

Bleak prospects for Maori Party in Parliament



Paul Moon

Between four and six members of the Maori Party could enter Parliament after the election, assuming all other things remain relatively equal. But, despite the spectacular success that such a result would represent for a new party, the omens are not good for its longer-term future, and there are two principal reasons for this: a lack of formal policies and the historical record.

The Maori Party and its poli-

cies are defined more by what they oppose than what they stand for. At a speech co-leader Tariana Turia gave to the Diplomatic Club in July, she asserted her party was opposed to the removal of the Maori seats in Parliament, opposed (perhaps ironically) to the "political sham of the pretence of [indigenous] representation", as she put it, opposed to attacks on the Treaty of Waitangi, opposed to mainstreaming and opposed to the Government's foreshore and seabed legislation.

However, there is a good dose of self-indulgence evident when any political party becomes so preoccupied with the imperfections of the world around them. After all, it has been demonstrated throughout history that focusing on past wrongs is a great rallying point for political support (a diminutive Austrian's criticism over the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles in the 1920s and 1930s is probably one of the most vivid examples). What makes such an approach so risky, however, is the imbalance that emerges between problems

and solutions.

The diagnosis may be detailed, but the prescription has yet to be articulated. What, for example, are the details of the Maori Party's fiscal, immigration, foreign affairs, NCEA policies, and so on? These have yet to come to light, and suggest that although the party has built a strong base of support, its role as a possible coalition party will place pressures on it for which it may not yet be prepared. And this leads to the second reason for doubts about the long-term viability of the party.

The comparative policy deficit of the Maori Party is the ideal breeding-ground for internal dissent and division. Whenever a decision is needed for a policy on which the party has no position, the opportunity for personality and ideological clashes is regurgitated.

A party gets into Parliament, and maybe even becomes part of

a governing coalition, but thereafter suffers from fractures stemming from the failure to have formulated a comprehensive range of policies. This has been the fate of almost all narrow-issue parties in recent decades.

There is a troubling parallel for the Maori Party in the emergence of the Kotahitanga movement from around

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1892. This movement also voiced Treaty-based concerns, and expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of credible Maori representation in Parliament.

However, even though its membership grew at phenomenal rates during the 1890s, and even though it had representatives in Parliament (Wi Pere and Hone Heke Ngapua among them), the Kotahitanga movement suffered from the sorts of internal rifts that could well affect the Maori Party.

Throughout the 1890s, the major parties in Parliament conspired to muffle any views being expressed by the Kotahitanga members. Grass roots members soon lost interest in the movement when its promises failed to materialise, and personality clashes and the odd scandal quickly unravelled unity among its leadership. Finally, the Liberal Government discovered that the best way to beat the Kotahitanga movement was to appropriate some of its ideas.

Is there a remedy then for the problems the Maori Party could well encounter in the next year? If history is anything to go by (Mana Motuhake and Mauri Pacific are two recent examples that come to mind), the challenges ahead for the Maori Party will be formidable, and it will require special leadership qualities, combined with clarity in the policy positions the party assumes, to offer a chance for survival.

Dr Paul Moon is a senior lecturer in AUT's Faculty of Maori Development.

Our dirty little secret...



Tammy Buckley

Denial is a fantastic thing. Without it, we would have to admit that despite being on Hollywood's latest fad diet we did in fact eat the last chocolate bar.

Without denial, we would have to admit that we enjoy all those trashy gossip mags.

An odd comparison, chocolate and gossip? Not really, after all they are the two finest secret indulgences we have.

Gossip is the guilty pleasure of many – young, old or in between – yet so many deny it.

Among my peers, I see so many turn their noses up at it yet the next day they turn up to class with the latest *NW* (*New Weekly*) or *Woman's Day* under their arm. Sometimes they even partake in the latest gossip session unfolding in class.

The whole nation was abuzz with gossip when the current celebrity drug scandal hit the fan. Everyone, everywhere was talking about it. At the take-away shop, supermarkets, even in public toilets. There was no escaping it.

But, oh no, we aren't ones to gossip now are we?

It amuses me that we deny our love for scandals and proclaim our love for intellectually

stimulating material. Yet it is the trashy mags that appear to sell more copies and faster than any other.

At my old workplace, *Woman's Day* and *NW* routinely sold while hardly any copies of *Time* or the *Listener* were touched.

Quit the denial: gossip is huge in New Zealand. TV One has even embraced the gossip scene with its weekday show *Headliners*. Despite being panned by critics, a year on the show is still going strong.

Now TVNZ has added a new in-depth gossip show by bringing *The Insider* to its mix. Something I doubt they would do if they didn't recognise the potential of the gossip market.

Have you watched the news lately? Interesting isn't it how the latest celebrity scandals have been emerging in the nightly news hour. Russell Crowe, Brad Pitt and even dear old Rachel Hunter have had their private lives splashed around the news.

Let's not forget newspapers. They don't shy away from a juicy scandal either.

What is the world coming to?

It's time to stop being a hypocrite and just admit our love of gossip. There's no need to be ashamed. To be clichéd, in a world filled with war, tears, terrorism, death, starvation and way over the top political correctness, don't we deserve a break?

Why can't we just indulge in some scandalicious gossip?

There is no need to deny it, everyone loves a bit of tabloid trash.

Why not make it a bit sweeter and enjoy that chocky bar while you indulge in this week's scandal.

Tammy Buckley is an AUT Bachelor of Communication Studies student.

The circus comes to town...

Nothing beats an election for heart-thumping pyrotechnics, drama, and racing presidential motorcades. All the stuff best suited to the TV screen.

With less than a month to go until final elimination, all actors on the political circuit try to outdo each other with whopping visual feasts.

Campaign openings are a perfect opportunity to witness this phenomenon. They're controlled by master puppeteers, perfectly choreographed and offer the spectator a variety-show-styled reality format.

The contenders are many, the prizes few, and on their shoulders sit elimination, its cold, stinking breath caressing their hardened cheeks. One slip-up, indiscretion or misquotation could cost the only thing that a minority of contenders still have to lose; their dignity.

New Zealand First officially kicked off its election campaign at Takapuna's Bruce Mason Centre.

A sell-out crowd of grannies, some alone, and some with their granddaughters, waited hungrily for more than two hours for their Winston.

Their wait ended when former funny man Mike King appeared masquerading as an MC for the afternoon.

His opening one-liner got a few giggles.

"My name's Mike King.... I sell pork....a shit-load of pork."

Mike, doing his best to keep the crowd happy, announced that there was a poor little girl lost in the foyer.

"She's lonely, crying and missing her parents...her name's Helen."

Raucous laughter ensued.

Winston finally arrived on stage, to the tune of *We Are The Champions*, riding helmet-less on a bed of smoke as the pillion passenger on a huge Harley Davidson low-rider. The bed of smoke was a nice touch for a smoker, drinker and a true survivor of the political game.

His speech was periodically interrupted by a mad old bugger whose unintelligible solo protests got the grannies screaming bloody murder. No one interrupts their Winston! Not at this party!

Winston outlined numerous failures of the Labour-led immigration policy. He threatened an inevitable king-tide of terrorists waiting to suffocate the freedom and liberty of our formerly great nation.

He outlined a golden age card, offering lower tax, cheap doctor visits, drugs and free cups of

tea for those who made it past 60, although this was money-back guaranteed to please the coffin-dodgers.

The large media contingent in attendance was the victim of constant tirades and abuse.

Spectators hurled loud exclamations of "shame" towards unsuspecting journalists and their innocent cameramen.

The press conference that followed saw Winston further insult "The Media", as he belittled a veteran journalist who had the chutzpah to ask him for the umpteenth time which party he'd support in a coalition.

I left convinced that Winston would never get my vote, but my respect for him has rocketed immensely.

The man's charisma is infec-



Ben Clark

tious and his puppeteers sure know how to put on a show-stopper.

His supporters, on the other hand, leave a lot to be desired. Not to worry, they'll all be dead soon.

Not one to base my opinion on a single event, I went to the very recent Labour Party Election Special. Once again, it boasted a sell-out crowd of more than 1000 people.

This time the crowd was diverse. There were black people, poor people, brown people, rich people, white people, young people, homosexual people, old people, sick people – generally a diversity that wasn't on the guest list for Winston's show.

At first I was denied entry on the basis that my claims to be a journalist were fraudulent (which they were). Persistence failing me, I ran in when no one was watching the door, hiding in the darkness of the cavernous Auckland Town Hall next to some recent Afghani refugees.

The Prime Minister was introduced by block-busting actor and Queenstown wine merchant Sam Neill.

This was real spectacle, not some two-bit fading celebrity like Mike King. I hope the Labour Party didn't have to pay Sam Neill, because it would have cost them a mint.

Ben Clark is an AUT Bachelor of Communication Studies student