MMP context. Collins and Butler expect followers to be on the whole large parties with stable market shares whose goal is to protect that share rather than challenge for leadership. However, this research has demonstrated that those parties that sought and gained benefit from not challenging the leader were small parties with unstable market shares! In 2002, for example, the parties that had follower messages, that is the Alliance and the Progressive Coalition, were neither large nor did they have a stable market share. A follower strategy certainly did not work for the Alliance in 2002 when it found itself out of parliament at that election; and the Progressive Coalition only returned to office in 2002 as a very small party on the back of Jim Anderton's electorate win. Both parties had argued they would make good coalition partners for Labour because they had already proved themselves as stable coalition partners, but neither party seemed to gain party vote benefit for this position. On the other hand United Future, a very small party, also chose to behave like a follower and refrained from attacking Labour (despite having no prior agreement with Labour to do so), and achieved electoral success in 2002. The difference is that United Future had something new to offer in its campaign message. It could be argued that size and stability of market share may not be the most important factor for a follower party, but rather having something considerably more to offer in a message than simply being compliant.

In some ways these parties' desire to increase market share after only a short time in parliament is still a product-oriented ambition, a sign that they may still be driven by the short-term need to persuade voters of the superiority of their policy platform in order to gain political power for its own sake rather than a concern for the needs of the market. However, it may also be that the model with its four typologies is currently too rigid to cover the many types of arrangement open to a party in a proportional electoral system. If it is to be of further use in my framework the Collins and Butler model needs to be expanded and refined to take into account other competitive and collaborative behaviours.



### 5.3: APPLIED CONTRIBUTION

The goal of this thesis was to look for plausible associations between the visual manifestation of market orientation in political advertisements and parties' achievement of their party vote goals in the 1999 and 2002 elections. One of the outcomes of this research has been the development and implementation of a framework for analysing demonstration of market orientation in forms of political communication, like advertising. This is a framework that, with a little development, could have further application as a tool for scholarly analysis.

Currently the value of the framework is that it has been able to identify a plausible relationship between the demonstration of market orientation in campaign messages and electoral success. If a more concrete connection between demonstration of market orientation and electoral success is to be identified the framework will need to be tested over more than two elections, in more than one electoral system, and in more than one country. To make it easier for other scholars to implement, work remains to be done developing the framework so that it can be understood and transferred across electoral contexts and disciplines. This includes refining the rationale for the voter and competitor orientation factors included, and developing the terms and concepts that have been lifted from commercial marketing literature into terms and concepts that are also appropriate to political science and communications understanding and practice.

As well as being a tool for descriptive analysis, the framework should also be of prescriptive value for political parties planning their next campaign communication strategies. This study has confirmed that campaign messages are important to electoral outcomes, and that decisions parties make about the words and images they place in their advertisements can make a difference. While not claiming to hold the formula for guaranteed electoral success, and though the framework is not as developed as it ultimately will be, I am confident that parties that take into consideration the voter and competitor orientation criteria in Table 2.1 when designing their next campaign strategies should still be able to offer appropriately targeted and differentiated campaign messages that will assist them to achieve their party vote goals.

To be more specific is not easy. It would be nice to be able to prescribe the exact images and words that will result in a successful campaign message. However, it should be remembered that the visual and verbal criteria used in this study to examine market orientation in political advertisements are not the only signs of market orientation that could have been chosen as evidence, and are therefore not the only options

available for communication of a campaign message. Moreover, as this study has shown, the appropriate words and images to be used in a campaign message depends on context, the needs of the audience, and on the competition. For example, National communicated a message of stability and competence in office yet failed to achieve its electoral objectives in 1999, while in 2002 Labour communicated a similar message and was electorally successful. Here the message of stability and competence by itself was not the key factor in determining electoral success. Of more relevance was the message in relation to the competition. Images of competence in office may differentiate a party from its competitors if the competition cannot demonstrate the same level of competence. However, if all the parties are able to demonstrate maturity, the stability message may be redundant, and some other offer more significant.

### **Conclusion**

Stephan Henneberg (2004) has claimed that a focus on political communication instead of strategic aspects of political marketing management and other marketing instruments constitutes an “impoverishment” of political marketing research that can “endanger its development” (p. 235). This thesis, by bringing together visual communications research methodologies with political marketing theory and more conventional electoral behaviour research, has demonstrated that there is a place for the study of political marketing communications alongside the managerial and strategic aspects of political marketing. Far from threatening, political marketing communications may instead be a source of enrichment for the discipline, with the potential to broaden the purview and acceptance of the field.

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