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**The political field and public relations:  
competing discourses in New Zealand's  
first MMP election**

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis uses Norman Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis to analyse the campaign discourse of each of the five main political parties that contested the New Zealand general election in 1996. The parties were: The National Party, the New Zealand Labour Party, New Zealand First, Act and The Alliance. The election itself was of historic importance because it was the first to be held in New Zealand under an electoral system of proportional representation.

The theoretical framework of the thesis combines Bourdieu's theory of the political field and Bobbio's concept of the universe of political discourse. This framework facilitates an analysis of political campaign discourse within the context of a struggle for representative and symbolic power in the political field. Critical discourse analysis focuses on the campaign texts as a product of the social and discourse practices of the political professionals vying for that power. It underscores the ideological functions of language, as well as the role of communication professionals, in (re)constructing political discourse. The thesis also raises concerns about the professionalisation of discourse construction in the context of the public sphere.

Because of the introduction of proportional representation, competition within the political field was intensified. This fact, combined with an evident dissatisfaction with politics and politicians by voters in New Zealand civil society, resulted in a wider range of stances, based primarily upon ideological differences, being adopted than under the previous first-past-the-post system. Political parties were not, therefore, able to cluster in the neutral centre of the political field in line with international trends of campaign modernisation and the associated formation of catch-all parties.

Increased competition in the political field resulted in greater importance being placed on party identification and differentiation, as each party sought to discursively position itself as representative of a range of issues of concern in civil society. The ways in which the parties not only discursively positioned themselves in the political field but repositioned their

opponents have practical significance for the fields of public relations, organisation communication and marketing.

A post script to the thesis looks at the use made of World Wide Web sites by New Zealand political parties in 1996. It discusses their potential for the revitalisation of the public sphere. It also surmises that public relations practitioners and political marketers, when they realise the potential, will transform the sites in order to provide entertainment formats which target voters as consumers of political discourse.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis comprises a study of the political field of New Zealand, 1996, during the general election campaign period. The political field is understood as the realm of institutional political power and of discursive struggles to attain or maintain that power (Bourdieu, 1991). Through a critical discourse analysis of the campaign texts of those political parties which successfully contested the New Zealand election, in this thesis I examine changing relations of, and struggles for, political and symbolic power. The political field provides an opportune site for such a study as it is

the site *par excellence* in which agents seek to form and transform their visions of the world and thereby the world itself: it is the site *par excellence* in which words are actions and the symbolic character of power is at stake (Thompson, 1991, p. 26).

During the period of election campaigns the struggle for symbolic power between political parties (and other allied professionals within the political field) is coupled with the struggle to act as representative in the political field for voters in civil society. Because of the short duration of the election campaigns, the struggle for symbolic and representative power is intensified. These facts render the political field at times of elections a site *par excellence* for critical research.

The rationale for this thesis was, in effect, set up by Bourdieu (1991) whose theory of the field of politics and political discourse provided a theoretical framework for a detailed empirical inquiry (Thompson, 1991). In order for such a project to draw fully on Bourdieu's theoretical contribution, the research would need to historically and socially contextualise the political field under examination. This is because political discourse and the institutional components of the political field are inextricably interrelated to the broader social space.

This thesis follows the above prescription by critically analysing the political discourse of each of the five political parties which, by virtue of their eventual success in being elected to parliamentary seats, together could be said to represent the full range of political discourses admitted to the political field in New Zealand, 1996. As explained below, the critical dimension of the analysis entails an examination of the socio-political context in which the political texts were produced.

### **New Zealand, 1996**

The political field in New Zealand, 1996, was of particular interest as it was the first in which an election was held under a new system of proportional representation, Mixed Member Proportional (MMP). For the first time, minor parties could, through party lists, gain parliamentary seats with a minimum of five percent of the public votes. This opened up the contest and, by extension,

potentially open up the public debate of electoral issues, with an unprecedented number (23) of political parties contending.

In 1993 New Zealand voters had opted for the change in their electoral system, away from the Westminster-style first-past-the-post, to MMP. The change was the result of voter disillusionment and subsequent demand for representation in Parliament which was more closely aligned to the voters' preferences than was effected by the previous system. The voter disillusionment came during a period of social unrest when the two major political parties, Labour and National, each in turn implemented economic and social policies which were both unpopular and contrary to the parties' respective election platforms (James & McRobie, 1993). What is more, each party acted without a strong mandate, having been elected without a majority of the overall vote (Mulgan, 1994; Vowles, Aimer, Catt, Lamare, & Miller, 1995).

The decision to change New Zealand's electoral system was made through a process of two referenda: a non-binding referendum in 1992, followed by a binding one in 1993. The result of the 1992 referendum was unequivocal. Fifty-three percent of registered electors returned a vote which was 84.5 per cent in favour of change, with 70.5 per cent opting for the MMP system over other options (Vowles et al., 1995). By 1993, voters were less sure. The voter turnout increased to 82.6 per cent but after an aggressive campaign by the key opponents of electoral change (Roper & Leitch, 1995),

those who favoured the “fairer” system over the status quo were reduced to 53.9 per cent (Vowles et al., 1995).

As stated above, MMP was first implemented with the 1996 New Zealand general election. Under this system, any party which won at least five per cent of the vote, or at least one constituent seat, would gain seats in Parliament. The public, however, was even less sure of the new system than it had apparently been when it had voted the system in. Throughout the election campaign period, opinion polls revealed that voters were unsure of exactly how their two votes would influence the outcome. In addition to this dilemma, voters were very much concerned to know which parties would together form a coalition government, and which of their policies would be sacrificed as a consequence.

## **The Research**

Thus the election and its associated campaigns were of historic significance. New sets of campaign practices had to be developed. Increased competition opened up the political field to a much wider range of positions or stances which could be adopted by political parties. The ways in which each of the five main parties sought to maintain those positions in the face of competition is a key focus of this thesis. The thesis seeks to answer the following primary research question: “How did the five main political parties of the political field in New Zealand, 1996, discursively position themselves and their opponents during the 1996 general election campaign?”

The research is, then, concerned with language and symbolic power, unlike the majority of political science studies of elections and election campaigns which primarily focus upon representative power and campaign methods, or voter preferences. While the study of language is becoming increasingly central to politically oriented disciplines, and relationships between language and politics are examined, the focus of the study and the methods applied vary from one discipline to another (Schaffner, 1996).

In answer to van Dijk's (1994) call for discourse analysis to be a "genuine social, political or cultural analysis" (p. 164), and Bourdieu's requirements for a systematic analysis of the political field, discussed above, this thesis takes a multidisciplinary focus, incorporating relevant perspectives from the fields of political science, public relations, organisational communication, cultural studies and sociology. Of particular significance is the theoretical framework developed for the thesis, in chapter two. The framework integrates Bourdieu's (1991) concept of the political field with Bobbio's (1996) concept of the enduring differences between Left and Right in the era of Western capitalism. These two theories together provide a route for the analysis of the political field within its broader social, political and historical context.

The incorporation of the principles of the public sphere, as theorised by Habermas (Calhoun, 1992; Habermas, 1979), as a theoretical "umbrella" under which issues of concern to democratic theory are raised, is particularly salient to this thesis. While the political field can be understood as a sphere of

struggles for political outcomes, so, too, can the public sphere be understood as a sphere of discursive struggle for the formation of public opinion which, in turn, has political outcomes in influence on the formation of public policy.

Habermas, in his *Transformation of the Public Sphere*, is greatly concerned that commercialised mass media and the associated activities of advertisers and public relations practitioners have brought about the demise of public opinion formation through informed and rational debate amongst citizens. Governments, amongst others, have used the media to market ideas and policies to the public rather than to generate and facilitate open debate. Bourdieu (1991) is similarly concerned that the professionalisation of politics has meant that individuals have been dispossessed of voice as they increasingly must delegate the right to speak to professionals who construct what is to be said and how it is to be said.

In the context of modern general elections, political parties have used the media, particularly television, to persuade the voting public of the virtues of their respective election platforms. This asymmetrical (Grunig & White, 1992) style of communication has been increasingly managed by communication professionals whose role has arguably become one of the manipulation of public opinion and the “selling” of political parties (Franklin, 1994; Kern, 1989). The degree to which they manipulate public opinion, and the means which they employ, are of obvious importance to the political process.

Beyond the establishment of a theoretical framework for the analysis of, and socio-historical contextualisation, of a political field, chapter two explores theories such as that of articulation by which professionals in the political field seek, at least discursively, to integrate their policies with the concerns and interests of voters in civil society. Chapter two also provides a review of significant published research relevant to this study. Such research includes the theories of representation and identity, and the modernisation of political campaigns. The latter, derived primarily from empirical studies based in political science, leads to another original contribution of this thesis. To date, empirical studies of campaign practices and modernisation have not been given a critical focus. That is, analysis has not been situated within a socio-political and cultural context. Nor have they been contextualised as a part of a political field. This thesis seeks to fill that gap.

Through the application of Fairclough's (1995; 1989; 1992) three dimensional model of critical discourse analysis to the campaign discourse of each of the five principle political parties, the campaign texts are analysed as a product of the discourse practices (including the use of communication professionals) and the social practices of each party. The methodology of critical discourse analysis, as prescribed by Fairclough, is described in chapter three. Chapter three also details the method of data selection and collection for this thesis.

Chapters four to eight are the five substantive chapters in which the analysis of the campaign discourse of each of the following political parties is

detailed: The National Party (chapter four); The New Zealand Labour Party (chapter five); New Zealand First (chapter six); Act (chapter seven); and The Alliance (chapter eight). Each of these chapters is divided into three main divisions - the social practices, discourse practices and texts - in line with Fairclough's model.

The discourse practices sections of both the National and the New Zealand Labour parties were considerably enriched by the particularly generous provision of sensitive information by the campaign managers of each these two parties. For this reason, these sections are able to focus primarily upon the organisational aspects of the production and dissemination of campaign discourse. The discourse practices sections of the other three substantive chapters, where less (or, in the case of New Zealand First, no) such information was provided, focus upon the strategies of discourse production and dissemination as evidenced by campaign texts, and as revealed by some media commentary. Fairclough emphasises that analysis at the levels of discourse practice and text should include an analysis of consumption. However, consumption of campaign discourse is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Each of the five substantive chapters is concluded by a discussion section. Chapter nine develops the overall conclusions of the thesis, reflects upon the usefulness of the theoretical framework developed, and further suggests how both that framework and the findings of the research could be applied to future research. Of particular relevance for a thesis which has been

produced within a management school, are the suggestions for future applications of this critical research to the fields of public relations, organisational communication, and marketing.

Chapter ten provides a post script to the thesis which is both analytical and forward looking. It contains an overview of the party political use made of the World Wide Web in New Zealand during the election campaign period of 1996. This was significant because, here and internationally, 1996 was the first year in which political parties set up web sites for election campaign purposes.

The sites were used primarily as a vehicle for the further dissemination of the same campaign texts as were analysed in chapters four to eight. Their use did not vary from one political party to the next. For this reason, an analysis of the sites was not included within the main body of the thesis. Rather, the sites have been explored collectively. Beyond their use by political parties, the sites are of importance to this thesis because of their implications for the public sphere. Chapter ten discusses the sites in the context of their potential for revitalising the public sphere. It also makes a prediction, however, that, when they realise the potential of the internet for political campaigning, communication professionals will “transform” the sites, in the Habermasian sense, in order to target individuals and “sell” policies to political consumers.

Chapter ten has been previously published, almost in its entirety, both as part of a refereed journal article (Roper, 1997) and part of a book chapter (Roper, 1998) when the journal was republished as a reader.

# CHAPTER TWO

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Introduction

Political communication is a field of study, as yet not clearly defined, which has diverse sets of roots. Many scholars of political communication are based in the traditions of political science, while others are based in the fields of sociology or media studies. The most widely researched area within the field of political communication falls within the broad category of election campaigns. Most of this research is focused on analysis of media coverage of election campaigns (for example, Diamond & Friery, 1987; Gans, 1988; Graber, 1989; Hellweg, Pfau, & Brydon, 1992; Jamieson, 1992; Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988; Jones, 1995; Kaid, Gobetz, Garner, Leland, & Scott, 1993; Kavanagh, 1997; Levine, 1995; Mancini & Swanson, 1996; McNair, 1997; Negrine, 1996; Steele & Barnhurst, 1996; Swanson, 1977); on the processes of political campaigning and marketing (Franklin, 1994; Friedenberg, 1997; Luntz, 1988; Maarek, 1995; Newman, 1994; Scammell, 1995; Shea, 1996; Trent & Friedenberg, 1995), or on studies of voter reception of campaign messages (Christ, Thorson, & Caywood, 1994; Colford, 1992; Delli Carpini, Keeter, & Webb, 1997; Herbst, 1993; Meyer & Carlin, 1994; Suhonen, 1997; Zhao & Chaffee, 1995). This study takes a different route by applying a methodology, critical discourse analysis, which is grounded in the discipline of cultural

studies, to analyse the competing discourses of the principal contenders in an election campaign.

In taking such a critical, qualitative approach, it is necessary to develop a new theoretical framework for this study which brings together the relevant functionalist theories of political science, of public relations, and the post-structuralist theories of cultural studies. The combination of these sets of theory allows a new perspective to be taken in accounting for the processes applied in the construction of political campaign discourse.

This study also makes an original alignment of the political science theories of campaign modernisation with Bourdieu's (1991) theory of the political field. In particular, it bridges theoretically the notion of a centrist "catch-all" political party with Bourdieu's concept of a neutral centre of the political field. By further linking these theories to the neo-Gramscian notion of hegemony as developed primarily by Stuart Hall (1988a), political campaign discourse is socially and historically contextualised. Such contextualisation is further effected through the application of democratic theory.

The overall theoretical context for the study is grounded in the Habermasian notion of the public sphere. It is within the context of the public sphere that, ideally, citizens (members of civil society) receive and discuss political discourse with the object of reaching informed decisions in political matters such as the democratic exercise of the vote.

## Habermas and the Public Sphere

Jurgen Habermas (1991), in his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, describes the existence of a public sphere in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries which comprised male members of the bourgeoisie who met together as equals in coffee houses and salons to discuss issues of public concern. From the open and rational discussion between these men, with private interests and social barriers put aside and without constraints of church or state power, a consensus of public opinion was reached. The principles upon which Habermas' public sphere is based are "general accessibility, especially to information, the elimination of privilege, and the search for general norms and their rational legitimation" (Garnham, 1990, p. 108). Legitimation of general norms is brought about through free participation in discussions which move towards consensus of public opinion. Participation is facilitated through the communicative functions of the public sphere: dissemination of information and provision of a forum for debate (Garnham, 1990). Participation cannot occur when citizens become passive consumers of information, divorced from interaction with either other citizens or the disseminators of the information as is the case with the current linear models of mass communication (Carey, 1987; Hacker, 1996).

Although the viability of the principles of the bourgeois public sphere has been repeatedly called into question, they can still today serve as a set of ideals against which democratic participation in political matters can be measured. Habermas is essentially asking "[w]hat are the social conditions ...

for a rational-critical debate about public issues conducted by private persons willing to let arguments and not their statuses determine decisions?” (Calhoun, 1992, p. 1).

Habermas is pessimistic, some argue too pessimistic (Calhoun, 1992; Dahlgren, 1991), about the viability of a public sphere in modern capitalist society. He blames the advancement of capitalism, and, with it, commercial mass media, for the demise of the public sphere. It is with these advancements that the power of private organisations has grown and the separation of the state from the private realm has decreased. Powerful private organisations can exercise greater influence over the state, especially in the formation of public policy, without reference to the concerns of citizens of the public sphere. At the same time, the commercialised mass media is directed by imperatives of political economy to serve the joint interests of government and powerful organisations of the economic sphere more than the interests of the public sphere. That is, mass media have a commercial interest in supporting their powerful clients. In a two-way relationship, they must also work to attract readers or viewers primarily in order to provide avenues for advertisers to reach target markets (e.g. Schiller, 1996; Sparks, 1992).

Public relations advisors work with media in mind in order to generate appropriate publicity for their clients (e.g. Ward, 1995). Their work, with that of advertisers, becomes particularly evident during national election campaigns when it is perceived by practitioners and their politician clients that favourable publicity may have the capacity to persuade voters to accept the messages of

one contestant over another (for example Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Jamieson & Campbell, 1992). Thus the distinctions between public and private become less distinct, making it difficult for the public sphere to operate within an environment where private, individual concerns and inequalities are put aside in the interests of rational-critical debate and the formation of an objective public opinion (Calhoun, 1992; 1995).

Today it is still generally accepted that the key criteria for an actively working democracy are participation by citizens in collective decision making informed by rational debate about political issues. Such debate must involve contestation as well as negotiation and compromise, and the centrality of the common good (Held, 1989; Herbst, 1991; Reilly, 1996). By examining their campaign discourses of contestation, negotiation and compromise, this study examines the ways in which key election protagonists seek to inform the voting public through the agency of their public relations practitioners.

While the realm of public debate and opinion formation is theorised by Habermas as the public sphere, situated within civil society, Bourdieu (1991) theorises the arena of the election contest as that of the political field, described below. Bourdieu (*ibid.*) further conceptualises the realm beyond the political field as that of social space, comprising a multitude of social fields, each invested with its own type of capital, such as economic capital (in various forms), cultural capital, symbolic capital (prestige, fame) or social capital (p. 230). In democratic regimes the inhabitants of social space are

citizens. In that regard, parallels can be drawn between social space as described by Bourdieu (1991) and civil society.

## **Political fields**

The political field, as conceptualised by Bourdieu (1991), is the “sphere of political parties, electoral politics and institutionalised political power” (Thompson, 1991, p. 25). It is the sphere, not only of institutionalised political power but of competing discourses which encompass a range of discursive positions, from the dominant to those which challenge the dominant order. Thus, it is the field in which participants put forward a range of world views of politics, each contesting for public acceptance and support, particularly through the institution of democratic elections. The participants in the political field are political professionals - such as political journalists, politicians and their public relations advisors - who construct political “products” for citizen (non-professional) consumers in civil society:

the political field is the site in which, through the competition between the agents involved in it, political products, issues, programmes, analyses, commentaries, concepts and events are created - products between which ordinary citizens, reduced to the status of “consumers”, have to choose (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 171-172).

The products thus offered must also be constructed with an understanding of what the demands of the “market” are - what will be acceptable and what will

meet the demands of the voting public. The outer limits of the political field are defined by the poles of that field. That is, the boundaries of the field are determined by the range of what is “politically thinkable”:

the political field in fact produces an effect of censorship by limiting the universe of political discourse, and thereby the universe of what is politically thinkable, to the finite space of discourses capable of being produced or reproduced within the limits of the political *problematic*, understood as a space of stances effectively adopted within the field - i.e. stances that are socio-logically possible given the laws that determine entry into the field (ibid. p. 172).

Within the range of politically acceptable products or discourses of the political field, each must, as in any market place, be differentiated from each other in order for consumers to be able to make a choice. This fundamental precept means that each political contender adopts one or more of a range of stances within the political field (ibid.) and each stance is defended against the claims of the others whose stances may, at times, shift and overlap. Differentiation is essential and so political contenders must defend their stance(s).

The selection of a particular stance is further determined by the demands of consumers whose support the political professional requires. In order to meet consumer demands, political professionals must attempt to

simultaneously occupy stances within the political field and appeal to groups outside the political field. As Thompson (1991) explains:

While the political field has a considerable degree of autonomy, it is not completely independent of other fields and forces. Indeed, one of the distinctive characteristics of the political field is that, in order for professionals to succeed within it, they must appeal to groups or forces which lie *outside* the field .... Hence a significant part of the discursive output of politicians consists of slogans, promises and pledges of support for causes of various kinds, the purpose of such expressions being primarily to build up credit by providing non-professionals with forms of representation and self-representation, in exchange for which they give material and symbolic support (in the form of subscriptions, votes, etc.) to those who claim to represent them in the political field (p. 28).

Politicians must create for themselves identities, or adopt stances, within the political field which reflect the stances adopted by voters in social fields if they are to be elected as the political representative of the voters' stances. The issues of representation and of the adoption of multiple stances are considered in more detail below.

Informed consumers in the public sphere will survey the full range of products on offer in order to compare and evaluate each with the others before making a choice. Thus:

in order to understand a political stance, programme, intervention, electioneering speech, etc., it is at least as important to know the universe of stances currently offered by the field as it is to know the demands made by non-professionals of whom the leaders, in adopting these stances, are the declared representatives (the base): adopting a stance, a *prise de position*, is, as the phrase clearly suggests, an act which has meaning only relationally, in and through difference, the *distinctive deviation* (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 172).

This study examines the “universe of stances” offered in the political field as it stood during the campaign period of the 1996 New Zealand general election.

The outer limits of the field, the poles, represented the limits of what New Zealanders, at the time, deemed socio-logically possible by voting in sufficient numbers to allow a political party to serve as their representative. Those parties with too few votes were thus marginalised, by the voters as much as by the system, as outside the current political field.

The strength of the poles of the political field - that is, the degree of support given to the products or discourses which occupy the stances at the outer limits of the field - will determine the degree to which the central, neutral stance will be occupied and the degree to which parties or politicians will cluster around that central space (ibid. p.185). Also of significance is the distance which separates the occupied stances within the political field and the degree to which each of those stances directly coincides with the interests, values and discourses of non-professionals. Each of these factors depends on

the intensity of the competition, with greater numbers of contestants resulting in a greater number of occupied stances and, thus, more intense competition. It is the number of parties “which determines the diversity and renewal of products on offer by forcing, for instance, the different political parties to modify their programmes to win new clienteles” (ibid. p. 183). In the case of New Zealand, as for other countries with a proportional representation electoral system, the political field is expanded by a greater number of political parties than can be admitted under a first-past-the-post system.

As cited above, Bourdieu (1991) describes the political field as imposing “an effect of censorship” upon the universe of political discourse (p. 172). Bourdieu does not, however, describe that “universe” but limits his conceptualisation to what is contained within the political field. Because political fields are historically specific, however, it is useful to contextualise the political field within the universe of political discourse. Such contextualisation allows for differences between specific political fields to be charted against a set of enduring characteristics over time. In capitalist democracies, the universe of political discourse can be conceptualised as a continuum ranging from Left to Right, as described in the following section. Political fields are most commonly defined by poles which are situated at some points on the Left/Right continuum, with a range of stances available between those poles. The range and number of stances available for each historically specific field is dependent upon the socio-political context of the field.

## The universe of political discourse

Left and Right together form an abstract continuum of political space. Norberto Bobbio (1996) theorises the enduring differences between Left and Right in terms of equality and inequality. That is not to say that Left is synonymous with equality, or the Right with inequality. Rather, the Left tends more towards equality than does the Right:

there is an element which typifies the doctrines and movements which are called and are universally recognised as left-wing, and that this element is egalitarianism .... At a more practical level, this would mean encouraging policies which aim to make those who are unequal more equal, rather than a utopian society in which all individuals are equal in every single thing (ibid. p. 71).

Thus the Left is characterised by an adherence to the belief that equality can only be achieved by the regulated modification of capitalism. Giddens (1998) aligns social justice with equality and states that “those on the left not only pursue social justice, but believe that government has to play a key role in furthering that aim” (p. 41). Or, as put by Neilson (1997): “The Left argues that there should be collective responsibilities towards those who have been failed by the market .... Capitalism requires transformation or at least regulation” (p. 8).

The Right, on the other hand, also uses a discourse of equality to argue that capitalism is inherently fair. The Right, or liberal, concept of equality,

however, extends only to the notion that all individuals are equally recognised by the law as legal subjects (Hall, 1986b, p. 41). The neoliberal view of equality lies in the premise of equality of opportunity, or meritocracy (Giddens, 1998). In this view there is no provision for equality of advantage, whereby all can compete on equal terms. There is no concern for equality of outcome in a free market (Giddens, 1998; Hall, 1986b).

Because a measure of democratic practice is both expected and demanded within Western capitalism, the extreme, unmodified expressions of Left and Right (embodied in totalitarian Communism and Fascism) are deemed to be politically unthinkable. They are marginalised at the extremes of the continuum because of their failure to incorporate democratic means for achieving their ideological goals.

Bobbio (1996) proposed that Left and Right meet at a central line, with the spaces on either side of that line being occupied by expressions of the moderate Left or the moderate Right, both moderated by concessions of the one to the other. His attempt to define the characteristics of the Left/Right distinction, however, cannot alone explain the shifts which occur at different periods in history from the dominance of one political compromise to another.

An explanation of the processes involved in the movement towards, and the establishment of, historically specific periods of political compromise can be provided by the application of Bourdieu's (1991) concept of political fields within the universe of political discourse to Bobbio's concept of political space. Political fields occupy a space within the Left/Right continuum

of the universe of political discourse. The space of each political field is determined by the socio-political conditions and beliefs of the period in which the field occurs. The poles of each political field are occupied by stances which are themselves each compromises between the extremes of the broader continuum. As in any field, the strength of the poles and the number of stances adopted between them is determined by the intensity of the competition (Bourdieu, 1991), which is, in turn, determined by the nature of the social and political context of the field.

The neutral, central space (further discussed below) which can exist in any given political field to a degree determined by the political stability of the time, need not, then, coincide with the central line of the universe of political discourse. Rather, the integration of the perspectives of Bobbio and Bourdieu allows for the potential transference of what were at one time characteristics of the Left to the Right or vice versa, as Left and Right exist in relation to each other rather than to a fixed central space. Thus a political field with poles situated to the right of Bobbio's central line may incorporate a "centre" which, in the universe of political discourse, is positioned to the right. The stances of that particular field which are positioned to the left of the field's centre would be described as being of the "left". In another political field, however, with redefined poles which are situated further to the left within the universe of political discourse than those of the first field, those stances which may encompass the same discourses as those of the left of the previous political field may be said to fall to the right of the new field.

A parallel can be drawn between what Bobbio (1996) refers to as the “inclusive middle” and the theoretical centre of Bourdieu’s political field. Bobbio interprets the inclusive middle as a “synthesis of opposing positions with the intention in practice of saving whatever can be saved of one’s own position by drawing in the opposing position and thus neutralising it” (p. 9). This is the same process by which Bourdieu explains the development of a neutral central space of a political field - both sides embrace the same positions and, thus, remove them from contention. It also explains that parties can adopt multiple and even contradictory positions (as explored further below) within the political field. Different positions can be adopted for different issues - some more dominant than others, some shaped more by compromise than others - particularly in deference to public opinion.

An analysis of the development and the nature of the central space of successive political fields allows a conception of directional movement and change, through compromise, over time. It also allows the mapping of trends of ideological dominance. It is useful to take an historical look at a range of periods of relative political consensus, each of which has, in turn, been superseded by a period of renewed contestation and a subsequent shift in the position of the political field in relation to the universe of political discourse. The process by which new political fields can be established, comprising new, yet viable stances in terms of their acceptance by non-professionals in social space, can also be explored in terms of the theory of articulation.

## **Articulation**

Any theorising of the compromises required of political parties or candidates in order to occupy a particular stance, or set of stances, within the political field, or to effect a shift in the position of the political field in relation to the universe of political discourse, cannot stop at an examination of other adopted stances in the same political field. It must also take into account the need of the parties to accommodate the interests of citizens in social fields. Stances within the political field are only viable in so far as they are supported by social groups outside the political field whose interests political parties seek to represent. This fact is often rendered complex by conflicts in the beliefs and aspirations between different social groups, and between political professionals within the political field and non-professionals of social space. A further set of conflict can be incorporated with the two already mentioned: the conflict between contesting groups of political professionals (often grouped as political parties) who seek dominance of the field. For Bourdieu, as for Habermas, the increased professionalisation of political discourse is of great concern. Bourdieu (1991) sees it as bringing about “the dispossession of the majority of the people” (p. 175). Habermas (1991) theorises it as contributing to the transformation of the public sphere, although, in principle, the two concerns closely parallel each other.

Difficulties arise for political parties or other professionals in balancing their own ideological beliefs and aspirations against the demands of social groups. In such cases compromise alone is often insufficient to bridge the gap.

What is needed is a means of bringing together two or more apparently disconnected ideals to form a single, new discourse which will be accepted as common sense. The process by which such an amalgamation can be effected, under certain conditions, is articulation (Grossberg, 1992; Hall, 1986a; Moffitt, 1994; Slack, 1996).

Hall (1986a) describes articulation as “the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time” (p. 141). For an articulation to be effective, the disparate elements must together form a new discourse which is accepted for its own apparent logic. Such a logic will not always be apparent. This is why the success of a particular articulation is dependent upon socio-political and cultural conditions which determine the readiness of subjects to “see” and accept the logic of the new discourse. Of critical importance to the parties in the political field is the connection between the new discourse within the political field and the non-professionals (voters) in the social space beyond.

Within the universe of political discourse, over time, different political theories and ideologies which have no obvious inherent interconnections have been articulated to form new discourses; new, apparently coherent ways of seeing the world. The words “apparently coherent” are significant. Articulations are inherently unstable because the disparity of the nature of the connected elements render cohesion difficult. “Cohesions” which are achieved through articulation are only apparent and are only perceived as cohesions

temporarily within a given set of social and political circumstances. Some of these articulations have formed the basis of periods of political stability, where the articulated elements, by virtue of being uncontested, have formed the neutral centre of the political field of that time and place. Some such articulations are examined in the following section.

### **Left/Right articulations and compromises in modern history**

By focusing specifically on the era of advanced capitalism, conflicts and compromises within historically specific political fields can be said to have fundamentally arisen from tensions and contradictions between articulations of democracy, socialism and liberalism.

Socialism developed to take on different forms (Vincent, 1995), but it is a theory opposed to individualism (Giddens, 1998). It is, essentially, situated to the left of the universe of political discourse as it embraces a belief in a collective responsibility to ensure the well-being of each member of society.

Liberalism, on the other hand, places individual concerns above collective concerns. Particularly in its contemporary form, neoliberalism, it demands a clear separation of the private and public spheres. Liberalism celebrates the drive for individualism and the maximisation of self-interest (Hall, 1986b; Kelsey, 1994). From a position to the right of the universe of political discourse, neoliberals argue for the reduction or removal of social

welfare issues from the public agenda, seeing “efficiency and profitability [as] the only acceptable criteria” for judging the value of enterprises (Jesson, 1987, p. 131). The theories of liberalism and socialism both exist in various forms, a result of internal tensions of conception and practice (e.g. Hall, 1986b).

Democratic theory is concerned with who can legitimately govern. The representative form of democratic theory specifies how representatives are to be elected. The onus is on a democratically elected government to exercise its given authority, as far as it is possible to do so, in accordance with public opinion (Parekh, 1993) and for the good of society as a whole. Traditionally, the concept of democracy implies active participation and equality of political power amongst citizens (Held, 1989). Democracy, in political practice, however, does not exist independently of, but is articulated with, other theories. As Murphy says:

Democracy is not a free-standing political culture. It is not an ideology-in-itself .... In practice, we have only ever come to democracy through the cultures of liberalism, socialism, and so forth (Murphy, 1992, p. 13).

As stated, the political framework of Western capitalism has been variously constructed and contested through struggles and compromises between the traditions of socialism and liberalism and their expression within the institutional requirements of democracy, as demanded of the political field.

Again, this is supported by Murphy:

My pre-supposition is that there is no immanent, no internal connection between socialism and democracy; just as there is no immanent, no internal connection between liberalism and democracy.

The connection had to be argued for, fought for (Murphy, 1992, p. 22).

A range of articulations resulting in various balances of liberalism, socialism and democracy are possible and have occurred at different times according to the relative dominance through public acceptance and, hence, admission to the political field, of each. Each rearticulation within the specific history of Western capitalism incorporates some democratic theory weighted more or less heavily towards liberalism or socialism. Political fields of the past, present and future can be thus conceptualised as expressions of balances of Left and Right within the universe of political discourse.

Social democracy brings together the theories described above, but in this case socialism and democracy are the dominant partners in a political field which “cherishes and respects individuals, but defines them and their rights in social terms” (Barber, 1984, p. 4). Liberal democracy constitutes an articulation which is weighted towards liberalism, one which is, according to Barber:

concerned more to promote individual liberty than to secure public justice, to advance private interests rather than to secure public good, and to keep men safely apart rather than to bring them fruitfully together (ibid.).

Here the emphasis is on keeping the activities of the state to the minimum so that individual liberty is maximised.

Keynesian social democracy, occupying a political centre dominated by concessions to the Left, gained hegemonic acceptance (a concept explained below) in Western democracies in the 1950s and 60s. Its dominance began to be overtly challenged by those with more liberalist views from the 1970s. A strong push away from regulated economies towards market driven ones in the 1980s and on into the 1990s was widespread and has been well documented. For example, in Britain under Margaret Thatcher (see e.g., Hall, 1988a); in the United States under Ronald Reagan (see e.g., Kiewe & Houck, 1991); in New Zealand first under a Labour Minister of Finance, Roger Douglas, and then by the National Party (see, e.g., Jesson, 1999; Kelsey, 1997; Roper, 1996) and in Sweden (Jenson & Mahon, 1993).

By the mid to late 1990s a new but still contested political compromise has been emerging, one which has been dominated by neoliberal, free market ideology, embraced by both Left and Right. As Thompson wrote of Britain's New Labour Party:

what makes the political economy of New Labour different from what has gone before is the extent to which the discourse of supply-side economics, mirroring in many respects the patois of the New Right, has dominated the literature to the increasing exclusion of those ideological markers which have traditionally indicated that what was being read was the work of a putatively socialist party (p. 42).

That both parties of the Right and of the Left are now embracing the economy of the market provides evidence that the current move towards consensus is situated within a political field which is, itself, situated to the right of the Left/Right continuum of the universe of political discourse. Within the political field the market economy is neutralised as an issue between the major parties and thus forms the central space of the field. However, the core Left value of regulation as required for social purposes is not abandoned. As Thompson (ibid.) critically points out:

Now the emphasis is on the *regulation* of private utilities such as electricity, gas and water, rather than their return to the public sector .... Fair competition, regulated markets, regulations governing the actions of producers, consumers' charters; these are the means by which New Labour seeks to use the market to secure its ends. (p. 43)

The public rationale for such a shift of the Left to accommodate a new centre dictated to by the Right is provided by the discursive conflation of "co-operation and competition, social cohesion and efficiency, social justice and economic success, social concern and economic advantage" (ibid. p. 46). In this way we see a new articulation of Left and Right principles, with centre left and centre right parties differing primarily in their concepts of the ways in which the central ideology is to be delivered.

Some would argue that the new consensual acceptance of market driven economies has signalled the end of the Left Right dichotomy (e.g. de Benoist, 1995). They argue that on the grounds of a general move towards the centre

and the establishment of “catch-all” parties (discussed below). Those who make such arguments fail to analyse the current period in the context of political history, or the current political field within the universe of political discourse.

Periods of political consensus can be explained by the theory of hegemony, explored in the following section. The hegemonic dominance of a particular political ideology is consistent with Bourdieu’s concept of a neutral central space in the political field, where a dominant ideology is so widely accepted that it is regarded as common sense (Hall, 1986b) and so is no longer under contention. Hegemonic consensus is the product of struggle and compromise. Predictably, when a period of political turmoil subsides and the central space of the political field becomes dominant with more stances adopted within that space by parties of both the left and the right, the distinctions between Left and Right appear to become blurred. The essential differences may, in fact, remain within the means of policy execution, but they are obscured by the apparent similarity of the competing messages. Such is the case in the example discussed above of New Labour’s embracing of a market economy, but with the imposition of state regulations. Or, conversely, messages which are apparently conflicting and competitive, may mask ideological similarities.

## Hegemony

Dominance of political and economic interests can be established and maintained either by coercion or by hegemony, a concept developed by Antonio Gramsci (1971). Use of coercion leads to a much less stable state than can be achieved through the exercise of hegemony because hegemonic ideologies may, and, indeed, must alter or shift ground slightly in concession to opposition in order to accommodate it by compromise and so win consent rather than face opposition head-on.

Raymond Williams (1977) succinctly describes Gramsci's conception of hegemony as infiltrating every facet of social life, as comprising:

not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs but the whole lived social process as practically organised by specific dominant meanings and values .... [and] as in effect a saturation of the whole process of living - not only of political or economic activity, nor only of manifest social activity, but of the whole substance of lived identities and relationships, to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense (, p. 110).

Common sense thus "constitutes a sense of reality for most people in society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of society to move, in most areas of their lives" (ibid.).

The neo-Gramscian, post-marxist reading of hegemony, as expressed by Hall (1988a; 1988b) is that “common sense” is only ever partial and is always under construction. This view provides a much more dynamic concept of hegemony which moves beyond the static one to accommodate the idea that hegemony is constantly challenged at multiple sites by contradictory and opposing interests at every level of society (Eley, 1992; Fairclough, 1992; Hall, 1988b).

Political hegemony is based in ideology. Ideology, for Hall, is language based and involves the politics of signification or the power to signify events in a particular way (Hall, 1982). Election campaign discourse illustrates the ways in which politicians or political parties attempt to portray, through language and visual symbols, their version of events, of causes and effects. Each contestant aims to have their portrayal accepted as reality. In this way language is used strategically to construct a specific social reality based upon a world view held by the disseminators of that reality (Fairclough, 1995a; Hall, 1988a; Shapiro, 1984). Hall (1982) uses the term “reality effect” to describe the acceptance of an ideologically constructed meaning as common sense, when people could not imagine it to be any different.

As stated, hegemony is never permanent. It is maintained through a process of concessions made by the dominant order at key sites of struggle. The dissolution of ideological common sense and consequent receptiveness to change is typically initiated by a sense of, or the reality of, crisis (e.g. Laclau, 1986). When a hegemonic discourse is dissolved and the precepts upon which

it was established are no longer accepted as common sense, the contradictions which were always inherent in that discourse become apparent (ibid.). Such is the case in each of the articulations of democratic theory, socialism and liberalism described above. Hall (1988a) points out that when opposition at a particular site reaches crisis proportions, the site becomes vulnerable to the advances of a new order.

Laclau (1986), describes the process by which contestants in the struggle for a new order attempt to replace the dissolved one:

Each one of the sectors in struggle will try and reconstitute a new ideological unity using a “system of narration” as a vehicle which disarticulates the ideological discourses of the opposing forces. What is important for the present problem is that one of the possible ways of resolving the crisis for the new hegemonic class or fraction is to deny all interpellations but one, develop all the logical implications of this one interpellation and transform it into a critique of the existing system, and at the same time, into a principle of reconstruction of the entire ideological domain (p. 28).

However, as Laclau (ibid.) states: “As the function of all ideology is to constitute individuals as subjects, this ideological crisis is necessarily translated into an ‘identity crisis’ of the social agents” (p. 28). Laclau draws here on the work of Althusser (1971) who claims that ideology “interpellates subjects” (p. 161). By being ideologically invested, then, discourse works to, amongst other things, constitute subjects (Fairclough, 1992), or identities.

In the political field the aim of the struggle is ultimately to gain power as representative of those “non-professionals” (Bourdieu, 1991) who “reside” in any number of the various social fields which together make up the social space beyond that of the political field (*ibid.*). The relationship between crisis, representation and identity is explored in the following section.

## **Representation and identity**

Because citizens of civil society, through the delegation of their own power (Bourdieu, 1991), rely on political professionals to represent their interests in the formation of public policy within the political field, citizens need to be able to personally identify themselves with that representative. Jenson and Mahon (1993) use a perspective of representational politics in their description of the crisis of social democracy in Sweden. In that model, representative democracies are examined in terms of the dual process of representation: the representative positions him or herself through the creation of an identity which is projected to others. In the case of a political party, the identity is a collective one. The projected identity, however, must also be reflective of the interests and demands of civil society (*ibid.* p. 78) if the necessary connections for representation are to be made. Representative identities are constantly altered to accommodate changing values and demands within civil society and to gain increased support through political discourse.

In the political field it is through political discourse that identities are socially constructed. The construction is an ongoing process as political

professionals need to adapt to the changing values and demands of the non-professionals. Cheney and Christensen (in press) observed that “the public relations activity of large organisations today .... is identity-related in that each organisation must work to establish its unique ‘self’ while connecting its concerns to those of the ‘cultural crowd’ ” (p. 4). The observation is relevant to the identity of political parties. The connection of the political parties’ concerns to those of whom they purport to represent can be effected by the process of articulation, described above.

As stated in the section on political fields, above, political parties must address issues of concern to voters of the social space, or civil society, outside the political field. They must articulate their policy positions and their stances within the political field with those concerns. The process of articulation of political party positions with the concerns of voters is made more complex by the fact that each individual voter or group of voters shifts between multiple, often contradictory concerns (Moffitt, 1994). The multiplicity of concerns can be theorised as each group or individual occupying multiple subject positions (Fairclough, 1989; Leitch & Neilson, 1997). For example, one voter may simultaneously occupy the subject positions of parent, tax payer, teacher and patient, amongst others. For the political professional, multiple subject positions of voters must be recognised in the construction of messages which reach diverse and often contradictory demands (e.g., Moffitt, 1994). Some of these messages will reflect core party dogma and will be targeted towards the party faithful. Other messages will attempt to extend the appeal of the party

by extending its agenda in the manner of the “catch-all” party, described below.

In line with the two way process of representation, through identity creation and identity projection, described above, the articulation of messages with multiple subject positions held by voters can be facilitated by the adoption of multiple subject positions by the political party itself. However, “the identity of an organisation can be only so fragmented before the organisation ceases to function as an organisation” (Christensen & Cheney, 1994, p. 228). The desire to maximise its potential to represent a wide range of subject positions must not override the consistency of message and purpose of a political party (or of any other organisation). As Cheney and Christensen (in press) point out in relation to organisations in general: “without such consistency, the organisation of today will have difficulties sustaining and confirming a coherent sense of ‘self’ necessary to maintain credibility and legitimacy in and outside the organisation” (p. 2).

As discussed above, political parties and individuals need to make new articulations to accommodate shifting voter concerns. New articulations are also often required to accommodate shifts within the political field, or shifts of the political field within the universe of political discourse. These shifts may be made necessary by, for example, economic forces or by the ascendance of social movements from civil society to a position of influence within the political field. Small shifts in identity of a political party are normally eventually assimilated by voters as the representatives continue to “speak the

hegemonic language, even if in their own ‘dialect’” (Jenson & Mahon, 1993, p. 79). A fundamental problem arises, however, when the representative alters its identity to the extent that it can no longer successfully articulate the new identity to the concerns and discourses of his or her target group. Then the representative no longer represents, or is no longer seen to represent, the group or groups who elected it to office and so can no longer elicit their support:

Representative organisations - parties, unions, social movements, for example - which once successfully promoted a particular set of identities, become vulnerable as the “naturalness” of their capacity to represent comes into question (Jenson & Mahon, 1993, p. 76).

From such circumstances a “crisis of representation” can emerge. It is when the respective identities of political parties apparently merge in a centrist position that a crisis of representation can be linked to the issue of Left/Right distinctions within the political field.

As stated above, the strength of the poles of a political field as well as the relative dominance of a particular ideology will determine the degree to which political parties can occupy the neutral centre of the field. In times of social upheaval, demands made upon the political field by social groups are increased. Under such circumstances, political parties cannot easily neutralise ideologically based issues through establishing one perspective as common sense. This is because the articulations which would have been made in order

to forge that perspective, no longer appear to fit logically as “common sense” in the face of social unrest.

The number of political parties which occupy a political field with a position of influence in government is also likely to affect the potential for parties to merge ideologically in the neutral centre. To a large extent, this will be determined by the electoral system which governs the dynamics of the political field. Under a system such as first-past-the-post, one political party is likely to form a government. Coalition governments are unlikely and dissenting voices can more easily be marginalised outside the sphere of policy formation. Under a system of proportional representation, however, minor parties can have direct influence in government. This means that a greater range of social representation is possible with a corresponding greater range of voices heard within the political field. Many of these voices will be dissenting voices which render political consensus difficult.

A merging of political opponents in a central position is considered more likely to occur when a country is in a period of political stability, free from political turmoil. A lack of a clear ideological differentiation between political opponents, however, raises concerns for the democratic process. One of the principle concerns is that citizens fail to participate in politics, thus effectively removing themselves from the public sphere (Mouffe, 1993):

liberal democracy [or other forms of radical democracy] calls for the constitution of collective identities around clearly differentiated positions and the possibility of choosing real alternatives .... [A lack of

binary (or multiple) opposition] means that the current blurring of political frontiers between Left and Right is harmful for democratic politics, as it impedes the constitution of distinctive political identities. This in turn fosters disaffection towards political parties and discourages participation in the political process. (p. 5)

In line with Mouffe's observation that a lack of clearly differentiated alternative representatives in the political field results in a lack of political participation by citizens in the public sphere, the United States, where catch-all parties dominate, records the lowest rate of voter participation (40%) of any democratic country in the world (Gans, 1988; Reilly, 1996).

Political parties which merge in a central position in order to maximise their role as representative of multiple interests in a socially diverse civil society are known as "catch-all" parties (Haeusler & Hirsch, 1989). As other parties also seek to maximise the range of voters' interests they represent, differentiation between the parties becomes difficult, especially on ideological grounds as Left/Right positioning becomes blurred. More and more issues, as they gain social capital in social fields (Bourdieu, 1991), are drawn into the political field in an effort to transform social capital into political capital. As each party seeks to turn that political capital to its own advantage, the issues can become neutralised in the centre of the political field.

In an effort to maintain differentiation within a political field characterised by a strong, neutral centre and relatively weak poles, the parties of the centre are likely turn to personal attributes. Characteristics such as

“honesty” or “integrity” cannot be drawn into the political field from social fields as they cannot be contested as issues on an ideological basis. That is, they can’t be drawn into arguments of Left versus Right. If they cannot be thus contested, they cannot be neutralised in a political centre. As Mouffe (1993) says, a divergence of political positions and interests “can too easily be replaced by a confrontation between non-negotiable moral values and essentialist identities” (p. 6).

While it may be contended that catch-all parties are becoming less viable in an increasingly heterogeneous society (Haeusler & Hirsch, 1989), they are still a strong feature of Western democracies. Their continued viability is dependent upon “the existence of a stable ‘hegemonial structure’ that in turn is based on the compatibility of social experiences and political forms of interest regulation” (ibid. p. 311). It is also dependent, as discussed above, upon an electoral system which marginalises the voices of smaller, more narrowly focused political parties.

The formation of catch-all parties, defined by Kirchheimer (1966), without ideologically differentiated positions is but one of the features of the process termed Americanisation or modernisation of politics, particularly of political campaigns (Kavanagh, 1995; Swanson & Mancini, 1996). This process, discussed in the following section, is the focus of a large percentage of political science and political communication based research internationally, but particularly from within the USA. A review of the literature detailing that research is necessary for the empirical analysis of this thesis. To date,

however, that research has not been socially, historically and politically contextualised within a critical analytical framework.<sup>1</sup>

## **The modernisation of political campaigns**

There are numerous factors other than the formation of catch-all parties which contribute to the Americanisation process, a process which Haeusler and Hirsch (1989) describe as “reducing the party to an ‘election machine’ or political PR agency, personalising and depoliticising politics” (p. 321). The process, however, is manifest to greater or lesser degrees in individual democratic nations, often independently of direct influence from the United States (Kavanagh, 1995; Mancini & Swanson, 1996). Hence, Swanson and Mancini (1996), among others, conclude that the term “modernisation” is a more appropriate one for the process than is “Americanisation”.

The other factors which characterise the modernisation of electoral politics include, as suggested above, a tendency towards a personalisation of political campaigns whereby the campaign focus is on personalities rather than issues and/or whereby individuals conduct their own campaigns

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the use of the term “critical” in this thesis coincides with its use by critical discourse analysts who emphasise that in order for an analysis to be critical, it must be socially, culturally, and politically contextualised (Fairclough, 1992; 1995; van Dijk, 1994a; 1994b). Not all discourse analysis is critical in this sense. The same can be said of rhetorical analysis which is commonly applied in the analysis of political discourse (for example, Jamieson, 1992; Kiewe & Houck, 1991).

independently, or at least relatively so, of political parties; a reduction in the influence of political parties; the professionalisation of campaigning techniques brought about by the influence of advertising and public relations consultants who have an increasing degree of influence, not just in the formation of campaign advertising but in overall campaign strategy (Franklin, 1994; Wernick, 1991); and the structuring of campaign agendas around those of the mass media, particularly television (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Franklin, 1994; Kavanagh, 1995; Mancini & Swanson, 1996; Scammell, 1995; Semetko, 1991).

Although a feature of political campaigns world-wide, the personalisation of political campaigns is particularly evident in those countries, such as the United States, which operate under a system of primaries. The 1992 presidential campaign of Ross Perot who used his private resources to run as an independent candidate is an extreme example of such a campaign (Lemert, Elliot, Rosenberg, & Bernstein, 1996). Generally, campaigns which are run under a first-past-the-post electoral system tend to be more personalised than those under systems of proportional representation (Mazzoleni, 1996). This is because voters place a vote for an individual rather than a political party, even though their choice may be driven by party loyalty. When individual candidates do use their own resources to run their own individual campaigns, it is often at the expense of the political influence of political parties (Mazzoleni, 1996; Swanson & Mancini, 1996). However, the ongoing importance of political parties at an organisational level and

identification with parties as a basis for political loyalty should not be ignored (Mayhew, 1997). In many countries, particularly those, like New Zealand, with a system of proportional representation, the centrality of political parties in the electoral process is not in dispute.

The increasing dominance of television as a medium for reaching potential voters has clearly been a further influence in the trend towards the personalisation of politics and political campaigns. Television is, of course, highly visual by nature and lends itself best to images rather than the detailed treatment of issues which is better handled by the print media (Dahlgren, 1995). The capacity of written and spoken language to construct “reality” is rendered more powerful when it is reinforced by visual images (Jamieson, 1992). Television also, importantly, has the capacity to deliver the subject, in this case the political candidate, directly and personally to the voter via the screen (Swanson & Mancini, 1996). From a democratic perspective, television allows the political candidate or party to address the voter within the private sphere (Garnham, 1990), thus by-passing the open, interactive arenas of the public sphere.

Politicians today must be trained in the use of television. Speeches are often written with a view to delivering “sound bites” to news media, particularly television, as it is those short, memorable phrases which are likely to be chosen by editors for inclusion in news coverage (Franklin, 1994; Jones, 1995). Events are staged with television in mind, providing visually appealing or otherwise visually significant links between politicians, their messages and

their voters. However, many of these apparently modern techniques of political campaigning were in use well before the introduction of television. Political candidates have long employed professional consultants in the structuring of their campaigns and in the construction of images and slogans to run highly personalised campaigns (Gitlin, 1991; Mayhew, 1997; Rosenbaum, 1997; Scammell, 1995). The media then used for the dissemination of the messages were posters and cartoons.

Although the evidence of early professionalisation of electoral campaigning is clear, it is also true that since the advent of television and more refined polling techniques, especially from the late 1970s, the degree of professionalisation has increased enormously (Mayhew, 1997). Today there are specialists in public relations, advertising, opinion polling, direct mail, computerisation and media - consultants whose analytical techniques have become increasingly sophisticated (Levine, 1995; Semetko, 1991; Tiffen, 1989). As Wernick (1991) puts it, "promotion has been drawn into the heart of the [campaigning] process" (p.135). Advertisers and public relations consultants are now involved at all stages of campaign strategy.

The professionalisation of politics is of key concern to Bourdieu (1991) who regards the process as contributing to the increasing dispossession of inhabitants of social space as they forfeit their political voice to the professionals of the political field. Bourdieu equates the professionalisation of politics with a "rationalisation" of political competence, facilitated by

“rational techniques, such as opinion polls, public relations and political marketing” (p. 177) which disregard class interests.

Discourse technologists are described as communication professionals who use data from social science research to strategically modify the discourse practices of targeted discourse consumers (Fairclough, 1989; 1992; 1995). Fairclough (*ibid.*) includes advertisers as examples of discourse technologists. Public relations practitioners can similarly be included (Motion & Leitch, 1996). In the case of political campaigns, discourse technologists use data from opinion polls, focus groups and demographic sciences to articulate campaign messages with voter discourses and concerns. In this way the technologists facilitate the integration of issues from social fields (or civil society) into the political field in such a way that they will generate political capital for their political clients.

The degree to which discourse technologists can disseminate party or candidate messages through election advertising is clearly limited by the relevant legislation of different countries. In some countries, such as Great Britain, no paid political advertising is allowed on television and radio (Blumler, Kavanagh, & Nossiter, 1996) while in others, such as the United States, there is no limit (*ibid.*). Still others, such as New Zealand, work within strictly limited campaign spending allowances. In most democratic countries, however, political advertising exists in some form, and global patterns have emerged. Well established, for example, is the technique of negative advertising which, although disliked by voters, is considered easier if not more effective

than the positive (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Diamond & Bates, 1992; Jamieson, 1992; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991; Maarek, 1995; Tiffen, 1989). The US presidential campaign of 1988 is considered to have reached the peak of negative political advertising and is often the departure point for discussions of the implications of such advertising (e.g. Jamieson, 1992; Lemert et al., 1996). The same campaign is also reported for the way in which the mass media amplified the negative advertisements by replaying them during news casts, in many ways signifying the success of the advertising strategy in media manipulation (Jamieson, 1992; Kern, 1989; Lemert et al., 1996; Scammell, 1995). Ansolabehere (1995) reported finding that negative or “attack” advertisements are so disliked by voters that they act to suppress voter turnout and that “they can be, and are, used strategically for this purpose”, suggesting that “negative advertising may pose a serious antidemocratic threat” (p. 9).

Political television advertising also tends to focus on images, though with careful interaction between the visual and aural components of the advertisements. It is in this way that issues are frequently personified with a candidate becoming linked to a personified entity such as crime (Kern, 1989). Levine maintains that “the most persuasive advertising in recent presidential elections is ... ads that fuse together images and issues, using powerful symbols that enable voters to discern the different general policy orientations of the candidates” (Levine, 1995, p. 40). Levine also maintains that election critics focus on “the rise of the professionally mediated televised campaign”

and fail to recognise that although “campaign strategists and advertising consultants continue to portray presidential candidates as embodying desirable personal leadership attributes” they do also “utilise *both* personal image ads and more substantively based ads. Different appeals are used to reach different markets of voters” (ibid. p. 288). Stokes distinguishes between positional issues (which relate to government actions) and valence issues (which refer more generally to a condition, positively or negatively valued, such as prosperity or corruption) (Stokes, 1966; Tiffen, 1989). It is valence issues which are more commonly used in electoral campaigning and “presentations are increasingly cloaked in appealing imagery” (Tiffen, 1989, p. 142).

Modern television advertising techniques, and the images constructed with them, are now readily transferred to print with the advent of digital media. Hence the full page advertisements which feature in news papers are frequently taken directly from the television versions and are designed to repeat and reinforce the images of the former. It is now rare to find large print advertisements which feature large amounts of wording: “In short, the advent of television has allowed quite new forms of political advertising in which images matter more than words” (Ward, 1995, p. 185).

Image is also an important precept for election campaigning generally. Prior to the development of campaign strategy, an image is decided upon and used as a basis for the building of an identity of a candidate or party. “The image is crafted through the media by emphasising certain personality traits of the candidate, as well as stressing various issues .... The outcome of this is the

development of a ‘position’ for the candidate” (Newman, 1994, p. 12). This description of the positioning of a candidate can also be aligned with Bourdieu’s (1991) concept, discussed above, of the adoption of a particular stance within the political field. In the political field polarised by Left and Right, those candidates or parties which adopt a stance (or stances) only in the neutral centre do not overtly differentiate themselves on Left/Right determined issues. They are then likely to position themselves by issues outside the political field, such as personalities, as described by Newman.

The adoption of a particular stance or position, both within and without the political field, is generally based upon an analysis of public opinion. Or, in Bourdieu’s (1991) terms, it is based upon the potential for maximising political capital. Facilitating this “has been the increasing application to the analysis of voter preference and intentions of techniques developed in the field of market research” (Wernick, 1991, p. 136). The application of such techniques is the work of discourse technologists (Fairclough, 1995a; 1989; 1992), discussed above.

The long held understanding of marketers and public relations practitioners of the notion of diverse publics (Grunig & Repper, 1992; Grunig & Hunt, 1984) is put to use with the targeting of messages tailored to specific audiences (Levine, 1995; Newman, 1994). Consistent with the notion of political candidates or parties occupying multiple subject positions in order to maximise their identification with multiple publics, discussed above, Levine observes of the United States presidential campaigns that they:

do not seek to present a single image of a candidate to the entire nation. Instead, campaign consultants use computer analyses of voter demographics in order to determine how a candidate will be marketed to different segments of the polity. Satellite hook-ups allow the candidate to “appear” before various groups of voters around the country, with messages tailored to each audience (1995, p. 37).

Such technology clearly facilitates the formation and extension of catch-all parties as they seek not only to maintain links with their traditional voters but also to extend their appeal as representatives of as wide and diverse a range of social groups as possible (Haeusler & Hirsch, 1989).

Highly specialised computer demographic software is employed to disseminate messages to various “market segments” through other means such as direct mail, telephone or video distribution (Maarek, 1995; Newman, 1994; Scammell & Semetko, 1995). Tracking polls are undertaken at regular intervals to monitor campaign effectiveness and, in marginal constituencies, the development of voting preferences (Rosenbaum, 1997). Indeed, such polls are continued between campaign periods in what has been termed the permanent campaign (Scammell, 1995).

Market research techniques also include the use of focus groups for the pretesting of messages and to isolate issues of concern and preference as well as trends. Focus groups comprise “members of key voting groups, both to test potential media ads and to uncover potential ‘hot-button’ issues that a campaign can exploit” (Levine, 1995, p. 37). The success of these groups is

derived from increasingly sophisticated analytical methods “especially the marriage of more qualitative probing in small groups with ... quantitative mapping of the electorate, and the speed of such analysis [which] allows immediate feedback, and so quick political responses” (Tiffen, 1989, p. 139).

The extensive use of polling and of pre-testing through focus groups has significant implications for democracy, particularly in relation to the public sphere. Mayhew (1997) expresses concern that “it is pretesting that removes the shaping of public debate from the public arena and locates it instead in the research designs of professional political experts” (p. 215). By privately simulating discussions which might otherwise occur publicly, focus groups can allow researchers to “avoid unanticipated negative responses or reinterpretations of carefully planned campaign messages” (ibid. p. 216).

Of concern to Bourdieu, and more broadly to democratic theory, is the unequal distribution of resources in the production of political discourse. As ordinary citizens become further removed from the source of production, i.e. the politicians themselves, because of the highly developed professionalisation of political discourse, there is an increasing risk of public opinion being formed on the basis of misunderstood messages (Bourdieu, 1991). An unequal distribution of resources amongst professionals within the political field can lead to the privileging of certain messages over others. Similarly, an unequal distribution of resources within social fields privileges particular individuals and groups in the accumulation of economic, cultural and social capital. Capital accrued in social fields can be transferred to the political field as political

capital in the form of direct influence in the production of public policy.

Capital in social fields can also be used to mobilise public opinion within the public sphere in order to indirectly (through the power of votes) influence public policy. The interrelationships within and between social space and a political field can be seen to be highly complex. The complexity grows as increasing numbers of social groups seek political influence. Concerns, however, that professionals within political fields, as well as social fields, can successfully manipulate the formation of public opinion assume malleable recipients (Scammell, 1995, p. 20). They also endorse an entirely pessimistic view of the potential for the existence of a Habermasian public sphere where opinions can be formed by citizens based upon rational, informed discussion, as described above.

An analysis of the consumption of political party messages by citizens, or by political journalists whom Bourdieu includes as professionals within the political field, is beyond the scope of this study. There are indications, however, that through discussion in the public sphere, New Zealand citizens formed opinions independently of political public relations efforts during the 1996 election campaigns (Roper, 1999a).

Voters and researchers alike need to look beyond the catch phrases of campaigns, which are designed to capture media and voter attention, to the stances taken by the contestants within the political field. Even in times of relative political stability, with an apparent convergence of political candidates and parties to the centre of the political field, it is possible to find ideological

differentiation. For example, if a political party, along with its competitors, proclaims that it aims to reduce poverty, how does it say it will achieve this end? Will it happen through greater welfare provision, higher minimum wages or through enforced work? The answer can indicate a stance in the political field in relation to Left and Right.

Fairclough (1992) asserts that techniques of critical discourse analysis should be taught to all school pupils in order to empower them to understand the ideological constructs hidden behind public relations techniques of discourse production. This study employs critical discourse analysis to identify the stances or positions adopted and the discourses constructed by political parties within the political field during the New Zealand general election of 1996. The following chapter explains the methodology of critical discourse analysis.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **METHODOLOGY AND METHOD**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The primary research question which drove this research was: “How did the five main political parties of the political field in New Zealand, 1996, discursively position themselves and their opponents during the 1996 general election campaign?” The political field is, amongst other things, a field of discursive struggle, and so its analysis is closely related to the theme of language and symbolic power. For this reason, critical discourse analysis, as described below, was considered an appropriate analytic tool for seeking an answer to the research question posed.

As indicated in the previous chapter, critical discourse analysis was employed in order to identify the stances adopted by each of the five political parties which successfully contested the election . A critical analysis of each party’s discourse also facilitated the identification and understanding of the strategic function of text construction in the context of the election campaigns. The approach to critical discourse analysis applied in this study was that of Norman Fairclough (Fairclough, 1993; 1995a; 1995b; 1989; 1992).

Because of the large volume and comprehensive nature of the set of texts analysed in this project, an initial coding of the texts by thematic analysis (Owen, 1984) was carried out, as described further below.

This chapter provides a description of the methodology of critical discourse analysis, followed by an explanation of thematic analysis, as applied in this study. The chapter then provides functional details of the method by which the study was carried out. It itemises the specific campaign texts which were collected for analysis and the limitations of that collection.

### **Critical discourse analysis**

Fairclough (1995a) views discourse as “use of language seen as a form of social practice” (p. 7). It is the analysis of language within a socio-political and cultural context which provides the “critical” element to the analysis. He describes critical discourse analysis as:

discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 135).

Fairclough offers, therefore, a three dimensional approach to discourse analysis by which text (written or spoken, in the Hallidayan tradition, and including the visual elements of text) is analysed in conjunction with the discourse practices

by which it was created and with the social (socio-political, socio-cultural or institutional) practices which shaped its creation. The three dimensions are not separate dimensions but must be used integrally. The primary focus of analysis, however, will be at the level or levels most relevant to the research or research questions and will shape the nature of the analysis. Each of the three dimensions of analysis is by no means distinct, with each necessarily overlapping with the others. For example, a political advertisement can be regarded as a piece of text. It can also be regarded as a particular discourse practice, in the sense of genre, primarily designed to be persuasive in its argument.

This three dimensional approach to discourse - social practice, discourse practice and text - is particularly useful in the analysis of political discourse because it provides a means and rationale for moving beyond text to the ideology found both in the text and behind the production of the text. The three dimensions of Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis are each described in turn below.

### **Analysis of discourse as social practice**

Social practices will strongly influence the ways in which reality is both understood and constructed, according to the socio-political, institutional, and cultural beliefs of the producer of written or spoken texts. Because they are so strongly influenced by fundamental beliefs of what constitutes "common sense" (Fairclough, 1992; Hall, 1988a), texts are ideologically invested. That is, each ideological position has a specific view of reality which will shape discourse

production (Parker, 1992). The consumption, or understanding, of texts is similarly influenced by the social practices of the text consumer whose own ideological position also provides a specific view of reality. Thus the relationship between producers and consumers of discourse is not uni-directional, but works dialectically.

The analysis of discourse as social practice recognises that discourse is socially constructed as well as being socially constitutive. That is, a particular view of reality will shape a particular discourse, but, on the other hand, the dissemination and promotion of a particular reality through discourse can, in effect, shape or maintain social belief in that reality.

Social practices may include the experiences and relationships of an individual or group within particular economic, political and institutional settings as well as the values and beliefs held by the individual which are, in large part, determined by those experiences. Analysis at this level, “may refer to different levels of social organisation - the context of the situation, the institutional context, and the wider societal context” (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 134). For the purposes of this study, a knowledge of the political and social history of a particular political candidate or party can reveal the ideological and strategic perspective of their campaign texts. Similarly, a knowledge of the wider socio-political context of their campaign discourse allows the analyst to understand the texts in relation to the political and social fields in which they were produced and disseminated.

### **Analysis of discourse as discourse practice**

Within his model of critical discourse analysis, Fairclough describes discourse practices as the means of production, distribution and consumption of texts (Fairclough, 1995a; 1989; 1992). At one level, “production” and “distribution” can be analysed as purely mechanical functions - for example, the employment of an advertising agency to produce an advertisement or the publication of that advertisement in a newspaper. At another level, however, analysis of discourse practices is very much more subtle and can only be effected through the traces which those practices leave embedded in texts. It is, in that case, the very subtlety of the nature of the discourse practice which blurs the distinctions between the dimensions of the model, as described below.

One important example of a discourse practice which Fairclough describes as embedded in text, is the challenging or changing of a particular order of discourse. Orders of discourse are socio-culturally, politically and/or institutionally determined. They constitute a set of beliefs which determine the nature and range of discourse practices within that particular discursive domain, or order of discourse. The beliefs, and, therefore, the discourse practices, of an order of discourse are not absolute nor fixed but are constantly under challenge. Fairclough (1993) draws a parallel between the shifting nature of an order of discourse and the concept of hegemony:

Hegemony is a more or less partial and temporary achievement, an “unstable equilibrium” which is a focus of struggle, open to

disarticulation and rearticulation. This seems to me to be also not an inappropriate description of an order of discourse, which can itself be seen as one domain of potential cultural hegemony (p. 137).

Thus an attempt, usually strategic, to alter or influence the beliefs - or, to use Fairclough's (1995a, p. 79) term, "ideological dilemmas" - which determine an order of discourse can be understood as a discourse practice (ibid.). Control over discourse practices can usefully be seen in terms of hegemonic struggles over orders of discourse. A change in an order of discourse can be further analysed as indicative of social change in the broader societal context.

A common means of effecting change in an order of discourse is the use of interdiscursivity, a discourse practice which manifests itself in text. It is through the practice of interdiscursivity that elements of particular orders of discourse - Fairclough (1992) uses the example of genres - are used within another order of discourse, effecting a rearticulation or transformation of one of those orders. As Fairclough (ibid.) states:

discourse as a political practice is not only a site of power struggle, but also a stake in power struggle: discursive practice draws upon conventions which naturalise particular power relations and ideologies, and these conventions themselves, and the ways in which they are articulated, are a focus of struggle (p. 67).

The extent to which interdiscursivity can be creatively applied is limited only by the effectiveness (i.e. the degree to which it is hegemonic by virtue of its

being accepted as “common sense”) of the pre-existing order of discourse (ibid.).

Orders of discourse can also be maintained or changed through the process of intertextuality, which is closely related to that of interdiscursivity. Fairclough (1992) regards intertextuality as a key practice in discursive struggle. As the term suggests, intertextuality refers to the transference of texts from one domain to another. The term “text” refers both to written scripts and to verbal utterances, no matter how small. A text is constructed intertextually by “being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth” (ibid. p. 84). An analysis of intertextuality thus reveals the historicity of texts.

Fairclough draws a distinction between “manifest intertextuality” where the appropriation of other texts is overt, and “constitutive intertextuality” which Fairclough regards as synonymous with interdiscursivity because it acts to transform or maintain an order of discourse. A set of political advertisements, in an example of manifest intertextuality, may draw sequentially upon each other, re-applying key images and slogans developed in previous advertisements to new advertisements in order to strengthen the impact of the overall campaign messages. The same advertisements, in an example of constitutive intertextuality, might also refer to specific historical events in order to draw upon established connotations and social constructions associated with those events. In New Zealand, 1996, a

political party which advocated a free market approach to the provision of social services might refer intertextually to a well-known example of failure of the government to provide such services. This example would also work interdiscursively, providing a rationale for the dominance of free market discourse. Thus the process of intertextuality can work, though the construction of new texts, to effect change. Fairclough's particular interest in the concept of intertextuality is that it can be used to trace processes of social change.

Discursive practices are also the processes by which text is consumed. This means that interpretation of discourse practices, along with the texts produced thereby, is subject to the social and discourse practices of the interpreter. The social and discourse practices of consumers are beyond the scope of this study and, therefore, are not analysed. What is observed, however, is the range of discourse practices employed in order to target specific discourse consumers. The practice of targeting is made more complex and difficult by the fact that consumers are situated within multiple orders of discourse by virtue of the fact that they can occupy multiple subject positions simultaneously (Fairclough, 1992, see also chapter two).

### **Analysis of discourse as text**

Analysis at this level is influenced by the disciplines of linguistics and semiotics. It focuses primarily upon the formal features of texts while, at the same

time, assuming that the particular construction of a text is socially motivated. As Fairclough (1992) noted, “there are social reasons for combining particular signifiers with particular signifieds” (p. 75).

Fairclough stresses the importance of analysis of the “texture” (after Halliday and Hasan) of texts which moves beyond the linguistic level to include analysis of the intertextual properties of text, the selective drawing upon of other orders of discourse to allow for alternative interpretations. In textual analysis these features are, then, the result of specific discourse practices.

At the level of vocabulary, Fairclough describes a hierarchy of meanings which can be ascribed to given words and which is inextricably linked to socio-cultural practices both of the author of the particular text and its interpreter. The particular words may be the same but the connotative associations are changed (Barthes, 1973; Fairclough, 1992; Hall, 1982; Silverman, 1983; Williams, 1976). The struggle is for dominance of meaning. The hierarchical order of meaning may be altered from one text to another and may, in this way, be indicative of social struggle and, ultimately, change (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 88).

A useful tool in ascertaining which meanings of words (and, hence, which ideological investments) are predominant in particular texts is that of cluster criticism (Burke, 1966) by which the meaning ascribed to a word is determined by its context - by examining the other words which are associated or “clustered” with it. Each salient word is drawn out of a text and interpreted according to its use in relation to other words. Others have used a similar technique under the name of keyword analysis (Edelman, 1974; Leitch, 1990; Williams, 1985).

Also important in textual analysis is what is not stated. For example, it may be politically expedient to omit all but one of a range of interpretations of a given situation. Other interpretations, while potentially valid, may counter the desired discursive construction of that situation. Closely linked with textual absences are meanings which are implicit but left for the reader or listener to provide. Very often implicit meanings are based on assumptions of what constitutes “common sense”. Discourse can be manipulated to establish one meaning as common sense in the hierarchy of meanings. From another perspective, in analysing political discourse there is a logic behind looking for ground which is not contested between opposing parties as well as that which is contested. A shift in what is or is not commonly accepted (by voters and politicians) will probably be indicative/evidence of social change, manifest in a change in the political field.

A discursive event such as an election campaign brings ideological struggles into sharp focus. The mandate to exercise power in government is an overt objective of the campaign. However, it is also a struggle over the formation of orders of discourse - for example, the economy or, more specifically, the economic system. Such a system is ideologically invested within a political field in terms of Left and Right, as theorised in chapter two.

As stated above, the distinctions between the three dimensions of Fairclough’s model of critical discourse analysis are not clear. In applying the model to this study I have followed Fairclough’s (1992) own prescription for the division of analytical topics between text analysis and analysis of discourse practice, according to the relative salience of each category in the analysis. Thus, in some

cases, texts will be analysed under the category of discourse practices in terms of the strategies underlying their construction and dissemination. In other cases, salient features of text production will be analysed under the category of textual analysis, with specific reference to the ways in which the strategies are manifest in text. The analysis of the mechanical features of the discourse practices of the National and Labour Parties, in particular, was facilitated by extensive interviews with campaign managers both prior to and after the election. For this reason, the discourse practices sections of chapters four and five are primarily concerned with those overt practices, while the more subtle analysis of discourse practices, as they are embedded in text, is described in the textual analysis sections.

### **Thematic analysis**

Fairclough's method of critical discourse analysis is most relevant to a small number of discourse samples (Fairclough, 1992). The body of texts which comprised the sum of the campaign texts of the five political parties which contested the 1996 general election in New Zealand was very large. A means of reducing the amount of text to be subjected to a close textual analysis was required. The solution was, in part, provided by Fairclough's (*ibid.*) suggestion that the whole set of texts be initially coded in terms of topics or particular sorts of feature (p. 230). However, Fairclough does not provide a specific means by which coding should be carried out.

One method which usefully provides a means of initial coding of a large number of texts is thematic analysis (Owen, 1984). Owen applied thematic

analysis in a study of interpersonal relationships, but the method is suitable for a much wider range of applications.

Owen notes a theme in discourse when any one of three criteria were present in the text being analysed: recurrence, repetition or forcefulness. Recurrence can be noted when at least two parts of a text (or a set of texts) have “the same thread of meaning, even though different wording indicate[s] such a meaning” (ibid. p. 275). The criterion of repetition is noted when key words, phrases or sentences are repeated. The third criterion of forcefulness is primarily applied to the oral form of texts and, therefore, was of limited use in this study. Forcefulness can, however, be implied or discerned in particular emphatic features of text, such as an apparent emphasis on a negative within a sentence.

A key criterion, however, applied in the selection of relevant samples within the total body of texts collected for this study was not used by Owen. It was, in principle, suggested by Fairclough (1992), who advocated that the particular piece of text should offer an insight to the answer of the key research question which the entire study set out to determine. As stated above, in the case of this study the key question was: “How did the five main political parties of the political field in New Zealand, 1996, discursively position themselves and their opponents during the 1996 general election campaign?” Samples of texts which, in some way, offered a perspective to the answer to this question were isolated for closer analysis.

## **THE CAMPAIGN TEXTS**

The length of the official general election campaign period in New Zealand is six weeks. From September 1, 1996 until election day, October 12, 1996 the following texts disseminated by each of the five leading political parties (National, Labour, New Zealand First, Act and The Alliance) were collected for analysis:

press releases

transcripts of speeches

television and newspaper advertisements

brochures

billboards (photographed)

free to air Party Political Broadcasts (PPBs)

In the cases of National and Act, campaign newsletters distributed to candidates and members were also collected.

These published texts were supplemented by interviews with the campaign managers of each political party which were taped and transcribed for analysis. The exception was New Zealand First which declined to allow any interview with its campaign management staff. In the cases of National and Labour, two interviews were conducted with the campaign managers: one early in 1996 and the second after the election. The Alliance campaign manager was interviewed prior to, but was not available for a further interview after, the election. In the case of Act, insight was provided anonymously by a

regional campaign manager prior to the election, while after the election two national level campaign managers were jointly interviewed.

For the insights provided by media commentators and for the collection of direct statements made to journalists by election candidates, the following newspapers were closely monitored throughout 1996 until the end of October:

*The Dominion*

*The New Zealand Herald*

*The Waikato Times*

*The Sunday Star Times*

The first three newspapers listed are regional daily papers whose combined circulation extends throughout the North Island of New Zealand and the upper half of the South Island. The *Sunday Star Times* is a weekly newspaper, distributed nationally.

The texts were all initially coded according to Owen's criteria for thematic analysis and according to their ability to contribute to the answering of the key research question, as described above. Critical discourse analysis was then used to analyse the sections of each text thus selected. This process allowed the elimination of those relatively few texts which were primarily functional in nature, such as those which gave details of the daily schedules of candidates' meetings. It also allowed the findings of the textual analysis to be grouped, where appropriate, according to each theme which emerged in the parties' discourse.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE NATIONAL PARTY CAMPAIGN

This chapter draws on two interviews with the National Party campaign director: one before the election and the second post-election. The chapter also draws on National's principle campaign texts: press releases, speeches, advertisements, party political broadcasts (PPBs), and party campaign newsletters.

Fairclough (1995a) stated that “the analysis of the discursive event as social practice may refer to different levels of social organisation - the context of situation, the institutional context, and the wider societal context (p. 134). The social practices section of this chapter, therefore, explores National's socio-political and institutional history, providing an historical context for the development of National's institutional beliefs and practices. The section also outlines the socio-political and economic context of New Zealand in 1996, including the advent of MMP. The social practices section thus explores the context in which National tempered its neo-liberal economic policies by embracing, at least to some extent, some of its political opponents' policies in order to neutralise them in the centre of the political field, as theorised in chapter two. National's sharing, in part, of social policies with parties of the Left, combined with its embracing of neo-liberal economic policies of the Right,

positioned National at the centre-right of the political field. This was a position traditionally held by National, although the nature of the position is always a negotiated one (see chapter two).

The interviews were of primary importance in the discourse practices section as they provided valuable information regarding the mechanisms set in place for the formation and distribution of key party campaign messages, as well as insight to the strategies and tactics which drove the message production and distribution. The discourse practices section of National's campaign looks at National's use of campaign methods, such as polling combined with sophisticated demographic software to construct and specifically target its campaign messages.

The analysis of the campaign texts provided evidence of National's discursive positioning of itself as well as its (re)positioning of its political opponents. The textual analysis section demonstrates how National's social practices and discourse practices shaped its campaign texts. Traces in the texts provided clear evidence of tensions between National's neo-liberal economic agenda and its concessions to government provision of core social services. The tensions were apparent both in National's self positioning and in its (re)positioning of others.

## **NATIONAL'S SOCIAL PRACTICES**

The National Party, as New Zealand's conservative political party, has traditionally adopted a stance in the centre right of the political field. The party has held office for longer and more frequent terms than any other party since 1949. Its key opponent under the first-past-the-post electoral system, the New Zealand Labour Party, had held office intermittently during that time, for only two, single, isolated terms until 1984 and then for a double term from 1984 until 1990. Over the period from 1949 in New Zealand, the nature of the political field had changed considerably. Of particular note is that "centre" had shifted from one of Keynesian social democracy to a dominance of free market economics (Bertram, 1997; Jesson, 1999.). National lost office in 1984 when its leader, Sir Robert Muldoon, who was noted for his rigid adherence to traditional Keynesian economic principles, was forced to call a snap election (Vowles & Aimer, 1993). As described in chapter five, Labour then set about introducing a series of radical neo-liberal economic reforms, including the privatisation of state owned assets. National resumed office in 1990. From 1990, National had continued with the economic reforms introduced by the Labour Government, taking them even further with a radical restructuring of labour relations and employment law effected by the introduction of the Employment Contracts Act (Kelsey, 1997). By the time of the 1996 general election, National had held office for six years and was yet again

in a position to contest an election from the position of incumbency (Trent & Friedenber, 1995).

As the incumbent governing party National should, theoretically, have been in a dominant position over the other election contenders (ibid.). The fact that the country's economy was demonstrably strong would, prior to 1996, have served very much to strengthen National's dominance. However, there were other socio-political factors which influenced National's power base. In 1993, while National had been returned to Government as the party with the most seats, opposition parties had together won 61% of the vote. In addition, voters then opted for the 1996 introduction of MMP, a system which would not allow National to govern alone with such limited support.

During its term in Government from 1993 until 1996, National lost its majority as several of its MPs deserted the party to either join other parties or to form new ones in anticipation of the introduction of MMP. In order to retain power, National was forced into a coalition agreement with one of these new parties, United New Zealand. As *The Dominion* put it: "The wreckage of National's near defeat on election night 1993 and the verdict in favour of MMP kicked the props out from any certainties Mr Bolger may have clung to" (Laugesen, 1996d). *The Dominion's* comment could equally apply to certainties both of Bolger's leadership and of National's political dominance. Rumours of a

desire within National's caucus to replace Bolger were carefully downplayed but his survival was clearly dependent upon a successful election campaign.

The combined socio-political factors of the uncertainties of a new political environment; a voting public that was clearly disaffected, and its own incumbency, led National to run a campaign that was as much self defensive as self positioning. In its positioning of other parties, however, National's campaign was aggressively negative. This, too, was a practice shaped by the uncertainty and vulnerability of National's hold on power.

The areas in which National was vulnerable to attack were clearly those of social issues, notably health, education, housing and social welfare. Yet newspapers consistently reported that health and education were considered by voters to be the most important issues of the election. Unpopular health reforms had been introduced and the waiting lists for hospital treatment were very long; schools and kindergartens were considered underfunded; tertiary students were paying ever increasing fees as Government funding to universities and polytechnics was reduced; market rental rates had been introduced for state housing, regardless of the tenants' income; and social welfare benefits had been cut. Many people considered that these problems were the direct result of National's social practice of an adherence to neo-liberal user pays and free market economic policies (Coney, 1996).

A more pragmatic area of vulnerability for National which had an affect on National's social practices was a lack of natural coalition partners. New Zealand First had not ruled out joining with National after the election to form a government, but it could equally well go into coalition with Labour. Neither Act, United nor the Christian Coalition was ranking consistently highly enough in opinion polls to be assured of reaching the five percent threshold necessary for their votes to be counted. Furthermore, the Christian Coalition was espousing some patently unpopular, and apparently unnegotiable, policies such as tighter restrictions on abortion (Laugesen, 1996a).

National's political vulnerability meant that it had to be very much aware of the nature of public opinion, and prepared to acknowledge, as well as make concessions to, the demands of its target voters. The ways in which National used discourse technologists to research public opinion and use that information to produce and disseminate National's campaign texts are explored in the discourse practices section below, as are the external constraints, such as the electoral system, upon the formation of those texts.

## **NATIONAL'S DISCOURSE PRACTICES**

Consistent with the international phenomenon of campaign modernisation (for example, Swanson & Mancini, 1996), discussed in chapter two, National

utilised modern methods of market research in the construction of its campaign messages; personalised the campaign, wherever possible, by focusing primarily upon Bolger as leader; and used the expertise of international campaign specialists in the construction and targeting of campaign messages. These discourse practices, however, were adapted to the constraints of the political system as appropriate. In this way, the analysis of the discourse practices associated with National's election campaign includes the adoption and execution of campaign tactics as shaped by the particular socio-political context of the campaign.

This section explores the features of campaign modernisation practised in the construction and dissemination of the National Party's campaign texts. In particular, it uses this context to focus on the work of National's discourse technologists (Fairclough, 1995a; 1989; 1992) in the formation and execution of the party's campaign strategies. It also looks at the ways in which the new electoral system of MMP generated tensions between electorate candidates and those candidates standing via the party's list. The electoral system, complicated by the tensions between candidates, had a significant affect upon the production and dissemination of the campaign texts.

### **Party vs electorate campaigning**

MMP fundamentally altered the nature of election campaigning in New Zealand. A new focus was required, one which was aimed at maximising the party

vote. That focus also required a shift in the balance of resources for the dissemination of campaign messages.

Those electorates which previously were considered to be key marginal seats previously had party resources poured into their campaigns. Under MMP the list vote became the priority, leaving all electorate campaigns equally resourced and of secondary importance. This created a tension for those electorate candidates who were not placed high on their party list and whose only hope of entering parliament was via the constituency vote. They were, in effect, being asked to use their private resources to campaign for the party over themselves.

Some of National's electoral candidates were so concerned by the lack of party help that they defied the national campaign management team and produced and distributed their own individual, personalised campaign messages, independently of the national campaign. This was the case in Hamilton East and Hamilton West, both traditionally closely marginal seats. Such individual campaigns were of concern to the National Party, particularly as it was attempting to position itself as the party of stability:

we don't want candidates giving boutique performances - wanting to go out and doing their own thing because that adds no value at all to the overall percentage vote that we need to get and I closely monitor what they are doing .... we've had current MPs who are going to be candidates at the elections who are wanting to have the discretion to do their own thing

and we've said quite clearly, no you're part of a team, we're interested in unity, discipline here and stability. You have to project just as we're doing across the country, because that's what people are looking for, stability. You have to fall into line and there is some resentment to that (Tisch, personal communication, March 9, 1996).

The concerns of constituency candidates were exacerbated when the National Party slogan was changed from "Two Ticks for National" to "First Tick National", to emphasise to voters, who were uncertain about the new electoral system, the primary importance of the party vote. Many constituency candidates opposed the revised slogan because they felt that it even further excluded them from the efforts of the national campaign (Tisch, personal communication, October 30, 1966). It was to reassure the constituency candidates, particularly those in Auckland electorates where polls revealed that Act was taking some of the party vote from National, that the National Party published two advertisements in regional newspapers. The first carried a modified National Party slogan: "First Tick National; But Tick It Twice". The second, published the day before the election, stated that "A vote for any other party is a vote against National". The statements were an example of organisational auto-communication whereby organisations use mass media rather than internal media (such as newsletters) to reinforce and communicate organisational values to its own

members rather than to external publics (Christensen & Cheney, in press).

External, mass media are chosen because the higher status of external media adds value to the message (Christensen & Cheney, in press; Lotman, 1990). Whereas Christensen and Cheney (in press) refer to auto-communication as a means by which organisations can “remind their employees on an ongoing basis about their commitments to the organisation and its customers” (p. 8), in this case it is a means by which political parties can remind candidates (rather than employees) of the parties’ commitments to them. The National party published the advertisements to reassure constituency candidates, as well as those party members who believed that the National campaign was not being proactive enough to try and stop voters from giving their party vote to Act (Tisch, personal communication, October 30, 1996).

The internal differences over campaign strategy and tactical voting presented a further problem for the National Party. The National Party President, Geoff Thompson, was reported as arguing against National supporters’ vote splitting in favour of Act on the grounds that they would split the centre-right vote (for example, 1996f). National’s polling, however, showed that National was not likely to win a clear majority in the election (Tisch, personal communication, October 30, 1996). National did, in fact, want sufficient vote splitting to ensure that Act crossed the five percent threshold required for its votes to be counted. The only other possible way for Act’s votes to be counted was for Act to win at

least one electorate seat. However, National did not want to risk alienating those party members who believed otherwise. Tisch had to reassure those people

that we were taking Act seriously and didn't want them to erode our support, but on the other hand we wanted to make sure that they were going to win either Wellington Central or were going to get five percent ....

All that vote was coming from us anyway and the worst that could happen was that they got 4.9% and didn't win Wellington Central and we lost the centre right vote .... What a lot of people didn't realise was that our job, our strategy was aimed at maximising the centre right vote (ibid.).

Wellington Central, where Act's candidate was its leader, Richard Prebble, was the most likely electorate for Act to win.

As early as April 1996, at a regional meeting of the party, Thompson and Bolger had warned that any potential coalition partners of National must build their own support base and not be allowed to persuade voters to split their votes in the belief that such "political experimentation" would help National (Pepperell, 1996b). However, while the National campaign strategists considered it unwise to overtly endorse the practice of vote splitting in favour of Act, others in the party actively encouraged it. A group of National Party supporters faxed National's candidate for Wellington Central, Mark Thomas, asking him to stand down in favour of Prebble. It was reported that "some ministers were actively, but covertly, supporting the group because an Act win in Wellington Central was

considered vital in guaranteeing a centre-right coalition” (Kominik, 1996b).

National was thus caught, as were other parties, in a transition to a new electoral system which required a fundamental change in campaign strategy to be made by all people, some of whom were unsure of how the new system would work.

Ironically, National had agreed not to stand a candidate for the Ohariu-Belmont electorate in order to help its United New Zealand ally, Peter Dunne. Peter Dunne had strong local support and was, therefore, likely to win the seat in any case.

However, his win was not likely to help National significantly as polls showed that United New Zealand had very little party support and was no longer in a position to be a viable coalition partner.

Until everyone agreed on the campaign strategies required for the changed electoral system, particularly in regard to party lists and the question of tactical voting, political parties had to attempt to appease as many people as possible. For this reason, National refrained from overtly campaigning for Act in any way. However, the day before the election, contrary to their own autocommunication discussed above, Bolger used the news media to disseminate a signal of National Party endorsement of vote splitting in Wellington Central by publicly stating that he thought that Prebble was the most likely candidate to win that seat (Laugesen, 1996b). The intention was that voters should give their constituency vote to Prebble and their party vote to National.

## **Discourse technologisation**

National had a campaign “machine”, a team of discourse technologists (Fairclough, 1995a; 1989; 1992) or communication professionals which utilised data obtained from social science research in the strategic production of the party’s campaign texts. The ultimate authority of the campaign machine, the strategic committee, comprised key members of the National Party as well as its political wing. As is the case in Australia (Mills, 1986; Ward, 1995), the high degree of involvement and influence of National’s political party members was notably in contrast to the campaign modernisation trend of a significant reduction of party influence in favour of individually run campaigns (see chapter two). Lindsay Tisch, National’s campaign manager and a Party member, explained that

we’re very mindful in National that the party input is there, that it’s not dictated to by the politicians - it’s dictated to and has a greater influence by the consultative process that we have within the Party. The Party can feel assured that these things aren’t going to be hoisted on them without the party’s input and the party’s signing off on them (personal communication, March 9, 1996).

National’s central strategic committee received advice and recommendations from communication professionals (advertisers and public relations personnel) and market researchers. It also both received and shared

strategy information with other parties of an international organisation of centre-right political parties, the International Democratic Union. As Tisch explained:

We had the opportunity because we had relationships with other centre-right parties around the world to actually use those people and to get feedback and use them as a resource. Three of our members were in Australia for the Australian elections. I will be going over possibly next week or the week after for the debriefing and of course the [Australian] Liberal party is a member of what we call the International Democratic Union of which the National Party is a member. We have that tie in just as we have for the Republicans in the States and the Conservatives in the UK so we all belong to an organisation of International Democratic Union and we can feed resources from those people in terms of our campaigns (ibid.).

National's use of communication professionals and the international sharing of campaign experience and expertise support current theory of campaign modernisation. However, National found the international advice to be of limited value in the context of New Zealand's new electoral system (ibid.). The co-operating political parties were still campaigning under a first-past-the-post system.

All of National's messages were produced with regard to information gained from market research. Consistent with the findings of, for example, Levine (1995) and Tiffen (1989), between elections National conducted on-going focus

groups and interviews in order to “gather information as to what people perceive, how they perceive our policies how they perceive the direction” (Tisch, personal communication, March 9, 1996). Much of the between election focus group research was what Tisch termed “mood analysis work” in order to ascertain “what changes people’s minds”. It is such on-going market research which turns election campaigns into permanent campaigns (Scammell, 1995). National’s discourse technologists used the knowledge gained from market research to construct the basis of their election campaign which was deliberately negative. As Tisch put it:

People don’t ever change significantly .... So, all we want to be able to do is to break the opposition. That’s what politics is about, not necessarily getting them to buy your brand or what you’re selling. To be able to break the run on the others. That’s what we did (personal communication, October 30, 1996).

Ticsh’s strong use of interdiscursive references to a political market, both above and below, suggests a dominance of a market discourse over political discourse in shaping campaign practices and texts. His use of the word “brand”, in particular, is taken from the marketing order of discourse. The encroachment of the discourse of the market into politics is a widespread phenomenon internationally (see, for example, Franklin, 1994; Kavanagh, 1995; Newman, 1994; Scammell, 1995). Bourdieu’s (1991) key concern regarding the professionalisation

of the political field is that “consumers”, or citizens, because of their relative incompetence for politics, “are all the more dedicated to an unquestioned loyalty to recognised brands and to an unconditional delegating of power to their representatives” (p. 173).

In line with traditional marketing practices, National employed an advertising agency, Mojo, to help construct the campaign’s themes and advertising strategy. The strategy was to be based upon information from their market research:

we said to them this is what the market is telling us. Now you come up with how you would present this if this was a product. So they came up with words, they came up with visuals, and then we took it from there (ibid.).

By commissioning the agency to treat the party as a product, Tisch openly countered his own claim that campaign emphasis was less on party branding than on “break[ing] the run on the others”. However, rather than promoting their own party, the marketing strategy which Mojo proposed, and which National adopted, was a predominantly negative attack against National’s opponents.

Mojo’s campaign presentation to the National Party on July 13, 1996, stated that the “market” was giving National the following key information: The prevailing sentiment of voters was cynicism. Because it was election year, voters were expecting bribes and would not be ready to believe promises. Not only were

voters cynical, they were nervous, and this mood was making them “change-averse”. Voters were looking for stability. While both wanted stability, the notion of stability was found to be manifest in different concerns for males and females. Female voters demonstrated “strong social fabric concerns” while males had “re-emerging economic concerns”. There was also evidence that, generally, voters did not yet understand the importance of their list vote.

The articulations of the market research information with National’s election campaign messages was evident. As demonstrated in the textual analysis section below, National built its platform on the notion of its own stability and attacked its opponents for their inherent instability as well as for the potential instability of their coalition. National also drew strongly on the notion of risk, particularly to the economy under a “left-wing” coalition government. Concerns over the “social fabric” of New Zealand, also demonstrated in the textual analysis section, below, were dealt with by the use of an economic discourse which presented social spending as possible only with a strong economy. Mojo recommended that National “always turn debates to National’s strong suit” - stability and economic management (ibid.), a recommendation which was clearly taken up throughout National’s campaign (see textual analysis, below).

The knowledge of voters’ uncertainty over their list vote was used in National’s campaign slogan, initially “Two Ticks For National” but later changed to “First Tick National”. The reasons for the change are discussed in the previous

section. The level of voter information obtained through ongoing market research enabled National to pre-empt likely voter responses to its election campaign messages. By doing so it was in a position, as Mayhew (1997) suggested, to “avoid unanticipated negative responses or reinterpretations of carefully planned messages” (p. 216). In this way, discourse technology offered National (and other political parties and politicians) the means by which they could produce campaign texts that aimed to avoid the uncontrolled and unwelcome shaping of public opinion in the public sphere (ibid.).

In line with campaign practices internationally (Maarek, 1995; Newman, 1994; Scammell, 1995), information gathered by National from market research was supplemented by census information, available only to political parties, and used to build voter profiles: “We know who’s got a mortgage in the street, we know what sort of income they’re on, how many in the family and whatever but we don’t know what they voted” (Tisch, personal communication, October 30, 1996). These profiles were a key resource, combined with computer demographic software, in the targeting of campaign messages. National’s position in the centre left of the political field meant that the party had to attempt to appeal directly to as broad a range of voters as possible. Only those parties which position themselves further from the centre of the field, because of the greater purity of their discourse, target a narrower and much more specific range of voters (see

chapter two). As Tisch explained, National's targeting became even more important with the change to MMP:

we've been able to identify target groups that respond to or respond against what our policies mean to them and this is what we've always done in the past, but because we're campaigning now over 65 electorates and not say 25 electorates, then, of course, the importance of target segmentation becomes far more important. We can't be all things to all people. We don't have the resources to target every voter but what we can do, of course, we have the technology to be able to do it, we have the sophistication to do it, we can actually target our groups, our target market (personal communication, March 9, 1996).

One of the ways in which National targeted its multiple publics was by drawing on the multiple subject positions (Moffitt, 1994; Motion & Leitch, 1996) held collectively by its candidates. By drawing on multiple subject positions held by individuals, a relatively small group could seek to increase its representation of a wide range of discourses and subject positions occupied in social fields. As detailed in the following section, each key candidate was publicly aligned with at least one subject position which could be directly articulated with one of multiple subject positions held by their target voters.

## **NATIONAL'S TEXTS**

National campaigned, in so far as it was possible under a changing electoral system, by utilising the strengths of its incumbency and by attacking its challengers. As described in the discourse practice section, above, National's discourse technologists constructed National's campaign texts to keep to National's strong suits - stability and a strong economy. These two key precepts underpinned National's key messages and themes which were repeated consistently through its campaign publications, such as press releases, speeches, brochures and party political broadcasts.

This section analyses National's campaign texts to explore the ways in which they were shaped by National's social and discourse practices. In particular, they focus on the textual evidence of compromises National made in its positioning in an attempt to maintain power, and on the ways in which National's key themes of stability and a strong economy were articulated with National's political agenda. Key to National's texts were the ways in which National effected such articulations in order to position itself both in the political field and in relation to voters concerns.

As stated above, National's attempts to "break the run of the opposition" resulted in a strongly negative campaign against its opponents. The negative messages constituted an attempt by National to attribute particular unfavourable positions to opposing candidates and parties. Attributing positions to an

opponent often involved the discursive repositioning of the opponent away from the opponent's preferred position or stance.

### **National's discursive positioning of itself**

This section discusses each of the several themes which emerged in the analysis of National's discursive positioning of itself. The analysis revealed evidence of the ways in which National's social practices influenced its text construction. In particular, National's position within the political field as a party of the centre right meant that National had to appeal to a wide range of voters. It did this by endowing the party with multiple subject positions through the agency of individual candidates. It also attempted to align itself with nationalistic pride.

In order to counter the view that after six years of conservative government and unpopular reforms it was time for a change, National positioned itself as the party of the future, leading New Zealand in a global economy. While National identified itself, by preference, with economic performance, it was also forced to defend its performance in the area of social services. Each of these discursive positionings by National of itself is discussed below.

### **National's multiple subject positions**

National had to campaign defensively to remove itself from an uncaring image. It also had to identify itself with a wide range of voters. This was a key tactic in National's opening PPB where a diverse range of candidates was used explicitly to articulate National's concerns with those of a range of voting sectors. A new list candidate, Patsy Wong, was featured in the subject position of an Asian upset at racist politics; Georgina Te HeuHeu, a new and high ranking list candidate, represented the subject positions of both Maori and woman; Bill English, the Minister of Health, was presented as a caring, family man whose children are part Samoan with a large extended family; Bill Birch, the often unpopular Minister of Finance, was described as someone who "can be tough" but who has a warm heart; and Jenny Shipley was presented as a mother of two as well as a politician. Thus these candidates were collectively presented as the multi-faceted and caring, human face of National. Bolger explained that the new candidates were "hoping to join ... a government remarkable for its stability", further articulating the candidates with the key image of National as the only stable party. Furthermore, National's values were articulated with the traditionally conservative values of family stability.

The candidate who was given major coverage throughout National's PPBs was the Prime Minister. Jim Bolger was presented as family man and statesman in presidential style. Bolger the statesman, was a subject position which had been

developed for him as part of an on-going campaign since the 1993 election. It had been fostered with the help of international visits and involvement in broad issues such as the republicanism of New Zealand and the establishment of a nuclear-free world. All of these tactics served to endow Bolger with an aura of international respectability and wisdom. One notable visit made by Bolger was to South Africa to meet with President Mandela. These activities were well reported in the press although certain ironies did not pass unnoticed. For example, one commentator observed that “It is no matter that National was once the party which supported the need for the nuclear deterrent and which damned Nelson Mandela and his ANC comrades as bush revolutionaries” (Laugesen, 1996d). Almost half of the 30 minute opening PPB was devoted to Bolger. His personal concerns were articulated with those of ordinary people with families by presenting him in the subject position of head of a large family. A voice over explained: “that’s why he bristles when political opponents try to imply that somehow the National Party is going to remove the social security safety net”.

Bolger was also given a personal position on the controversial issue of race. In an implied but, nevertheless, direct attack on New Zealand First, Bolger was described as “angry [and, hence, socially just] when anyone tries to play the race card”. Bolger, in a speech, had earlier positioned himself in regard to the use of race as an election issue by adopting the dual subject position of New Zealander and immigrant: “As a New Zealander I object to that, as the son of

migrants I object to that, as Prime Minister I object to that” (September 6, 1996).

Significantly, this triplet was delivered to the Pacific Island Chamber of Commerce. Pacific Islanders form a major group of immigrants to New Zealand.

Pictured hiking in national parks, Bolger was further positioned in National’s opening PPB as a man with a “love of the land” which was genuine and “not politically expedient”. The dominant theme was Bolger’s leadership which was characterised by stability and wisdom. The use of a voice over, albeit anonymous, also served to provide an independent endorsement of the qualities and achievements of Bolger and the National Government. Endorsement was also employed in the use of Doug Graham’s saying “the leadership of the Prime Minister has been quite outstanding”. Bolger, the wise statesman, was thus placed in a position to be able to express his faith in New Zealanders with some credibility. He called on their own innate wisdom in putting the onus on New Zealanders to ensure the future of their country: “I ultimately trust, I trust New Zealanders, I trust that they will vote wisely and therefore we won’t go back, we will go forward” (opening PPB).

Bolger was positioned as the leader responsible for the stability of the Government “despite the minority status of the past few years” (PPB opening ). His leadership was presented as the type which would be required under an MMP electoral system and which had already been proven as successful in National’s coalition with the United New Zealand party. In this way, Bolger’s

incumbency was used to position him as the only leader with the experience and proven ability to manage a stable Government under MMP. National built on this assumed wisdom to speak authoritatively about the workings of MMP and to voice concerns about others' lack of understanding of how the system would work. Bolger told members of the New Zealand Education Institute at their annual conference that

There appears very little real understanding that the voters no longer elect a Government at election time. Now they will elect political parties who, after the election, will negotiate to form a Government. That is the biggest change in our electoral system .... Too many leaders and parties are fighting this campaign as if it were an old first-past-the post campaign rather than MMP (September 24, 1996).

The post-election formation of a coalition was a matter of considerable concern to the voting public. That specific concern was closely linked to the general concern of national stability. By claiming prior experience, Bolger was able to assume a position of being able to maintain stability in government after the election.

The multiple subject positions ascribed to individual National candidates served, by association, to similarly position the National party. National's texts also attempted to position the collective party. The party's stance in the political field polarised by Left and Right placed it in the centre right of the field. That position was defended on the grounds of a strong economy and national stability,

as prescribed by National's discourse technologists. National used its strengths to position itself as the party of the future. It also attempted to call upon national pride to identify its economic policies, for the present and the future, as "the New Zealand Way", described below.

### **National and the future**

As recommended by their discourse technologists, above, National spokespeople consistently turned any debate of issues around to the economy, looking ahead to a rosy future. For example, Bolger said in a speech in Napier that "The decade of the nineties with a National led government will be the golden decade of the 20th century" (September 25, 1996). National was careful to establish that the "rosy future" could only be based upon a sound economic system.

In presenting a situation of a healthy economy and a rosy future, National also positioned itself as the creator of that situation. The Minister of Finance, Bill Birch, made a speech in which he said "we have finally got the fundamentals right .... so long as the present framework is maintained, the future holds great promise ... New Zealand is now on track to enter the 21st Century with a strong and vibrant economy" (Wellington, September 4, 1996).

The notion of National as progressive and as the only party capable of providing a desirable future was echoed strongly in a brochure entitled "This

election there is one political party that is offering you something different: A future”. In this brochure, National contrasted the past and future but the “past” was the past of 20 years ago. The text of the brochure listed things that “you” couldn’t do or were restricted by 20 years ago, including:

- eating out or drinking in pubs after 6 o’clock - [This was somewhat misleading as the restrictions were actually only on pubs and not on restaurants.]
- compulsory unionism
- no private television broadcasting
- foreign currency exchange restrictions
- limited trading in weekends - “you couldn’t go to the supermarket on the weekend”.

The text of this particular brochure did not attempt to justify the time frame (“20 years ago”) which enabled the present to be contrasted with the discredited Keynesian social democracy of the 1970s. These times were implicitly removed from the National Party even though the National Party was then in power. The statement “In the past ten years we New Zealanders have proven that we can deal with the world on equal terms”, gave credit for the changes to “all” New Zealanders but also allowed for the ambiguity of the following statement: “We’ve achieved so much, and have so much ahead of us”. It was the “we’ve” that was ambiguous. Implicitly “we’ve” meant the National Party, especially as the statement was visually separated from the rest of the text, in bold italic format

with white space above and below, and was likely to be read out of context. And yet, if challenged on grounds of historical inaccuracy, “we’ve” could have referred to “we New Zealanders”. This section of the text ended with “This is no time to go back”. The words, combined with the graphic of an old analogue stop watch, strongly implied a return to the discredited past if National did not win the election.

### **The “New Zealand way”**

National presented its economic model as unique in the world, one which “the world recognises as the ‘New Zealand Way’ of managing our economy”. This assertion was made in speeches throughout the country where Bolger also said “we have developed a modern, disciplined economic model that works” (for example, September 27, 1996). In thus claiming credit for the economic reforms undertaken in New Zealand, National attempted to position itself as an economically progressive and innovative party which has been responsible for “the last six years [of] rational change, bold innovation, leading to rapid transformation, very strong growth and effective social reform” because of which “our nation has evolved almost beyond recognition” (ibid.). In fact, the wave of economic “reforms” was initiated by the 1984 Labour Government and was a reflection of international trends in favour of free market economies. The difference between the New Zealand reforms and those in other countries was that

the economic reforms in New Zealand had arguably been promoted more aggressively and taken further (Kelsey, 1997). National based its claim of a “New Zealand way” upon reports from organisations such as the OECD and the World Bank which proclaimed the “success” of the New Zealand economic reforms. The claim of success, however, has also been vigorously contested (ibid.).

The “New Zealand Way”, the economic model claimed by National, was revealed in National’s discourse as one strongly influenced by neo-liberal ideology. Individuals were, particularly through the business sector, called upon to perform independently of government. National’s closing PPB attributed the growth and strength of the economy to “the efforts of individual New Zealanders” - it “was not generated by the government”. The role of the government “is protecting what you have achieved”. These statements effectively gave ownership of economic success to New Zealanders as individual citizens, rather than to New Zealanders as a collective society. In doing so, they implied that if it was not a collective achievement the success should not to be taken away by any government. Individualism, which is at the heart of neo-liberal ideology, requires minimal involvement by Government in the affairs of the individual. (Neilson, 1997). In a speech to members of the business sector, Bolger further promoted neo-liberalism in his endorsement of private sector ownership of what was state property. National, amidst much criticism, especially from the Alliance and New Zealand First parties who campaigned on a platform of economic nationalism (see chapter

six), had sold state forests in order to repay foreign debt. In a speech Bolger stated that

I am proud that we are seeing much more investment in industry. That it is private enterprise who has the confidence to invest in processing our vast forests, not government departments. The suggestion that the Government buy back former state forests is populist nonsense” (September 26, 1996).

If a set of policies were to be accepted as “normal” they could also be accepted as common sense (Hall, 1988a). By dismissing the suggestion of Government’s buying back of a state asset as “populist nonsense”, Bolger was attempting to reinforce a common sense perception of the asset’s sale. By extension, the sale of state assets to the private sector was promoted as common sense.

National was quite specific in detailing its own economic policy which was summed up as “five fundamentals”, the basis of “the New Zealand way”. The wording of Bolger’s “five fundamentals” was calculated to provide a basis for criticism of the economic policies of a “left-wing coalition” and to establish National’s policies as common sense. By calling it a “New Zealand way”, National was attempting to normalise its economic policies as right for the nation and to engender a sense of patriotism over their “success”. Economic policies which make popular common sense are less likely to be challenged and those parties which adhere to them will occupy, at least in part, the hegemonic centre of the political spectrum (see chapter two). The following is an excerpt from a speech

by Bolger made to a business group in Invercargill, but the details of the “five fundamentals” of National’s economic policy were repeated by Bolger in other contexts and by other National politicians:

[The] New Zealand way of managing an economy [is] based on five fundamentals that can not must not be tampered with, regardless of the temptations to do so in the interests of short-term political expediency. First, we have an open, accessible economy; ensuring that the finest goods and services that the world has to offer are allowed to flow freely across our borders. This will give our people choice, encourage innovation, spur competition, set good example and engage our nation at the cutting-edge of global trade. Next, we maintain stable prices .... So let me restate that National strongly supports the Reserve Bank Act and the low inflation target. We are also committed to maintaining the flexible modern labour market brought in by the Employment Contracts Act .... The fourth fundamental is what the economists call responsible fiscal management, although it could be more simply described as a little self-discipline .... Finally you have our commitment to a low-rate, broad-based tax system (September 13, 1996).

In order to explain the differences between accepted economic policies in New Zealand and those of other countries, National claimed that those countries

which did not adhere to the same economic direction needed to be set a “good example”. Any deviation from the “five fundamentals” could only be “in the interests of short-term political expediency” and, therefore, could not be trusted. The issue of the free flow of imports from the point of view of national producers is discussed in relation to farmers, below. Choice is not necessarily in the interests of the national economy, especially if goods can be manufactured more cheaply overseas. In such cases, competition can result in the demise of local manufacturing industries. By equating “responsible fiscal management” with “a little self-discipline” Bolger was able, on the one hand, to exonerate National from accusations of being uncaring in its lack of spending in the social sector and, on the other hand, to accuse a “left wing coalition” of a child-like lack of restraint in its policies of greater spending.

### **The Employment Contracts Act**

One of the benefits of a growing economy which was repeatedly cited by National was an apparent increase in employment. Credit for such an increase was given to the introduction of one of National’s “five fundamentals” of economic policy, the Employment Contracts Act. National also credited the Act with having brought about the end of “industrial anarchy”. The articulation of the Act with these effects meant that its removal would signal the end of the economic

“recovery”. This Act had effectively reduced the power of labour unions by replacing collective employment contracts, previously negotiated between employers and union representatives, with individual contracts. Because of individual contracts and voluntary union membership, union strikes had decreased. National also claimed that the introduction of the Act resulted in a “flexible, modern labour market”:

We are also committed to maintaining the flexible modern labour market brought in by the Employment Contracts Act - something else which our left-wing opponents would dearly love to destroy. Since the Act was passed in 1991 time lost through work stoppages has fallen sharply .... And our opposition says bring back union control - they must be mad! While work stoppages have gone down employment has gone up (September 13, 1966).

In keeping with National’s theme of a discredited past contrasted with a progressive future, no pejorative interpretation of the word “modern” was allowed for. Increased work time (without stoppages) and increased employment was implicitly linked to a greater productivity. However, national statistics did not uphold such a claim. Professor Hazeldine of Auckland University, amongst others, was one economist who took a different perspective of New Zealand’s productivity as a result of the Employment Contracts Act. He pointed out that

the country's economic macro data revealed "mediocre productivity performance, even more mediocre real wage growth (so that income distributions are widening) and increased casualisation and insecurity of work" (Hazledine, 1996).

Individualisation of contracts and rewards had resulted in competition amongst staff members and a reduction in co-operative teamwork necessary for production efficiency (ibid.). While employers may have been able to report increased profits, national productivity had not increased. Temporary contracts had resulted in a reduction in job security for workers. Lower wages were able to be paid which, in many cases, forced workers to take on secondary employment. This could have accounted for an increase in employment figures.

### **The economy and globalisation**

An integral part of neo-liberal economics is the establishment and maintenance of a free market on a global scale. With statements such as Bolger's "Economies grow when they build on their strengths, ... release the energy of their private sectors and seek, increasingly, to link into the larger global market as a source of export earnings, expertise and investment capital" (September 6, 1996), National clearly positioned itself as strongly supportive of an open global economy. Indeed, such a position was central to National's economic platform. Don McKinnon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade stated in a speech to

the Dunedin Institute of International Affairs that “One of the fundamental bases of this Government’s economic policy has been, and will remain, to create and support an open and internationally competitive economy” (September 19, 1996).

There was, however, considerable resistance to National’s wholesale embracing of a global economy from amongst National’s traditional supporters. One key sector of resistance was that of farming and its associated industries such as meat and dairy exporting because a truly open global market relies on the universal removal of tariffs on trade. Local producers, who had already suffered substantial tariff reductions, were very much aware that the removal of tariffs might prove detrimental to their own industries through freer importation of competing products. However, somewhat surprisingly given its electoral vulnerability, National did not look to any compromise in this area. Instead, it argued a counter perspective of a global economy, one in which the removal of trade barriers by other countries would increase prospects for the sale of New Zealand produce:

It is about protecting and enhancing New Zealand’s trade interests .... It’s not only about working in a positive sense to sell more but it’s also about negotiating the removal of trade barriers .... Global free trade is in part about the removal of tariffs. It is worrying and rather tragic to see some political parties want to undo the work we’ve done in this respect .... This

Government will go on encouraging export led growth and working assiduously towards the creation of global free trade (ibid.).

Thus “protecting and enhancing” was primarily confined to the point of view of exporters who would be in a position to benefit from the removal of tariffs and other trade barriers imposed by other countries. What was not discussed was the reluctance of most other countries to comply with the request that they also remove trade barriers. Also omitted was the position of local producers who had to compete in a national market with more cheaply produced goods imported without restriction.

One group of traditional National party supporters was that of farmers. Farmers, however, was a group that had suffered financially from the removal of tariffs and, in particular, from the removal of production incentives. National positioned the future of farming firmly within the international economy.

### **Farming**

Farming was described as still being “the strong backbone of the economy”. However, the message also stated that the strength of farming was dependent upon its being “internationally competitive” and having “free access to global markets”. These were the factors which were stated to be “now at stake” as “all of the other major parties had pledged to ditch” that programme. The removal of farming subsidies and tariffs in order to create a free market were again key

components of neo-liberalism. Once more, “access to global markets” looked at the advantages for exporters rather than the disadvantages for those producers whose domestic markets would be opened up to greater competition from importers.

In a brochure entitled “National and Rural New Zealand”, National attempted to articulate, at a personal level, its concerns with those of farmers. It did this by placing several of its MPs in the subject position of farmer. The brochure opened to reveal a photograph of and personal message from the Prime Minister, Jim Bolger and, opposite that, a parallel photograph and message from Lockwood Smith, the Minister of Agriculture. The Prime Minister’s message stressed the National Party’s “special relationship with those who live on the land” and the farming background of Bolger and “around half my Cabinet”. The message was written in the first person (“I”; “we”), carefully creating an inclusive group with farmers by not directly addressing farmers as “you”.

The message regarding the role of government in farming reinforced National’s position in the Right of the political field. It acknowledged that “international market conditions have been difficult for some time” but stressed that the “open economy” enabled the agricultural sector to “best determine the actions which will deliver its own success”. The onus was hence on the farming industry “to improve its marketing and improve returns”. All that the government would do was provide “stability and leadership”. The message thus articulated

National's key theme of stability with the free market, ending significantly with the statement that: "The last thing the industry needs now is government intervention, tariffs and political instability." As observed earlier, National was not prepared to compromise its neo-liberal stance to address the financial concerns of farmers, even though farmers had traditionally been a key group of National Party supporters.

### Social services

While National adopted a stance in the Right of the political field by giving ownership of economic success to the individual and expressing its determination to further pursue a free market economy, other parties were pointing out the failure of the Government's economic policies to allow individuals beyond the business sector to receive any benefits of national economic success. National attempted to counter this dissent by articulating economic success with social spending. The former was positioned as a prerequisite for the latter.

Public opinion polls taken throughout the country showed that health was uppermost in voters' concerns. Specifically, public concern centred on the length of waiting lists for treatment at public hospitals and a general perception of an encroaching privatisation of the public health system. National did not attempt to ignore these concerns, although, as much as possible, its spokespeople did as their campaign advisors advocated and returned debate to the grounds of economic

discourse. National's spending in the social sector and implicit acknowledgement of the need for governments to take some responsibility for collective welfare went some way towards balancing the party's neo-liberal economic principles. Thus the party was brought closer to the centre than the far right of the political spectrum.

National promised future rewards for all, now that individuals had endured the necessary pain of reform. Bolger again presented the future as rosy now that "we" had paved the way for prosperity: "the things we have done so far have been but the beginning - the foundation stones upon which we are now about to build a brilliant future" (September 24, 1996). National thus used the perspective of future rewards to both account for perceived limitations to the sectors of health and education and to promise amendments, without actually admitting fault.

In their opening PPB, a well-respected senior Cabinet Minister, Doug Graham, did go some way towards admitting that mistakes had been made when he stated that "I wouldn't say that we have done everything 100% but I would say that New Zealand is a better place now than it has been for 30 years". Similarly, in National's closing PPB, Bolger related economic success to the "benefits that holds for the future" and said that

without trying to say that it's all rosy, that there are no poor, unemployed or sick, because that's patently not true, but it is true to say that on the

whole this country is richer, healthier and happier than it has been for years.

In this case it was more politically expedient to take a collective view of the nation's state than to attempt to apply the statement to individuals for whom the descriptives of "richer, healthier and happier" may well not have applied.

By continuing to use an economic discourse, National attempted to position itself as a fiscally responsible rather than an uncaring manager of health and education. Social spending in these sectors was thus presented as a future reward for fiscal rectitude. For example, in a speech to the Waikato Business network, Bolger stated that:

With future budget surpluses predicted ... we will be able to spend more in the key areas of health and education. With a strong economy we will be able to enjoy a first-class quality of life, provide world-class social services, and meet our commitment to the disadvantaged in society (September 27, 1996).

An incumbent Government is in a position to reallocate spending in order to gain public support (Trent & Friedenber, 1995). Throughout their campaign National took advantage of its incumbency by making announcements of increased spending allocations to the social sector. Such announcements served, by way of demonstration, to add credibility to National's promises of increased social

spending. The following excerpts from press releases provided examples: “[Bolger] today announced extra funding ... to expand two successful programmes targeted at youth at risk” (September 23, 1996); “Bolger today announced a \$1 million one-off allocation for iwi social services development” (September 25, 1996); “Bolger announced today that the government intends to expand the Family Services Centres and HIPPY (Home Instruction by Parents of Pre-school Youngsters) to six new sites” (September 26, 1996). At the same time, National emphasised how much it had already spent on health, as well as on education, social welfare and retirement support. In a brochure entitled “So Far, So Near, So Let’s Keep Going Forward”, National described its performance in health and education in numerical terms: numbers of dollars spent, numbers of operations performed, numbers participating in education. There, as elsewhere, social spending was articulated with the economy. For example:

Those figures are huge and that’s why we place such an emphasis on the economy because if we don’t we will never be able to provide for that future. Under a National-led government you can have the confidence that we will generate that money we must have to secure the future. There is no way around the fact that this country and this country alone has to earn the money to pay the bills (closing PPB).

While promising and demonstrating ever increasing spending in the social sector, National continued to justify its programme of “reforms” in areas such as health and education, placing responsibility for service provision on both the individual and the state. For example, in National’s opening PPB, Doug Graham said that although people felt left out by a Government that was “cruel and uncaring”,

in fact we spent hours trying to be as caring as we could but we realised we had to change some attitudes and that you have to earn your living and you have to earn a living as a country . That was pretty hard to take after 30 years of do it when you feel like.

In this case, the pronoun “you” addressed, in turn, the individual and society as a collective. The “pretty hard to take” implied that change was equally difficult for both individuals and government. National further implied that the previous, more protectionist regime had taken a somewhat cavalier approach to the economy (“do it when you feel like”) which, in less prosperous times, is no longer possible. The Government had adapted; the onus was now on individuals and society (the “country”) to adapt and accept change. The explanation of the need for change was echoed in a speech by Bolger which touched on a well-publicised public concern - the closure of provincial hospitals in favour of larger, centralised institutions:

you have to modernise and change if you want to achieve the best .... The expense, the technological sophistication and the expertise needed to perform today's remarkable procedures cannot be delivered in small provincial hospitals, or even in every city when you talk about the most sophisticated surgery (September 24, 1996).

National's discourse thus positioned provincial hospitals as an anachronism and justification of the closures was made on the grounds of modern technology.

Another major concern held by much of the voting public was that of impending privatisation of the public health system. National could not afford, even as it justified its consolidation of health services, not to address that concern. To do so would confirm widely-held suspicions and position National unfavourably as uncaring, an image which they struggled against throughout the campaign. Again, National was in a position of having to defend itself by tentatively admitting that the programme had flaws. Such tentative admissions as this are indicative of a fundamental shift in National's discourse, from a neo-liberal, individualist and free market stance toward one of increased government intervention. The shift was small. However, such a shift in response to public opinion demonstrates the extent of the pressure National was under to generate social change. Small concessions at key points of conflict are necessary in order to establish and maintain hegemonic power (Gramsci, 1971; Hall, 1988b). National's paramount

objective had to be to reassure voters that the state would continue to provide public health and education. In the party's opening PPB, a voice over stated that:

It doesn't seem to matter that for every story of South Auckland educational failure there are hundreds of thousands of children receiving among the best the world has to offer. The same can be said of health but in spite of billions more being committed and six years of spending it, the National Party concedes it still has a long way to go. And it's not down the path of every person for themselves,

National thus denied a neo-liberal approach ("every person for themselves") in favour of government provision of health services. The voice over was immediately followed by Bolger's personal assertion that:

No New Zealander that knows anything would want an Americanised health system with 40 or 50 million Americans with no health care whatsoever. That's nonsense. What we want and what we're committed to is a publicly funded health system that delivers to all New Zealanders. We want to do it in a way that enables them to have the highest level of sophistication in terms of technology and modern pharmaceuticals. We know we have to spend more money and we've spent over a billion dollars more already. We haven't cut and funding - we've spent more.

In New Zealand, the American health system is widely and emotively believed to realise all the fears of a health system in which an uncaring Government leaves

individuals to fend for themselves, regardless of the individual's ability to do so. No New Zealand political party could afford to have itself aligned with such a system.

While National balanced a neo-liberal, free market approach to the economy against acceptance of state responsibility for the provision of social services to position itself at the centre-right of the political field, the party was aware that its stance might have to be compromised in the formation of a coalition government. One obvious potential coalition partner for National was Act which was positioned further to the Right of the political field (see chapter seven). National had to counter the perception that a partnership with Act would reposition National to the Right of the political spectrum, placing even greater responsibility on the individual for the provision of social services. Bolger drew on National's coalition with United in order to place himself in a position of authority when he explained that not all of a coalition partners' policies need be implemented:

The first point I would make is that you can't stop an individual party bringing its proposals to the negotiating table. But that doesn't mean they will all be accepted. Nor does it mean that the rejection of specific policies will prevent a coalition being formed (September 24, 1996).

National's position on the formation of coalitions was presented as one of rationality and open-mindedness:

What coalition forming and coalition governments require is consultation, co-operation and commonness. Our position on coalition forming is clear. We won't rule any party in or out. We will campaign strongly on our policies, highlight the defects in other parties' policies as we see them, point out the contradictions and then trust the voters to make their choice (ibid.)

The context of Bolger's speech was significant. As with all speeches, the content was articulated with the interests of the audience. This speech was made to the New Zealand Education Institute (NZEI), a body which had been directly affected by Government reforms in education and which had mounted its own parallel campaign against the election of a right-wing government (Roper, 1999b). Bolger began his explanation of coalition formation with the statement "We are not in favour of vouchers as a universal means of funding education". The use of education vouchers was a policy of Act and one which was known to be disliked by educationalists. Bolger's rational explanation of the marginalisation of unpopular policies in coalition formation was particularly necessary for an audience which was fundamentally hostile to National's moving even further to the right by entering a coalition with Act. However, as demonstrated below, Bolger's stated approach to coalition formation was not applied consistently in the discursive positioning of National's opponents.

## **National's discursive positioning of others**

National drew on its own research in its positioning of other parties. In particular, it used its own perceived strengths of stability and a strong economy to place its opposition in the contrasting position of unstable and a risk to the economy. Many of National's campaign texts were strongly negative, in line with the party's strategy of "breaking the run" of the opposition (see discourse practices section, above).

This section analyses how National's texts were constructed in an attempt to position the party's opponents as unfavourable, or to reposition them away from the positions they had claimed for themselves. The need for repositioning was most acute when positions adopted by opposition parties or candidates overlapped with those assumed by National. Opposing parties must be differentiated from each other. Thus they cannot adopt "compromising" stances which would show them to be of the same mind as each other (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 179). Most often, National discussed Labour, the Alliance and New Zealand First as a collective, left-wing coalition. This section first examines National's positioning of a left-wing coalition. It then examines National's (re)positioning of the separate opposition parties. Act is absent from the analysis as National's campaign texts did not directly address nor attempt to (re)position Act.

### **Left-wing coalition**

National's stance on potential coalition formation by opposition parties was particularly interesting in that it countered, almost entirely, National's own explanation of how coalition agreements would be formed. National chose not to allow that any party other than itself would follow normal prescriptions in a coalition forming process. By only rarely mentioning itself as part of a future coalition, National avoided the need to address its own potential coalition partners' apparent inability to negotiate rationally. For the most part, National referred to a "National Government" and only occasionally a "National-led Government".

When addressing opposition parties, however, National almost invariably grouped them as a collective - an inevitable coalition - rather than as individual parties. The coalition of opposition parties was always positioned as "left-wing", and as a danger to the economic progress made in New Zealand under National. For example, in his speech to an Invercargill business group, Bolger drew on imaginary (or at least very diverse in terms of time and source) poll results to portray a three-party coalition in which each of the three parties would have "roughly" equal influence in policy formation. Bolger's loose intertextual reference to "polls" presupposed that the audience would draw on other texts and thus validate his proposition. However, as Fairclough (1992) points out, "the text

producer may present a proposition as given for another or established by himself dishonestly, insincerely, and with manipulative intent” (p. 121). The word “roughly” in Bolger’s statement was used as a hedge (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fairclough, 1992) in order to by-pass the inadequacy of his summation:

The alternative is a composite Cabinet formed by Labour, New Zealand First and the Alliance. If National is not in government then there is no other possibility than what we call the three-headed, left-wing monster. At present all of those parties rank roughly equal depending upon whose polls you read. Thus, in a coalition Cabinet, we can expect to see them providing a roughly equal number of Cabinet members let’s say six each. ... the likely new Cabinet line-up .... would look like this (based on current polls and parties own list rankings): (1) Helen Clark, Prime Minister (2) Winston Peters, Deputy PM (3) Jim Anderton, Minister of Finance. Now there’s an interesting little troika if ever I saw one (September 13, 1996).

“Left-wing” was thus articulated with perceptions of the extreme left of the political spectrum and an opposition coalition government was positioned as a monstrous thing of the extreme left. The word “troika” is evocative of Russian communism, an anachronism which, nevertheless, may still have threatening connotations for many New Zealanders after many years of rhetoric about the communist “enemy”.

The association of an opposition coalition with extreme left-wing policy was developed by National throughout the campaign. The tactic was exemplified in the “National and Rural New Zealand” brochure published by National. The brochure presented two lists: what the “National Team is committed to” and “the alternative”. The first was a generic list repeated in other brochures and largely linked to economic performance and policy. By contrast, the “alternative” list consisted of the most potentially unpopular and extreme economic policies of the three other parties and, in several cases, extrapolated outcomes from these. For example, “job losses from changes to the Employment Contracts Act” and “the re-introduction of tariffs, and discouragement of trade”. In each case the extrapolation was a matter of speculation. It was not known whether job losses would occur nor whether trade would be discouraged. To a voting public, which was known to be unsure of how their new electoral system would work in practice, National used its knowledge that voters were risk averse in presenting extremes as possibilities, as risks. The “alternative” list made no acknowledgement of the process of negotiation and concession that is required of a coalition government whereby “extreme” policy differences are likely to be those which would be compromised or side-lined in favour of ground more common to the participating parties.

Similarly, another brochure produced by the National Party for national distribution, entitled “13 risks you don’t need to take” offered a choice of “a high-

risk, unstable coalition of Alliance, Labour and New Zealand First” or “a secure, stable, experienced National Government”. There was no suggestion of a coalition for the National Party. The contrast between the two alternatives was given as “eyes on the future” (National Party) or “repeating yesterday’s mistakes” (coalition), repeating the themes of previous brochures. “Yesterday’s mistakes” was a reference to policies of government intervention. The message of the brochure was entirely negative. It stated that the “left-wing coalition” would be “unstable”, “unable to agree on anything” and would result in “economic and social chaos”. Again, it comprised points loosely extrapolated from combined opposition policy, highly speculative and emotive but stated as fact: “Here’s what you would see”. Claims made included: “investor confidence ... evaporates”; “New Zealand’s international reputation damaged”; “a return to union control and industrial anarchy” [with changes to the Employment Contracts Act], and “an open cheque to settle Maori treaty claims”. The latter was in contrast to National’s “fair and affordable” settlement of “genuine” land grievances outlined in an earlier brochure. National was not targeting the Maori vote as its own market research had shown that vote was going to New Zealand First (Tisch, personal communication, October 30, 1996). Rather, National’s discourse here was targeted to those conservative New Zealanders who were concerned that Maori were being given too much. The brochure also stated that there would be “a return to more

government interference in our lives”, a broad sweeping statement which betrayed National’s neo-liberal perspective.

In line with the theme of risk, National’s discourse aimed clearly to contrast its own “stability” with the instability of a “left-wing coalition” and to create doubt in the minds of voters that such a coalition could ever be capable of governing the country. The coalition parties would be “unable to agree on anything” because the parties, themselves, were inherently incompatible. In fact, the National Party’s “*Campaign '96*” newsletter to candidates stated emphatically that “voters must be told just how incompatible these parties are” (October 4, 1996). National also employed two advertisements, in print and on television, to emphasise the incompatibility of the opposition parties. One, entitled “musical trio” demonstrated the cacophony which would result if the three parties attempted to “perform together”. The other portrayed traffic lights with the three colours being operated at the same time - “it just won’t work”. The underlying theme of each of the advertisements was that if you voted for one of the parties, “you’ll get all three” and the result would be chaos.

The National Party opening PPB described “on the left a confusing babble of feuding factions all hoping for a slice of power by taking a great leap backwards into the failure of the past” while showing a large collection of assorted billboards on the one site, each promoting a candidate of one of the opposition parties. In their closing PPB, National told voters that “You must ask yourselves if they will

truly be united behind any policies let alone a co-operative strategy for running this country's economy." Yet again, although it had been careful to establish itself as experienced in coalition management and internally stable, National conveniently ignored the likelihood that it would also have to manage as a part of a coalition government, possibly with one or more of the opposition parties whom National was presenting as incapable of co-operation. The only hint given of National's future in a coalition was given visually in their opening PPB. As the camera passed the billboards portraying "a confusing babble of feuding factions" it moved directly to the right, down the line of billboards, to those of National and Act. As the camera moved the voice over said "and on the right path to stability and success, National". Act was visually linked with National and both were metaphorically associated with the right of the political field. The visual link, however, was only briefly made and was subtle. There was no verbal acknowledgement of Act. It would not have been in National's interests to have overtly linked its future in government with Act. Act's own policies were recognised by voters as belonging to the extreme right. Also, Act was not assured of reaching the five percent threshold required to enter Parliament. The opposition parties could well have adopted National's own tactic and linked Act's more extreme policies to National and positioned National itself further out to the right than was politically desirable.

As with its own positioning, National's basis of criticism of a "left-wing" coalition was primarily economic. National used its positioning of its own economic policies as "innovative" to serve as a contrast and thus position those of the collective opposition as backward looking. As described above, the "past" was equated by National with interventionist and protectionist government to which a left-wing coalition would return. National, in general, did not deal with the specifics of the economic policies of Labour, New Zealand First nor the Alliance. If they had, they would have found it too difficult to justify an attack on Labour's economic policies as they were not dissimilar to National's own. Labour, New Zealand First and the Alliance were instead collectively presented by National as big spenders who wanted to spend the rewards of National's successful economic management. For example, Bolger told the NZEI Annual Conference that:

They want to spend the fruits of the economic tree that produces strong growth and therefore the ability to invest much more in key areas like education and health. But in the same breath they solemnly promise to cut down the economic tree that created the economic wealth they wish to spend (September 24, 1996).

The metaphor of an "economic tree" suggested that the economy, as set up by National, would be self-sustaining if left as it was. Investment in education and health was constructed as the fruit of the economic "tree", dependent upon the tree for its generation and survival.

Closely connected to the economy in National's campaign texts by virtue of being one of its "five fundamentals", described above, was the Employment Contracts Act. Labour and the Alliance wanted to repeal the Act. In a speech to the Waikato business network, Bolger said:

Under a government led by Peters, Clark and Anderton the only certainty would be chaos. ... the Employment Contracts Act would be repealed and we'd be back to the days of industrial anarchy .... investor confidence in our country would evaporate and the capital to fund growth would dry up (September 27, 1996).

The Employment Contracts Act thus also served to reposition the opposition as backward looking and against the interests of the country. National's use of the Employment Contracts Act as a repositioning tactic against the opposition was reinforced by a strongly negative advertising campaign run by the Employers' Federation parallel to the election campaigns (Leitch & Roper, 1999). A counter perspective, that of workers oppressed by the constraints of the Act, was aired in a campaign run simultaneously by the Engineers' Union (*ibid.*).

In its closing PPB, National showed a video clip of striking workers trying to stop a busload of workers from leaving a site. As the clip played, Bolger said:

That's an ugly way of doing business isn't it? I, and I am sure most New Zealanders, thought we had got rid of that adversarial way of resolving issues. Raw union muscle never created jobs in the past and it won't in the

future. So why are the other parties so keen to bring union power back into a controlling role in the New Zealand economy? When that sort of system failed us so miserably in the past?

Once more, generalisations were made from extreme scenarios so that all opposition parties could be positioned as a risk to the nation and its economy.

The implication was made that there were only two possible means of conducting labour relations - via the Employment Contracts Act, or by union-instigated (and violent) strike action. Yet, in spite of his vehement rhetoric in favour of it, Bolger indicated that, if necessary, he would be prepared to soften his stance on the Employment Contracts Act in order to form a governing coalition (Kilroy, 1996b). His admission drew much criticism from his more right-wing colleagues who saw National's stance on the act as unnegotiable.

National's fifth economic principle, adherence to "a low-rate, broad-based tax system" was also contrasted to "left-wing" policy, this time both collectively and individually. In their closing PPB, National showed graphs of economic growth with projections which "can only be achieved by having a commitment to low tax policies" and which would apply only "if a National Government is re-elected". The statement, backed by the "scientific" graphs for credibility (Gandy, 1992), was made that National's promised tax cuts "provides a stark contrast to the left-wing parties because each and every one of them, by themselves and collectively, want to tax you more." The figures provided to show how the

opposition parties would increase taxation were also used in a series of print advertisements and were the subject of official complaints on the grounds of inaccuracy (those made by New Zealand First were upheld). The figures cited for Labour policy were not actually an increase over existing tax rates but were presented as such by assessing them against National's projected tax cuts. Those shown for New Zealand First included contributions to a compulsory superannuation savings scheme which was, in fact, proposed to be introduced incrementally over a five year term.

The risk that a "left-wing coalition" would increase taxation and drive up interest rates was articulated with voter concerns at a very personal level. National's "burning cheque" print and television advertisement depicted each of the left-wing opposition parties igniting a one hundred dollar cheque for cash under the caption "don't let them send your tax cuts up in smoke". In fact, even by National's published figures of fortnightly differences in tax under their own and each of the three main opposition parties' policies, only those on relatively high incomes (over \$40,000 pa - or, according to the Alliance campaign manager, 40% of the population - see chapter 8) would lose as much as \$100. No-one would under Labour. Similarly, National's prediction that interest rates would rise under a "left-wing coalition" was articulated with voters' concerns with home mortgage interest rates. In another television and print advertisement, "don't let them bury your dreams", the three opposition parties were symbolised by spades

burying a photo album. The photos in the album were of someone's family and home. The text stated that the instability of the coalition would "drive up interest rates on home mortgages, putting home ownership beyond the reach of many thousands of New Zealanders". The photos of existing possessions suggested that voters had already materialised their "dreams" and would lose what they had. There was no positive suggestion that those dreams might be attainable for more people under National, revealing that National's target market did not include voters who did not own their own home. Indeed, those living in state-owned housing were strongly opposed to National's introduction of market rental rates for that housing.

The risk message was further personalised in National's closing PPB, with Bolger's saying "In short order you will see rising inflation - and that will affect you - your mortgage is going to go up and the value of your savings is going to go down". The broadcast ended with the vox pop technique of interviewing "floating voters" in the street who endorsed Bolger's view by saying that they think that this time they will vote National because they've done well so far and don't want to risk a change. For example: "I've got such a huge mortgage I really don't want to take a risk at this stage with anything else".

The natural progression for National from a theme of risk was to one of choice. By dealing in oppositional extremes, National was able to present a stark choice for voters in clearly positive versus negative terms. Voters were told in

National's closing PPB that they had, in effect, a choice not merely between political parties but

between low taxes or high taxes, between low interest rates or high interest rates, between freedom in the workplace or returning to union domination, between investment in jobs or high unemployment, between a united society or a divided one, between going forward or returning to a failed past. Between a freer society or more big government making your decisions for you. Because it really is an issue of freedom - yours.

The choice presented by National was one between neo-liberal or socialist ideologies. National essentially pitted individualism against collective responsibility and used a strongly negative discourse against the latter. National did not acknowledge, in any way, that opposition parties' policies represented compromises between the two extremes. The same theme of choice was repeated throughout a series of National's television and print advertisements. Again, these were articulated with the personal concerns of voters. The advertisement which was widely credited with destroying the Alliance vote was one which appeared on television and in print in which National stated "on Saturday you have a choice". Using intertextual references to previous National advertisements and campaign events, the advertisement starkly contrasted the following captions and pictures (in parentheses): tax cuts (\$100.00 cheque) or tax increases (burning cheque); stable mortgage rates (house) or higher rates (house for sale); prices stable (full

shopping trolley) or prices up (depleted trolley). The full shopping trolley clearly echoed back to a photo opportunity created only a few days earlier by Jenny Shipley who, in an appeal for women's votes, went to the supermarket to demonstrate that under National's deregulated economy the price of groceries had fallen by nearly ten percent (Orsman, 1996). She was then quoted as saying that consumers had a clear choice at the polls - "Any coalition which includes the Alliance will see sales taxes and tariffs reintroduced that will put many of these goods up in price and families will lose out" (ibid.). Shipley's tactic was openly a repeat and comparison of an exercise undertaken by a Labour MP, Ann Hercus, in the days of wage and price freezes (ironically, under a National administration). The images used in National's advertising were powerfully symbolic. Their effectiveness was consistent with Levine's (1995) claim, discussed in chapter two, that "the most persuasive advertising ... is ads that fuse together images and issues, using powerful symbols that enable voters to discern the different general policy orientations of the candidates" (p. 40). The purpose of National's negative campaign advertising, as with its other campaign genres, was to attempt to discursively reposition Labour, New Zealand First and the Alliance much further to the left of the political field than the stances they adopted for themselves. Furthermore, National attempted to reposition them collectively further to the left than the range of stances available in the political field in New Zealand, 1996.

A vote for any party other than National, Bolger warned, would result in the “crash of ‘97” - an implicit and, for many, an emotional intertextual reference to the “crash of ‘87” (under a Labour Government) when the collapse of the sharemarket led to a sharp downturn in the economy of New Zealand and the financial ruin of many New Zealand businesses and individuals. The 1997 crash, however, was one, Bolger suggested, that people could choose to avoid:

On October 12th New Zealand’s voters are going to have to make a decision on whether they wish to go forward to a better tomorrow, or back into the economic swamplands of yesterday. Think for a moment whether in 12 months time you wish to be enjoying another year of growth or surveying the “Crash of ‘97”? That is what our first MMP election is all about. It’s a stark choice .... use your important party vote for the good of the nation. (September 26, 1996.)

All of National’s economic discourse had been working towards establishing that their own economic policies were synonymous with what was “for the good of the nation”. The “crash of ‘97” warning was used repeatedly by Bolger in speeches and press releases. Other National candidates were encouraged through the *Campaign ‘96* newsletter to do the same. Bolger’s warning culminated in his historically dramatic “morning after” prediction, made, for example, to the Auckland Chamber of Commerce, that “If it happens you’ll wake up the morning after, put your head in your hands, and weep Sunday, Bloody Sunday!” (October

2, 1996). However, National's strategy was undermined when the international credit rating agency, Standard and Poor's, stated that a change in government would not affect New Zealand's A++ credit rating. Bolger countered defensively by questioning the judgement of the agency:

We have three parties that are out there campaigning as a bloc - Labour, Alliance and NZ First - and all are committed, passionately committed, to going back to the policies that we left behind in the early 90s. Now, if Standard and Poor's wants to come out and say that's fine by them, well, let them do it. But I have to say I think that would be totally wrong.

(1996d).

Those "three parties" did not, in fact, campaign as a bloc at any stage. They each campaigned to establish their own separate identity and to claim their own stance in the political field. In spite of this, National's campaigning against individual opposition parties was rare. The following instances, however, were notable.

### **Labour**

National could not have campaigned against Labour alone by using a discourse of opposites. Labour was National's greatest threat, in terms of popularity, but National could not use its own strength, the economy, against

Labour. In fact, Labour's economic policy did not vary greatly from National's. Their key differences were in the area of social spending but this was an area of strength for Labour, not a weakness, in the eyes of the voters. Labour had, in fact, established for itself a potentially popular identity as a party which combined fiscal "responsibility" through adherence to free market principles with social responsibility and a concern for co-operative labour relations. By combining the policies of the "left-wing" opposition parties, National was able to position Labour further to the left of the political field than Labour's own economic policies would allow. The Minister of Finance, Bill Birch, in an interview given early in 1996, was quite open in acknowledging the rationale behind National's strategy of positioning Labour to the left, as close to the Alliance as possible:

There are a lot of traditional Labour voters who are good New Zealanders. Many will be blue-collar workers working in factories who are concerned about their jobs and jobs for their kids and about their families and their homes but they've been traditional Labour party voters. I think those are the interesting ones from our point of view simply because they won't like Helen Clark getting too close to the Alliance or to Anderton and they're not terribly comfortable with Helen Clark in any case. ... if the Labour moves towards the Alliance I think they could well lose some of that middle-ground constituency. That's very important to us because that's the sort of voters our policies should appeal to because they'll want jobs,

stability, certainty, a good safe environment in their own community and so on (O'Sullivan, 1996).

National was very much aware that those particular traditional Labour supporters referred to by Birch would not desert Labour if Labour were able to sustain the identity it had chosen for itself. Not only was Birch's view consistent with the National strategy of linking Labour with the Alliance, it also foreshadowed National's strategy of creating doubts about stability, employment and social safety under a left-wing coalition. While their positioning of Labour was done primarily through a projected association with Labour's potential coalition partners, National did also make occasional attempts to position Labour independently well to the left. For example, in a press release National Minister, Paul East stated that

Labour's desire to influence the content of commercial radio news is reminiscent of the control former Eastern Bloc leaders had over their countries' news media. It failed behind the iron Curtain and would most certainly be disastrous if implemented in New Zealand (September 4, 1996).

Such attempts to link Labour with communist policies were, however, too obviously tenuous and were not pursued but occurred in response to specific incidents.

On a completely different tack and in keeping with a different context, Bolger acknowledged the similarities between Labour and National policies. However, if two political parties were to be allowed to take the same, or similar, stance in the political field, the contest between them would have to be situated outside the political field. That is, it would have to be based on differences other than those offered by the range of stances between Left and Right. In this case, both National and Labour, if only momentarily, were acknowledged as ideologically close, comparable with “catch-all” parties reported internationally (Kavanagh, 1995; Kirchheimer, 1966; Swanson & Mancini, 1996). The basis of competition was thus reduced to personalities. Bolger used Clark to construct Labour’s refusal to enter into a coalition agreement with National as irrational and historically motivated - again positioning Labour, through Clark, as retrogressive and in opposition to National’s own rationality:

Helen Clark says they could never work with National. She says that despite the fact every commentator knows that Labour’s policies across the board are closer to National’s than she cares to admit. The reason for her position is not policy but history (September 24, 1996).

The context of Bolger’s comment is significant. It was made in his speech to the New Zealand Education Institute discussed above. In a speech to a Labour supportive organisation, the best approach was to draw parallels between key policies and to position the oppositional factors in the personalities of the leaders

and their respective abilities to execute sound policy. Thus the contest was here reduced to one of individual personalities, in line with trends of campaign modernisation (discussed in chapter two).

### **The Alliance**

It was established, very early in the campaign, that the Alliance was not a threat to the National party vote (Tisch, personal communication, October 30, 1996). The Alliance was most used by the National campaign to discredit, by association, both Labour and New Zealand First. As described above, National worked to establish the notion that extreme party policies would be incorporated in any coalition policy. In the case of the Alliance, National stated that “it will be impossible for the centre left to form a government without caving in to the demands of the Alliance” (PPB closing) and that “the Alliance ... who were the strongest supporters of MMP, says that it has 12 policies on which there can be no compromise .... They cannot compromise, full stop” (Bolger, speech to NZEI Annual Conference, 24 September, 1996). As long as those statements could be given credence, National could use them as a rationale to steer voters away from Labour or New Zealand First.

## **New Zealand First**

In positioning New Zealand First, National highlighted inconsistencies in the party policies and apparent incompatibilities in the party's voter base. The context of each of these factors is described more fully in the New Zealand First chapter. National used the diversity of New Zealand First's support base to position the party as divided and, therefore, inherently unstable. Once more, this was in direct contrast to National's own claimed identity of the stable party. For example, *Campaign '96* stated that "There is no way that this alliance of Grey Power and Maori radicals - which is NZ First - can stay together after the election" (September 13, 1996). A party which was internally divided could not be relied upon to form a stable member of a coalition government. The Maori vote had never been strong for National so it was more politically expedient to further position the Maori faction of New Zealand First as the stronger:

Our polling provides detailed demographic data and today's update provides startling information about the Maori vote. NZ First is basically a Maori Party commanding 48.6% of the committed Maori vote .... An analysis of the NZ First support base makes interesting reading. For instance the polls do not register one single supporter amongst Asian voters for NZ. First (ibid.).

Such a comment serves not only to signal to New Zealand First's elderly supporters that their concerns will be secondary to those of Maori but also to

position National more favourably in the eyes of the Asian electorate which it was targeting.

National further positioned New Zealand First as unstable by pointing to internal discontent over the power given to Michael Laws, a former National MP and New Zealand First candidate, who was discredited in his own electorate:

“National Chief Whip Roger Sowry says it is only the beginning, NZ First candidates aren’t going to put up with the continuing manipulation of the party by disgraced former MP Michael Laws” (ibid.). It is noteworthy that the above positioning statements were all made in *Campaign '96*, a private fax to candidates, rather than in speeches or press releases. It is likely that the intention was that the comments should be disseminated covertly, by word-of-mouth, rather than overtly.

### Act

Any discussion of Act was significantly absent from National’s campaign material. It was mentioned only in the context of tactical voting, discussed in National’s discourse practices section, above. The reason for the absence is likely to be that Act was perceived as a party of the far Right, built on the unpopular, neo-liberal economic policies of Roger Douglas, the instigator of “Rogernomics” in New Zealand (see chapter seven). National had to campaign against public perceptions that it was an uncaring party that wanted to privatise core public

services such as health and education. An association with Act through the potential formation of a coalition government would have countered National's self-positioning and strengthened the perception of National as a party of the Right.

## **DISCUSSION**

Social practices and discourse practices are shaped by the political, social and economic environment. National's position within the economic environment was seen as strong and secure. However, in the political and social environments National was particularly vulnerable. National's hold on political power was tenuous and was further threatened by the introduction of a new, proportional representation electoral system, MMP. National had to campaign in the knowledge that it would be likely to have to compromise its position on a number of issues in order to form a post-election coalition with one of its political opponents. Those compromises could, depending on which other parties National entered into an agreement with, require a shift in National's stance within the political field.

The discourse practices section of this chapter looked at the shifts that National was required to make in its campaign practices during the transition to the new electoral system. National's campaign discourse had to be directed

towards generating the maximum number of party votes rather than to assisting electoral candidates win electorate seats in Parliament. The change to campaigning for the party vote represented a significant shift in traditional campaign practices, particularly in those electorates which were considered marginal. The change led to tensions between the National party campaign directors and electoral candidates. In the analysis of National's campaign practices in response to these tensions, the organisational communication theory of autocommunication was employed to explain the ways in which the political party, as an organisation, attempted to appease its electoral candidates by publicly advertising in the mass media.

In the analysis of National's discourse practices the party's use of discourse technologists in the production and distribution of campaign texts was also examined. The discourse technologists used market research techniques and census statistics to gather data which was then used to inform text production. Campaign messages were tailored to and distributed to specific target groups with the assistance of demographic computer software. National, through the agency of individual candidates, especially the Prime Minister, adopted multiple subject positions in an effort to articulate the party's concerns with those of specific target groups.

National's stance within the political field polarised by Left and Right was dominated by its neo-liberal economic policies. However, in response to a strong public demand for government provision of social services such as health and

education, National compromised its economic position to accommodate and neutralise, at least in part, public opinion. Thus National's adopted stance in the political field was one of centre right, a stance traditionally held by National although the nature of centre is always contested and negotiated.

National discursively positioned itself by drawing on its perceived strengths of a strong economy and stability. It articulated these strengths with a positive future under a National government and "the New Zealand way" of economic policy. Through the "New Zealand way", National embraced neo-liberal precepts and attempted to normalise the concepts of individual responsibility and an international free market. The latter, however, was argued from one perspective only. National ignored the difficulties resulting from other countries' reluctance to remove trade barriers and from the free importation of goods produced overseas more cheaply than can be produced here.

National's position on social spending was also articulated with the economy. In this way, National justified its perceived lack of spending on economic difficulties and, at the same time, promised increased spending as the result of a stronger economy.

National's discursive positioning of others was primarily effected by positioning the three key opposition parties as an inevitable coalition, if National did not win the election. By positioning the opposition as a collective, National was able to attribute the least desirable or popular policies and features of

individual parties to all three of the opposition parties. In this way, National used the more social democratic policies of the Alliance to reposition Labour and New Zealand First away from stances near the centre of the political field to stances at the far Left. One of the primary genres used by National to disseminate messages designed to reposition the three opposition parties was advertising. National's advertising was strongly negative. Negative political advertising has been widely researched and theorised internationally (for example Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Diamond & Bates, 1992; Holtz-Bacha & Kaid, 1995; Jamieson, 1992; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991; Kaid, Gobetz, Garner, Leland, & Scott, 1993; Kern, 1989), but it has not previously been theorised in terms of the repositioning of political opponents away from their preferred positions or stances. However, this chapter clearly demonstrates that discursive repositioning is a key function of negative political advertising.

National offered its voting publics a choice between a "left-wing coalition" or a National government. At the same time it positioned the "left-wing coalition" as a risk to the stability and economic security of the nation. National did not position itself as a coalition partner with any other party. As the campaign period developed, it became apparent that its only viable coalition partner was likely to be Act whose neo-liberal policies were considered extreme. Clearly, an association with Act would not have been desirable for National as the association might have created the perception that National, itself, had adopted a stance, with Act, at the

far Right of the political field. National's association with Act could have been used to that effect by opposition parties, particularly Labour. Yet, as discussed in the following chapter, Labour's election campaign advertising was primarily positive. Labour's other campaign genres did not effectively reposition National in the way that National repositioned Labour.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE NEW ZEALAND LABOUR PARTY CAMPAIGN

This chapter draws on two interviews with Labour's campaign director, Tony Timms; the party's controlled campaign texts, including brochures, advertisements, speeches and party political broadcasts (PPBs); and the party's press releases produced in an effort to obtain free media coverage of the party's policies, positioning and campaign activities. In line with Fairclough's (1995) statement that "viewing language use as a social practice implies ... that is always a socially and historically situated mode of action" (p. 131), Labour's social practices are examined in the context of Labour's complex political history, and in the socio-economic and political history of New Zealand. It was the complexity of Labour's political history, particularly its rapid and unmandated transformation from a party which had formed New Zealand into a Keynesian welfare state to a party which undertook radical neoliberal economic reforms, which made its self positioning in the political field of 1996 particularly difficult.

Labour's introduction of neoliberalism into the economic sector to New Zealand and the doctrine's eventual normalisation effected a shift to the right of the political field in New Zealand within the universe of political discourse. The textual analysis section describes the ways in which Labour sought to discursively position itself within the transformed political field. In order to render credible its own positioning, Labour had to simultaneously reconstruct itself by drawing on

and combining those positions that the party had taken previously that had proved both successful and compatible with the current political field.

In adopting a stance at left of centre in the political field, Labour had to distance itself from its competitors. In order to do so, Labour attempted to discursively reposition National far from centre to the right of the political field, with Act and the Christian Heritage Party. It positioned the Alliance's economic policies as too far to the left to be realistic, but allowed some credence of their social policies. The rationale for doing so is analysed.

The analysis of Labour's discourse practices, employed in the production and dissemination of the party's campaign texts, draw primarily on the interviews with Timms. The focus of the analysis is on the complexity of Labour's campaign organisation which worked to produce unified party messages and to maximise their coverage by the news media. The discourse practices section also draws on evidence provided by newspapers of the discourse of individuals within the party which served to undermine the party's internal cohesion, the credibility of its self positioning and the unity of its messages.

## **LABOUR'S SOCIAL PRACTICES**

The New Zealand Labour Party has traditionally adopted a stance in the left of the political field, in opposition to the more conservative National Party.

Labour, formed in 1916, had its origins in the trade union movement and was built upon socialist principles (Mulgan, 1994). The party first won a parliamentary majority in 1935, under Michael Joseph Savage who became New Zealand's first Labour Prime Minister. In the wake of economic depression, Labour made significant changes in the policy areas of health, education, employment law and housing. Savage, himself, is still credited with the introduction of a then immensely popular social welfare system to New Zealand (Gustafson, 1988).

Labour maintained its social democratic principles and practices until, after long periods in opposition, it was elected to power in a snap election in 1984 under David Lange. Lange's government faced an apparent economic crisis, reportedly induced by years of Keynesian economic protectionism and a failure to develop New Zealand as an internationally competitive economic force. The country's levels of foreign debt were critically high. This economic situation was used as the justification for the introduction of a series of radical, neoliberal economic reforms, designed by Treasury and implemented by Roger Douglas, Labour's Minister of Finance, and his supporters (including Richard Prebble) during the period 1984-1987 (Jesson, 1999; Kelsey, 1997). The reforms, dubbed "Rogernomics", after Douglas, had not been foreshadowed in Labour's 1984 election manifesto and were in direct opposition to Labour's traditional stance of democratic socialism (James & McRobie, 1993; Kelsey, 1997; Mulgan, 1994). The reforms of Rogernomics created discontent both among the political

professionals of the Labour Party and the non-professionals outside the political field.

The party split after its 1987 election victory when it became apparent that Roger Douglas' and Treasury's economic reforms were to be extended to reforms in the social sector (Kelsey, 1997). Lange attempted to stall the reforms but he resigned after disputes over Douglas' membership in the Labour Government Cabinet. In 1988 a senior Labour MP, Jim Anderton, resigned in protest and formed the NewLabour Party, based on Labour's traditional social democratic principles (see chapter eight). The Labour Party had effectively discarded its traditional voter base and was in disarray. The party's decline in support from the newly wealthy business sector corresponded to the economic depression which began with the 1987 crash of the stock market (Miller & Catt, 1993). As described in chapter one, the popular support for the introduction of a new electoral system has been attributed to Labour's radical reforms followed by National's (see chapter four), in both cases without an electoral mandate.

During its years in Opposition from 1990 to 1996, Labour had to re-establish its connections with a stable voter base. In keeping with theories of campaign modernisation and the globalisation of political practices, the New Zealand Labour Party joined the New Labour Party of Britain, headed by Tony Blair, in following the examples successfully set by Bill Clinton's Democratic Party of the USA. What these parties all adopted what was a "third way" of

economic and social policy (Giddens, 1998). As Giddens (*ibid.*) explains, “it is a third way in the sense that it is an attempt to transcend both old-style social democracy and neoliberalism” (p. 26). By creating new articulations between neoliberal economic policies and social policies grounded in social democratic principles, Labour could (as did Blair and Clinton) seek to represent both its traditional working class voters and members of the more wealthy business sector. The fact that Labour continued to endorse key principles of neoliberal economics and shared these principles with National was indicative of a shift to the right of the political field within the universe of political discourse. Within this repositioned political field of New Zealand 1996, Labour continued to adopt a stance at the left of centre.

Britain’s New Labour carried the concept of the Americanisation of politics further than it had been before in their efforts to ensure an election victory in 1997. In their case “Americanisation” moved beyond general trends and became the much more specific “Clintonisation” with the adoption of a campaign blueprint devised by the 1992 Clinton election campaign team. This included key themes and messages, with only the names changed (Michie, 1998). Two principles outlined by Clinton’s campaign blueprint which were adopted by New Labour were also fundamental to the New Zealand Labour Party’s bid to claim its stance near the centre of New Zealand’s political field. The first of these was “the occupation of the centre ground of politics, requiring the abandonment of any

historical baggage that makes the party beholden to forces associated with political extremes” (ibid. p. 283). Labour’s “baggage” came from each pole of the political field. From the Right, the party had to dissociate itself from its former Cabinet members, Douglas and Prebble, who had since formed Act. From the Left, Labour had to be cautious about a strong association with the trade union movement as such an association could alienate support from the business sector.

The second principle of Clinton’s campaign which Labour needed to take into account was “the jettisoning of firmly held policy positions which may attract negative comment in favour of all-encompassing general statements which can be accepted by audiences with widely varying, and even conflicting, demands and which will change with public opinion (ibid. p. 283). This principle, too, was consistent with the Americanisation or modernisation of political campaigns. The aim of such practices is the formation of “catch-all” parties with the capability of appealing to multiple publics (for example, Swanson & Mancini, 1996).

The political and social history of New Zealand, particularly since 1984, prevented the New Zealand Labour Party from wholesale adoption of the Clinton strategy, but in many ways the circumstances of the two Labour parties were closely parallel. Both parties, especially Britain’s, had experienced long periods in Opposition with conservative, right leaning governments. The neoliberal regime of the government, in each case, had gained some degree of social normalisation with the result that the political centre ground had moved to the right to embrace a free-

market economy. The key differences, however, were the New Zealand Labour Party's historic involvement in the introduction of neoliberalism, the New Zealand public's reactionary demand for a new electoral system and the electoral system itself. All of these differences had to be taken into account in the New Zealand Labour Party's election strategy.

All of these social, historical and political factors shaped Labour's social practices. While Labour sought to reconstruct itself as a modern party of the centre left, as detailed in the textual analysis section below, it was not yet able to completely remove itself from the internal dissent which began with its 1984 reforms. There was still a division in the upper hierarchy of the party caucus over the degree to which Labour should reject neoliberalism. That division, coupled with personality differences, resulted in a challenge for the Labour party leadership in election year. The tension within the party had an effect upon the party's campaign discourse. As Fairclough (1995) points out, analysis within the social practices dimension of critical discourse analysis focuses "upon the discursive event within relations of power and domination" (p. 133). The details of the challenge are detailed in the discourse practices section below.

## **LABOUR'S DISCOURSE PRACTICES**

Labour's recent political history increased the need for Labour to position itself unequivocally. This imperative, in turn, required the dissemination of unified and consistent campaign messages. As was the case for National, detailed in the previous chapter, Labour's campaign team comprised a wide variety of skilled discourse technologists (Fairclough, 1989). The complexity of Labour's campaign team and their use of sophisticated technology and political marketing techniques was consistent with campaign trends reported internationally (for example, Franklin, 1994; Friedenbergl, 1997; Maarek, 1995; Scammell, 1995; Shea, 1996). Contrary to international trends, however, was the pervasive power and influence of the Labour Party in the production and dissemination of the campaign messages of its candidates. The continued power of the political party can be attributed, to a large degree, to the proportional representation electoral system, as discussed in chapter two.

The campaign was driven by the campaign director, Tony Timms, and primary authorisation of campaign practices fell to the Campaign Committee. This committee comprised the Campaign Director; the President of the Labour Party, Michael Hirschfeld; the deputy Leader of the Party who was also the Party spokesperson for finance, Michael Cullen; and Peter Hodgson, a strategist. Reporting to the Campaign Committee were 16 specialist committees or sections.

The Electorate Management Committee, referred to by Timms as a “nuts and bolts” committee had the job of maximising the party vote.

The Electorate Management Committee was in charge of both the List and Constituency seats, and was responsible for all of the data management throughout the party. Through this committee the Campaign Director also ran a series of conference calls each week with about 16 candidates on each conference. These conference calls had the overall purpose of updating both list and constituency candidates and discussed “the issues ahead, tactics in dealing with issues of the day, what’s actually happening” and provided basic training in voter recruitment (Timms, personal communication, April 16, 1996).

An advertising group dealt with all aspects of controlled, or paid, media coverage, including media buying. Decisions were made on a case by case basis whether advertisement production and dissemination would be handled by an in house group or by Labour’s consulting agency, Fresco. The in-house group consisted of a professional advertiser who, on behalf of the Labour Party, contracted staff such as a copywriter and a media placement expert to work on campaign material.

The messages disseminated through advertising were devised by the strategy committee guided by voter information and opinions gathered through constant professional polling. It was information from opinion polls which brought about the decision to run a positive campaign through advertising and to

concentrate on issues of health, education and living standards, using the focus group tested slogan “New Heart. New Hope. New Zealand.” Similarly, opinion polls were used to identify Labour’s target of initially “soft” Alliance and “soft” National voters, later changed to National and “soft” New Zealand First voters as support for New Zealand First grew. The one television commercial was broadcast 52 times with responses to the advertisement tracked through focus groups. Print advertisements, particularly targeted through the local free press, were used to position Helen Clark was the one person who could deliver what voters wanted. The strategy was to run an essentially positive campaign through paid advertising. This strategy ran counter to international trends which report a dominance of negative political advertising (for example, Jamieson, 1992; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). Labour’s negative discursive repositioning of opponents was done primarily through press releases and speeches.

A separate group had responsibility for the dissemination of messages via uncontrolled or free media coverage. Messages disseminated via uncontrolled media coverage, particularly the news media, are subject to media filters such as journalists and editors. Therefore the political party or candidate has no control over the final form or content of the message. Nevertheless, news coverage is essential to political campaigning as it is inexpensive and is attributed greater credibility than the controlled messages of paid advertising (Shea, 1996). In order to maximise media coverage, public relations practitioners have a thorough

understanding of the requirements of news institutions, including the criteria of newsworthiness, and the economic constraints journalists face in gathering news (for example, Tiffen, 1989; Ward, 1995). The campaign communications director, Mike Monro, who worked within Labour's media unit was previously the political editor of the major Wellington daily newspaper, the *Dominion* and was, therefore, well placed to co-ordinate the journalistic imperatives of news production with public relations objectives. Two outside public relations consultants worked with the group. It was the role of this group to maximise media coverage of issues and events of the campaign, from the Labour Party perspective and consistent with Labour's positioning of itself.

Each day the media unit issued press releases to news outlets nation-wide. These press releases were used in an attempt to obtain media coverage of policy statements and events. The degree of importance of news coverage was reflected in Clark's daily schedule which began with a 7 am press conference designed to set the news agenda for the day, and ended with her being available for interviews for the 6 o'clock television news broadcast. As Tony Timms put it:

what you must aim to do is not have your leader sort of floating around the country where you've got no access to television ... and this is where you've got to think very seriously about hiring a small plane to get about so she's either in Auckland, Wellington or Christchurch for that 6 o'clock news (personal communication, Timms, April 16, 1996).

The extensive use of uncontrolled media coverage for message dissemination made by all political parties and candidates necessitated constant monitoring of that coverage. Labour set up a media monitoring group within the free media group to allow an instant response, as required, to negative or “erroneous” comments made in the media by other parties or by journalists. This group, every morning, provided the Campaign Director with news clippings and media coverage logs. The group also had a key task of monitoring talkback radio programmes so that: “as soon as an issue comes up the message comes through directly to me. I can then get a spokesperson to ring that programme and correct any impression that may have been given, so it’s instant response”. Closely aligned in purpose to the media monitoring group was another whose role was to monitor the output of key opponents - initially identified as the Alliance Party and the National Party, but later revised to New Zealand First and the National Party. Responses to information provided by this group formed the basis of an attack on these opponents.

Clearly, the various groups involved in campaign management and organisation worked interdependently. The groups formed to organise and coordinate the Leader’s and MPs’ visits, for example, worked with the free media group for publicity and with the fund-raising group for financial support and guidance. The visits were arranged to reinforce key messages decided upon by the

communications strategy group and to attempt to seize the political agenda for media coverage. In turn, the themes and subthemes decided upon by the communications strategy group were driven by the findings of the polling and research group.

Separate groups were established with responsibility for formation of policy, for liaison with opinion leaders, voter enrolment and Auckland campaign strategy respectively. Voter enrolment was an important issue for the Labour Party as in many cases potential Labour voters were not on the electoral roll. Their enrolment campaign, therefore, was aggressive:

we will be enrolling people and we get them outside video parlours, you get them outside video stores, you get them in supermarkets, so we concentrate our attacks in those areas and we've got teams out doing enrolments with various Pacific Island groups various ethnic groups and so on (Timms, personal communication, April 16, 1996).

Co-operation with various societal opinion leaders such as church leaders, members of the legal profession, trade union leaders and teachers was essential for lending weight to both Labour policies and Labour's criticisms of the Government's current social and economic policies. This was particularly evident over the issues of poverty and of labour reform. Opinion leaders tended to be members of society who, because of their positions, were considered likely to

have interpersonal influence over their group members. Many of them were, also by virtue of their positions, considered to be news elites (see, for example, Tiffen, 1989) and thus in a position to have their opinions expressed through the mass media. The stories written about them and their views were deemed more credible because of a lack of overtly political association. From another perspective, it was better for the Labour Party to remain disassociated from the broadcasting of views of the trade unions over labour reform, as mentioned above. Labour did not, however, sever its ties with these representatives of the workers whose votes Labour wanted to regain. The Engineers' Union, however, sought prior approval of their campaign from the Labour Party. Also, the Labour Party was directly involved in the writing of the advertising campaign run by the Council of Trade Unions (Timms, personal communication, October 31, 1997).

The Labour Party campaign organisation was highly complex. There was some criticism, however, that this complex campaign machine served as a deterrent to the dissemination of universally consistent messages. *The Dominion* published the following article criticising the Labour Party organisation:

insiders say "The party is sending too many messages about too many things .... The result isn't that the public becomes more informed. It becomes confused." The party has been left with a serious image problem, contributing to its opinion poll support falling to 15 per cent. Labour's structure made it impossible to develop a proper strategy for getting the

party's message across to the public, the source said. Its strategy was drawn up by a committee of nine or 10 people, not a single manager, as was the case in most modern corporates. Even when it was drawn up, MPs lacked the discipline to follow it: "A strategy is drawn up, everyone nods and agrees to it. Then a week later they are all sending out [press] releases on completely unrelated issues." (Martin, 1996b)

The sending out of press releases on unrelated issues did not, however, appear to stem so much from a lack of coherent strategy as from a lack of internal party discipline. Bryan Gould observed of Blair's New Labour that because they had been in opposition for 22 years "the thirst for victory is overwhelming" and they would "tolerate almost anything for the sake of a win" (Gould, 1996). The same, apparently, did not apply to the New Zealand Labour Party.

Helen Clark, consistent with the Clinton blueprint, had been campaigning on behalf of the Labour Party for many months before the official campaign period. As early as March the Waikato Times wrote:

Monro [campaign communications director] believes Labour is making headway in improving its public perception. "Our strategy is in place now and that will be followed as rigidly as we can. Obviously it revolves around Helen Clark and presenting her as a prime minister in waiting. To do that we've got to present her as a person who's out there and in touch with New Zealanders and presenting constructive solutions." That means

following a rigorous programme of regional visits, focusing on health and education issues, visiting hospitals, schools, kindergartens, polytechnics (Pepperell, 1996a).

Labour's strategy of maximising direct contact between candidates and voters was followed by most political parties in New Zealand, in 1996. Trent and Friedenber (1995) affirm the effectiveness of a candidates direct appeal for votes. Direct interpersonal communication allows voters to give feedback and so engage with the candidate.

There was a second source of tension and message diversion among Labour candidates which was much more publicly acknowledged than that between the party and its candidates. In spite of efforts to position Clark as a "prime minister in waiting", its own social history conspired against it in terms of tension over leadership. Two previous Labour leaders remained as MPs. One, David Lange was due for retirement. The other, Mike Moore, contested the 1996 election with the Labour Party, although his continued allegiance to Labour was in doubt. Moore, a popular and somewhat charismatic leader had been deposed by Clark in a bitter coup shortly after the 1993 general election. Moore was outspoken in his criticism of Labour and as late as March 1996 he considered forming his own party, reportedly with National MPs Michael Laws and Peter McCardle. He remained with Labour but was supported by senior Labour MPs who in June 1996 asked Clark to step down in favour of Moore. The attempted coup apparently brought

ideological differences within the party to the surface. Clark was reported to have described the coup attempt as the “last gasp of Rogernomics” and accused Richard Prebble of working with the plotters (Laugesen, 1996c). Her accusations served to remind the voting public of Labour’s remaining right wing faction. The proponents of the attempted coup were adamant, however, that their motivation was one of wanting a popular and telegenic leader for the campaign. *The Herald* reported:

The Rogernomics scenario was also misleading as it implied the dispute was philosophical whereas it was only about Helen Clark - whether she should be replaced or allowed to lead Labour into the October 12 elections.

The party’s polling shows that she is a liability as voters are tending to use their list vote as a presidential vote or as a leader’s vote (Herbert, 1996).

The argument was, thus, that in the case of party leaders, personality was more important than policy in attracting the party vote. Ironically, Labour’s rise in popularity later in the campaign was attributed to Clark’s personal performance in the two leaders’ debates broadcast on National television (Roper, 1998a).

The coup itself cast doubt upon the party’s own messages. *The Dominion* reported: “Labour plans to portray itself in the election as the only credible alternative to National, a claim that will be undermined by disunity” (Laugesen, 1996c) and “Labour’s recurrent leadership tremors have become part of the public face of the party, reinforcing impressions of a party plagued with self-doubt”

(Laugesen, 1996e). Moore continued to campaign with Labour but for him “the question now was his role with the party, which he would stick with, working on issues of concern to him such as gangs and mental health” (Martin, 1996a). Had he instead campaigned on the issues decided upon by the Labour campaign strategy team, Moore’s messages would have resonated more consistently with those of the party.

The other influential former Labour leader, David Lange, also undermined the consistency and unity of party messages. Throughout the year he wrote a fortnightly newspaper column in which he chose to pursue a personal rather than party agenda with a commentary of his own experiences and observations (for example, Lange, 1996). Although he campaigned for Labour beyond his retirement, he was reported as publicly saying that after the election it was likely that the right wing faction of the Labour MPs could defect to the National Party and that “there was too much “baggage, ill-will, history and madness” for a formal coalition on the left” (Clifton, 1996a). Thus Lange, too, reinforced perceptions of Labour’s disunity. He also, like Moore, fuelled perceptions that party divisions were derived from differing views of the stance labour should adopt in the political field. Officially, Labour tried to position itself away from its right wing former members. The ways in which Labour attempted to position itself and (re)position its opponents are explored in the following section.

## **LABOUR'S TEXTS**

Evidence of the tensions derived from Labour's social and discourse practices was found in the party's campaign texts. This section analyses the ways in which Labour drew on some key aspects of the third way politics of Britain's Labour Party in attempting to draw together its traditional social democratic stance with elements of its more recent neoliberal stance. Third way politics articulates neoliberal economics with social democratic principles of social responsibility (Giddens, 1998). The key areas in which Labour specifically sought to differentiate itself from National were those of the provision of social services and reform of the labour market. In adopting a stance at the centre left of the political field, Labour had to discursively (re)position its opposition away from centre. The ways in which Labour sought to effect such (re)positioning are also analysed in this section.

The messages and themes discussed below were consistently evident in Labour Party publications such as press releases, brochures, speeches and party political broadcasts constructed by the Labour Party campaign machine. Labour's own position was backed up by detailed policy documents.

## **Labour's discursive positioning of itself**

With so many political parties contesting the first MMP election and with five or six of them capable of winning enough votes to gain seats in Parliament, the occupation of the centre ground of politics in New Zealand was not easy. Each party still had to differentiate itself from the others. In line with public opinion, Labour adopted a stance at “left of centre” of the political field. However, in order to do so, it still had to jettison historical “baggage” and in Labour’s case the baggage came from opposite poles of the political spectrum, as stated in Labour’s social practices section, above. From the Right, Labour had to disassociate itself from the unpopular aspects of the neoliberal economic “reforms” of the 1984 Labour Government. The two members of that Government who were most strongly associated with the reforms were Roger Douglas and Richard Prebble who had now formed ACT. From the Left, in order to appease the business sector, Labour had to position itself away from militant unionism and from the Alliance Party. The Alliance was perceived as a high taxing, socialist party even though those values were not shared by all member parties of the Alliance (see chapter eight). Labour could not afford to be seen to be linked to unpopular Alliance policies by an assumption that the two parties would work together in coalition.

### **Labour's discursive reconstruction of itself**

The New Zealand Labour Party had to be seen to have changed but the name New Labour as a symbol of change was not an option as it was for Britain's Labour Party. NewLabour was the name taken by Anderton for his party which he formed after he broke away from Labour (see chapter eight). What the Labour Party of 1996 opted for instead was to reassociate itself with the "Old Labour", the pre-1984 Labour Party, in order to align itself with the values of a centre-left party. Clark, in her opening PPB, focused on what the Labour Party had done, historically, in the provision of social services:

I believe in the Labour Party because it has done a tremendous amount for this country. I know that it put social security in place, I know that it delivered free public health and education, I know it put this country on its feet after a great depression ... it's done a lot and it's been good. Sure it's made mistakes. Nobody that tried anything didn't make mistakes, but overall, it's record is a tremendous one for this country.

In evoking the Labour of the past, the present Labour Party also drew on its heroes, those renowned Labour leaders whose images were strongly positive for many New Zealanders. For example, in a press release Clark likened her own leadership to that of Michael Joseph Savage: "under my leadership Labour is on track with policies Michael Joseph Savage would be proud of" (press release,

September 12, 1996); and in another she was cited as saying “Norman Kirk used to say that social welfare did not imprison people but rather should set them free. This is the philosophy behind Labour’s approach today” (press release, October 1, 1996).

Labour discursively reconstructed itself by drawing on those values of “Old Labour” which could be linked to the values of traditional Labour voters. Many of those voters had become disillusioned with Labour because of the 1984-1987 economic reforms. Labour had to attempt to reassure its traditional voters but it also had to accommodate a much wider public acceptance of a free market economy. The acceptance indicated that a shift to the right of the political field had been effected. In order to maintain a stance close to the centre of the political field, Labour had to join National in embracing the concept of a free market. Thus the issue was neutralised in the political centre. Labour effected the shift to the left of a new centre by articulating its record of popular social reforms with its reforms which opened the economic sector to a free market regime.

On one hand, Labour had introduced some unpopular, neoliberal reforms in the social sector. Labour acknowledged these as mistakes of the past and constructed them as part of a learning process. For example, Clark stated in Labour’s opening PPB:

We’re the old Labour Party. Labour’s had to come to terms with its past, some of it good, some of it bad. Problems in the 80s, some good things in

the 80s. What we've had to do is chuck away the things that were bad, the people that caused the problem have gone and we move on. We've listened to people. We've changed the policies that hurt people. We're back on track. And that's a very positive process.

Labour thus positioned its unpopular policies as a temporary deviation from Labour's core values which were situated at the left of the political field. Now Labour was "back on track".

Labour drew on its popular social policies of the past to position itself as a party with an established and positive record of social reform. Such a position enabled Labour to assert that its past successes could be repeated in the future.

For example:

Labour's strength is that it knows what works. We put in place social security. We put in place state housing, we put in place decent health systems and education so we know these things can be done. There's nothing about modern society that stops those things being done again (ibid.).

The statement strongly implied that the social reforms put in place by Labour had been removed by National and that Labour would reintroduce them.

On the other hand, Labour did not choose to discard altogether its involvement in the economic reforms of the 1980s. Instead, Labour chose to adopt dual subject positions in order to articulate social and economic reforms. Thus it

positioned itself as a social reformist as well as an economic reformist. These dual positions enabled Labour to adopt a stance close to centre and appeal to a wide range of voters. In order to effect the articulation and sustain the positions, Labour was selective in claiming ownership of the economic reforms. The restructuring of school administration provided one example:

The fourth Labour Government introduced the Tomorrow's Schools system - which gave local communities greater say in the running of their schools. I am proud of those changes and I have yet to meet a school which would like to revert back to the old system (press release, September 30, 1996)

The success of Tomorrow's Schools was positioned as belonging to the Labour Party while its problems belonged to others: "the success of Tomorrow's Schools depends largely on proper resourcing and the National Government has failed to provide that resourcing" (ibid.).

Generally, the economic reforms of the 1980s were constructed as being sound in principle but also as having been taken beyond the original intention. As Clark put it:

we feel that the baby's been thrown out with the bath water when it comes to changes in New Zealand. It's just gone too far. And people feel that they've lost something fundamental. And as for economic recovery,

the ordinary person is saying when am I going to see some of it? Because it hasn't helped me yet (PPB Opening)

Such an approach created a path by which the Labour Party of 1996 could attempt to balance the desirability of economic liberalism with the need to redress issues of social security. If Labour deviated from either it stood to lose the support of the sector thus concerned. The following two sections examine Labour's positioning of itself in relation to economic liberalism and social responsibility.

### **Economic liberalism**

From an economic perspective, Labour positioned itself firmly on the side of liberalism. With the statement that "We pose no threat to the open economy. Indeed we propose to strengthen it" (press release, October 3, 1996), the Labour spokesperson for finance, Michael Cullen, sought to reassure the business sector. This was a theme that was consistently repeated throughout the Labour campaign. In another press release, Cullen said:

We have no intention of trying to rebuild the walls or kill the goose that lays the golden egg. Far from it. We know that giving new heart and new hope to the people Labour has always represented is dependent on maintaining a strong healthy economy and sharing its benefits more fairly (September 19, 1996).

While reassuring the business sector that Labour would not return to protectionism (“rebuild the walls”) and destroy international free trade (“the goose”), Cullen also articulated those assurances with principles of social justice.

The following example from Mike Moore put Labour’s position succinctly:

A reckless, reactionary reversal from an open market to a closed economy will not help the children or create new wealth and jobs. It will do the opposite. Nations that embrace trade win; those that don’t lose .... The economic facts of history are clear. To close down a market economy because it fails the bottom 20 percent of the population would be a catastrophe, just as not doing more for those 20 percent who are losing out would be a disaster (press release, October 3, 1996).

Moore thus framed the free market as incontestable in an attempt to neutralise it as an election issue. Indeed, by virtue of its being core policy of the other major party, National, the free market was neutralised in the centre of the political field. The need to defend its stance came from the position adopted by the Alliance and the attempts made by National to reposition Labour away from the neutral ground of political centre to the Left with the Alliance (see chapter four).

### **Social responsibility**

While supporting the broad economic direction of New Zealand, the Labour Party had to take care to differentiate itself from National. The area in

which it could best do this was in the area of wealth distribution. Wealth distribution was positioned by Labour as the role of the state. For example: “only Labour offers people the balance between maintaining economic growth and ensuring that its fruits are distributed to all New Zealanders” (press release, September 15, 1996). Wealth distribution was articulated with social responsibility which implied a degree of state driven collectivism, a key defining feature of the political Left. In another press release, Labour promised to deliver “a government which recognises that the other side of fiscal responsibility is social responsibility” (September 8, 1996) and it was this premise on which the party based its claim to a stance in the centre-left of the political spectrum. In her address at the opening of Labour’s election campaign (September 8, 1996), Clark emphasised that Labour did not “see achieving a healthy and efficient economy as an end to itself” but as a means of “delivering a fairer and better society” (while, by implication, National did not).

Much of Labour’s campaign discourse addressed “ordinary New Zealanders”. In Labour’s view, ordinary New Zealanders here were the people for whom the country’s economic policies and recovery meant nothing, the “New Zealanders who have experienced no recovery at all” (ibid.). One brochure which stated that a party vote for Labour was the “only vote that will help ordinary people”, depicted in cartoon style a family of ordinary people saying “We deserve a fairer deal. It’s about time we had a Government that worked for us”. As they

spoke, they were watching a Rolls Royce car driving past, a symbol of the wealthy sector for whom government was working because that was the sector which had benefited from current policies.

Labour's public rationale for differentiation from the National Government's policies and for a departure from those policies was presented through the construction of a poverty crisis. It is in times of crisis that people will be more receptive to a change from the status quo. The change required can be effected by as little as a change in government which can introduce a new mode of regulation (Haeusler & Hirsch, 1989). Labour's spokesperson for social welfare, Annette King stated that "the growth of the food bank industry could be tackled by reversing the policies of the past six years which have created a poverty crisis in New Zealand" (press release, September 12, 1996). By limiting the effects to the policies of the "past six years", King limited the blame to the National Government rather than extend it to the neoliberal reforms undertaken since 1984. In the following example, Clark similarly limited the time frame in which government policy could be held accountable for poverty, but she was more specific in separating economic reform from social reform: "Foodbanks are synonymous with the six year tenure of Mr Bolger's government. There is a direct linkage between the savage benefit cuts of 1991 and the surge in demand for food parcels from foodbanks" (press release, September 30, 1996).

Those who could be considered to be suffering from poverty were not necessarily amongst the voter publics targeted by Labour. They were more likely to be attracted by the policies of the Alliance. However, Clark extended the effects of poverty to a much wider set of publics, to “all of us”. In Labour’s closing PPB, Clark stated that the reason that everyone should be concerned about poverty was that “Poverty is corrosive in New Zealand society. It affects all of us. It results in sickness, in anger and crime. It strips our people of dignity and hope”. Ownership of the problem was extended, too, beyond government to “everyone” by Clark’s reference to the poor as “our people”. “Ordinary people” were not constructed as the poor, but were implicated in the need to change the government which created the poverty crisis. By contrast, the Alliance campaign texts constructed “ordinary people” to include the poor (see chapter eight).

Labour did not, however, advocate a return to the Keynesian social welfare system introduced by the Labour Party of post war New Zealand. Clark’s statement in Labour’s opening PPB that “Labour has stood for the ordinary *working* person who aspires to have their house, their car, a decent life for their kids...” was very carefully worded. Here there was a shift in meaning, a qualification of the word “ordinary” to make it synonymous with “worker” rather than “beneficiary”. A strong work ethic was to be engendered and long term welfare dependency was to be discouraged. The wording of Labour’s policy on transition to work made the same shift in stating that “A modern welfare state

can't be just a safety net, it has to be a trampoline, bouncing its clients back into full and meaningful participation as quickly and effectively as possible." The shift in Labour's discourse from Keynesian social welfare to a reconstructed one in 1996 was entirely consistent with the aims and precepts of third way politics embraced in Britain. Giddens (1998) suggested that a motto for third way politics might be "no rights without responsibilities" (p. 65). He states that under "old-style" social democracy, rights became unconditional claims but that with "expanding individualism should come an extension of individual obligations. Unemployment benefits, for example, should carry the obligation to look actively for work, and it is up to governments to ensure that welfare systems do not discourage active search" (ibid. p. 65). One of the compromises necessary in making such a shift, in New Zealand as elsewhere, was the restructuring of Labour's traditional philosophy of unqualified communal support.

Labour, through its social welfare system for the 1990s positioned itself as entirely in tune with a free market economy which would help the whole country. for example, in a press release Labour stated that its "innovative approach will provide New Zealand with a welfare system designed to cope with the pressures and enhance New Zealand's ability to cope with the new global economy" (October 1, 1996). In this statement, which was also consistent with third way politics, Labour acknowledged and embraced a shift in the position of the political centre, a common sense acceptance of a free market, global economy.

## **Social services**

Health and education were the two key areas where Labour sought to fundamentally differentiate itself from the parties of the Right, particularly National and Act. It was primarily in these areas that Labour claimed its position on the left side of centre in the political field. Labour's stance in health and education also had a basis in political rationality. The issues were identified as of key concern to voters who wanted the state to continue to provide key social services. Labour positioned health and education as services which should remain public and which should, therefore, be not an individual but a collective responsibility. Labour's position was summed up by Labour MP, Mark Burton, in the following press release statement: "Health is an excellent example of where we have traditionally sought to pool our resources and to apply our sense of shared responsibility. We should pay for our hospitals and health services - through tax" (September 12, 1996). Burton's sentiments would have resonated with a wide range of voting publics whom Labour sought to represent. By linking state provision of health services to tradition, the statement evoked Labour's past and the desirable aspects of the social welfare system. More explicitly, the statement moved away from the "bludger" connotations which had, over the recent past, been associated with the welfare state (see Leitch, 1990).

Labour's approach to a reconstructed system of social welfare was premised upon an articulation of social and economic imperatives, as explored above. In contrast to National which had introduced a market model to health and education. Labour was careful to differentiate between the economic sector and the provision of social services. They were interdependent but they were to be "judged by different core objectives". For example, Burton stated that

There is an important, indeed a central place in New Zealand's future prosperity for entrepreneurial enterprise and business. But there is equally a need to recognise that there are core services, such as Health and Education, which should be organised around, and judged by, *different* core objectives (press release, September 17, 1996).

The difference, according to Labour, was that a market system could not be applied to health and education. As Labour's health spokesperson, Lianne Dalziel, stated: in health "the competitive market simply doesn't work, because health is not a commodity that can simply be traded in the market-place (September 11, 1996).

As stated above, Labour's position on the issues of health and education was in direct opposition to the popularly perceived position taken by National, as well as by Act. Thus, while the issue of free trade in the economic sector was neutralised in the centre of the political field, the provision of social services became a key point of differentiation between Labour and National, as well as a

defining difference between Left and Right in the political field in New Zealand in 1996.

### **Labour reform**

Because much of the business sector attributed the success of the economy to the Employment Contracts Act (ECA) by which the labour market was deregulated, and indeed, because the Employers Federation was running a parallel campaign based on that premise (Leitch & Roper, 1999), Labour had also to reassure the business sector that it posed no threat through labour reform. This was a difficult position to take as Labour also wanted to regain its traditional support from the working sector. Labour tackled the problem in two ways. First, there was very little direct reference made to the ECA in Labour's press releases and speeches, and, apart from one brochure targeted to workers which bluntly stated that Labour would remove the ECA, none in its advertising. Advertising against the ECA was left to the Engineers' Union which engaged in an adversarial campaign against the Employers' Federation (ibid.). The ECA was referred to directly in Labour's opening PPB, but only indirectly in the closing PPB. Secondly, where the law was referred to by Labour candidates it was not in a sense of returning to a discredited past. Instead, reform was presented in a forward looking manner. Workers were portrayed as having a positive

contribution to make to organisations, if only they were free to do so. As Clark said: “we want them [workers] to be able to contribute to building better companies, more profitable industries, a stronger economy. Workers have got a stake in this economy and they’ve got to be able to express it through their organisations” (PPB opening).

Cullen also delivered a carefully worded statement in the same broadcast, constructed to demonstrate that Labour would take an impartial view of both sides of the employment law issue. He addressed the issue of labour reform in terms of redressing an existing imbalance in favour of employers:

The ECA is fundamentally unfair. It is biased in one direction. Both in its general approach and in detail, it’s way too towards the employers’ side of the argument. Now, we don’t want to go back to the old system of rigid national awards and automatic coverage by unions .... If all employers were good and all workers were responsible then we wouldn’t need any industrial relations law at all but we do need law which is fair and balanced on both sides and moves us towards a more co-operative partnership in business as well as between government and business.

Cullen thus countered the view put forward by National that repeal of the ECA would lead to industrial unrest. He attempted to appease employers by his reference to industrial relations as a “co-operative partnership”. He also indicated the willingness of a Labour government to work in partnership with business.

In the closing PPB, Clark did not refer to the ECA by name. She merely talked of introducing “new employment law to ensure that working people can bargain in good faith for better wages and conditions” and worked to further assure the business sector that:

We’re committed to economic growth. This country mustn’t go back into debt. We have to keep the confidence of the business community both here and overseas. We’ll work in partnership with business and the unions and earn that confidence. There won’t be any U-turns.

For the workers, though, Clark did declare that “the Labour Party stands for the right of working people to have a voice through their unions” (September 8, 1996), a statement that would have been unthinkable for Tony Blair in his wholesale jettisoning of Britain’s New Labour’s association with trade unions. Such direct references to unions from the New Zealand Labour Party were rare but they did indicate an attempt to regain the support of Labour’s traditional voters and to articulate the needs of both employers and employees.

### **Labour’s discursive positioning of others**

When a political party takes a certain position on an issue within the political field, or adopts a particular stance in the political field, it must be aware of the positions taken, or likely to be taken, by opposition parties or candidates.

Bourdieu (1991) refers to this as a necessary “practical sense ... [which] enables the politician to ‘choose’ suitable and agreed stances and to avoid ‘compromising’ stances, which would mean being of the same mind as the occupants of opposite positions in the space of the political field” (p. 179). If the position chosen by a particular party is already taken by another, it may become necessary for that party to discursively reposition the other party to a different space, sufficiently removed from the desired one. The alternative to repositioning the opposing party is to accept an overlap. In cases where policy positions overlap because the parties concerned recognise that those positions are supported by a majority of voters, those positions tend to become neutralised in the central space of the political field (*ibid.*). Then other differentiating positions must instead be put to the foreground. If the overlap within the political field is great, key differentiating positions, which tend to be personality based, can be drawn from outside the political field. The discursive repositioning of a political party by an opponent is likely to require some form of negative attack designed to undermine the party’s positional claim.

Under MMP, when a coalition government is expected to be formed after the election, discursive repositioning of political opponents becomes problematic. If a political party were to be seen to be working to undermine the credibility of an opponent during the election campaign, and then enter a coalition agreement with that opponent, its own credibility would be undermined in the eyes of the

voting public. In many cases, those parties which are positioned closest together in the political field and which need, therefore, to distinguish themselves from each other, are the same parties which will work together in coalition. However, the parties which position themselves closest to the political centre are likely to be the parties with the largest voter support by virtue of their appeal to the broadest range of publics. The differences between these parties is likely to be perceived as small because of the degree of shared, neutralised positions in the centre of the political field. If two such major parties were to govern together, it could easily be perceived by voters as a disintegration of difference altogether. In that case, the demise of one of the two parties would be likely. Labour and National were two such parties. The ways in which Labour dealt with the situation and attempted to reposition National is discussed in the following section.

### **National**

At the opening of Labour's election campaign, Clark stated categorically that "we will not enter a coalition with National" (September 8, 1996). If Labour did agree to enter into a "grand coalition" with National it would, in the words of Bryan Gould, a former senior Minister of Britain's New Labour Party, and in line with the suppositions made above:

find that it had abandoned any claim to be the principal party of opposition, leaving that role to the Alliance or NZ First, and that it had even more difficulty than it does now in establishing a clear identity in the minds of the voters” (Gould, 1996).

Another factor was that a coalition agreement with National would be irreconcilable with the “Old Labour” side of the Labour Party and would thus split the party irretrievably (ibid.).

Labour’s early refusal to co-operate with National effectively removed the problem of negative attacks against a party which was seen by many as being closely aligned to Labour in its policies. The public perception of such an alignment also meant, however, that Labour had to make a concerted effort to differentiate itself from National. It did this by attempting to reposition National to the far right of the political field - as “New Right” but, significantly, not as neoliberal. The appropriation of a third way of politics by traditionally social democratic parties such as those of Clinton and Blair have been seen by their critics as “warmed-over neoliberalism” (Giddens, 1998, p. 25). The term “new right” refers to the primarily conservative origins of neoliberalism (ibid.). Hence “new right” served Labour’s purpose of differentiating itself from National better than “neoliberal”.

In taking a stance just left of centre in the political field, Labour was careful to distance National’s user pays approach to health and education far from

centre. These were labelled as the policies of the New Right, constructed as extreme and, therefore, in no way near Labour's adopted stance. The New Right, extended principles of the market economy to public services such as health and education. Because Labour also advocated a market economy, it was essential that Labour's emphasis on the need for "different core objectives" for health and education, discussed above, was unequivocal. Labour implicitly made the paradoxical claim that individualism in some areas of public service was "New Right" while individualism in areas of business and markets, neutralised as an issue in the centre of the political field, was universally acceptable: Such a key difference allowed statements, such as the following by Clark, to be made:

Under the new government ... the new right ideology stops. I am not interested in bulk funding, vouchers, and breaking down teacher pay scales and awards. These moves are all destructive of a publicly funded and provided education system (Clark, speech, September 18, 1996).

Bulk funding to schools is intended to allow schools to act as independent organisations, making their own decisions on spending allocation, including teacher salaries, and thus nominally remove schools from state control. Voucher education provides funding on an individual student basis with the student free to use the "voucher" at the institution of his or her choice. Both were positioned by Labour as New Right because they encouraged a free market approach to education. The

fundamental argument against such an approach was made on the basis of equality. As Labour MP, Sutton, stated in a press release:

The move to population-based funding for health and education may be equitable in terms of expenditure per head. However, in terms of equality of access to health and equality of opportunity in education, the New Right formulae fail miserably ( September 6, 1996).

Giddens (1991) explains the differences in the meanings of “equality” between the neoliberal model and the model proposed by “new politics”, or the third way model. The neoliberal model suggests that equality should be that of meritocracy, or equality of opportunity. The problem with that model, however, he suggests, is that the levels of outcome are likely to be highly unequal, with a few rising to the top at the expense of the majority who would be kept at, or pushed down to, lower levels of achievement. The new politics regards equality in terms of exclusion and inclusion, with inclusion ranging in meaning to include citizenship and opportunity. Giddens (ibid.) states that

In a society where work remains central to self-esteem and standard of living, access to work is one main context of opportunity. Education is another, and would be so even if it weren’t so important for the employment possibilities to which it is relevant (p. 103).

Consistent with third way politics, equality of access to health and education was positioned by Labour as a collective responsibility.

Labour's core objectives of sustaining publicly funded health and education and of providing support for those who need it to supplement incomes or to create a bridge to self-sufficiency were not to be implemented in order to reduce a growing gap in wealth between different sectors of society. Rather, the objective was to create the opportunities for all individuals to generate their own wealth and/or success. This was summed up in the following statement by Clark:

If we get the fundamentals right in New Zealand- decent health care, housing, education, security, we'll have a country again where the child of a factory worker can become a neurosurgeon. We'll have a country again where anything is possible for the person who strives, who works, who studies, who puts the effort in. That's what people ask for. Opportunity to do these things (PPB opening).

There was no discussion of inequality of earning potential for a factory worker or neurosurgeon. While repositioning National further to the right of the political field by accusing it of exercising a neoliberal meritocracy, Labour attempted to justify its own position at the left of centre by articulating the notions of equality of access to education and health with the meritocratic principles of "winner takes all". In effect, Labour articulated the meritocratic approach with principles of social justice by claiming to increase the odds in favour of individual achievement.

### **National and the New Zealand Business Roundtable**

An effective way of linking a political party to a New Right agenda in New Zealand was to create a link with that party and the New Zealand Business Roundtable, well known for its outspoken lobbying for the deregulation of both business and social services. The Labour Party sought to establish such a link with National. For example, Maharey, Labour's spokesperson on labour and employment, linked National and the Business Roundtable in employment law issues: "Bill Birch's decision to join with the Business Roundtable to advocate abolishing the Employment Court is quite logical in that it is the next step in the New Right agenda" (press release, September 6, 1996).

Clark made a much more comprehensive link between the National Government and the Business Roundtable by saying at the opening of Labour's election campaign: "For us all, good government must be a friend, not an enemy as the Roundtable and its friends in National would have it". As it did with the National Party, Labour articulated the New Right agenda of the New Zealand Business Roundtable with issues of social policy rather than business policy. Again, it was through a market approach to social policy that "ordinary" "working" New Zealanders were constructed as suffering inequalities. Maharey's press release stated that

Every policy position adopted by the Business Roundtable would be detrimental for working New Zealanders and their families - whether it is

about welfare benefits, tax policy, health care, education or labour relations. Bill Birch has signalled that he is willing to join National up to an unholy alliance with the Business Roundtable. Ordinary New Zealanders will be the losers (September 6, 1996).

The New Zealand Business Roundtable, in turn, has frequently been linked to the New Zealand Treasury. Indeed, its Executive Officer, Roger Kerr, had previously worked for Treasury and was a co-author of the Treasury blueprint for the 1984 Labour Government's economic reforms (Jesson, 1987). Labour used Treasury connections with National MPs to reposition National. Dalziel, for example, countered National's construction of Bill English in the subject position of farmer by stating that any differences were superficial and that English was still, essentially, a Treasury official:

Bill English [National's Minister of Health] describes himself as a Southland farmer, but you all know that before that, he was a Treasury official. His job description may have changed, but the message stays the same. He would privatise our health system in a twinkling of an eye (speech, September 11, 1996).

Labour here attempted to undo the efforts of National to portray its leading MPs in multiple subject positions (see chapter four) by reconstructing them as one-dimensional. The purpose of such a reconstruction was not only to reposition

National to the political Right, but to attempt to remove the appeal of National and its MPs to specific voter groups.

Labour metaphorically associated the members of the New Zealand Business Roundtable and Treasury with the towering glass skyscrapers of the larger cities. The skyscrapers were used to symbolise power and wealth and to position National as out of touch with “ordinary” people while it was in league with members of big business. Clark said: “National’s listening to different people. It’s listening to the glass tower brigade” (speech, September 8, 1996). The “glass tower brigade” was visually represented in the background of Labour’s opening PPB with background pictures of close-ups of glass skyscrapers, one reflecting Auckland’s Sky Tower casino, as Helen Clark was saying “people don’t want pie in the sky” and “I think that National is looking at everything in terms of dollars and cents”.

### **National and the economy**

National campaigned strongly on a platform of economic success which has always been a difficult position for an opposition party to counter (for example, Trent & Friedenber, 1995). Labour tackled the problem in three ways. First, they claimed credit for the policy decisions which led to a turn-around in the economy of the country. Once more, Labour made no retraction from its neoliberal stance regarding the economy. For example, Clark stated that “[National] has to a

large extent coasted along on the momentum generated by Labour's tough decisions of the 1980s. Certainly Messrs Bolger and Birch cannot claim the resurrection in New Zealand's economic fortunes as their own work." (speech, September 8, 1996).

Second, Labour maintained that while Labour had introduced the means to an improved economy, National had failed to ensure that economic rewards were shared equitably. The result, as described above, was poverty for low income New Zealanders, especially those reliant on benefits and state housing. In constructing New Zealand as a country with a crisis of poverty, Labour positioned National, its policies, and "Mr Bolger's dog-eat-dog society" (press release, September 15, 1996) as the cause of that crisis. While National was seen to be celebrating an upturn in the national economy and denying the existence of poverty, Clark stated that:

for too many New Zealanders, the economic "recovery" of the early 1990s has been a purely statistical phenomenon. I'm shocked at the endemic poverty which exists in New Zealand today, and appalled that government politicians continue to deny that we have any significant degree of poverty at all (speech, September 8, 1996).

Foodbanks, the increasing queues for which were used to demonstrate the existence of poverty, were said by Labour to be "synonymous with the six year

tenure of Mr Bolger's government" (press release, September 30, 1996). Both of the following extracts from press releases exemplified the way in which Labour squarely blamed the benefit cuts for the existence of poverty in New Zealand.

There was no suggestion that a free market approach to economic management had failed to secure economic benefits for all strata of society:

There is a direct linkage between the savage benefit cuts of 1991 and the surge in demand for food parcels from foodbanks. Mr Bolger's refusal to accept that poverty exists and is growing is at odds with every study on the subject. It is just another example of how far removed his National Government is from the people it has governed for the last six years (ibid.).

Labour's positioning of National as "removed ... from the people" served to reinforce the public perception of National as uncaring, an image National tried to counter during its own campaign (see chapter four).

Annette King, Labour's spokesperson for social welfare, linked benefit cuts to health problems associated with poverty:

As well as the mountain of research showing the inadequacy of benefits, indicators of widespread poverty are becoming worryingly repetitive. New Zealand children are suffering from Third World diseases such as whooping cough, pneumonia, iron deficiencies and glue ear at alarmingly

high rates. Food banks are a 1990s icon ... These children are the blameless victims of National's 1991 benefit cuts (press release, September 9, 1996).

By constructing the children as the "blameless" victims of benefit cuts, Labour sought to deflect the argument that adults could be held responsible for their own welfare and that it was the beneficiaries' fault, not the government's, if they were out of work (see, again, Leitch's 1990 work on victims and dole bludgers).

Labour's third tack against National's involvement in the current economic success of the country was to claim that National did not know how best to capitalise on the economic upturn which it had been "given". Labour thus attempted to position National as a poor manager. For example, Maharey stated that

Labour will adopt a local economic development approach that encourages industry and job growth in the regions, in sharp contrast to National's hands off approach that has meant New Zealand has been unable to capitalise on the recent economic upturn (press release, September 12, 1996).

Labour thus positioned National as out of touch with "ordinary" New Zealanders, in league with the key proponents of a New Right economic agenda, and the cause of endemic poverty in New Zealand. If National were to be re-elected to power, Labour maintained that the situation would worsen because

National would move even further to the right of the political field. From that more extreme stance, National would carry out privatisation of the state sector even more vigorously. Of health, Dalziel stated that

The fact that the National Party hasn't produced a health policy should not fool you .... It is a hidden agenda, and it is about privatising our public health system .... If National is re-elected, then it will be more market. The creeping privatisation of the last three years will become an all engulfing privatisation regime that will diminish state provision to the very minimum (speech, September 11, 1996).

Dalziel implied a programme of stealth in National's privatisation of New Zealand's health system. What had begun as "creeping privatisation" would gather momentum once National's as yet "hidden agenda" was implemented.

Labour's repositioning of National at the far right of the political field was reinforced by Labour's linking National in coalition with Act, in particular, and with the Christian Coalition.

The possible election of a three-headed monster of the Right poses the greatest threat to working people and their living standards this election ... The election of a hydra-headed monster of the right can only mean further Americanisation of New Zealand's labour laws, health and education systems and social policy in general (press release, September 16, 1996).

Americanisation was understood by the New Zealand voting public to be a negative concept, particularly in the area of health. It was evocative of an uncaring user pays society where those who cannot pay go without.

The imagery of a “three-headed monster” was used in response to National’s dubbing of a “left-wing coalition” of Labour, the Alliance and New Zealand First as “the gloom gang”. The tactic used by each side in describing such coalitions was the same - the most extreme, and certainly the potentially least popular policies of each of the supposed coalition partners were put together as the combined policy of the coalition government. New Zealand First dubbed the “right-wing coalition” the “toxic trio”, a term picked up and used by Labour. The following extract of a press release by Clark demonstrated the potency of discursively combining unpopular policies:

We’ve heard about the toxic trio and I’m sure people are grasping how toxic this little lot will be. We’re talking the 245T of the far right. A National-led coalition would be a coalition in which economic zealots and religious fundamentalists would pull the strings. Murray McCully and his friends talk about vote splitting, the more they ask about deal making with the Prebbles [Act] and the Capills [Christian Coalition], the more voters, including National’s own moderate, liberal supporters, question whether National should get a chance to form a government .... the real face of the National Party in 1996 is Richard Prebble’s. What that means is that any

National-led coalition would be so far in debt to Act and the Christian Coalition that Mr Bolger's promises of moderation such as his personal rejection of vouchers, would prove hollow (September 25, 1996).

A coalition which included both Act and the Christian Coalition would combine both the neoliberal Right and the conservative Right, both here depicted in extreme forms. The contrast of the policies of the parties of the Right with those of the centre Right of the political field was constructed as extreme by the suggestion that 'National's own moderate, liberal supporters' considered them too dangerous to be allowed in government. The combined influence of the two parties was constructed as so powerful that moderates, including Bolger, would be impotent in the face of them. Repositioning of political parties through a construction of the degree of influence of minor coalition partners was a tactic used by both of the major parties. Their claims were made more feasible because of a voting public that was unsure of how the new proportional system of representation would work.

### **New Zealand First**

While discursively repositioning National much further to the right of the political field, Labour also had to deal with New Zealand First which had claimed its own position at centre and hence between Labour and National. As described in

chapter six, New Zealand First's claim to the political "centre" was, in many instances, not based on a stance that was neutralised, and thus centralised, by virtue of its being based on issues or positions which were uncontested by other the centrist parties, National and Labour. Rather, New Zealand First adopted positions which were variously at centre left or centre right of the political field.

New Zealand First was rating highly in opinion polls although indications were that those ratings were generally at the expense of the Alliance Party rather than Labour. The centrist ground that New Zealand First could lay claim to, however, overlapped with much of the ground already claimed by either Labour or National. New Zealand First was also proving to be very attractive to the traditionally Labour-supportive Maori voters. Thus New Zealand First presented a real danger for Labour, especially as it provided opportunity for disaffected Labour and National supporters to cast a protest vote.

Labour consistently sought to undermine New Zealand First's credibility by positioning the party as unstable and light on policy. Whereas most discursive repositioning of one party by another constituted an attempt to deny the potential appeal of the opposition to multiple publics by reducing the opposition's multiple facets to generalised, but single, positions, in some cases the opposite strategy was more effective. Labour consistently sought to emphasise the multiple subject positions held within New Zealand First in order to position the party as without cohesion and unstable. For example, a Labour press release

stated that “Helen Clark has described New Zealand First’s industrial relations policy as a ‘damp squib’ and ‘light on detail’ .... like other New Zealand First policies, this one grabs ideas from here and there, and is essentially incoherent” (September 26, 1996). Michael Cullen spoke of the “increasingly qualified and incomprehensible noises from NZ First” (September 9, 1996); Pete Hodgson asked “Does such a party have the cohesion, unity and common purpose necessary to play a meaningful role in government? Recent events raise serious questions on this matter” (press release, September 16, 1996), while Joe Hawke commented that: “New Zealand First is quickly turning into the U-turn party. Their method of policy making seems to be flip, flam and fly. In recent weeks, they have backtracked on major areas like housing and the economy” (press release, September 15, 1996). The consistency of Labour’s positioning of New Zealand First through press releases reflected Labour’s discourse practice of using a media group for message dissemination.

Labour focused its positioning of New Zealand First as unstable and without common purpose by identifying New Zealand First’s division over policy and intent regarding Maori issues. This focus was strategically important to Labour because of the shift to New Zealand First by Labour’s traditional Maori vote. A significant number of New Zealand First candidates were Maori. Their concerns centred on Treaty of Waitangi issues and on social policy for Maori. Others in the party, however, including Winston Peters who was also Maori, were

said to be more concerned with right-wing economic issues (see chapter six). The apparent division provided a platform on which Labour could raise doubts over the real benefits New Zealand First would provide for Maori and so encourage Maori voters to reconsider moving away from Labour. For example, a press release from Clark stated that

The New Zealand First party is making very nice noises in these [campaign] meetings about their commitment to the Treaty. However, their leader has shown that he does not have the same commitment. What I am saying to people is that they must remember who has the most power in the New Zealand First caucus. Of course it will be Winston Peters, not the Maori electorate candidates .... I predict that the Treaty of Waitangi is going to cause splits and divisions within New Zealand First's caucus and that Maori will come out the loser (October 9, 1996).

As discussed in chapter six, Winston Peters, although himself Maori, positioned himself as the champion of the elderly rather than Maori. The two publics were too politically separate to target together. The elderly voters who supported Peters were predominantly pakeha (European) and conservative, while Maori, who had traditionally supported Labour, were likely to seek representation from the left of the political field as well as be concerned with specifically Maori issues. The deputy leader of New Zealand First, Tau Henare, positioned himself as the champion of Maori. Labour specifically constructed his position within New

Zealand First as unstable. For example, a Labour press release stated that a “senior New Zealand First source has been reported as saying that Tau Henare’s position as deputy leader will be extremely tenuous after the election. Maori should look at that closely when deciding how to vote” (September 15, 1996). By citing a source within New Zealand First, Labour could lend credibility to its statement. If Henare were to lose his position of influence, there would be no power base from which to promote Maori issues.

Several members of New Zealand First came from the National Party, including Winston Peters. This fact facilitated Labour’s positioning of the non-Maori faction of New Zealand First as sympathetic to National. In this way Labour could also raise the possibility that New Zealand First would ultimately enter into a coalition agreement with National. In order to reposition New Zealand First to the right, Labour linked New Zealand First’s National Party heritage with its refusal to take a stance on the left of the political field regarding industrial relations. For example, in a press release Clark stated that

Working people will be concerned that New Zealand First’s policy uses National Party terminology in not referring to unions and continuing to refer to bargaining agents. This indicates a basically anti-union prejudice within New Zealand First. That is scarcely surprising given the National party origins of many people in New Zealand First’s organisation (press release, September 26, 1996).

The reference here was to New Zealand First's reluctance to repeal the Employment Contracts Act which was introduced by National. Thus the attack by Labour was double headed. New Zealand First's attitude to employment law and the possibility of a union with National would both be unpopular with Maori New Zealand First supporters.

Labour capitalised on New Zealand First's refusal to dismiss National as a future coalition partner. For example, Clark asked in a press release:

“if Mr Peters really believed that National, Act and the Christian Coalition are a toxic trio, why does he not join Tau Henare in ruling coalition with them out of the question?” (September 17, 1996). By association, Clark implied that those voters who wished to have National replaced in government should vote for Labour rather than New Zealand First.

### Act

Unlike New Zealand First, ACT was not perceived as a threat to Labour votes. Act was a party already regarded by most as being positioned at the far Right of the political spectrum. Labour reinforced that position with statements, such as Cullen's, which claimed that Act was following a “Business Roundtable agenda of extreme individualism” (speech, September 9, 1996). The irony for Labour was that the founder and leaders of Act, Roger Douglas and Richard

Prebble, were previously Labour Government Ministers, the proponents of the economic reforms for which Labour still claimed some credit. Labour emphasised that Douglas and Prebble had moved on and were no longer to be associated with Labour or its policies. For example, in the following statement made through a press release, Clark identified herself with Labour's traditional supporters. She positioned Prebble and Douglas, when they were with Labour, as a cause of concern not only for Labour's supporters but also for her and the party:

under my leadership Labour is on track with policies Michael Joseph Savage would be proud of. The politicians like Richard Prebble and Roger Douglas who caused our traditional supporters and me so much concern have formed their own party which hovers around the margin of error (September 12, 1996).

Clark thus positioned Prebble and Douglas as marginalised when they were with Labour, and positioned Act as marginal in the view of voters.

ACT could be best dealt with by Labour by using it to align National with the far Right and, as exemplified above and in the following statement, this is what Labour did:

Voters have realised the full horror of what a right wing coalition made up of National, Act, and the Christians would mean for New Zealand. Voting for Prebble or Act could result in the most extremist Government this country has ever seen (press release, September 20, 1996).

## **The Alliance**

In adopting a stance in the political field which was separate from that of the Alliance, Labour had a different set of problems to attend to. The Alliance Party was clearly perceived as a high tax party with strong socialist principles, the same principles which Labour had to jettison in claiming a stance just left of centre. And yet the Alliance was also in a position of being a potential coalition partner for Labour. Labour also had to be aware that the Alliance was likely to attract those former traditional Labour voters who were still alienated by Labour's move to the economic right from 1984. Labour responded to these problems by actually referring to the Alliance very little in its speeches and press releases, especially when compared with the large volume of material Labour put out in opposition to National. When it did address Alliance policies it was in the area of the economy.

Labour had articulated its own neoliberal economic policies with the need for state provision of social welfare. An association with the more Keynesian economic policies of the Alliance would weaken Labour's articulation and hence its claim to a stance at the centre left of the political field. For the most part, references by Labour to the Alliance economic policies were oblique, although by virtue of there being no other viable party to fit the references, the meaning was

clear. Labour held up Alliance economic policy as unrealistically insular against an established global economy. For example, Clark stated that “There are the people who want to put a wall around New Zealand and pretend the world economy doesn’t affect us” (Clark, speech, September 8, 1996). In this regard, Labour went even further to construct, in order to dismiss, the Alliance as irrationally eccentric. Cullen stated in a speech that “we have to make our way in a competitive and increasingly integrated regional and world economy. Opting out is only for muesli parties - those composed of fruits, flakes and nuts” (September 9, 1996). Comments such as these served to position the Alliance very far from the mainstream or central political ground and thus marginalise them. In the following example, Cullen went on to attempt to position the Alliance as the polar opposite but equivalent of the far Right: “The Alliance’s bizarre propositions regarding tariffs, getting rid of Coca-Cola and McDonalds, and disappearing into fantasy land in the tax system are only made credible by having the extreme right-wing agenda still hanging around” (ibid.). In this way Cullen positioned the economic policies of both the left and right of the political field as marginal and unrealistic, as “fantasy”. By implication, only neoliberal economic (but not social) policies, that were uncontested and so neutralised in the centre of the political field, could be positioned as common sense.

In discrediting the Alliance’s economic policies, Labour had to be very careful to establish itself as strong enough to withstand demands that Alliance

economic policies be taken into consideration in the formation of joint policy of a new government formed by a coalition of Labour and the Alliance. Any mention by Labour of its own post election coalition plans positioned Labour as the dominant partner in a “Labour-led Government”. Thus Labour would be the stronger negotiating partner and in a position to state that it could resist pressure to compromise its economic policies. In her speech at the opening of Labour’s 1996 election campaign, Clark stated that

Some prospective allies will seek to drag us to the left - and others to the right .... But we will not accept policies which destroy economic recovery and the nation’s finances. We will not put this nation back into debt. Too many people have paid a heavy price for Muldoonist mismanagement of the past. We cannot go back to that (September 8, 1996).

Clark’s inclusion of “others to the right” was in reference to New Zealand First whom Labour attempted to reposition to the right of the political field, as described above.

Because of the likely need for co-operation between the Alliance and Labour, Labour could not afford to completely dismiss Alliance policies as beyond reason. In denying the Alliance any degree of negotiating power over economic policy, Labour needed to allow some room for the Alliance to have some acceptable influence in coalition decisions. The area in which Labour could do that and still maintain credibility was in social policy. Indeed, the social policies of

Labour and the Alliance were compatible except for the degree of state provision of social services. Thus Labour did not criticise the Alliance for its social policies, except for the question of their affordability. The issue of affordability was implicitly controlled by Labour's dominance over economic policy and sense of "fiscal responsibility".

## **DISCUSSION**

Labour needed to reconstruct itself because of the inconsistencies of its own political history and because of the socio-economic changes which had occurred in New Zealand. These changes, mirrored throughout the Western world, had effected a shift to the right of the political field within the universe of political discourse.

Labour drew on Clinton's US and Britain's Labour Party's successful election campaign discourse where appropriate, but New Zealand's socio-political history, together with a change to an electoral system of proportional representation, restricted the applicability of the campaign blueprint. The blueprint recommended that the party position itself close to centre by distancing itself from extremes which may have formerly been associated with the party. In New Zealand Labour's case, the extremes associated with the party came from each pole of the political field.

The adoption of a stance in the centre of the political field was also rendered much more difficult in a multi party, proportional electoral system than in a two party first-past-the-post system. As discussed in chapter two, the inclusion of multiple parties greatly increased the competition within the political field, with a greater number of stances occupied.

The most obvious influence on the New Zealand Labour Party from Britain was New Zealand Labour's adoption of third way politics. This model articulates key principles of social democracy with free market economics to create a new political compromise. In order to place itself within the third way model, Labour selectively drew on its past in reconstructing itself as a modern political party of the centre left. From its first period as Government, Labour drew on its history of social reform to align itself with principles of social justice and collective responsibility. From its much more recent past, Labour drew on its history of economic reform to position itself as the party which opened New Zealand to the global free market. Thus in 1996, Labour positioned itself as in favour of a free market and global economy but also in favour of equal access to health and education, and a rejection of meritocracy in those key areas of social service. In rejecting meritocracy, however, Labour retained an element of neoliberal individualism in its approach to social welfare. In line with the model of third way politics, Labour's policy regarding unemployment was to place responsibility on

the individual to actively seek work, and responsibility on the state to ensure against welfare dependency.

Labour also sought reform in the labour market, particularly with the promise of repeal of the Employment Contracts Act. Its positioning on this issue was essential for regaining its traditional support of the working sector. However, as Labour also sought support from the business sector, it had to be careful to avoid being perceived as too pro unionist.

The complexity of the stance it adopted in the political field in New Zealand in 1996 and the inconsistency of its stances in previous political fields rendered Labour's self positioning particularly difficult. If Labour was to gain the support of non-professionals outside the political field, it was essential that its stance was seen as credible. Labour, in particular, needed to be sure that the messages disseminated by its members were consistent and indicative of party unity. Labour set up a highly complex campaign organisation in order to oversee the production of campaign messages and the maximum efficiency of their dissemination. In spite of that, dissent within the Party was apparent. Many attributed the dissent to a failure by Labour to reconcile the left and right wing factions which still existed within the party. If these factions were not united, Labour's articulation of social justice and economic liberalism could fail.

Labour's position at centre left of the political field, largely because of the existence of a new centre which endorsed a free market economy, was perceived

by voters as being very close to National's position at centre right. While Labour undertook to run a positive campaign, particularly through its advertising, many of its press releases and speeches were negatively constructed in an effort to reposition National away from centre to the far right of the political field. In order to effect that repositioning, Labour linked National's economic and social agenda closely with those of Act, a recognised advocate of neoliberalism. Labour also argued that National had close links with the New Zealand Business Roundtable, an association which positioned National as the representative of big business. Labour reinforced that position by citing National's economic policies, coupled with their social policies, as the direct cause of the growing gap in income and living conditions between workers and big business.

At the opposite pole of the political field, the Alliance presented a problem for Labour's campaigning because the Alliance was both opponent and potential ally, if the two parties joined in coalition after the election or if Labour, as a minority Government, had to rely on the Alliance's support. The key difference between the two parties lay in their economic policies. The Alliance advocated a more Keynesian social democratic approach to the economy while Labour had shifted to embrace a global free market. Because Labour's economic policy had the greater support from outside the political field, Labour had to distance itself from the Alliance policy. In social policies the two parties shared

more common ground, and this is where Labour positioned itself as willing to work with the Alliance.

While Labour and National were perceived as being positioned closely together in the political field, New Zealand First claimed the position of centre, between the two major parties. Labour positioned New Zealand First as unstable, and as likely to enter into a coalition with National. New Zealand First's own self positioning is analysed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **THE NEW ZEALAND FIRST CAMPAIGN**

This chapter analyses New Zealand First's campaign discourse by drawing on the party's press releases, speeches, advertisements and party political broadcasts disseminated during the 1996 general election campaign period. It also draws on media commentary from three major national newspapers. This commentary provided evidence of New Zealand First's discourse practices, supported by statements made by the party's candidates. The media commentary, while used in each of the analytical chapters in this thesis, was particularly important in the case of New Zealand First as the party's campaign management declined to be interviewed for this project.

The social and political history of New Zealand First's candidates, particularly that of its leader, Winston Peters, provided insight to the contradictory views held within the party. The chapter discusses, however, how Peters' own politically conservative views largely determined the party's discourse practices and shaped its campaign texts.

As a minor party, like Act and the Alliance, New Zealand First could only expect to influence government in the capacity of a coalition partner. Such a level of influence was only made possible through the introduction of a proportional

system of representation. New Zealand First's texts reveal how the party set out to position itself in such a way as to hold the balance of power and so be a part of any government formed after the election. Key to that position was the strategy of adopting a stance at the centre political field, although, as described below, the construction of "centre" was dependent upon a further complex set of discursive constructions and articulations.

## **NEW ZEALAND FIRST'S SOCIAL PRACTICES**

New Zealand First, led by Winston Peters, was a minor and relatively new political party at the time of New Zealand's 1996 general election. Peters had formerly been a National Party MP and cabinet minister, and a supporter of the then Prime Minister, Sir Robert Muldoon, and his interventionist policies (Miller & Catt, 1993). However, after repeated public disagreements with Muldoon's successor, Jim Bolger, Peters had been dismissed first from National's front bench and then from caucus in 1992. Peters' resignation from Parliament forced a by-election in his Tauranga electorate in 1993, which he won. From there, he established New Zealand First, only months before the 1993 general election.

In the early months of the 1996 election year, New Zealand First's voter support rated well below the five percent threshold required for entry into Parliament. Peters, however, had the support of his Tauranga electorate. As long

as that continued, Peters' personal victory would mean that, under MMP, Parliamentary seats were assured for New Zealand First. By declaring itself to be at the centre of the political field and open to negotiations with parties either side of centre, New Zealand First was confident that it would play a key role in the eventual formation of a coalition government. As discussed below, the party's discursive practices throughout and, indeed, prior to, the election year were geared towards attracting voters who identified themselves with policies from either centre-left or centre-right of the political field, particularly those voters who were revealed by the 1993 vote for electoral change to be disenchanted by the two dominant parties.

One group of disenchanted voters which was particularly supportive of Peters was that of the elderly. Peters' Tauranga electorate was home to a disproportionately large number of elderly who were attracted to the warm, coastal region for retirement (Chamberlain, 1999). Tauranga's elderly constituted, in large part, conservative and relatively wealthy former supporters of the National Party. Their disenchantment with National arose, historically, from National's breach of its 1990 election promise to remove the surcharge on national superannuation which had been imposed by the Labour Party in 1985 (Jackson & McRobie, 1998). Furthermore, National, in 1991, "froze pension rates, raised the age of entitlement to 65 years, and replaced the surcharge with a more punitive income test" (Miller & Catt, 1993).

New Zealand's elderly had become politically active through the formation of the New Zealand Superannuitants' Federation, or "Grey Power", a group which was particularly supportive of a proposal for the introduction of a system of citizens initiated referenda (CIA) which would serve as a means of public control over the activities of Parliament (ibid.). Peters, as the leader of an alternative, conservative political party, as well as the MP for Tauranga, was in a position to put himself forward as champion of both causes (superannuation and CIA) on behalf of the elderly. What Peters stood for, in this regard, were the values of social welfarism which were central to both National and Labour party policies before the introduction of neoliberalism. Those values, at that time, were neutralised in the centre of the political field. By 1996, however, the political field had moved further to the right within the universe of political discourse. Those same values were no longer universally accepted and a struggle was underway for the establishment of a new centre. As proposed in chapters four and five, in 1996 the acceptance of the principles of free market economics was emerging as the basis for the neutral centre of the political field. The core values of Keynesian welfarism had, by then, been assigned to the left of the political field.

The other significant group which identified itself with New Zealand First was that of New Zealand Maori. This group had, in the past, widely supported Labour (Mulgan, 1994), but, like the elderly, had become disenchanted by the policies of its traditional representatives. Maori have always been

disproportionately dependent upon the welfare state and reliant upon the state for employment (Kelsey, 1997). The on-going transition towards neoliberalism, including the corporatisation and privatisation of state-owned resources, had exacerbated their dependency (ibid.). New Zealand First offered an alternative, made possible by the introduction of MMP. Both of New Zealand First's MPs, Peters and Tau Henare, were Maori. Henare had won the Northern Maori parliamentary seat in 1993 and maintained a strong constituency there.

New Zealand First's dual constituency - conservative elderly and Maori - was, however, inherently incompatible and caused tensions within the party. Concern was expressed by some party members that New Zealand First should not be seen as a "Maori Party", and attempts were made to reduce the potential for such an image. Thus it was reported that

A new rift is developing inside New Zealand First, with senior candidates now planning a caucus coup against deputy leader Tau Henare straight after the election. Mr Henare's opponents include some Maori candidates who fear a "Maori separatist" tag will hamper the party's chance of cementing broad voter appeal, and oppose the party being led by two Maori MPs (Clifton, 1996b).

There was no doubt that New Zealand First's continued support depended primarily upon the disenchantment and anger of its dual constituency,

despite the potential for conflict between the two groups. The ways in which the party, and Peters, worked to achieve this are described in the sections below.

## **NEW ZEALAND FIRST'S DISCURSIVE PRACTICES**

Because New Zealand First's campaign management declined to be interviewed for this research, information regarding the structural organisation of their campaign, including the use of communication professionals, was not available. This section draws, therefore, upon the party's own statements and media commentary for an analysis of New Zealand First's overall discursive strategies and tactics. These sources provided evidence of some of the problems encountered within the party in the dissemination of their campaign discourse.

The primary objective of New Zealand First's election campaign was to win the balance of power and, thereby, form a part of the new Government. While this may, arguably, be a common objective of all political parties contesting elections, New Zealand First differed in being prepared to form a coalition government with either of the two major parties, from either the left or right of centre of the political field. New Zealand First's key strategy in meeting its objective was the securing of a position at the "centre" of the political field. As described below in both this section and in the textual analysis section of this

chapter, New Zealand First adopted various strategic meanings of the term “centre” in pursuing its goal.

### **New Zealand First and the political “centre”**

A position at the centre of the political field is a difficult one by virtue of the multiple concessions required for its occupancy. A central position is best held by those parties which are theorised as “catch-all” parties, typified by personality-driven and opportunistic politics. Catch-all parties target as wide a range of voters as possible by using a “centrally organised and ‘depoliticised’ discourse” (Haeusler & Hirsch, 1989, p. 319) rather than one which is ideologically based. These are the parties which are said to emerge from a modernisation of election politics and which are particularly evident in the USA (Kavanagh, 1995; Kirchheimer, 1966; Swanson & Mancini, 1996). The extent to which these factors allowed New Zealand First to be classified as a “catch-all” party are further discussed below.

The discursive strategies employed by New Zealand First in its targeting of specific voter groups and in its bid to disseminate unified party messages are here discussed in terms of the party’s discourse practices.

From the beginning of his career in politics, as a National Party MP, Winston Peters has had a reputation as one who used scandal to political advantage, particularly to position himself as a crusader for honesty, a champion

of the underdog, and to gain media coverage for himself. As one political commentator put it:

Peters' technique, if that is the word, is to dart into a hot spot, fan the embers into flame with some code-words that never quite say what the listeners hear them saying and then withdraw to moderacy, claiming that was always his position .... This technique has earned Peters a reputation for "telling it like it is" (James, 1996).

The tactic allowed Peters to gain personal support, and media attention, while at the same time claim a "centrist" position politically. The "centrist" position claimed by Peters was, in this context, equated with being beyond the influence of external political pressure, from either side of the political field but, in particular, from big business. Thus "centrist" was endowed with the meaning of "neutral", but not in the same sense in which Bourdieu (1991) conceived the centre of the political field as embracing shared, and thus neutralised from competition, values and concepts. In other contexts, New Zealand First ascribed other meanings to the term "centrist" which are discussed below.

One particularly notable example of Peters' use of scandal was his prolonged assertion that the Cook Islands were being used by certain New Zealand corporations in an elaborate and fraudulent tax evasion scheme. He eventually tabled his "evidence", a collection of correspondence and documents, in a wine box in Parliament, sparking a major and prolonged enquiry, commonly

referred to as the “Winebox Enquiry”. The tactic ensured wide spread news coverage of both Peters and the event, greatly facilitating the dissemination of Peters’ messages to voters. As noted by one commentator, amongst others, the tactic proved to be hugely successful for Peters whose long-awaited testimony was fortuitously called for in election year:

Peters has made a career of exposing scandals. His biggest claims, over the Cook Islands tax fraud, long rubbished by his opponents and many in the media, are turning into a timely “I told you so.” Peters will testify at the Winebox inquiry next month, a great PR opportunity in election year (Bain, 1996).

New Zealand First has always been firmly associated with Winston Peters to the extent that it has commonly been called “the Peters Party”. Reflecting that association, the party also assumed the popular position of being controversial, the champion of ordinary people against corporate and political elites, as in the case of the Winebox Enquiry. One of the key ways in which Peters was able to reinforce such a position was by opposing New Zealand’s rapid but unpopular move towards becoming an integral part of an international economy. He did so by embracing a doctrine of economic nationalism, campaigning against the sale of New Zealand companies and land to foreigners. Economic nationalism, along with other more specific policies espoused by Peters, was primarily aimed towards gaining

public support rather than being founded in any deeply-held ideology. This view is given weight when examined in the context of New Zealand First's discursive positioning of itself in the textual analysis section, below.

As was often the case, policy statements made by Peters which reflected the doctrine of economic nationalism were couched in controversial contexts in order to maximise their media coverage. The Winebox accusations constituted one such context, other examples are detailed below. Economic nationalism, itself, reflected Peters' earlier support of the protectionist policies of the National Party prior to 1984. Peters was also very much aware that both nationally and internationally there was ground swell support for a drawing back from the global economy which is fundamental to neoliberal ideology. The *Sunday Star Times* stated that Peters

has caught a new wave in world politics - one which revisits the mainstream tenets of the global economy, and cranks up good domestic electoral business in doom-saying. Mr Peters is too assiduous with his political homework to be ignorant of the turf he shares with Britain's Euro-phobes, and America's anti-GATT/NAFTA brigade .... His stance on economic nationalism has been developing for several years (Clifton, 1996c).

A particularly effective, in campaign terms, set of policy statements, made early in the campaign by Peters, which fundamentally stemmed from nationalistic principles were those surrounding the issue of immigration. By questioning the Government's immigration policies and suggesting that Asians, in particular, were having a detrimental economic effect on New Zealanders, Peters gained considerable voter support. The rapid rise in support for New Zealand First, from six per cent in February, 1996 to 28 per cent in May, but still primarily from within the party's two major constituencies, was largely attributed to Peters' stance on immigration (Savage, 1996). A Maori bishop, Bishop Whakahuihui Vercoe, stated that Peters had picked up a "ground swell of opposition to immigration" and believed that immigrants increased the Maori position as a minority and Maori poverty (Young, 1996). The concern was, then, that immigrants would both outnumber Maori and compete for scarce employment, to the detriment of Maori. While many Maori voters may have been concerned about the effect of immigration upon their own status within New Zealand, the antagonism of many conservative elderly voters towards Asian immigrants stemmed from historical associations. As explained by one commentator, the issue of immigration, as constructed by Peters, generated support from a wide range of social groups:

(Peters, ) has tapped a sentiment that extends across the whole spectrum of tolerance. Among his [elderly] constituency, for example, are some who

fought the Japanese in the Second World War and who cannot reconcile the hatred they held then to any more accommodating post-war policy of co-operation with Japan (Savage, 1996).

It was not a matter of coincidence that many of Peters' statements regarding immigration were made at meetings of Grey Power members. The same commentator went on to say that

What ultimately is offensive about Mr Peters' utterances is not that they are racist, though they may be, but that he panders to the politics of fear. In the case of immigration, that fear is world-wide. The US Congress, for instance, is looking at bills that would cut immigration by 24 per cent for five years and 43 per cent after that. Large-scale migration within Europe has sparked the rise of the racial right. Mr Peters knows exactly what he is doing: trading alarm for votes (*ibid.*).

While Peters' anti-immigrant discourse may have articulated strongly with the views of significant numbers of elderly and Maori voters, its resonance there and elsewhere was likely to have been derived from unrelated social factors such as employment insecurity. Peters fuelled racist antagonisms within New Zealand by playing upon the economic insecurities of a public which had suffered cut backs in government support and a rise in unemployment. Once more, Peters' statements reflected a knowledge of both national and international uncertainties.

Pierre Bourdieu (1998) maintains that French politicians, for reasons of voter support, fail to speak out against “the xenophobic discourse which, for some years now, has been working to generate hatred out of the misfortunes of society - unemployment, delinquency, drug abuse, etc.” (p.16) and, instead, refer to a need to reduce the levels of immigration. Immigrants are thus used as scapegoats for unrelated social problems. Such was the strategy adopted by Peters. A similar strategy was applied in the promotion of New Zealand First’s policy on crime. As detailed in the textual analysis section below, Peters drew on the widely shared moral panic regarding criminals to promote an increase in police numbers, regardless of social causes of crime.

Peters, as already noted, used a tactic of gaining attention through controversy but then retreated to a position of moderation. The retreat was essential to maintaining what Peters termed a centrist position. In the case of immigration, Peters claimed that he had never been racist in his views and that he firmly believed that most immigrants were beneficial to New Zealand. The party, Peters said, merely wanted a review of current immigration policy, with particular reference to the numbers of immigrants allowed: “It’s the numbers, not the race. NZ First’s immigration policy will never be about race as long as I’m a member” (1996a).

Peters’ and New Zealand First’s electoral success demonstrated the effectiveness of his populist discourse, even though there was very little evidence

of substantial policy put forward by the party. The degree to which New Zealand First modified its policies provided evidence of the party's opportunist approach to policy formation and was again consistent with the notion of a "catch-all" party which was primarily guided by public opinion. A further example was provided by the party's contradictory stance over the issue of the sale of the Forestry Corporation. Both the Alliance Party and New Zealand First had stated that the corporation, previously a state-owned asset, would be bought back by the government. The stance was consistent with the principles of economic nationalism but New Zealand First was clearly prepared to sacrifice those principles. *The New Zealand Herald* stated that

(Peters, ) yesterday confirmed he would introduce legislation to buy back Forestry Corporation as a priority when Parliament resumes. But he would not clear up confusion over whether this was instead of making the buy-back a non-tradable policy in a coalition deal or as well as. He does appear to be preparing an escape route for the fix he is in by making the buy-back one of non-tradable policies (1996b).

Even in its policy on foreign share holdings, New Zealand First was prepared to soften its stance:

New Zealand First has amended a main plank of its economic policy, saying the limit of 24.9 per cent foreign ownership of New Zealand companies would apply only to "key infrastructural assets". Previously

party leader Winston Peters said any New Zealand company would be subject to the 24.9 per cent foreign ownership rule (1996e).

This amendment was followed by a similar shift in policy in foreign ownership of land in New Zealand. Peters had originally stated that “NZ First will stop all land sales to foreign interests, be they companies or individuals” (Speden, 1996b).

Only a week later, Peters modified the policy to exclude urban land, saying that “A NZ First-led government will immediately halt the sale of all rural land to foreign interests” (ibid.).

New Zealand First’s key tactics were both the use of the personality of Winston Peters as its principal resource, and close adherence to public opinion in its policy formation. Both tactics were consistent with a “catch-all” party. Peters, as leader, was very much the face and voice of the party. His face appeared as an endorsement of New Zealand candidates on all of the party’s electorate bill boards. The use of Peters in this way was a two-fold tactic. Peters’ personal charisma and support was well-established and could be used to encourage support for local candidates. In addition, he could compensate for the presentation of mostly new and little-known candidates. By presenting them as part of a team under the wing of Peters, the lack of experience of the candidates could be downplayed. This endorsement technique was intended to provide “credibility by association” (Trent & Friedenberg, 1995, p. 75). As long as Peters had credibility, so, too, would other New Zealand First candidates, by association.

### **Tensions within New Zealand First**

As stated above, New Zealand First had two key groups of supporters: Maori and the conservative elderly pakeha (European) middle class. The irony was that the two groups were, in many ways, polar opposites, and yet both groups were able, for different reasons, to identify with some of the key policy statements made by the party. Immigration was one example of common interest, as explained above. Appealing to both groups without alienating one because of the other required careful public relations planning. New Zealand First campaigned strongly on a promise of removing the surtax on government-funded superannuation. New Zealand First's promise was a direct appeal to the relatively wealthy pakeha elderly who may have had to pay the surtax.

On the other hand, Peters avoided overt targeting of Maori voters. Their support was assured because of the relatively large number of Maori candidates standing for New Zealand First. Peters left the task of maximising Maori support to his Maori colleagues who, generally, did so quietly while Peters took the more overt role of ensuring that New Zealand First was not seen as a Maori party. The result was a very specific discursive positioning of Maori by Peters, described below in the textual analysis section. In practice, however, Peters did not have complete control over the discourse of his colleagues. The diversity of its membership created difficulties in positioning the party consistently. The strong

Maori faction of the party, which Peters, through lack of engagement in pro-Maori issues, appeared to remain removed from in spite of his own Maori heritage, had good reason to be ideologically motivated to put forward certain nationalistic policies. They would not be so ready to compromise their stance as Peters was. The differences in motivation between party members led to tensions within the party which discursive positioning could not overcome. One of New Zealand First's Maori candidates was reported as saying that he had continual concern about Peters' approach to Maori issues, and that "Winston has this ability to say things an audience wants to hear ... he's trying to win an election appealing to that middle New Zealand vote" (1996c).

Peters' closest advisor, Michael Laws, further exacerbated the tensions within New Zealand First caused by the party's discursive practices. Laws, a pakeha, was said, particularly by candidates who had resigned from the party, to wield enormous influence over party policy. Indeed, he was the advisor credited with the softening of policy that had been required for New Zealand First's populist positioning. The degree of influence he held over all aspects of party policy, including candidate selection, became a matter of public speculation. For example:

Bitter infighting in NZ First over its list and the influence of former MP Michael Laws has erupted publicly, with one candidate resigning and another about to be purged for disloyalty .... "The influence of Michael

Laws has made the party something that I don't wish to be associated with," said Mr Stevenson, the party's Kapiti candidate in 1993 (Kilroy, 1996a).

Tensions within New Zealand First were also evident over the party's choice of a potential coalition partner. While Peters maintained that he would be open to negotiations with either National or Labour after the election, others in New Zealand First disagreed. *The Dominion* reported that

NZ First leader Winston Peters and his deputy Tau Henare were in dispute about a possible coalition with National on the eve of their official campaign opening today. Mr Peters was adamant yesterday that his party was still ready to consider a coalition with any other, despite Mr Henare's saying he would not serve in a NZ First-National government .... "It's my personal point of view, and it won't hinder the caucus making a decision," Mr Henare said (Speden, 1996a).

Henare's views were likely to have been consistent with the majority of Maori voters. Maori, traditionally, had been strong Labour supporters prior to the 1996 election (see also chapter five).

While tensions and differences within New Zealand First made discursive positioning of the party difficult, the party also had to position itself in relation to National and Labour. Each of these parties claimed positions very close to the

centre of the political field and each of them was a potential coalition partner for New Zealand First. By campaigning on a platform of economic nationalism, New Zealand First also overlapped with the Alliance (see chapter eight). These factors made it very important for New Zealand First to successfully differentiate itself from its competitors. The party's internal differences over a choice of coalition partner were exacerbated by the fact that New Zealand First's key supporters were known to be strongly antagonistic toward the National Party, as exemplified by Tau Henare's statement, above. A New Zealand Insight poll taken in August 1996 revealed that values held by New Zealand First supporters were a mirror opposite of National supporters' values. The pollsters analysis was that "The natural home for many New Zealand First voters is likely to be the most angry opposition party". New Zealand First would clearly have alienated its own constituency, as well as some of its candidates, if it had openly supported National. Had it supported Labour, the task of differentiating itself from Labour would have been more difficult. Yet New Zealand First consistently stated its intention to be a part of the new government. For example, Peters stated in a speech that "Coalition government will be essential - even, possibly, a minority coalition government. New Zealand First intends being part of that coalition. We will not desert our supporters by deliberately staying outside the political process" (October 6, 1996).

New Zealand First's platform of moral responsibility to its supporters was thus used by New Zealand First to obscure its apparent lack of principle over choice of coalition partner. The same professed morality was used frequently by Peters, particularly in the face of media pressure for New Zealand First to declare its post election intentions. Regardless of the election outcome, the party would claim a position of power in the name of responsibility. New Zealand First's strategy, in this case, was facilitated by the Alliance Party's stance of insisting on coalition talks prior to the election, a stance which, by contrast, New Zealand First portrayed as irresponsible. While the assumption of power was the objective of New Zealand First's campaign discourse, Peters constructed that objective as one which was thrust upon them, as exemplified by the following speech excerpt:

Now that the Alliance have ruled themselves out of playing any part in a coalition government, it will be New Zealand First who has the instrumental role in making or unmaking a government. There are only three major parties left to contest this election - National, Labour and New Zealand First. New Zealand First was formed in reaction to the sell-out of New Zealand by both Labour and National governments .... If we have the opportunity to create a better New Zealand, a New Zealand that provides free health care to our children, that abolishes the super surtax, that stops state asset sales, that gives the police the resources and staff to do their job, to address the mental health crisis, to build a solid foundation for our

families, then New Zealand First is morally obliged to take on that responsibility. We will (October 8, 1996).

While Peters clearly attempted to place New Zealand First in a position of moral responsibility, internal tensions and differences created problems for the party in discursively positioning itself in a consistent and credible manner. The close proximity, within the political field, of its key competitors made it difficult, though essential, for New Zealand First not only to discursively position itself strongly, but to lay claim to its own political space. Textual analysis, below, of New Zealand First's campaign discourse revealed the ways in which the party discursively positioned itself and, at the same time, repositioned its competitors to a different space in the political field.

## **NEW ZEALAND FIRST'S TEXTS**

This section analyses the ways in which New Zealand First's social practices and discourse practices shaped its campaign texts. The texts drawn upon were New Zealand First's press releases, speeches, advertisements and party political broadcasts (PPBs) disseminated during the campaign period. These texts provided evidence of the key strategies and tactics discussed in the discourse

practices section, above. They also provide evidence of the difficulties experienced by the party in attempting to adopt a stance in the centre of the political field, both in its discursive positioning of itself and in dealing with the tensions which arose within the party because of Peters apparent willingness to compromise policy in order to maintain a “centrist” position. The difficulties and tensions were exacerbated by the diverse social practices of Peters and some of the other New Zealand First candidates, as evidenced below.

### **New Zealand First’s discursive positioning of itself**

New Zealand First’s discursive positioning of itself was carefully constructed along very simple lines. Socially, it wanted to be identified as the only true and honest representative of “the people”. New Zealand First campaigned by taking a stance on issues which were calculated to appeal on an emotional level to its target voters - economic nationalism (which was inextricably linked to the party’s positioning as a party of the people) and crime. It also campaigned, but only out of necessity, on Maori issues, as explained below.

Politically, it wanted to position itself as the only party at the “centre” of the political field as this was the position from which it could attain power as the coalition partner of either Labour or National, whichever emerged the stronger from the election. As discussed in the discourse practices section, however, the centre of the political field, as constructed by New Zealand First, did not coincide

with Bourdieu's concept of a centre neutralised by policy agreement between key parties. The party's campaigning in social space, on issues of honesty and integrity, was also implicitly aligned, through a series of constructions and articulations, to its position as a party of the centre. New Zealand First's construction of the political centre and of its own position there is further analysed below.

### **New Zealand First as a party of the people**

In espousing its policies of economic nationalism, New Zealand First positioned itself as a champion of both New Zealanders and of their country against the growing tide of internationalisation. Peters declared repeatedly that "New Zealand is for New Zealanders" and that New Zealand First would keep the country "in New Zealand hands". In doing so, he identified and targeted those groups of New Zealanders who had reason to feel that current policies such as the superannuation tax, discussed above, and neoliberal policies of globalisation had not served their interests. These included the elderly, and those farmers and manufacturers who had suffered from the removal of trade tariffs. Peters stated:

We are the only party at this election that is prepared to share power with the people of New Zealand. We are the only genuine "people's party"....

We belong to New Zealand and we are here to serve the New Zealand people. We are the party for the farmer or the manufacturer who is

exporting overseas and creating real wealth for our country .... We are the party for the retired New Zealander because we are the only party that has not sold them out. We are the party for those who want this country to remain in New Zealand hands (September 16, 1996).

In New Zealand First's campaign texts, the people of New Zealand, "ordinary" people, were constructed as powerless against the current political system which had allowed the dominant political parties to break their election promises in order to pursue their own interests. Against this background, New Zealand First discursively positioned itself as created to be the saviour of ordinary New Zealanders. For example, Peters stated that

we were formed in reaction to the betrayal of New Zealand by the two party club that regarded manifesto commitments as works of fiction, that regarded the people as mere pawns, that placed party political interests far above the concerns of ordinary New Zealanders (October 9, 1996).

Peters further discursively positioned New Zealand First as "the only party at this election that is prepared to offer a partnership with the New Zealand people" (September 18, 1996). The suggested means of achieving such a partnership was by reducing the size of both Parliament and Cabinet, reducing the power of committees and Cabinet and by holding frequent public referenda to

resolve key issues. The introduction of such referenda was a key objective of New Zealand First's Grey Power constituency, as mentioned in the social practices section above, and was important for that group's continued support. The referenda would also have enabled New Zealand First to move with popular opinion and so, ostensibly, remain in favour and power. But New Zealand First, through Peters, couched its proposal in terms of democracy and, thus, the party as the only truly democratic party:

We must make sure that New Zealand's government is made ever more democratic, accountable and transparent .... New Zealand First is the only political party at this election with a democracy policy .... Our democracy policy is about taking power away from bureaucrats, politicians and political parties and giving that power back to the people (September 18, 1996).

While it positioned itself as the champion of New Zealand and its people, New Zealand First also discursively constructed New Zealanders as fiercely nationalistic and resilient. The party's discourse aimed to foster the notion of the "kiwi spirit", constructed as a combination of national pride and independence which lies at the heart of "ordinary Kiwis". Peters stated that the

determination, the independence, the "can do" attitude of the ordinary Kiwi ... have not been lost. For all the talk of making public health into a

business, for all the efforts of National and Labour to make New Zealanders selfish, and to think about themselves with no regard to their neighbour, the real heart and spirit of New Zealanders is still there (October 2, 1996).

In this way, New Zealand First positioned both itself and New Zealanders as opponents of the two key principles of neoliberalism:

the notion of individual rather than collective responsibility, and internationalisation. The term “kiwi spirit” was used by New Zealand First to reinforce the articulation of its own principles with those of ordinary New Zealanders. The tour bus, in which Peters and his entourage travelled throughout the country prior to the election and from which he conducted his campaign, was named “Kiwi Spirit”. The bus, the party and New Zealanders were thus positioned as one. In his campaign opening speech, Peters declared that

Yesterday, New Zealand First launched the “Kiwi Spirit”. Over the next four weeks New Zealand First will promote that “Kiwi spirit” the unique brand of enterprise, initiative, and integrity which makes us New Zealanders. And for every day, every week, every year, that New Zealand First exists, this great party will protect and nurture the “kiwi spirit” in All New Zealanders (September 16, 1996).

With “kiwi spirit” so constructed, New Zealand First further articulated its own position with that of the people by positioning itself as the only party whose own integrity had meant that it had not compromised its principles and its policies. This was a theme that Peters repeated throughout the country and one which was closely articulated with the party’s nationalistic policies. For example, he stated that his party was

the one Opposition party that has never sold out. That has never accepted monies from the greedy corporates. A party with a vision of what New Zealand can be. A party that will unleash the “Kiwi Spirit”. A party that will share power with the people and build new democratic systems to put the people in charge of this country .... A party that will keep New Zealand for New Zealanders (ibid.).

In a further example, Peters drew on his own involvement in the “Winebox” enquiry, mentioned above, to position his party (“we”) as endowed with the “kiwi spirit”. That spirit enabled them to challenge those who were in a greater position of power, and who thus comprised “the system”, and win:

We are a party that has taken on the system and won. We are a party that has brought real accountability back into New Zealand politics. We are a party that has gone to the wall for what we believe in. A party that has not bowed to political, business and media pressure on issues of public interest. We are a party that is not beholden to any sector, business or

lobby group - or the prisoner of any corporate donation. We are not a party that takes the easy way out (October 9, 1996).

New Zealand First thus discursively constructed itself as endowed with the “kiwi spirit”, synonymous with integrity and ordinary New Zealand people. At the same time it constructed itself as in opposition to a combination of the powerful forces of business, media and other established political parties which together worked against the “public interest”. New Zealand First strengthened that position by using its own history of exposing alleged scandals, ostensibly regardless of consequences to itself. In this way, New Zealand First attempted to capitalise on the general public’s distrust and disillusionment with politicians. For example, Peters said that

We are a party that says what we mean and mean what we say - regardless of the political consequences. Because we are a party that puts the interests of the people above our own vested interests. We are not about pursuing political power - at any cost. We are a party of consistency (October 9, 1996).

These statements positioned New Zealand First as prepared to go out on a limb for matters of principle, yet they did not fit comfortably with New Zealand First’s positioning of itself at the centre of the political spectrum, as explained below.

### **New Zealand First as the centre party**

New Zealand First further articulated “the people” with “middle New Zealand”. However, middle New Zealand was clearly equated with the, potentially, largest voting block, those voters who could be represented by either National or Labour but who might choose a political party which, in effect, offered a compromise between the policies of each. In this way middle New Zealand was equated with the political centre while at the same time constructed as honest, ordinary New Zealanders. The articulation was clearly demonstrated by a New Zealand First press release which said that

the Prime Minister was misrepresenting the political landscape as we approach the first MMP election by depicting the only choice to New Zealanders being between those on the left and those on the right of the political spectrum. There is another choice this election and it is the choice that frightens Mr Bolger the most. That choice is not for the left or the right but for middle New Zealand. New Zealand First stands for middle New Zealand with a common sense, practical approach to the everyday problems of average New Zealanders (October 3, 1996).

The space at the centre of the political field - the “neutral zone” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 185) constitutes, in this case, the intermediary position between Left and

Right. The zone is neutral because of policy agreement between key parties of the left and right of the political field. Mutually agreed policy stances are removed from political contest, albeit temporarily. As Bourdieu argues, the occupancy of this neutral zone is indicative of the relative weakness of the two poles of the political field (ibid.). However, those poles, at the time of the 1996 general election in New Zealand, were sufficiently strong for New Zealand First, from that centrist position, to have to campaign in terms of Left and Right, against each simultaneously. New Zealand First discursively constructed both Left and Right as untrustworthy because both were liable to corruption in pursuing their agenda. For example, in a speech Peters declared that

... the Labour Party's current social manifesto policies are closer to that of New Zealand First than National. However, Labour's economic policies with regard to fiscal spending, with regard to an excessive regard for trade union powers, with regard to the lack of a national savings strategy, obviously represents a grave difficulty for ourselves. But National's excessive reliance upon monetarism, its callous disregard of the weak, the sick and the most vulnerable in our society, represents a malaise of the heart (October 8, 1996).

"Centre" in this way was constructed as the space for honesty, integrity and stability. Peters stated that "New Zealand First is the true party of stability in this election" (October 4, 1996). Such a statement was ironic as, consistent with

the theory of “catch all” parties (for example, Swanson & Mancini, 1996), parties of the “centre” are those which are most subject to the variances of public opinion and thus to compromise. The need for compromise is even stronger for partners in a coalition government. Nevertheless, once constructed as New Zealand First’s natural constituency as well as the majority of voters, “middle New Zealand” provided a justification for New Zealand First’s being prepared to enter into a coalition agreement with either the “centre left” or the “centre right”. When under intense media and political pressure to declare its post election coalition preferences, Peters declared that

Any coalition arrangement we enter will be on the basis of what is good for New Zealand. We will be there representing the interests of Middle New Zealand - making New Zealand politics honest and representative of the people. We will be there to make sure the public interest comes before the interests of any other select elite - be they in politics, business or the media (October 9, 1996).

As stated, the creation and maintenance of a position for itself at the centre of New Zealand politics, while establishing itself as different from the parties either side of centre, was a key objective for New Zealand First. Centre, however, was a difficult position to claim as the key constituencies of National and Labour, on either side of centre, were not only fundamentally different from each other in many of their ideological perspectives, as described in chapters four and five, but,

in those cases already described in this chapter, disaffected former National voters were vehemently opposed to National Party policies. New Zealand First worked primarily to capture these voters by campaigning on the platform of being the means of removing the National Party from power. Peters stated that “we are the only Opposition party that can unseat National. The only party that can restore honesty and integrity to New Zealand politics” (16 September, 1996). Even though New Zealand First always maintained that it could enter a coalition with either National or Labour, it was the anti-National platform (described more fully below) which targeted the angry voters. Campaigning strongly to woo disaffected National voters, primarily elderly pakeha, created further problems, however, when it came to generating support from its other key constituency, Maori. As stated above, the two groups were, in many ways, opposed to each other. It was only because of actions by some Maori activists that New Zealand First was forced to openly address Maori issues at all.

### **New Zealand First and Maori issues**

New Zealand First’s discursive positioning regarding Maori would probably have remained very low key if it had not been for the occupation of public gardens in Wanganui by a large group of Maori activists only a few weeks prior to the election. The occupation forced issues of Maori separatism out into the open. Because New Zealand First was implicitly acknowledged as a Maori

party by virtue of its significant number of Maori candidates, the party had to take a stance on those issues. Maori activists, particularly over issues of separatism, represented the key fears held by many of New Zealand First's pakeha constituency. If the party had in any way identified itself with the activists, it is highly likely that the party would have lost its pakeha support.

In a speech entitled "We are one nation. A categorical rejection of separatism" (September 19, 1996), Peters strongly rejected the perspective of the Maori activists at Moutoa gardens. He did so by asserting his opinion that New Zealand was for all New Zealanders, echoing his earlier sentiments of nationalism but remaining carefully inclusive. Peters further strengthened his inclusive discourse by taking for himself multiple positions of origin and identification:

New Zealand First rejects the hymn of hate that is sung by extremists, be they brown or white. We reject the separatism so beloved of those Maori radicals who seek to use their own people for selfish gain .... I am of Maori descent. And I am proud of that descent and that lineage. I am also of Scottish descent. And I am equally proud of that heritage and that culture. But I am, first and foremost, a New Zealander (ibid.).

Peters tactic was echoed by his deputy, Tau Henare, at a Grey Power meeting in Kumeu: 'My mother is as Irish and Scottish as she could be. My grandmother is from Norway .... If I'm a separatist, I would have to get rid of my mother ... and my grandmother' (Johnston, 1996).

Peters further distanced his own party from association with the Moutoa gardens occupation by identifying and condemning both Labour and the Alliance as supportive, by association, of the activists:

...whatever culture, whatever race, whatever language we speak, whatever our background, we are New Zealanders, and that is the cohesive force that binds us together. So when Ken Mair or Tariana Turia talk of building a separate Maori nation then know this. They sing their hymn of hate alone. It is alarming to note that Tariana Turia is one of Labour's key list candidates and that racial separatism flourishes in the Alliance with the Mana Motuhake party. They do not represent real New Zealanders, European or Maori. They are separatists who judge our value on nothing more than the colour of our skin and our adherence to their destructive ways. New Zealand First rejects that creepy creed of racial separatism (September 19, 1996).

New Zealand First also implicated the National Party in the Moutoa gardens occupation by articulating the occupation with National's social policies, with Peters stating:

Those radicals - be they European or Maori - ... gain a certain currency because too many Maori are represented in all the worst statistics ... in all the figures that measure human misery and hardship, Maori are grossly

over-represented .... If we keep tolerating these sorts of statistics we will have permanent racial division in this country. And the separatists will have won, delivered a victory by wilful government neglect (ibid.).

In attempting to position Labour, the Alliance, and National at variance to New Zealand First's own stance on the issue of Maori separatism, New Zealand First attempted to create a polarity where there was none. There was none because those other parties did not adopt stances for themselves on that issue. It was for that reason that Peters was forced to revert to an attack on grounds of social policy, within the poles of Left and Right. Peters went on to specifically list the social causes of problems for Maori, but then offered as a solution only New Zealand First's policy on law and order policy which comprised, primarily, more police. It is noteworthy that relatively little was said by New Zealand First on the key election issues of health, education and the economy. Instead, crime emerged as a primary election issue for New Zealand First as it set its own election campaign agenda in an attempt to differentiate itself from its opposition, as described below.

### **New Zealand First and crime**

New Zealand First promoted, on behalf of the voters, crime as a key election issue. Once so promoted, New Zealand First could articulate the problem, not with the need to restructure the social and economic policies which were,

arguably, the underlying cause of crime, but with its own call for an increased police force. For example, Peters stated:

Violent crime is out of control. Understandably, health is the major social issue of the 1996 election campaign. But law and order is the sleeper issue, the issue which the pollsters ignore but which every New Zealander feels in their heart .... The reality is that crime is causing hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders to live restricted lives, to live fearful lives and to severely impede upon the choices and opportunities that individuals and families will make in their lifestyles .... A real solution, New Zealand First's law and order policy (September 20, 1996).

Peters repeated this theme throughout the country, always acknowledging a shortfall in social policy but building on the perceived fears of his target voters to promote the party's law and order policy. New Zealand First's stance on the issue of crime was entirely consistent with its construction of its position at the "centre" of the political field. Again, "centre" was not neutral in terms of left and right contestation. Rather, it fell between Keynesian and neoliberal perspectives. As O'Malley (1996) points out, "the actions of criminal offenders in Keynesian welfarism ... were determined by social and psychological causes" (p. 198), an explanation which, according to Foucault (1977) reduces the liability of the individual (O'Malley, 1996). The neoliberal view, on the other hand, is that

individuals are free to make a rational choice to commit crime and, therefore, should be held fully accountable (ibid.).

By, in effect, campaigning with discourses of both the Left and the Right, Peters, as stated above, removed himself from the neutral centre. The dominance of his call for increased law and order over any call for social reform placed his stance on the issue of crime much further and more firmly to the right than his encroachment on the Left. A speech made in Nelson provided a further example:

This epidemic of crime, particularly violent crime, is like a cancer within New Zealand society. It is making prisoners of us all .... If this is Jim Bolger's stable society then he obviously is not living out here with the real people. The trouble is that New Zealand is descending down the same path that American cities travelled twenty or thirty years ago. Our education, welfare and political systems have created an underclass of New Zealanders who have no love for today and no stake in tomorrow .... New Zealand First has created a series of inter-related policies that will attack the causes of crime, but one which is also tough on offenders and seeks to protect ordinary New Zealanders (September 24, 1996).

By offering its law and order policy as a solution to the fundamental social problems experienced by many Maori (stated above), New Zealand First implicitly articulated poor Maori with crime in New Zealand. By doing so, New

Zealand First tapped into a moral panic which closely paralleled that described by Hall et al (1978) as existing in Britain. Hall et al described pre-existing public anxiety about racial tensions and hostility which contributed to the establishment of the “common sense”, and hence hegemonic, view of that anxiety having arisen from an increase in crime, specifically, mugging. They closely questioned that causal link, commenting that “[t]he *fit*, here, between a predisposition to discover ‘crime’ as the cause behind every general social ill, and the specific production of the ‘mugger’ Folk-Devil, is, indeed, almost too neat and convenient to be true” (p.182). New Zealand First’s dual approach to crime, acknowledging social problems as the underlying cause as well as promoting law and order policies as the solution enabled the party to target the concerns of both of its primary constituencies. The moral panic regarding crime, more likely to be held by the right-wing, elderly pakeha, was directly addressed, while Maori (traditionally supportive of a Left position) were acknowledged as victims of social policy.

## **New Zealand First's discursive positioning of others**

### **National and the "far Right"**

As stated above, New Zealand First had clearly positioned itself as the party which could remove National from power. Its discursive positioning of National, in all of its advertising, speeches and press releases, was entirely negative, using the technique of apposition, classic in negative political campaigning. In employing this technique, "[c]ampaigns try to make their candidate's name a synonym for everything the electorate cherishes and to transform the opponent into an antonym of those treasured values" (Jamieson, 1992, p. 47).

A key discursive tactic New Zealand First employed was to articulate its own discursive positioning with its repositioning of National, in the sense that National was repositioned in opposition to New Zealand First. There was no middle ground allowed for in their opposition. For example, in contrast to New Zealand First's own policy of increasing the police force, one set of New Zealand First's advertisements ran under the caption "National's policy on law & order. Rub out the Police". That particular caption presented another contrast as it was an intertextual reference to a well known advertising campaign run by the 1987 New Zealand Labour Government, entitled "Rub Out The Crim". That campaign was run in support of Government policies of both an increase in police numbers

and the introduction of community support schemes (Bethune, 1994). In another set of advertisements, New Zealand First visually and verbally articulated its own “fair tax policy” and its exposure of the Winebox affair and corporate tax avoidance with “National’s Tax Policy. You paye. But their mates?” In New Zealand PAYE is the universally accepted acronym for the “Pay as you earn” system of tax deduction.

New Zealand First discursively repositioned National, on its own, further to the right of the political field than the centre-right position National had claimed for itself. For example, Peters stated that “[chopping police numbers] is a classic example of National’s attitude to all social policy. They measure their response in dollars and cents and not in addressing the very real problems that real New Zealanders face” (September 25, 1996); and the next day referred to “Scrooge McBirch [National’s Minister of Finance] and his new religion. That new religion is called ‘privatisation’ and its priests and high priests can be found in Treasury” (September 26, 1996). Such repositioning, however, was not consistent with the increase in police numbers and rates of incarceration recorded under other neoliberal regimes (Hall et al., 1978; O’Malley, 1996; Wacquant, 1999). Indeed, under neoliberal regimes, as discussed above, an increase in police numbers and incarceration rates can be expected because “the logical corollary of rational criminals, who are individually responsible for their actions, is a policy of punitive or ‘just deserts’ sentencing (O’Malley, 1996, p. 198).

Its strongly negative stance against National, however, made it difficult for New Zealand First to ultimately accept National as a coalition partner. New Zealand First's campaign discourse skirted the issue somewhat by repositioning National primarily as a party of the far right by virtue of its being prepared to enter a coalition agreement with Act. In this way, New Zealand First could use its own potential position as National's coalition partner to bring National back towards the centre and force it to honour its obligations to "the people". Once more, New Zealand First's negative positioning of National served to paint New Zealand First in a favourable light. Peters said of National: "Its preferred coalition partners are ACT and the Christian Coalition which demonstrates National's real agenda. An agenda of further privatisation, an agenda of continued arrogance that rides roughshod over the hopes and dreams of ordinary New Zealanders" (October 8, 1996).

In response to National's coining of the term "the three headed, left wing monster" (see chapter 4) for a left wing coalition, New Zealand First dubbed the three potential parties of a right wing coalition "the Toxic Trio". They clearly positioned Act as belonging to a lunatic fringe at the extreme right of the political field, but also as campaigning in close association with National. For example, Peters used the situation in the Wellington Central electorate (described in chapter 4) to demonstrate a high degree of co-operation between Act and National. In a press release Peters stated that

A vote for National in this election is a vote for the Toxic Trio and especially a vote for Richard Prebble and his mad mates in the ACT party .... [some National Cabinet ministers] want Mark Thomas to step down so that the person who began the sell-out of New Zealand can get elected and stop ACT needing to worry about the 5% MMP threshold lever. The 5% threshold was imposed to shut out the crazies (September 24, 1996).

In statements made throughout the country, Peters stressed the dangers to “ordinary” New Zealanders of a such a right wing coalition. In his campaign opening address, Peters predicted that “the three-headed National, ACT and Christian Coalition monster” would deliver

the privatisation of our public health and education systems; the final sell-off of New Zealand’s assets to the highest foreign bidder ... the total dominance of our country by rich, unprincipled corporates; secretive, unprincipled government; and a large measure of religious intolerance and bigotry (September 16, 1996).

The Christian Coalition did not, in fact, pose any threat to New Zealand First’s election prospects. It became apparent well before the election that they would not even cross the mandatory five percent vote threshold. By virtue of their unpopularity, their inclusion in New Zealand’s discursive portrayal of a right

wing coalition could only serve to add to the colour and to the distaste of the picture presented.

As already pointed out, however, New Zealand First had to leave an opening for itself to support National in a coalition government. Merely positioning itself as honour bound to enter such an agreement if necessary was not sufficient. With a display of the power it intended to wield, New Zealand First, at the height of its own support, postured that the removal of Bolger, Birch and Shipley would be the price of its support for National. The other means of justification for New Zealand First to enter into a post election coalition with National was by discursively constructing Labour and “the Left” as no better an alternative than National. In this way, New Zealand First could continue to position itself as being willing to broker an arrangement which was primarily in the interests of New Zealanders.

### **New Zealand First’s discursive positioning of “the Left”**

As was the case in their discursive positioning of National, New Zealand First’s positioning of Labour and the Alliance was to reflect these parties as opposites of New Zealand First’s positioning of itself, particularly as a party of honesty and integrity. New Zealand First thus attempted to campaign in social space, beyond the political field polarised by Left and Right.

As discussed above, New Zealand First constructed the Alliance's insistence that potential coalition arrangements be openly publicised prior to the election as a refusal to take part in any coalition government. In this way they were able to construct a vote for the Alliance as a wasted vote and, therefore, a vote for National. Peters stated that

The problem with the Alliance position is that it is colossally selfish, breathtaking only for its stupidity. Alliance voters know that their vote is a vote for Opposition, which is a total waste of the democratic process ... [the Alliance's] ideological purity can be compromised before the election but not after ... a vote for the Alliance is really a vote for National and the "toxic trio" (September 20, 1996).

By identifying National as the "Opposition", New Zealand First appeared to link its own interests to those of the Left. This was consistent with New Zealand First's negative campaign against National and was designed to reinforce the prevalent opinion that Labour would be New Zealand First's preferred coalition partner. In this example, the suggestion was made that the Alliance was giving National its votes purely by default. In other cases, however, Peters openly suggested that the Alliance was acting in collusion with National. For example, a New Zealand First press release stated that

Winston Peters has accused the Alliance of "rank hypocrisy" over the Alliance's policy on coalitions. Very simply, the Alliance cannot be

trusted with their promise not to enter a political arrangement with National .... the Alliance “has supported National at critical times and on critical issues. Only New Zealand First has stood aside from conspiring with National in Parliament” (September 16, 1996).

Although they primarily campaigned against National, New Zealand First also positioned Labour as a party lacking in integrity. New Zealand First did not attempt to reposition Labour further to left by virtue of an association with the Alliance, as National and Act did. This was not an option as they had already discounted the Alliance as a partner in any coalition government. Also, many of New Zealand First’s target voters were supportive of what, by 1996, had become left-wing policies. Instead, New Zealand First used Labour’s economic reforms of the 1980s to associate Labour with National, and to position both these parties as acting in the interests of elites rather than ordinary New Zealanders. Again, it was by these means that New Zealand First attempted to campaign beyond the political field, constructing integrity as an issue rather than take a stance on the basis of the ideological conceptions of Left and Right. However, no other party campaigned on the issue of integrity. Nor would any party position itself as unsupportive of the need for integrity. Thus, New Zealand First was forced to also campaign according to the parameters of the discourses set by its competitors. In his campaign opening address, Peters said that

Labour and National governments have sold New Zealand ... and New Zealanders down the road, literally ... Labour's promise to make New Zealand a better place in 1984 really meant a better place for the rich. National's promise to restore prosperity in 1990 really meant to restore prosperity to Fay Richwhite, Brierleys and the other companies in front of the "Winebox Inquiry" (September 16, 1996).

To counter Labour's own campaign as a party of the centre-left, Peters stated that Helen Clark is desperately hoping that some collective amnesia assaults the memories of the people. Labour want you to forget all right. They want you to forget what they did to New Zealand the last time they were in power (October 2, 1996).

For those who were prepared to believe that Labour no longer adhered to neoliberal economic and social policies, Peters positioned Labour as inherently unstable and, hence, unreliable in its promises: "Labour will fragment - we have been predicting that for months. David Lange now admits that reality" (October 4, 1996).

## **DISCUSSION**

New Zealand First followed international trends in election campaign practices by adopting the stance of an opportunistic and personality-based

“catch-all” party. The political field in New Zealand in 1996, however, was sufficiently polarised from Left to Right to ensure that parties campaigned on ideologically based principles, rather than on issues beyond the political field.

New Zealand First’s principal campaign goal was to hold the balance of power, enabling it to become a key component of the new Government - be it a government of the centre left or centre right. Its key campaign objective, in order to achieve that goal, was to establish itself as a party of the political centre. However, because the centre of the political field in New Zealand, 1996, was relatively weak, no other party attempted to campaign from that stance. While both National and Labour shared an acceptance of the principles of global free trade and thus, arguably, neutralised those policies in the political centre, the range of such neutral policies was small. This meant that New Zealand First was forced to engage in the contest on the basis of left/right issues as well as on issues such as honesty which were situated in social space rather than the political field.

The lack of contest within the centre of the political field also meant that New Zealand First had to discursively construct its own meanings of the term “centre”. Its primary construction of “centre” was that of a space in the middle, between National and Labour, not neutral in Bourdieu’s sense of mutually agreed upon principles but, rather, neutral in the sense of independent. This construction suited New Zealand First’s campaign goal well as it positioned the party as able to enter a coalition agreement with either party, as moral defender of the public

interest. New Zealand First reinforced both that construction of “centre” and its own position within it by constructing a wide range of “ordinary kiwis” as comprising “middle New Zealand”. Thus the political “centre”, “middle New Zealand” and independence and integrity were conflated in opposition to both National and Labour.

In order to maintain its position at the political centre and its potential to form part of the new government, New Zealand First was clearly prepared to compromise its key policy stances. This willingness to compromise did not sit well, however, with all of the party’s supporters. Nor did it have the support of all of the party’s candidates. New Zealand First’s two primary constituencies, Maori and conservative elderly pakeha, did not share the same social practices and world views although both, for very different reasons, were not supportive of National. Neither group would have been fundamentally supportive of New Zealand First’s joining National in a post-election coalition. When New Zealand First did just that, in spite of its own self positioning as the party to get rid of National, its support dropped dramatically.

New Zealand First appeared to be the natural representative of Maori. This was because many of the party’s candidates, including its leader and its deputy leader, were themselves, Maori. Also, Labour, which had traditionally represented Maori, had lost much of their support when they introduced neoliberal economic reforms from 1984. Winston Peters, however, was very

careful to distance himself from the Maori faction of the party and to campaign for the support of his elderly pakeha constituency. This group was dominant in his own Tauranga electorate, and he needed their vote. Peters' willingness to cooperate with National was strongly in opposition to the views of his own Maori colleagues and constituency. This fact was also borne out after the election when New Zealand First split, with the majority of its Maori MPs (excluding Peters) forming their own, overtly Maori party. The general election of 1999 saw the Maori vote return to Labour.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE ACT PARTY CAMPAIGN

This chapter analyses Act's campaign discourse by drawing on an interview with two senior members of Act's election campaign committee; the party's controlled campaign texts including its speeches, advertisements and party political broadcasts (PPBs); and on its press releases disseminated to the mass media.

Act's social and political history forms the basis for the analysis of the party's social practices. The political history of its leaders and founder reveals the neoliberal perspective of the party from which it took its position at the far right of the political field in New Zealand, 1996. The party was formed in order to preserve and promote a free market economy in New Zealand, and thus defend the interests of business. The introduction of MMP provided an opportunity for the party to enter parliament and, thus, to exercise influence within the political field. The objective of that influence was to preserve their neoliberal ideals against counter reformists who sought to shift the political field back towards the Left within the universe of political discourse.

As a minor party, Act did not expect to wield influence in government in any capacity other than that of a coalition partner with National. An analysis of their discourse practices revealed the strategies employed by Act in attempting to secure that position. The party encouraged National voters to vote tactically by

splitting their vote, giving their party vote to Act. When it became apparent that Act could win the electorate seat of Wellington Central, their strategy was modified to encourage voters in that electorate to vote in favour of Act's candidate (and leader), Richard Prebble.

Act's texts revealed evidence of the party's social practices and of its campaign discursive strategies, particularly its own positioning and its repositioning of other parties. Its own discursive positioning was effected through a complex set of articulations aimed at generating a public perception of the parties' policies as moderate, rather than extreme. The analysis also revealed the ways in which Act attempted to position itself outside the political field, within civil society - again in an attempt to deflect public opinion away from its unpopular economic and social policies.

## **ACT'S SOCIAL PRACTICES**

From its beginnings, Act had experienced difficulty in creating for itself an identity which had appeal for the voting public. Its founder, Roger Douglas, the Minister of Finance of the 1984 Labour Government, was widely credited with the introduction of neoliberal economic reforms in New Zealand. Indeed, the reforms were termed "Rogernomics", a name which is still in use. When the Labour Government opted to slow down the implementation of the reforms, and

after acrimonious disagreements with the then Labour Prime Minister, David Lange. Douglas resigned from the Labour Party. After the 1993 referendum for the introduction of MMP, Douglas formed a lobby group called the Association of Consumers and Taxpayers (ACT). His co-founder, Derek Quigley, had been notable as a member of the National Party caucus who made an early push for a neoliberal point of view after the 1978 election (Jesson, 1987). Thus his ideological views coincided with those of Douglas. From the lobby group, the political party, Act (no longer an acronym), was formed in November, 1994. Act's policy platform was provided by Douglas' book, *Unfinished Business*. The title was a direct reference to the economic reforms set in train by Douglas in 1984, which recommended the abolition of income tax, and the privatisation of the government social services of health, education and superannuation (Orsman, 1995). When Act became a political party, the key principles of *Unfinished Business* were used as the basis of a party manifesto, *Commonsense For a Change*. Douglas, himself, chose not to take on the active leadership of Act, the political party, but instead remained as the "spiritual leader" (ibid.).

Douglas' return to politics via the opportunity presented by proportional representation was both ironic and problematic. Firstly, Labour's betrayal of its traditional voters, through its adherence to Rogernomics, in part contributed to the introduction of MMP (James & McRobie, 1993). Second, the introduction of MMP was aggressively campaigned against by a group called the Campaign For

Better Government. Their campaign was business-led and constituted an attempt to preserve neoliberal policy which was ostensibly in danger from a multi-party coalition government (Roper & Leitch, 1995). Three of the leaders of the Campaign For Better Government, Owen Jennings, Brian Nicolle and Priscilla Tate, became key personnel in Act (Roper, 1996). Not only did these people seek to enter politics by way of an electoral system which they had vehemently opposed, they were also negatively identified by many as the agents of big business. In March 1996, a former Labour Cabinet ally of Douglas, Richard Prebble, assumed the political leadership of Act.

The social practices of the leading members of Act clearly positioned the party as the champion of private enterprise and a free market economy. That position placed Act at the extreme right of the political field of New Zealand, 1996.

## **ACT'S DISCOURSE PRACTICES**

As a party marginalised at the far right of the political field, and without assurances of crossing the five percent threshold of votes required for proportional representation in parliament, Act's discourse practices were aimed primarily at constructing the party and its policies as politically viable.

This section draws on information gained from Act's press releases, speeches and on interviews with three key members of Act. It focuses primarily on the tactics which underpinned the construction of Act's texts. Each of the tactics was purely functional in that it was designed to increase Act's electoral chances. Three broadly grouped but key areas in which Act's discourse practices strategically shaped its campaign texts were: policy modification; tactical voting; and Act's interpretation of its low rating in public polls. This section examines each of these areas. More extensive analysis and examples of the specific strategies which shaped Act's text production, as they related to Act's discursive positioning of itself, are provided in the textual analysis section, further below.

### **Act's policy modification**

Prebble very clearly saw that the party had problems of identification and positioning in relation to social fields. These were key problems which the party had to address before it could seek election as a political representative of members of civil society.

At a press conference soon after his assumption of the party leadership, Prebble stated that he believed that the reason Act's policies did not appeal to New Zealand voters was that "Act has allowed itself to be portrayed as a loopy right wing party. As a party of the distant future, as a party of the elite" (March 21, 1996). He claimed that people did not understand Act's policies because the

policies were too clever. Act must, he said, “reposition the party as one that represents ordinary people - and to do so we must ditch some of the more extraordinary policy” (ibid.). The Party leaders did not cease to believe in and aspire to the implementation of their “extraordinary” policy; they recognised the need to temporarily modify it to make it more acceptable and credible. The modification was necessary to gain admission to the political field in 1996; to make the policies fall within the realm of what is “politically thinkable” (Bourdieu, 1991), by articulating them with issues of concern in social space. In a clear recognition of the need for a temporary modification of policy, one senior party member stated:

I often say that *Commonsense for a Change* is the world as Act would want it. There are certain things in there that I’ve never heard anybody back away from but it’s a matter of putting stepping stones in place to help people to understand where you’re trying to go to and if you have to do it in smaller steps rather than in a giant leap in order to allow people to do that there’s no problem with that (personal communication, December 12, 1996).

A key example of where Act modified its policy in order to make it more acceptable was taxation:

When we went out on the no income tax policy it was quite clearly what we believed in and I would have to say there are an awful lot of us who

still believe in it but it became clear that New Zealand in general felt it was too good to be true. So you have to take account of that and say OK we've moved too far ahead of people at this point. They cannot conceive. What people really couldn't conceive was that there was enough money there to do the things that they expected to be done without income tax (ibid.).

Even after making such compromises in policy, however, it was difficult for Act to position itself in such a way that would command sufficient support to cross the five percent threshold required under MMP. The way in which Act could best gain influence in public policy making was as National's coalition partner. As detailed below, it was on that premise that Act campaigned. Act assumed the role of insurance against National's deviating from market led economic and social policies.

### **Tactical voting**

Except for one or two seats in which Act stood well-known candidates, Act could not initially expect to enter Parliament via constituencies. Instead, Act campaigned primarily for the party vote which it hoped to gain from National. As a part of that campaign strategy, Act argued that National would gain most of its seats through constituencies and that party votes for National would thus be

wasted. Act told National voters who wanted to ensure the continuance of the current economic direction that it would be better if they gave their party vote to Act. This was in spite of the fact that National was also campaigning for the party vote. Act saw National's refusal to advise its voters to vote tactically as a threat and positioned National's strategy as a recipe for victory for the left. For example:

National is looking down the barrel at defeat. It is not so much a defeat by the left .... The right in this campaign continues to ankle-tap itself.

National continues to give its supporters false information about how to vote tactically in an MMP election (press release, September 30, 1996).

In this and the following example, Act overtly targeted National supporters for their party vote. The tactics used were aggressive, aimed at creating a sense of fear for the economic future of the country. For example, in a press release, Act stated that

National cannot afford for Act not to be in the Parliament - seeking party votes at Act's expense is a futile, expensive exercise in political vanity when the price is opposition for National and economic disaster for New Zealand (press release, September 29, 1996).

When it eventually became apparent that Prebble could win the Wellington Central electorate, Act pressured National to stand down its own candidate and to endorse Prebble. National finally, albeit obliquely, gave in to Act's request the day

before the election, as explained in Chapter Four. Even at that stage, however, Act could not be assured of reaching the threshold of five percent of the party vote. Prebble's win may have been their only hope of entering Parliament under the regulations of MMP. The party of a successful constituent candidate would bypass the five percent threshold and enter Parliament with a percentage of list candidates determined by the percentage of the total party vote won by that party.

Because of its position in the polls, Act, somewhat ironically considering its members' previous opposition to the MMP electoral system, declared that the first-past-the-post system had been undemocratic. This was a tactic aimed at persuading voters that a coalition government was desirable. A coalition government could be assured by preventing National from being able to form a government, even a minority government, on its own. Prebble told a Rotary Club (which comprised Act's primary target market) that

first-past-the-post government has become an elected dictatorship. Sir Robert Muldoon [National] took us into Think Big without a mandate, parliamentary debate or any check or balance. The Lange Government [Labour] was able to reverse the economic direction - similarly without the need to submit its plans to parliamentary scrutiny. The present National government was able to introduce a misconceived Think Big immigration policy without any mandate or debate (September 26, 1996).

There was, of course, a further irony in Prebble's reference to the Lange Government. The "reverse in economic direction" was after Douglas, Prebble and others had, arguably without a mandate as the party had not informed voters of their intention prior to election, worked towards a deregulated, free-market economy.

### **Act and the polls**

A key obstacle to persuading National voters to give their party vote to Act, however, was Act's poor rating in public opinion polls. If Act did not reach the five percent threshold there was a strong possibility that party votes given to Act would not be included in the final count. It was essential, therefore, that Act establish its own credibility as a viable political force. Prebble attempted to do this by challenging those opinion polls and "the dark art of polling" (speech, September 30, 1996) which gave it a low rating. Act also promoted the results of private polls which, it claimed, rated Act much more highly. Prebble explained the "inaccuracy" of the public polls:

As Act's supporters tend to be people who are working extremely hard, often families where both spouses work, our support group is notoriously hard to poll. Our own pollsters warned that the public polls might never show Act over 5 per cent while an election poll would produce a much

better result. It's my conclusion that Act support is already high enough for Act and National MPs to be able to form a parliamentary majority by themselves .... Act's own focus groups show that a list vote of better than 10 per cent is possible (ibid.).

Because of the "inaccuracies", Prebble further stated that "My advice to commentators is to ignore the polls" (ibid.). The commentators were the ones whom Act had to target as they were responsible for negative news coverage of Act's campaign performance. New Zealand media were no different from those of other western democracies in adopting a "horse race" style of campaign commentary, emphasising winners and losers more than issues (Graber, 1989; Jamieson, 1992; Kavanagh, 1995; Roper, 1999a).

The practical imperatives for Act's campaign were that it position itself as a viable party with its own credible policies which could take an important place as National's coalition partner. These imperatives determined Act's discursive positioning of itself and of opposition parties, including National. The ways in which Act's discourse reflected its practical imperatives was evidenced in its campaign texts, as explored below.

## ACT'S TEXTS

This section analyses the evidence of the ways in which Act's social and discourse practices shaped its campaign texts. As discussed in the previous section, the only modification of its neoliberal policies which Act was prepared to allow was in regard to their rate of implementation. Neoliberalism continued to underpin each of Act's policies, though in several areas Act had to downplay them or make complex justifications for them. Thus Act's discursive self positioning was often subtle and complex. Act's discursive positioning of its opponents, by contrast, was direct and strongly negative in an effort to marginalise them in the political field. The intended effect of the marginalisation of the opposition was to render Act's policies as more mainstream, by comparison.

In a further effort to side-step its own marginal position within the political field, Act attempted repeatedly to position itself beyond the political field. Its self positioning in this regard was based upon an attempt to identify itself with "ordinary" people, political non-professionals in social space. From its discursively constructed position beyond the political field, Act argued for a reduction in the influence of parliament through a reduction in regulation by government. Act also argued for the implementation of a market model of delivery of social services. Each of these arguments was very much in line with a neoliberal perspective, but Act was cautious in the ways in which it voiced them. Maori were used prominently by Act as a vehicle for justification of its social policies, as

discussed below. This section also examines the ways in which Act linked itself to National's free market economic platform rather than specifically espouse its own economic policies.

## **Act's discursive positioning of itself**

### **Act as the representative of "ordinary" people**

As recommended by Prebble when he assumed the Party leadership, Act attempted to position itself as the representative of "ordinary people". It named itself as a grassroots party by virtue of its "truly democratic grass roots ballot" for list candidates. From that beginning, Act extrapolated that "Act is the most remarkable grassroots movement in our lifetime and there is huge support out there for the values Act stands for" (press release, September 8, 1996).

Explanation of what constitutes a "grassroots" party was limited to its party list ballot but the term itself was evocative of a widespread protest movement which was taking politics into its own hands. As discussed in the section on Act's discourse practices, Act needed to convey the impression that it had a large body of support in order to lend itself credibility in the eyes of voters. In order to appeal to "ordinary people", Act campaigned on the platform of "values not politics". At the same time, Act repeatedly constructed "kiwi values" as

synonymous with “thrift, hard work, honesty and personal responsibility”. For example, Prebble said:

the values that underlie all Act policy ... are the values of middle New Zealand. Act says let’s have a government that rewards thrift, hard work, honesty and personal responsibility instead of penalising those values with taxes, user charges and abatements (speech, 25 September 1996).

The construction of taxes as a penalty was reflective of neoliberal discourse which rejects the notion of society having a collective responsibility. The counter construction would have been taxes as a contribution.

By constructing the values of “ordinary people” who make up “middle New Zealand” in this way, Act was able to articulate its own policies with those values. Act’s policies emphasised, above all else, the neoliberal value of individual rather than government or institutional responsibility and an associated reduction in government involvement in social policy. For example, Prebble stated that “At the core of Act’s policies is the belief that the ordinary New Zealand family knows better than any politician how to spend their own money. Act says that government policies must be rooted in these Kiwi values” (ibid.). Thus Act constructed its values as those of middle New Zealand and Act as representative of middle New Zealand. However, although they each constructed the group somewhat differently, “middle New Zealand” was the broad target of all of the centrist political parties and, in order to survive, Act needed to position itself as

unique. Act did not claim to be a centrist political party; rather, it further constructed middle New Zealand as without an existing representative:

Act's first step is to say why not have a government that represents middle New Zealand, the silent majority, the kiwi battlers, the politically forgotten. Their values are honesty, hard work, thrift and individual responsibility. No party in Parliament, no politician in Parliament represents middle New Zealand (press release, September 8 1996).

Act's social practices clearly indicated that Act would be the natural representative of those on well above average incomes and/or self-employed.

These people did not comprise average nor middle New Zealanders on that basis.

Given political parties' reliance on opinion polls to identify the concerns of the majority of the voting public, it was highly unlikely that any party which positioned itself at the centre of the political field would "forget" the major group described by Act. In constructing such a discourse, however, Act conflated its own position at the far right of the political field with that of "centre". In reality, however, Act's policies were not embraced by the major parties, nor by the majority of voters and could not, therefore, be successfully constructed as common sense. If the policies were accepted as common sense, they would not be questioned and, as a consequence, would be hegemonic in their dominance (see chapter 2).

### **Act beyond the political field**

Act further articulated its values with “kiwi values” by positioning its candidates as members of the public rather than as politicians. This positioning also constituted an attempt to neutralise Act’s unpopular social and economic policies as Act attempted to campaign on issues outside the political field, and so outside a Left/Right polarisation. For example, personal characteristics such as honesty are beyond Left/Right positioning and so cannot be contested within the political field. Social movements, or “grassroots” movements, too, begin outside the political field until they become political parties or their issues are adopted by political parties, integrated within Left/Right positioning.

Thus, in a print advertisement entitled “Values. not politics”, Act’s candidates were given the subject positions of “real people, sharing kiwi values” and this was constructed as a point of differentiation for Act. Again, such a differentiation was an attempt to identify Act with the majority of New Zealanders while, at the same time, removing other political parties from that position. In the advertisement Act also articulated its values with the discontent which “everyday Kiwis” felt towards politicians, particularly that discontent with politicians and Parliament which was expressed through the vote for the introduction of MMP: “everyday Kiwis won’t put up with politics as usual any longer. Because we are all sick of politicians putting their own interests before the nation’s .... Act represents the groundswell of Kiwis who want something better

in the new Parliament”. By positioning Act candidates as synonymous with “everyday Kiwis”, Act supported its own claim to be a grassroots party. By positioning them as being apart from politicians, Act was able to construct their role as counter balances to dishonesty in Parliament. In a print advertisement entitled “For an honest Parliament”, Act stated that “Our candidates are real, working people, not professional politicians”. By association, Act, the party, became “the honest broker in the new Parliament” (ibid.), situated in social space but with a voice in the political field. Act’s positioning of its candidates as apart from politicians also served to deflect from their political inexperience.

Act’s candidates were positioned in a way which would enable them to enter Parliament without becoming as other politicians. In Parliament they would not be bound by party policy. Rather, they would be, as Prebble stated in a speech, “a group of independent-minded MPs sitting on the cross-bench” (September 25, 1996). The following day, Prebble continued the notion of Act MPs as politically independent by telling a Wellington Rotary Club that “I expect every Act MP to treat every vote as a conscience vote” (September 26, 1996). The discursive construction of Act MPs as independent, however, served a wider, more ideological, purpose than that of party differentiation. Through the introduction of a new system of electoral representation, Act was able to pursue a revised role for Parliament which supported neoliberal ideals, particularly the removal of government involvement in decisions regarding the production and

distribution of goods and services, including social services (see, for example, Birch, 1993). This had been Act's stance over the role of government since the party's inception. In an initial, pre-election campaign run early in 1995 in order to introduce and build support for the new party, Act's discourse aimed to construct a state of crisis, brought about by the inefficient interference of government in the social sector. Through crisis came the justification of a call for change (Roper, 1996).

### **Act and deregulation**

Act continued to discredit Parliament in its 1996 election campaign. However, there was a discernible shift in emphasis in Act's 1996 campaign discourse. Whereas in 1995 the institution to be discredited was primarily "government" (ibid.), this time it was "Parliament". Act could not afford to overtly link government and Parliament as the former was made up of National Party politicians. Act would need to work in Parliament as an ally of National. To discredit Parliament, Act focused upon Parliament's role as regulator - creator of legislation. In a speech, Prebble stated that "Our Parliament has become a rubber stamp for the executive - a rapid-fire law-making machine" (September 26, 1996). Closely echoing Act's earlier campaign when exaggerated narrative was regularly employed to construct and exemplify a particular reality of an interfering

government (Roper, 1996), Prebble went on to articulate the Parliament of 1996 with that of 1978, when, he stated:

NZ was the most over-regulated country in the western world. The country was being run ... like a Polish shipyard. This was from an era when regulations forbade you to make carpets out of anything other than wool (we had to be loyal to our dominant animal). This was from an era when you needed a doctor's prescription to buy margarine. This was an era when New Zealand was famous for being the most over-regulated country in the world. And in the 10 years to 1978 the government passed an average of 300 new regulations a year. Last year, in 1995, the government passed 328 Statutory regulations - that's almost one new law a day ... The amount of legislation Parliament passes is beyond a joke. And no-one knows why they are doing it (September 26, 1996).

The "Polish shipyard" was evocative of communism and was used to suggest that New Zealand was little removed from that today as needless regulations were still being passed. Regulations were constructed as synonymous with the removal of individual liberty. With Parliament thus positioned, Prebble was then able to position himself, and, by association, Act, as a visionary with a way forward:

I have a larger vision of what Parliament should be. I believe Parliament to be one of society's most important institutions ... the underlying reality is that Parliament is what allows us to be a modern, stable state where

freedom is allowed to exist, where we can speak freely and make our livings and better our families' circumstances .... Parliament must serve the people .... it has become a servant of the bureaucracy (ibid.).

If New Zealand in 1996 could be likened to a communist Poland, then it could be inferred that our Parliament, through its regulations, did not serve to provide us with freedom. The freedom to which Prebble referred was the freedom of the individual from state interference and that freedom was entirely consistent with neoliberal ideology. Freedom from state interference was not limited to national boundaries, however. Beyond the breakdown of insular economies, neoliberal ideology was also to be applied to a global free market through a process of economic globalisation. The global economy would be dependent upon private capital, not state capital. Early in 1995, Roger Douglas had signalled his belief that the transition to a global economy had already been irreversibly effected when he stated that "We have had a technological revolution and a political revolution in the world. Governments will have less relevance and control and politicians need to realise that" (Small, 1995). Douglas implied that the power of private enterprise had gained ascendancy over political power. Act's continued belief in Douglas' assertion was evident in Prebble's categorical statement that "Big government is bad for business" (press release, September 30, 1996). The

rationale behind such a statement was repeated often throughout Act's campaign.

In a speech in Hamilton, Prebble asserted that

investors vote with their feet. That's what happens in a free society. Why should investors stay in New Zealand to be savagely taxed to pay for left wing politicians to buy votes. This is at a time of an international shortage of capital .... Today we are in a global economy and capital goes to the best home (September 30 1996).

Act's position regarding the relationship between government and business was unequivocal. Their campaigning on the subject was authoritative in style, admitting no dissent to what they stated as a matter of fact. Act's problem, however, was that there was, on the part of voters and other political parties, continued resistance to such power being assigned to business. Even statements such as Prebble's "As a trading nation, no country on earth stands to gain more from the new global economy" (September 25, 1996) did not, judging by Act's low ratings in public opinion polls, serve to build support for Act's economic policies.

Neoliberal regimes work with the aim of restructuring the relationship between the state and civil society, particularly in the provision of social services, such as education and health. While the aim is not to entirely remove the role of the state, it is to impose an autonomy upon the service providers by transforming

the mode of regulation to a market model (Burchell, 1996). Under a market model, service providers must compete for “clients”, and thus compete for funding (ibid.) either from the state or from the private sector. Consistent with neoliberalism, Act’s economic policies called for a significant and fundamental shift to a market model in service provision, with responsibility for funding moving from the state to the service provider.

The process of change towards such a transformation had been begun by Douglas and Prebble in 1984 with the Labour Government and was continued by the current National Government. However, public opinion had prevented the economic reforms from being taken as far as Act’s policies espoused. As Prebble had stated on assuming leadership of the party, such leaps were difficult for a voting public to accept. Voters would not be prepared to accept such changes while they believed that social services could be improved through adjustments in the existing economic order. In order to convince the voting public of the need to support a significant shift in economic policy towards a reduction in government involvement and a corresponding far greater role for the private sector, Act worked discursively to construct the reality of a crisis in each of the key areas of social policy. At the launch of Act’s manifesto, Prebble said “We’ve got to approach serious problems - some that amount to crises - with new, fresh thinking” (September 25, 1996). Stuart Hall pointed out that when opposition at a particular site reaches crisis proportions the site becomes vulnerable to the

advances of a new order (1988a). Act's strategy in their 1995 pre-election campaign was in line with this theory when they attempted to discursively construct crises in the public sector areas of health, education and superannuation as a justification for radical change in social policy (Roper, 1996).

### **Crisis in the social sector**

In 1996, Act did not directly construct the areas of health and education as being in a state of crisis, although they emphasised problems in delivery of services in those areas. The reason for this is likely to have been that Act's policies for education and health were known to be unpopular. The New Zealand public was firmly against any privatisation of, or application of a market model to the health sector. There was also widespread concern about Act's proposed "voucher system" for education, a market model whereby funding would follow the student rather than be allocated directly to the institution. National had earlier received adverse criticism when it was accused of considering a similar system. Instead, Act discursively constructed crises in the areas of superannuation and Maoridom. The latter was of particular interest, as, initially, it did not obviously fit with social policy, and is explored in depth below. What was clearly missing in Act's discourse was the crisis generated by growing poverty in New Zealand, a theme pursued by Labour and the Alliance but, as for Act, not by National. The absence was significant as Labour and the Alliance argued that National's

economic policies had generated poverty. Act, however, broadly supported National's economic direction, as discussed below. In each of the areas in which Act did argue either a state of crisis or deeply rooted problems, the motive was to offer a market model as the only solution. The promotion of one alternative system as the only possible solution was entirely consistent with Laclau's (1986) statement, explored more fully in chapter two, that

one of the possible ways of resolving crisis for the new hegemonic class or fraction is to deny all interpellations but one, develop all the logical implications of the one interpellation and transform it into a critique of the existing system, and at the same time, into a principle of reconstruction of the entire ideological domain (p. 29).

One area in which the market was offered as a solution was superannuation. Superannuation was a key area of concern for voters, particularly the elderly, in spite of the fact that a well-publicised, independent report had pronounced that the current state funded superannuation scheme was sustainable for at least a further thirty years. New Zealand First had proposed a compulsory retirement savings scheme which was similar to that proposed by Act. Act, however, by combining it with their policy of a low, flat tax rate, continued to position its own superannuation policy as unique. Prebble stated: "We face a crisis in providing for our elderly and Act is the only party with a policy to

address the problem .... With Act they [the elderly] have tax cuts combined with a compulsory private savings plan” (press release, September 26, 1996).

### **Crisis in Maoridom**

Prebble delivered a speech entitled “A real issue facing New Zealand - the crisis in Maoridom” (September 23, 1996). Act’s position on the “crisis” in Maoridom was both interesting and significant in that it served Act’s purposes in multiple ways. Firstly, it constituted a direct appeal to farmers, a key target group from whom Act aimed to gain support, at National’s expense. Secondly, it was articulated with Act’s call for substantial reforms to the health and education sectors.

With the ongoing settlement of claims made by Maori under the Treaty of Waitangi for the return of land, or for compensation for land seized illegally from Maori, many farmers felt that their land was threatened. It was an issue to which Act returned frequently. The issue, which was the state’s legal responsibility to social groups (Maori tribes) to return collectively owned land, was articulated with Act’s neoliberal belief in the autonomy of the individual and the importance of private property. In the launch of Act’s manifesto, Prebble said: “Act says the crisis in Maoridom must be faced ... when government strips private property owners of their property rights - as National proposes - the Treaty process has gone off the rails” (September 25, 1996). In other statements, Prebble used the

endorsement of the Federated Farmers to strengthen Act's direct appeal to farmers:

the Government is proposing stealing private property from about 600 families to settle a Waitangi Treaty claim .... Act believes in the rule of law and private property rights. We are the only party that does so .... Federated Farmers said just last week that Act stands out as the party with the strongest commitment to the sanctity of farmers' property rights. Federated Farmers President Mr Malcolm Bailey said: "This is not surprising given the long-standing recognition by Act's leadership of the critical importance of property rights to farmers" .... we will ensure that every New Zealander knows that every party in Parliament is colluding to steal private property from citizens (press release, October 8, 1996).

Act maintained that Treaty of Waitangi settlements were creating and benefiting a small group of Maori elite and that the intended benefits were not reaching other Maori. Therefore, Maori should stop expecting anything from Treaty settlements. For example, Prebble stated:

I am not interested in buying off a Maori elite in cash Treaty settlements while ignoring this social catastrophe .... The Maori who have really benefited from this process are not in Otara or Flaxmere or Porirua - they are sitting here in this room. The best and brightest brains in Maoridom are

now fully employed in the grievance industry. The idea that settling Treaty claims will solve the crisis in Maoridom is a very dangerous and false belief (September 23, 1996).

It was ironical that Act's discourse against Treaty of Waitangi settlements and the failure of those benefits to flow on to all of Maoridom echoed the principle arguments against neoliberalism - the growth of a wealthy business elite with no evidence of benefits flowing on to a growing number of people living in poverty. Act's solution for Maori echoed the party's general theme of individualism and the imposition of a market model for the individual, with Prebble saying:

Act New Zealand's emphasis on hard work, thrift and personal responsibility is striking a chord with those Maori who know that Maori dependence on state handouts and cargo-cult riches from Waitangi settlements are a dangerous illusion .... The real solution to the crisis in Maoridom is the same as for everyone. It comes from individuals taking responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities  
(September 23, 1996)

Prebble's criteria of "hard work, thrift and personal responsibility" were those of a meritocracy (Giddens, 1998), which assumes equality of potential amongst

individuals. A meritocracy does not admit inequality of opportunity, as discussed in chapter two.

Beyond the appeal to farmers through the preservation of private property against Treaty settlements, Act articulated the “Maori crisis” with a crisis in both health and education. It was in this way that Act avoided directly stating that the entire health and education sectors were in a state of crisis.

Through an articulation with a Maori crisis, Prebble was able, with a greater degree of safety, to extrapolate Act’s market-based solutions to society in general:

The fact is that the crisis in Maoridom will not be solved until Maori participate fully and effectively in education .... To blame failure on the Treaty and rely on the Treaty is to close our eyes to a crisis before us. An education policy that can deliver appropriate and proper schooling to Maori children - that is within our grasp with the policy instruments of today. I invite you to look no further than Act’s education policy (speech, September 23, 1996).

The education policy was not designed to treat Maori children any differently from other children (again consistent with a meritocratic perspective), but Act was able to cite statistics of Maori failure in education to support a notion of crisis. The articulation of the Treaty of Waitangi, Maori education and Act’s general education policy were designed to justify the proposed overall changes to education delivery and make them more palatable to voters.

In the same speech, Prebble applied the same tactic described above for justification of a change to a market model of education, to health. He claimed that

It is the crisis in Maori health that is overwhelming our public hospital system. Visit the Starship hospital in Auckland as I did last week and see for yourself. This too is a crisis that will be solved not by reference to the Treaty but by giving Maori families their own choice of health insurance from a range of companies competing for their custom. These are the real answers. They are the same for Maori as for non-Maori. The crisis will be averted when Maori take ownership of the issue (September 23, 1996).

Again, the “crisis” was restricted to Maoridom while the rationale for change was extrapolated to all. The solutions to problems in superannuation, education and health all involved a reduction in government involvement in service delivery in favour of a market-based model. Delivery was to be devolved to the individual and the private sector. In an apparent deviation from neoliberal theory, Act proposed the introduction of compulsory, private sector insurance for health care, and assurance for superannuation. However, as Stuart Hall points out, it is “possible to use the state, strategically, to divest the state .... The idea that ‘neoliberalism’ meant the abolition, rather than the recomposition, of the state was always inaccurate” (Hall, 1988b, p.86). O’Malley (1996) identifies the role of the state in the transition to neoliberalism and the associated privatisation of risk as a strong one, working towards “the strategic deployment of sovereign remedies and

disciplinary interventions that facilitate, underline and enforce moves towards government through individual responsibility” (p. 199). Hand in hand with the transference of responsibility from state to individual is the promotion of the “rational” individual who will prefer to take on responsibility for him or herself because

this will produce the most palatable, pleasurable and effective means of provision for security against risk. Equally, the responsible individual will take rational steps to avoid and to insure against risk, in order to be independent rather than a burden on others (ibid. pp. 199-200).

### **Act and the economy**

Although Act’s social policies directly stemmed from economic policy, Act was careful to separate the two. Act used the notion of crises in the social sector to generate support for change through the implementation of its own policies, but when faced by opposition solutions, the crises were reduced to “serious social issues” which did not necessitate fundamental change. Prebble said, for example, that “While there are serious social issues we must confront we do not face a crisis that justifies some of the traumatic changes now being advanced by those who wish to do a U-turn” (September 26, 1996). The “U-turn” referred to the degree of government spending in the social sector. As far as Act’s

positioning of opposition parties was concerned, social policies and economic policy were inextricably intertwined. Act's discourse regarding its own policy separated the two. This was because Act did not want, in any way, to imply that there was an economic crisis nor that there was a problem with National's economic direction. In this way Act was able to position itself as "the only party with real solutions to the problems in health, education and social welfare. Act's solutions don't involve doing any risky u-turn on the economy" (press release, October 6, 1996).

Paradoxically, however, Act further stated that health policy was dependent upon the economy:

Only Act says - if you want to spend money, first you have to create the wealth. It's the private sector that creates the wealth. It's business that creates the wealth - encouraging those sectors is the only way we will afford a world class health system. Act's business policy is the first step towards a world class health policy (press release, September 30, 1996).

The above statement was ambiguous. By saying "we will afford", Act could have implied that the government, through public sector funding, would finance the health system. The statement, so understood, appeared to echo National's discourse regarding social spending but was it not supported by Act's proposed policies. National's discourse was more palatable to voters. Act, however, was proposing that the private sector would build the "world class health system" and

it would be “encouraged” through revenue provided by the sale of compulsory health insurance in a free market economy. That proposal was consistent with Act’s policies. Privatisation and moving to a market model was what Act was referring to when it stated, for example, in a print advertisement that “Act has fresh, workable answers to our social issues”.

While Act’s social policy was clearly an extension of its economic policy, Act’s campaigning overtly on an economic platform was limited. The reason for that limitation was the widely held distrust of Act’s economic policies, based on “Rogernomics”. For the most part, Act’s discussion of economic policy was linked to a discussion of the National Party’s economic policies. The following statement from a press release, for example, was typical of the way in which Act used National to outline its own economic policy:

Act’s bottom line is that we will not trade away New Zealand’s economic success for the trappings of ministerial office. We will see that economic success extended through progressive social policies. The Employment Contracts Act, the Reserve Bank Act and the Fiscal Responsibility Act will not be traded away by Act. This marks us out from National. While we can work with National, they’ll find us a watchdog, not a lapdog (September 25, 1996).

Act’s own positioning was inextricably linked to that of National, with Act serving to prevent National from reverting from a neoliberal direction. Act’s

relationship with National was, thus, one of exerting influence rather than governing in its own right. Act's position in this regard was realistic for a minority party. Act's position of champion of a neoliberal economic and social policy direction was reflected in its targeting of self-employed and high income earners who best stood to gain from a low tax regime with a key focus on the individual.

### **Act's discursive positioning of others**

#### **National**

Act did not attempt to reposition National away from the position National claimed for itself. This was because National did not occupy a space which Act wanted. The two parties could work together to maintain a neoliberal economic direction. National could serve as an instrument by which Act could exert influence in public policy in the social sector as well ensure National's business-oriented economic policy direction. Act recognised National's position at the centre right of the political field. However, the more closely a political party aligns itself with the centre of a political field, the more willing it has to be to negotiate its policies in order to maintain power. Indeed, the position of centre itself, determined at least by widely accepted and, at best, hegemonic principles is

constantly under challenge. Such is the nature of hegemony. It was because of that position that National was seen to be in danger of compromising its economic direction to accommodate demands from further to the left, a fact which Act implicitly acknowledged. If National did compromise its direction in this way, they would effect a shift to the left of the entire political field, within the universe of political discourse. A new centre would thus be formed which embraced a greater role of the state in the provision of social services and a rejection of the market in that role. Once such policies were neutralised in the centre of the political field, Act's economic and social policies would be further marginalised. There would be a clear possibility that they would be, eventually, removed beyond the limits of what was politically thinkable and, hence, beyond the political field. Act, in response to that danger, positioned itself as insurance against National's changing economic direction. This allowed Act both to differentiate itself from National and to target those National voters who wanted to ensure that National continued to support business interests.

Act exploited National's apparent willingness to compromise its policies and co-operate with political parties which were positioned further to the left of the political field. While Act did not attempt to reposition National away from the centre right position, they did construct National's tenure on that position as weak. On some occasions, the construction was effected through an attack on National as a collective. On other occasions, the attack on National was made

through a personal attack on Bolger, the Prime Minister, constructing him as weak. For example, Prebble stated in a press release that Act would give “National the spine it has failed to display in Government to protect New Zealanders from the extremes of the left in power” (September 29, 1996); and, in another released on the same day:

Mr Bolger is afraid to attack the left because he still thinks that if he doesn't, and if he agrees that the Reserve Bank Act is amendable, and the Employment Contracts Act is tradeable, he thinks the left will support him in government .... all that Mr Bolger is doing is looking weak, trying to curry favour with party leaders who are implacably opposed to his record, his policies, his direction.

In order to maintain power, Act implicitly alleged, Bolger (and National) would be prepared to allow the nature of the political field to change.

Act's assumed role was presented as security against National's compromising economic policies which belonged to all: “A strong Act presence in Parliament will stop a National government bargaining away our economic fundamentals” (ibid.) By referring to them as “our economic fundamentals” Act implied that National had no mandate to change economic direction but, instead, had a moral responsibility to maintain its current direction. Act went further and constructed neoliberal economic principles and their associated economic “recovery” as something which National did not create but, rather, inherited. The

implication was that it was the work of Roger Douglas and Richard Prebble as leaders of the Labour Government's economic restructuring from 1984, and, by association, Act, which generated National's current economic policies. In launching Act's manifesto, Prebble stated that

we believe only National has the economic policies to be in government.

However, I do not have any real confidence that National will guard the inheritance they were given in 1990. As stewards for the recovery they have now indicated they don't actually have any non-negotiable principles ..... This is a National government that could easily be drawn back into old time socialism (September 25, 1996).

National was thus placed in the subject position of caretaker ("stewards") of the economic reforms, not instigator.

National, situated close to the centre of the political field, was constructed as prepared to change direction for political expedience. The extent of that change was presented as potentially extreme - "back into old time socialism". Through the adjectives "old time", socialism was pejoratively constructed as outdated and, through the issuing of a warning, as socially dangerous. Act positioned itself as necessary to protect what Act's own leaders had created for the nation - and, in particular, for business: "National has lost the plot in the last two years. The dollar is too high. Interest rates are the highest real rates in the world. The cost of doing business has been increasing" (press release, September 30, 1996).

Socialism was also pejoratively associated with spending in the social sector. Such spending was constructed as “irresponsible” because it resulted in high interest rates and a high value for the New Zealand dollar - both of which acted against private enterprise. For example:

The reason the productive sector is struggling in this country is because the National party is proving spendthrift. Increasing expenditure \$2,000 million in just one year is irresponsible. National should recognise that they can't out-bid the Alliance and Labour party for spending promises (press release, September 13, 1996).

Socialism was held up by Act as synonymous with the policies of the parties of the left, as discussed below.

### **Act's discursive positioning of “the left”**

By positioning National as vulnerable to pressures from the left, Act was able to position itself in opposition to a left which potentially included National. For the most part, however, Act campaigned against a left which comprised Labour, the Alliance, and New Zealand First. The inclusion of New Zealand First in this group was made in spite of an uncertainty as to whom they would support in a coalition government. Act positioned New Zealand First as a party of the left

in order to make it unattractive to centre right voters, and, therefore, less of a danger for Act.

As National did, Act positioned these three parties of the left as a collective, taking a combination of their more extreme policies to present a scenario which would not, as explained in chapter four, be likely to occur in reality. The process of coalition formation would exclude extreme policies. Nevertheless, Act campaigned on the premise that

Today the parties on the left are selling future financial surpluses .... The surpluses depend on the present stable economic policies continuing - something the parties of the left intend to reverse. By Christmas, if we have a left-wing government, the surpluses will be deficits, and government will be back to borrow and spend. I do not believe the New Zealand public is going to vote to do a U-turn back into the pain again (press release, 29 September, 1996).

Where National's discourse allowed spending in the social sector while the economy was strong, Act believed that there was never justification for government spending in the social sector. It was this fundamental, ideological difference which implicitly differentiated Act from National, with Act being positioned further to the right of the political field. The "pain" referred to the economic hardships suffered by many during the introduction of neoliberal economic "reforms" while they waited for the promised benefits of the reforms to

reach them. Ironically, the parties of the left argued that those benefits had never reached “the New Zealand public”. Instead, they maintained that poverty had increased and there was no question of going “back into the pain” for which Act’s leaders had arguably been instrumental.

Act repositioned the opposition parties of the left as a “socialist left coalition government” (press release, September 30, 1996). Further, Act, as exemplified in the following excerpt of a speech by Prebble, explicitly equated socialism with failed communism:

Socialism around the world has collapsed. The interventionist state, the high-tax, centrally planned economies have failed from Albania to Argentina. For Jim Anderton, Winston and Helen to tell us that they can succeed where the masters of the Politburo have failed is nonsense (September 30, 1996).

Act had employed the same tactic in its 1995 pre-election campaign (Roper, 1996). It was designed to discursively reposition and marginalise all three opposition parties very much further to the left of the political field than they had positioned themselves or their policies would allow. Like communism and socialism, a left wing coalition was positioned by Act as a threat to the country. For example “New Zealand faces the real threat of a violent lurch to the left. The three opposition parties are preparing to combine their spending programs into one fiscal bonfire” (press release, September 14, 1996).

There was little to be gained by Act by campaigning specifically against individual parties of “the left”. Act’s target voters were not likely to be supporters of those parties, particularly the Alliance. By trying to reposition “the left” as extreme, however, Act could attempt a complex positioning of its own policies as moderate and itself as the voice of middle New Zealand.

The greatest danger that the parties of “the left” posed for Act lay in their potential to gain power, leaving no room for Act in shaping public policy.

Whereas National had stated that it would be prepared to enter into coalition negotiations with any other party, Act made it clear that it would do so only with National. Prebble stated unequivocally that

Act will not do a coalition deal with the Alliance, New Zealand First or the present Labour Party. A Labour party with Sir Roger Douglas, David Caygill or even dare I say it, a Richard Prebble - we could work with. But not with the present Labour party that has lost its way (25 September 1996).

### **Labour**

As was the case for National, Act could not easily reposition Labour in the domain of economic policy alone. Nevertheless, by contrasting “the present Labour party” with that to which Douglas and Prebble belonged, Act was able to imply that it was through a change in economic direction that Labour had “lost its

way”. In fact, Labour supported a free market economy; its change in direction was towards more government involvement in social policy and welfare. As it was for National, it was considerably easier for Act to reposition Labour away from the centre-left of the political field by its “inevitable” association with the Alliance and New Zealand First.

### **The Alliance**

Act made very little direct reference to the Alliance. As already stated, there was little point in Act’s doing so. The Alliance was most useful to Act as a potential coalition partner for Labour and New Zealand First because, as National did, Act could articulate the more extreme points of “the Alliance’s bizarre and almost medieval manifesto” (press release, September 8, 1996) with the other partners in a potential left wing coalition.

### **New Zealand First**

New Zealand First presented the greatest threat to Act because New Zealand First had left open the possibility of going into coalition with National. What is more, New Zealand First was seen to be gaining ground in the traditionally National supportive provincial areas. (personal communication,

Tisch, October 30, 1996). Act, itself, was campaigning for the farming vote in some of those areas. From both these perspectives, New Zealand First occupied some of the political territory which Act wanted for itself. In order to combat New Zealand First on those grounds, Act worked to reposition New Zealand First away from the subject position of potential coalition partner to National. For example, Prebble stated, ostensibly to Bolger, that

You [Bolger and National] can not rely on New Zealand First. Every other day they say they will vote against a National government - and again, I don't like to be the bearer of bad news - Mr Peters hates you. He will never vote for a National government in which you, Mr Birch or Mrs Shipley have a role (press release, September 30, 1996).

By disseminating the message which was, ostensibly, a direct address to Bolger, as a press release, Prebble made it clear that the intended audience was, in fact, National voters. His intention was to persuade voters that New Zealand First would not support National in coalition and to position himself as the realist, as opposed to a naive Bolger.

Act also directly attacked New Zealand First in its fight for the support of farming communities. The tactic Act used was one of repositioning New Zealand First as "interventionist" and, as such, both insincere and damaging to farming. They did this by articulating New Zealand First discourse with that of Sir Robert Muldoon, the National Prime Minister for many years of Keynesian economic

dominance. Muldoon eventually became very unpopular for his interventionist policies, particularly through his resistance during the struggle for the introduction of a free market economy prior to 1984 (Vowles & Roper, 1997). Act stated, for example that

Winston Peters and New Zealand First are resorting to the same old bribes that Sir Robert Muldoon used to suck up to rural New Zealand .... Peters' attack on Federated Farmers is cheap, populist and typical of his unprincipled and desperate attempts to catch votes in Rural New Zealand .... Peters tries to con farmers by saying that he is not an old fashioned interventionist .... He uses techniques that Muldoon would have been proud of (press release, September 3, 1996).

By so repositioning Peters and New Zealand First, Act was able to give Douglas, the instigator of the free market economy in New Zealand, the contrasting subject position of saviour of the farming industry: "The vast majority of rural people know that Roger Douglas saved the country from bankruptcy - something that Peters and the other interventionist National MPs of the early 1980s couldn't and wouldn't do" (ibid.).

## **DISCUSSION**

Generally speaking, political parties which are positioned in or near to the centre of the political field have to accentuate the differences between themselves so that voters do not perceive them to be so similar to each other that they do not provide genuine alternatives. Those parties, on the other hand, whose policies position them near the poles of the political field have to minimise difference. Their very placement near the poles is an indication that their policies are not popular. Act was very much a party whose natural position was polarised to the right of the political field.

Although Act's campaign discourse was calculated to (re)position opposition parties within the political field, Act, generally, did not position itself there. On occasions, Act did discursively position itself as "centre right" but this was only when it was positioning itself collectively with National. Act's economic and social policies were known to be unpopular or, at best, distrusted. However, rather than fundamentally compromise its neoliberal ideals, Act attempted to position itself outside the political field as much as possible in order to establish an identification with voters. This was evident in Act's attempts to construct itself as a grassroots party, beyond the machinations of parliament and power. At the same time, Act downplayed its controversial and unpopular neoliberal policies of restructuring health and education to a market-driven mode of delivery.

Act did modify its immediate goals, particularly in respect to tax reduction, but the modification was only in terms of slowing down the time frame within which they would attempt to reach their goals. Their original policy of a zero tax rate generated mistrust as it raised questions of how the state could afford to provide help for those who needed it. Tax cuts would clearly be of most benefit to high income earners. Had Act not modified them, or downplayed them, their policies could have marginalised the party beyond the current political field, beyond what was politically thinkable (Bourdieu, 1991) at that time.

It was apparent that Act did not seek to govern on its own. While this may have been because it had to set realistic political goals for itself, Act's discourse gave the impression that Act did not want power for the sake of power. It had a very specific, ideologically based agenda of ensuring business interests were put first in public policy. That was evidenced by Act's lack of compromise in its policies to accommodate voters which it might have targeted from further left. The only compromises Act made was in deciding to introduce its policies by degrees in order to make them more believable and more palatable. As stated above, there was no intention to fundamentally alter the policies; their total implementation was merely deferred.

Further evidence of Act's political agenda was explicit in its own discourse, in its positioning of itself not only as National's coalition partner but as an "insurance" for continued neoliberal economic policies which would extend into

the social policy arena. Both implicitly and explicitly, Act positioned itself as an agent by which the direct role of the state would be reduced to a minimum, to be replaced by, or complemented by, the private sector.

Act's discursive strategies for minimising its own marginalisation within the political field differed extensively from those of the Alliance, the party which occupied the position at the opposite pole from Act. The differences stemmed, to a large extent, from differences in social practices. However, Act's discursive strategies were characterised by a complexity and subtlety which was, largely, absent from the discourse of the Alliance. The following chapter analyses the Alliance's campaign discourse.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE ALLIANCE CAMPAIGN

This chapter draws on an interview with the Alliance campaign director and on Alliance output of controlled media - press releases, speeches, advertisements, party political broadcasts - to analyse the ways in which the Alliance discursively positioned itself and its opponents during the 1996 New Zealand general election campaign. In accordance with Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis (see chapter three), the history and membership of the Alliance were examined in order to contextualise the analysis of its discourse practices within the sociocultural and political practices which shaped them. Textual analysis, in turn shaped by the social and discourse practices, provided specific evidence of the Alliance's positioning.

The Alliance comprised five separate member parties. Of particular interest in the textual analysis are the ways in which the Alliance positioned itself as a single party without either acknowledging or taking strategic advantage of the multiple voices which made up the Alliance. Organisationally, the overriding finding of the analysis of the Alliance's discourse practices was that the Alliance failed to adapt quickly and fully to the changed circumstances brought about by the introduction of MMP.

Its policies were representative, at the time, of the outer Left limit of the political field in New Zealand defined by the poles of left and right. There were other political parties contending the 1996 general election whose policies

could have been said to represent views which would have been positioned further to the Left than those of the Alliance. However, as these other parties did not gain sufficient votes to cross the five percent vote threshold required for entry into Parliament, their discourses could be said to be outside the limits of what could, at the time, be considered publicly acceptable. As discussed in chapter two, the outer limits of a particular political field within the universe of political discourse are determined by the range of discourses or stances allowed within that political field (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 11). By observing these limits, the Alliance position within the political field defined by the 1996 New Zealand general election was, for most of its policy stances, at the far left, the polar opposite of Act (see chapter seven).

## **THE ALLIANCE'S SOCIAL PRACTICES**

This section analyses the social practices of the Alliance by looking at the socio-political history and practices of its individual member parties and at the ways in which they came together to form a coalition.

In 1992, the Alliance was formed, comprising NewLabour, Mana Motuhake, the Greens, the Democrats, and the Liberal Party, all minor parties which retained their internal autonomy but which campaigned together under collective policies and hierarchy (James & McRobie, 1993). Jim Anderton of NewLabour was elected leader of the Alliance, with two co-leaders: Sandra Lee of Mana Motuhake and Jeanette Fitzsimons of the Greens (*ibid.*). Both list

and constituency candidates campaigned under the Alliance banner. The combination of the five parties resulted in a complex structure for the Alliance. It also required each of the parties which, together, offered a wide variety of socio-political perspectives, to make compromises in the formation of a single campaign manifesto. This meant that no one of the parties was able to pursue its own agenda unimpeded. The complexity of the organisation was reflected in the formation of the Alliance list, with candidate ranking having to balance the requirements of the five individual parties as well as reflect Alliance preferences for balance of gender and ethnicity (Trotter, 1996). Even with such a negotiated list, however, the Alliance party hierarchy was dominated by NewLabour, with Anderton as leader, and NewLabour's Matt McCarten as National Director of the Alliance. That power differential gave NewLabour greater influence in the Alliance's discourse practices than its co-members, particularly in the construction of the Alliance texts.

Anderton's ideological perspective which he brought to the Alliance was evident in his own political history. He had been president of the New Zealand Labour Party from 1979 until 1984, and then an elected MP of the Labour Party until 1989. It was at that time that there was a growing ideological rift within the Labour Party, divided between priorities of economic and social policies (Miller & Catt, 1993). Anderton is reported as having been opposed to Labour's economic reforms (see chapter five), saying as early as 1985 that "the acceptable threshold of pain has been exceeded" (Kominik, 1996a). It was after Labour's decision to "renege on its 1987 election promise

not to sell Postbank and other 'efficient' state owned assets", its refusal to allow an abstention from voting for privatisation legislation and Anderton's subsequent expulsion from the Labour caucus (Miller & Catt, 1993 p. 18), that Anderton left the Labour Party, saying that Labour had "corrupted its own ideals, policies and constitution" (Kominik, 1996a). He formed the NewLabour Party shortly afterwards.

NewLabour aimed explicitly to build its own voter base from Labour's disenchanted traditional supporters, principally wage workers and beneficiaries (James & McRobie, 1993). For the 1990 general election, NewLabour worked within an informal co-operative agreement with the Mana Motuhake party, a Maori group which had also detached itself from Labour and which shared NewLabour's social ideals (ibid.) and, hence, political perspective. It was those ideals and expectations of state protection of the collective interests of society which, from the post-World War II period until the early 1980s, constituted the centre of the political field in New Zealand. That is, they were fundamental to the way the majority of people regarded the role of the state and, as such, were implicit in the policies of both of the major political parties. By virtue of their hegemonic acceptance as "common sense" (Hall, 1988b), those fundamental expectations were not in contention and so were neutralised in the centre of the political field at that time (Bourdieu, 1991). As Anderton, himself, said: "There is a deep tradition in New Zealand of having a sense of values and wanting a fair go for everybody. Up until the early 1980s that was an ethos that had wide community agreement" (Kominik,

1996a). This hegemony, although it was contested with increasing vigour during the 1970s, was not openly disrupted in New Zealand until the introduction of Labour's economic reforms (Kelsey, 1997). The disruption, when it came, was abrupt and created a block of citizens who considered that their interests were no longer represented in Parliament (*ibid.*).

In spite of Labour's loss of the 1990 election, NewLabour did not attract significant support. The fact that a very new Green Party won more votes than NewLabour was reflective of growing concern, internationally, about ecological problems. It also suggested that voters were becoming more prepared to lend their support to issues and moving away from class-based electoral support (James & McRobie, 1993). It further indicated a growth in public acceptance of a market-driven economy.

The Democrats and the Liberals, individually, had very little voter support to bring to the Alliance. Nor were their policies based upon the same issues of social concern as those of NewLabour and Mana Motuhake. The Democrats had previously been known as Social Credit, a party associated with a specific policy of monetary reform and which was essentially libertarian (*ibid.*). The Liberals were formed by two former National Party supporters, one of whom moved on to join Winston Peters when he formed New Zealand First. Because of their small numbers and low levels of support, neither of these two parties were strongly influential in the formation of Alliance policies. Some of them did, however, have valuable experience in the

running of election campaigns (*ibid.*) and were, therefore, able to contribute in the discursive practice of dissemination of Alliance campaign messages.

The Greens joined the Alliance, as did the other member parties, in order to increase their electoral prospects rather than out of any inherent compatibility of beliefs or of policy (*ibid.*). The policies of the Greens differed essentially from all of the other Alliance members in that they were broadly based in social fields, outside the political field polarised by left and right.

Green principles generally:

centred on harmony with and preservation of the physical environment, rejection of materialism and industrialism (and high energy use) and a preference for community-based economics and human-scale technology, as strong sense of personal and social responsibility underpinned by grassroots, participatory democracy and decentralised decision-making and a commitment to non-violence (*ibid.* p. 100).

The principal goals of the Greens and NewLabour were generally compatible in that they were based upon collective rather than individual responsibility and could be realised by similar policies. In this way the Greens' environmental ideals could be articulated with ideological principles within the political field. The Alliance could also have used the Greens' differences strategically to draw upon a voter base which was, at that time, not contested by other political parties and which, as stated above, had already demonstrated its willingness to support environmental issues. As Bourdieu (1991) noted,

political professionals will often need to appeal to groups whose interests lie outside a particular political field. James (1993) commented that

[NewLabour] has also tapped new strands of socialist thought that add green to socialists' traditional red .... First on its own, then in leadership position within the Alliance, NewLabour has promoted a form of the 'eco-socialism', which emphasises the public good aspect of environmental conservation (p. 99).

Alliance policies reflected a combined domination of influence from the socio-political beliefs of both NewLabour and the Greens over the other three member parties. Yet, as demonstrated by the analysis of Alliance texts, below, the range of discourses which the Alliance could have drawn upon to maximise its combined voter appeal was restricted by the ultimate power differential in favour of NewLabour. For example, NewLabour failed to articulate its predominant concern for "social justice" with the environmental discourse of the Greens to create a new discursive formation which could have appealed to a wider voter base. Similarly, there was very little evidence of Mana Motuhake's influence in the generation of a strongly pro-Maori discourse. The multiple interests of the members of the Alliance should have allowed the party to adopt multiple subject positions (see chapter two) which would have placed it in a position to be the representative of multiple groups in social space. By allowing one member group to dominate over the others, the Alliance effectively reduced the multiplicity of the party.

The discourse practices, analysed in the following section, by which the Alliance produced and disseminated their campaign texts also served, in several ways, to restrict the potential impact of the Alliance in the new electoral environment.

### **THE ALLIANCE'S DISCOURSE PRACTICES**

The discourse practices engaged in the construction of the Alliance campaign discourse further reflected the dominance of NewLabour in several ways. In particular, these practices were the strategies of a focus on Anderton as leader; upon a progressive tax system; and the narrow targeting of wage earners and welfare beneficiaries. Their discourse practices associated with the campaign strategies for the dissemination of campaign messages demonstrated the Alliance strategists' failure to adapt to the new electoral system of proportional representation. These practices included the policy of insisting upon pre-election coalition settlements (and an associated refusal to enter into post-election campaign negotiations), and campaigning almost exclusively for the electorate vote rather than the party vote. This section analyses each of these practices.

**List vs electorate campaign:**

As a minor party, the Alliance was reliant upon the party vote to gain representation in Parliament. In spite of this, the Alliance campaigned for success in the electorates, in the expectation that electoral success would be reflected in the party vote. Thus, the Alliance discourse practice of message distribution was focused on the electorates. Matt McCarten told a commentator that if the Alliance focused on winning electorate seats by working on the ground, he believed that

list seats will take care of themselves .... The thrust of the campaign has to be to win it on the doorstep. We will door-knock on every street in every electorate. We have to go out there and get into everyone's face on the streets (Kirk, 1996).

The practice, however, stemmed from the fact that the Alliance had a policy of having all constituency candidates also placed on the party list in order to increase the candidates' motivation (M. McCarten, personal communication, March 22, 1996). Striking a balance between the needs of constituency candidates and electorate candidates was a problem faced also by National and Labour (see chapters four and five). In contrast to Act, which campaigned primarily for the party vote (see chapter seven), the Alliance was unwilling to risk upsetting its constituency candidates:

unlike Act, we had candidates in every electorate, and they're all working hard and trying to do their job, and you've got to be sensitive

to them. If you said, “Just vote for us on the party list”, then they think, “Well, thanks a lot” (Hubbard, 1996).

This dominant concern for electorates meant that the Alliance ran what was essentially a first-past-the-post campaign. However, a statement made in the party’s closing PPB indicated that the Alliance had realised by the end of the campaign that they should have targeted their campaign more specifically towards the party vote. On that occasion Anderton stated: “If you want to see the Alliance in Parliament, you’ll have to give us your party vote”. After the election McCarten acknowledged that they may have been wrong in assuming that work in the electorates would naturally transfer over to the list vote and that they should have campaigned more for the party vote (Hubbard, 1996).

### **Anderton as Leader**

McCarten referred to the Alliance campaign as a two part campaign - a “wholesale” campaign and a “retail” campaign. The “retail” campaign was the door-knocking campaign run for the constituency vote described above. The “wholesale” campaign was a personalised “Presidential campaign” which promoted Anderton as Prime Minister and which was geared towards television coverage (M. McCarten, personal communication, March 22, 1996). A joint promotion of the leading representatives of the key members of the Alliance would also have facilitated the targeting of the multiple publics who might have separately supported any other one or more of the multiple facets

of the Alliance coalition. As stated in the social practices section of this chapter, the Greens had the potential to attract those middle-class, middle-income people who were environmentally concerned and who had a social conscience. The Mana Motuhake party was in a position to attract Maori voters. The Alliance's failure to consistently articulate its policies and election discourse with each of those multiple publics was also evidenced by the Alliance's campaign texts, analysed below.

The promotion of Anderton was very much consistent with campaign modernisation trends described in chapter two, which have featured internationally regardless of the electoral system. The adoption of the strategy of focusing on Anderton as the face of the Alliance came relatively late in the campaign. Originally, the Alliance used the official slogan of "Making New Zealand a Better Place to Live" on its billboards, a slogan which would reflect the collective interests of the diverse members of the Alliance. Later, however, the slogan was replaced by "Leadership You Can Trust" written above the smiling face of Anderton (Laugesen, 1996f). The focus on Anderton came into criticism from some Alliance candidates, one of whom publicly stated that he believed that the campaign should have promoted the two co-deputy leaders along with Anderton, introducing a gender balance to the campaign (Hubbard, 1996).

## **The Alliance and coalitions**

In a further failure to understand the complex needs of voters and to adapt to the new political environment of MMP, the Alliance, from the outset, refused to enter into coalition negotiations after the election. Their policy of reaching agreements prior to the election was based on a particular belief in the consumption practices of voters. They believed that voters needed to know what combination of parties they would be voting for in casting their party vote. However, as one commentator stated:

That stance reserves for it the moral high ground of opposition in the first MMP parliament. The opposition benches will also give the bevy of new Alliance MPs a chance to learn the ropes without the pitfalls of power. Mr Anderton and the Alliance are already capitalising on their purist stance, cultivating the idea that they, of all the parties, will not sell out on election promises at the first sniff of power. Instead they will bide their time till the next election and work toward winning enough support to bargain from a position of power (Kominik, 1996a).

While there may have been long-term organisational advantages for the Alliance in its coalition stance, the stance imposed restrictions upon their campaign discourse and ultimately damaged their chances of success in 1996. No other party was prepared to enter pre-election negotiations. They wanted to negotiate on the basis of a known power differential (the relative numbers of votes) which could only be determined by the election outcome. The other advantage of withholding coalition agreements until after the election was that

it was easier for a party to construct its campaign texts with a view to differentiating itself from others if it stood alone. The danger of pre-election coalitions was that one party's identity could too readily be merged with that of its coalition partner.

The purity of the Alliance stance, once committed to, also meant that the Alliance could not campaign, as Act did (see chapter seven), on a platform of post-election support for another party and insurance against that party's deviating from its election promises. Thus the Alliance was unable to campaign convincingly for the party vote, had they decided to move away from an emphasis on the constituency vote. The Alliance's solitary stance was further entrenched by the publication of an election manifesto written without any future coalition formation taken into account. The emphasis remained, intentionally, on what the Alliance would do in its own right (M. McCarten, personal communication, March 22, 1996).

As stated above, the Alliance targeted the Labour Party's traditional voter base, comprising welfare beneficiaries and waged workers. Again, this was a reflection of the dominance of NewLabour practices. Through the Greens, the Alliance had the potential to articulate ecological with economic concerns of social justice and responsibility and, thereby, appeal to those middle-class voters whose social conscience rejected the individualistic and environmentally damaging policies of those parties who embraced neoliberalism. In spite of this, McCarten, the Alliance's campaign director, constructed campaign texts explicitly to capture the votes of those from lower

income wage earners. By McCarten's own assertion, the Alliance was targeting some 60% of the population whose incomes were below a certain point:

we're not trying to win 100% of the vote, we're not trying to win the middle ground of New Zealand. We're actually trying to stake out a claim of where we are and it's really that traditional sort of Labour vote, that under \$40,000 vote and that's about 60% of the population anyway .... we don't speak to the over \$60,000 - they can look after themselves and they've got plenty of parties to choose from (ibid.).

## **THE ALLIANCE'S TEXTS**

As stated above, the Alliance's failure to acknowledge and take advantage of its own multiplicity (Moffitt, 1994) was evident in the party's campaign texts. The Alliance's public discourse aimed to differentiate the party from other key election contenders, but it did so by positioning the Alliance as the only party which took a purist, uncompromising stance in all policy areas. Such positioning was, of course, ironical. The Alliance failed to acknowledge that it was itself a coalition created by compromise. This fact could have been used to position the Alliance as experienced in coalition politics. Instead, the Alliance allowed NewLabour's discourse to dominate that of the combined Alliance Party as well as that of each other member party. An acknowledgement and strategic use of difference may have resulted in a more

successful, and more permanent, coalition of the five member parties. Textual examples of the Alliance's failure to articulate the multiple discourses of its members are given below.

In a statement made in the Alliance opening PPB, Anderton summed up the fundamental position taken by the Alliance during its campaign. He said: "We have inequality in this country and we have a lack of trust and those are the two issues that the New Zealand population will be looking at this election". The Alliance, throughout its campaign, used the notion of equality (theorised below and in chapter two) to position each of its own policy statements and (re)position other parties by linking their practices and their policies with inequality and untrustworthiness. The ways in which these values underwrote the Alliance discourse are demonstrated in the following sections, first in the Alliance's positioning of itself, and then in its positioning of Labour, National and New Zealand First. Significantly, the Alliance did not attempt to (re)position Act, the only other party to take an apparently purist and uncompromising stance. Act, by virtue of the ideological basis of its policies, was the polar opposite of the Alliance in a political field defined by the poles of Left and Right (Bourdieu, 1991). Their target markets did not logically overlap and so the Alliance did not perceive Act as a direct threat.

## **Alliance positioning of itself**

The Alliance separated itself from its opponents, particularly Labour, by refusing to separate economic from social discourse: “social policy is inextricably linked with economic policy” (press release, October 9, 1996). Their discourse of nationalism combined with social democracy, once mainstream and thereby centrist, was, in 1996, considered to be a left-wing discourse. However, it remained within the “universe of what is politically thinkable” (Bourdieu, 1991 / p. 172) by virtue of the fact that it retained a viable level of voter support. Essentially, the Alliance discursively constructed its difference from other political parties as one of purity. In this way, the Alliance’s refusal to compromise its policies was associated with a refusal to break promises or “sell out”. Indeed, the slogan “the Alliance will not sell out” was visually repeated throughout the Alliance’s closing PPB.

## **The Alliance and equality**

The Alliance consistently positioned itself as the party which worked upon principles of “fairness”, in contrast with other parties whose policies worked against the fair and equal distribution of wealth and social services. “Equality” was articulated in the Alliance discourse with “fairness”, an articulation which expressly worked to counter liberalism’s traditional articulation of equality and liberty “in ways which systematically privilege liberty over equality” (Hall, 1986b, p. 41). Liberalism’s articulation is a source of ambiguity because of a “contrast between formal and substantive equality”

(ibid. p. 42). While individuals may have equal rights of access, opportunities are not equal because of differentials in the distribution of resources. Anderton pointed out the same contrast in the case of a “user pays” economy which is based upon equal rights to health care but, in practice, unequal access:

user pays simply means that if you can pay you can use, and if you can't pay you can't use it. So then we differentiate. The health care of a poor person isn't going to be dealt with unless that person can pay (Alliance PPB opening).

The Alliance made the same argument of inequality of access to all areas of social policy, including education, health and housing. The following example articulates inequality of access with education and contrasts the situations of the poor with the wealthy who would benefit from tax cuts promised by National and Act:

User pays for education recycles poverty between generations. User pays shuts out the children of the poor. Because they have a poorer quality education, they have fewer opportunities for the rest of their lives .... Free education is more important than tax cuts for the most affluent New Zealanders (press release, September 23, 1996).

In each case, the differentiation between those who could and could not pay resulted in inequality and a lack of fairness. The same comments were repeated in press releases throughout the campaign, with the concept of fairness being used to underpin Alliance social policies and to justify their economic policy of graduated taxation and government provision of social services.

### **The Alliance and progressive taxation**

The Alliance constructed their policy of progressive taxation as “fair”, on the understanding that income would be redistributed through the provision of social services. In their 1996 election manifesto, the Alliance claimed that “70% of New Zealanders will pay less income tax with Alliance, and everybody will get free health and education”. Implicitly, then, there was further potential for Alliance policies to appeal to a wider range of voters than those of the low socio-economic groups identified by McCarten (see Alliance discourse practices). However, the association of the provision of social services specifically with the reduction of taxation for those on low incomes resulted in a domination of focus on the taxation policy over social services. Under such circumstances, it would be difficult for those outside the low income range to accept the personal benefits of a tax increase. The Alliance clearly failed to recognise that voters’ interests and concerns are complex and multiple and that each person will shift between concerns which can often be contradictory (Moffitt, 1994), as discussed in chapter two. A voter may, while in the subject positions of patient and parent want free health care and education, but in the subject position of taxpayer, that person may be unwilling to pay tax for it. An awareness of these contradictions was not evident in the Alliance texts. For example, in a press release designed to

convey the message of universal benefits of Alliance taxation policy, attention was drawn to the promise of tax reductions for “those on low incomes”:

The Alliance package is based on two complementary elements: a fairer tax system and greatly improved social services such as health care, education, income support and retirement income. We’ll cut taxes for those on low incomes and provide much improved social services for everyone, including free health care, free education and universal superannuation (press release, September 11, 1996).

In this way the Alliance campaign further risked the alienation of potential voters and restricted the appeal of their messages to the narrow target group identified by McCarten. For “the middle ground of New Zealand”, taxation could too easily be perceived as a threat rather than a benefit.

The difficulty of acceptance of an increase in taxation for everyone else was exacerbated by the apparent, and probably unintentional, equation of “ordinary New Zealanders” with “those who are most able to pay”:

Commentators who refer only to tax scales and leave out the cash benefits of social services are negligent and misleading. It is far cheaper for ordinary New Zealanders if essential social services such as their health care are funded out of progressive taxation than if they are funded by user pays .... It is a question of whether those who are most able to pay will shoulder a fairer share of the burden so that every child can grow up with a chance (ibid.).

Most New Zealanders in the middle income range, especially those who perceived themselves to be “ordinary New Zealanders” would not readily identify themselves with such a subject position. The association would have been rendered even less successful by the discourse of other parties which constructed “ordinary people” in a very different way from the Alliance. For example, Act constructed ordinary people as hard working people for whom taxes were an unfair penalty (see chapter seven). Had the Alliance’s graduated taxation effected a tax increase only at a much higher rate of income, it may have appeared less threatening, and would have been likely to appeal to a wider range of voters. A less restrictive tax rate would also have allowed the Alliance to target more successfully those on higher incomes who may have voted for environmental issues rather than class determined ones.

### **The Alliance and change**

It was the Alliance’s stance on the inseparability of the economy and social services which placed it to the left of the political field in New Zealand in 1996. Those parties which were positioned (by self-reference and/or by virtue of their ideological stance) closer to the centre of the political field maintained a distinction between the economic and the social. National, at the centre right (see chapter four), maintained state ownership of social services but allowed them to be dominated by market forces. As described in chapter five, Labour, at centre left, removed the role of the market from the provision

of the social services of health and education but maintained a policy of non-interference in other areas of the economy.

Because the Alliance Party's principles of government intervention and graduated taxation deviated substantially from those principles which were mutually accepted by the major political parties, the party had to go further than position itself as the party of "change" and establish a need for change, particularly in economic policy. Ideologies become hegemonic by virtue of their being accepted as "common sense" (Hall, 1988a). The dissolution of ideological common sense and consequent receptiveness to change is typically initiated by a sense of, or the reality of, crisis (for example Laclau, 1986). Therefore, the discursive construction of a "crisis" is one of the most effective ways of bringing about change. This was the strategy which the Alliance adopted to position itself as a saviour, the agent of necessary change in the face of crisis.

From within the Alliance potentially came the rationale and motivation to campaign on a platform of a need for change because of a crisis in a range of policy areas. Two of these were Maoridom (picked up by Act - see chapter seven) and the environment. The NewLabour-dominated Alliance, however, did not address these issues in terms of crisis. In arguing for the need for a change in economic policy direction, the Alliance did introduce an environmental discourse, articulating, in a limited way, the economy with the environment. For example, the Alliance manifesto stated that "environmental quality and social justice go together. The Earth can provide for everyone's

need but not everyone's greed". Such an articulation would have been made in concession to the demands of the Greens within the Alliance. Nevertheless, the resultant discourse rarely went deeper than the notion of sustainability of economic resources, the need to regenerate income (through taxation) for social spending. For example, an Alliance press release stated that "placing the economy on a sustainable environment footing and making it more socially just requires a fundamental change in economic direction" (September 25, 1996). When the Alliance's articulation of the environment and the economy did, on occasions, admit the ecological sense of "environment", it was not elaborated upon and the economy was left to dominate the articulation. For example: "Alliance economic policy is based on the idea that our country's wealth should be shared fairly. It's based on the idea that the economy should serve people and the environment, not the other way around" (press release, October 1, 1996).

Similarly, the Alliance manifesto promised to "develop a constitution based on the Treaty [of Waitangi]" and to provide "additional financial support for Maori education, health services, economic development and Rohe Pooti (Maori Regional Councils). Beyond the manifesto which was written cooperatively early in the election campaign, however, any appeal to Maoridom was completely overdetermined by a NewLabour discourse based within the political field of Left and Right.

The crisis which the Alliance worked to have recognised as a reality in New Zealand was that of poverty. In adopting its stance on poverty, the

Alliance, at the same time, constructed National as its polar opposite in the political field. The Alliance positioned itself as the saviour of the poor, while National was the creator of poverty. The Alliance thus demonised (Burke, 1966) National. For example:

Poverty exists in New Zealand. It is the direct result of government policies and community leaders have a responsibility to condemn it. Only today the Salvation Army revealed it has been helping a South Island family that has been literally starving because it had been subjected to an eight-week stand-down for a benefit. A government that is prepared to stand by while that happens in New Zealand is unfit to govern. (press release, September 20, 1996).

By placing National at the opposite pole of the political spectrum, however, the Alliance effectively discounted Act as a contestant. For example: “The Alliance and National represent the true real contrasts in this election. National is the party that has created a society where one in three children live below the poverty line” (press release, October 2, 1996). The Alliance’s discursive (re)positioning of National is more fully explored in the following section.

## **Alliance positioning of others**

### **National**

As described above, in order to justify fundamental changes in economic policy, the Alliance asserted that a crisis of poverty existed in New Zealand. Underpinning this assertion was the Alliance discourse against the free market economy introduced by Labour and maintained by the National government since 1990. While National campaigned on a platform of economic success, the Alliance maintained that the economy was foundering. This assertion worked to position National as dishonest and untrustworthy, out of touch with New Zealanders, and uncaring. This section explores the textual evidence of the Alliance attempts to effect such a positioning of National.

In direct contradiction to National's own campaign discourse, the Alliance maintained that "National is running into the election with a precariously placed economy featuring permanent unemployment, chronic balance of payments of deficits and permanently high exchange and interest rates" (press release, September 12, 1996). The Alliance assertions aimed primarily to discredit the free market economy and, by association, National as an advocate of that system. They went further, however, and positioned the National government as dishonest and untrustworthy by maintaining that National had deliberately lied about the state of the economy. For example, an Alliance press release stated that

The Government's misinformation campaign over the level of New Zealand's overseas debt has reached epidemic proportions .... The

Government has been so unscrupulous in its misrepresentation of the foreign debt that there is a moral obligation on news media to publish a full statement of New Zealand's debt position so that the public knows the facts (September 27, 1996).

While maintaining that levels of foreign debt were, in fact, deteriorating, the Alliance linked the government's economic policies to a destabilisation of national sovereignty, providing a rationale for the Alliance platform of economic nationalism. In the following press release statement, the Alliance made the link quite explicitly:

While the government has been trying to convince the public that the country is paying off debt it has actually been sinking us ever deeper into the mire. The debt figures show this Government cannot be trusted when it talks about debt. Overseas debt is getting worse, not better .... The sovereignty of New Zealand is at risk from increasing debt levels of this kind (September 15, 1996).

The risk imposed on New Zealand as a nation state was not constructed as an unfortunate by product of National's economic policies. Rather, the Alliance positioned the National Government as a ruthless and fanatical conspirator which had deliberately aimed to sell New Zealand to international interests, at the expense of New Zealanders. For example:

The [New Zealand] IAP [Individual Action Plan - submitted to APEC 1996] reveals the position the National government is secretly

committing New Zealand to international negotiations. It means a privatisation programme that will run well into the next century and will cover remaining SOEs [State Owned Enterprises] and local authority assets .... National has declared war on public ownership and notified overseas governments but not the people of New Zealand .... There is no social or economic justification for National's fanatical privatisation of the infrastructure of the New Zealand economy (press release, September 24, 1996).

The negative effects on the economy and the country of National's privatisation programme were constructed as exacerbated by banks' high interest rates, imposed as a deliberate government policy: "In addition to punishing home owners, National's high interest rate policy also causes foreign capital to flood into the country, forcing up the currency which in turn punishes our exporters and producers of import substitutes" (press release 9 October 1996). The Alliance construction of the effects of foreign capital on the national economy, particularly in regard to exporters, was in direct contradiction to National's neoliberal construction (see chapter four). National campaigned for a global economy, with a free flow of capital which would, it claimed, benefit exporters.

Frequently, the Alliance's attacks on National were personalised through an attack on the Prime Minister, Jim Bolger. The use of personalities in this way was a well-established feature of modern political campaigns (for

example Swanson & Mancini, 1996), as discussed in chapter two. The individual provided a focus and a face for party policies. In addition, however, by reducing economic policies which had been in force for twelve years to the level of one individual, the Alliance, arguably, aimed to reduce the apparent strength, permanence and, hence, hegemonic acceptance of those policies. For example, an Alliance press release stated that “Mr Bolger’s comments [about interest rates] are about his own insecurity and desperation to cling to power. They are not about reality” (September 30, 1996).

In addition to being positioned as both committed to neoliberal economic policies and self-serving, Bolger was positioned as “out of touch” with the real issues facing New Zealand: “The Prime Minister’s abusive response to fair, environmentally sustainable policies shows how far out of touch he has become with mainstream New Zealand” (press release, October 10, 1996). At times, however, “out of touch” was given the meaning of “self-serving” through the implication that a lack of knowledge, or acknowledgement, was simply an expediency. Such was the case with the issue of poverty in New Zealand. The Alliance frequently pointed out a lack of recognition of the issue by National. For example, again focusing on Bolger, an Alliance press release stated that “Mr Bolger’s speech today didn’t mention a single policy to eliminate poverty, while he trumpeted the policies that have created it” (October 2, 1996). The Alliance maintained that National’s failure to acknowledge poverty was simply a tactic to ignore the issue. In addition, National’s use of voluntary social assistance, such as

foodbanks, was constructed as a dishonest means of masking the reality of poverty:

The Alliance has strongly attacked the inadequacy of benefits and the basic wage following media reports of a planned protest closure of several foodbanks around the country next week .... Foodbanks provide the Government a very cheap means for sweeping poverty under the carpet. It is time the Government publicly acknowledged the extent of poverty in this country and took steps to remedy it (press release, September 22, 1996).

The key theme of poverty in the Alliance campaign discourse against National was linked to each of the key election issues: health, education, superannuation and the economy. National was positioned as having callous disregard for the well-being of “ordinary” New Zealanders in its fanatical drive for deregulation and privatisation. In this way, the Alliance attempted to reposition National to the right (away from centre-right) of the political field. For example, under National’s health policy:

people are being subjected to inhuman suffering because of National’s underfunding of the public health system .... National is deliberately underfunding the health system in an effort to force people to take out private health insurance. The consequence for ordinary people is devastating (press release, September 18, 1996).

National was thus positioned in strongly negative terms, with no room for compromise built into its policies. Its policies of health, education, and the economy were linked to the imposition of the free market on all sectors of New Zealand society, with no regard to the affect on ordinary citizens.

As stated, the Alliance did not attempt to discursively position Act on its own. Act was positioned infrequently only, in the context of “the awful prospect of a Government taking power formed by National, Act and the Christian Coalition” (press release, September 17, 1996). Act, which naturally appealed to a different target market, did not apparently pose a direct threat to the Alliance. Nevertheless, the Alliance’s failure to position National as in collusion with the founders and supporters of Act was surprising. An articulation of National’s policies with those of Act would have facilitated the Alliance’s repositioning of National further to the right of the political field.

The Alliance campaign discourse worked to demonise National and to position both Labour and New Zealand First as linked to National. This positioning is explored in the following two sections, beginning with New Zealand First.

### **New Zealand First**

Repositioning of New Zealand First was of particular importance for the Alliance as, in several ways, the Alliance’s discursive positioning of itself resembled that of New Zealand First. Both parties embraced a doctrine of

economic nationalism (see chapter six) by expressing an unwillingness to open New Zealand assets to overseas buyers. Both parties could potentially serve as a coalition partner to Labour. As one commentator stated: “The problem for the Alliance and NZ First is that of distinguishing themselves from each other in an overcrowded political market-place, particularly when the range of available policy prescriptions is limited” (Laugesen, 1996f).

In repositioning New Zealand First, the Alliance consistently portrayed its candidates as untrustworthy. Their inherent untrustworthiness was, in turn, frequently linked to the prediction that New Zealand First would, after the election, go against its word and enter into a coalition agreement with National. In this way, the Alliance both countered New Zealand First’s own strongly anti-National campaign discourse (see chapter six) and repositioned it away from “centre” to right of centre and very much closer to National. The Alliance strategies thus aimed to remove New Zealand First as a viable coalition partner to Labour.

In an intertextual reference to both their own campaign slogan of “the Alliance will not sell out”, discussed above, and New Zealand First’s self positioning as the “only party that has not sold out” (see chapter six), the Alliance worked to reposition New Zealand First as dishonest and untrustworthy. The Alliance attempted to undermine New Zealand First’s self positioning by directly associating the characteristic of untrustworthiness with New Zealand First’s record of “selling out” on a variety of policy issues. The association also worked intertextually as a direct contradiction to New Zealand

First's self positioning as the only trustworthy party by virtue of its not having a record of broken promises. The key objective of the Alliance repositioning of New Zealand First was to construct New Zealand First as a coalition partner for National. This was effected by articulating New Zealand First policies (and changes in policy) with those of National and of a programme of neoliberalism. For example:

Now that New Zealand First has sold out tertiary students, we can also expect them to sell out everyone else. The Alliance has always said NZ First cannot be trusted .... If New Zealand First is prepared to tolerate [student debt] then it is prepared to sacrifice a generation to a sick economic experiment. No wonder New Zealand First is prepared to enter a coalition with National (press release, September 11, 1996).

The reference to an "economic experiment" is one which would be recognised by many as a term often used disparagingly to describe the neoliberal reforms introduced to New Zealand since 1984 (Kelsey, 1997).

New Zealand First's position on economic nationalism was also undermined by the Alliance and used to reposition New Zealand First close to National. Economic nationalism was a position that was shared by the Alliance and so repositioning was necessary. The Alliance used New Zealand First's shift in policy regarding foreign ownership (discussed in chapter six) to articulate their interests with those of National and thus reposition New Zealand First as dishonest and without any genuine intention of protecting New Zealand national interests:

No wonder New Zealand First is positioning itself for coalition with National. Both parties support Telecom's greedy profits. Nor is it a surprise that New Zealand First softened its opposition to foreign control this year, prompting Telecom to state that it was "relaxed" about NZ First (press release, September 24, 1996).

The example of Telecom served Alliance purposes well as it epitomised neoliberal policies. Telecom was a well known and unpopular company which had once been a state-owned enterprise, had been privatised and sold, in large part, to overseas investors. The company's unpopularity stemmed in part from the fact that it had made large numbers of staff redundant through a "restructuring" process, while generating large profits. It was also negatively associated with a big business-led campaign against the introduction of MMP (Roper & Leitch, 1995).

The Alliance further constructed New Zealand First as dishonest by attempting to discredit its promises of increased social spending after the election. Labour, too, positioned itself with similar promises. Such spending was dependent upon the economic surplus claimed by National. By casting doubt upon the reality or sustainability of economic surplus, the Alliance aimed to undermine National's election promises as well as those of New Zealand First and Labour. Without economic surplus there could be no increase in spending in the social sector:

Their problem is they are looking for an easy way out - promising to spend without raising revenue to pay for their promises. The lower

surpluses forecast by the Reserve Bank will not sustain anything like the promises of Labour and New Zealand First (press release, September 13, 1996).

By constructing New Zealand First and Labour's spending promises as unsustainable, the Alliance, in contrast, positioned its own tax-funded spending as the only viable policy. The Alliance's repositioning of Labour is further analysed in the following section.

### **Labour**

This section looks at the ways in which the Alliance attempted to retain Labour in the position of the unpopular neoliberal reformer of 1984-7 in order to target those low income and beneficiary voters who no longer considered themselves represented by Labour.

If the Alliance was to continue to appeal to these voters, it was necessary to prevent Labour from regaining its pre-1984 position as their representative. It drew upon Labour's performance in government between 1984 and 1990 in order to portray Labour as belonging to the right of the political field and to prevent it from repositioning itself from the stance it took then. For example:

Labour is trying to blame the Area Health Boards, which were badly underfunded by Labour, for making decisions that Labour forced on them .... Labour is trying to have it both ways. It says it will take

responsibility for health but tries to dodge responsibility. It says National should take responsibility but won't take responsibility itself ...The public knows full well where the responsibility lies. No amount of squirming from Labour will change that fact (press release, September 20, 1996).

In conjunction with articulating the Labour of the present with its policies of the past, the Alliance worked to prevent Labour from reclaiming a position on the Left of the political field in 1996. It amplified Labour's concessions to the existing economic direction by alleging Labour's total separation of social and economic policy:

Labour is making the same mistake as it made between 1984 and 1990 in attempting to separate economic policy from social policy .... Labour could not again get away with pretending that economic policy could be totally separated from social policy in the way Helen Clark was attempting .... Labour must also recognise that economic decisions have social consequences (press release, October 9, 1996).

The Alliance's repositioning of Labour in this way enabled the Alliance to distinguish itself from Labour and to position itself as "the only party committed to genuinely changing economic policy" (press release, October 7, 1996).

The Alliance further attempted to reposition Labour to the right of the political field by linking Labour's policies with those of Act. This

repositioning was extreme and, once again, served to reinforce the connection of the current Labour Party with the 1984 - 1987 Labour Government and the economic policies of Roger Douglas (the founder of Act), a link which the 1996 Labour Party worked to sever. For example:

Labour's user charges policies selectively victimise the children of the poor .... If Labour wants to focus on taxes alone and forget about user charges, it should join Act which wants to abolish tax altogether and replace it with across the board user charges (press release, September 19, 1996).

By attempting to reposition the 1996 Labour Party well to the right of the political field, the Alliance left little room for working in coalition with Labour after the election. This particular example was perhaps necessitated by the party's own refusal to enter into post-election coalition agreements.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Alliance occupied the polar position of left in the 1996 political field in New Zealand, the mirror opposite of Act at right (see chapter seven). Both were minor parties which relied primarily upon the party vote for entry into Parliament. That the positions of Act and the Alliance mirrored each other was evident in several dimensions of the analysis of their campaign discourse.

In particular, the policy positions taken by the Alliance reflected a fundamental belief in collective social responsibility brought about through government intervention. Act, on the other hand, promoted their core belief in individual responsibility and liberty (see chapter seven). The two parties, therefore, epitomised the essential differences between Left and Right within the universe of political discourse. The extent to which each party could adopt the core principles of Left or Right was determined by the scope of the political field in New Zealand in 1996, by what was deemed “politically thinkable” at that time and place. Each party had to make compromises in order to remain politically viable. This was particularly so for Act (see chapter seven).

The Alliance campaign discourse, dominated by that of NewLabour, was essentially reflective of the principles of Keynesian social democracy, an ideologically based system which still had the potential to resonate with a large number of voters who had suffered financially and socially under the shift toward neoliberalism. While Keynesian social democracy is, itself, an articulation forged between socialism and democracy (see chapter two), the Alliance attempted to use a purist discourse to differentiate itself from its election opponents. “Purity”, however, was an Alliance construct based upon its professed unwillingness to compromise its ideals and to separate social issues from the economy. Although its stance remained viable within the political field in 1996, it was marginalised. In order to maximise its potential to

have an influence in government, the Alliance (or, rather, NewLabour) needed to be prepared to make compromises.

The Alliance's purist position, dominated by NewLabour, failed to take advantage of the party's own multiplicity which could have been used to broaden the appeal of the Alliance to a much wider set of target groups. Those groups which the Alliance had the potential to reach included middle class environmentalists who rejected the individualistic policies of National and Act, and Maoris. Both the environmentalists and Maori had interests which extended beyond the arguments of the political field determined by Left and Right and which could have been articulated with the Alliance campaign discourse. The result of such articulations could have been the construction of a new discourse which integrated the multiple interests of its members and positioned the Alliance as a representative of those interests. It was significant that the Greens left the Alliance in order to campaign independently (and successfully) for the 1999 general election.

The Alliance campaign discourse practices further limited the party's collective chances of success. The party failed to adapt sufficiently to the new electoral environment by campaigning for electorate rather than party votes and by removing themselves as coalition partners by refusing to enter post-election negotiations. Labour was the natural coalition partner for the Alliance, yet the Alliance consistently campaigned aggressively and negatively against Labour. That strategy, combined with its refusal to negotiate coalition arrangements after the election, appeared to leave virtually no room for the

two parties to work together in government. Such a position could not have instilled voters with confidence that they would ultimately be well represented by the Alliance in Parliament. A reconstructed discourse which articulated the views and interests of the Alliance member parties, as suggested above, could have allowed overlap with Labour's policies yet retained a differentiation for the Alliance, leaving the two parties open to co-operation both prior to and after the election.

Potential voters were also alienated by the domination of taxation policies over issues of social justice within the Alliance campaign discourse. That domination was, again, reflective of the power differential within the party hierarchy which favoured NewLabour. By the time of the general election of 1999, the Alliance had modified its taxation policy by raising the threshold over which taxation would rise. The modified policy was not only more palatable to voters but was aligned to Labour policy.

# CHAPTER NINE

## CONCLUSIONS

In reflection of the diverse sets of roots of the field of political communication, this thesis has drawn together multi-disciplinary strands in investigating the discourses of the election contenders in the political field in New Zealand, 1996. The disciplines thus combined include political science, cultural studies, socio-linguistics, organisational communication and public relations. Not only did such a combination of perspectives enrich the research itself, but it resulted in original contributions to each of the contributing disciplines, as expanded upon below.

One of the key original contributions this work makes to political theory is the combination of Bourdieu's (1991) work on political fields and Bobbio's (1996) thesis on the enduring differences between Left and Right. Together, the two works give insight and depth of meaning to Bourdieu's phrase "the universe of political discourse". The concept of a political field facilitates the analysis of the range of stances which fall within the scope of what is considered to be "politically thinkable" at any given place and time. The amalgamation of that concept with Bobbio's Left/Right thesis provides Bourdieu's work with a dynamism which historically contextualises changing political fields. That dynamism provides a revised theoretical framework by which shifts in the nature of the political centre that occur over time can be understood. What is analysed as the centre of a particular political field may,

within the universe of political discourse, be analysed as positioned to the left or right. This explains, for example, how the core principles of Keynesian social democracy could be neutralised in the centre of the political field in New Zealand in the 1950s and 1960s but, by 1996, were positioned as left.

The combination of the theories of political fields and Left/Right differences within the universe of political discourse provides a framework for comparative studies of political fields over time. Similarly, it provides a framework for the comparison of political fields which exist at the same time, but in different geographical, social and political contexts. Such comparisons are of critical importance, especially in the context of political, economic, social and cultural globalisation.

A further enhancement of the amalgamation of the theories of political fields and the universe of political discourse was made in this thesis by the application of critical discourse analysis as a means of both explaining and mapping change and the processes of change in political discourse.

As stated, the use of critical discourse analysis as a methodological framework for this thesis facilitated the examination of political campaign discourse (in the sense of written and spoken language) within its wider social, institutional and political context. Thus language, which the traditionally functional discipline of political science most often regards as transparent, was analysed to reveal the “connections and causes which are hidden” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 9). The analysis of the social practices and discourse practices of political parties combined with a linguistically oriented analysis of their

campaign texts, as prescribed in Fairclough's (1989; 1992; 1993; 1995a) three dimensional model of critical discourse analysis revealed the dominant ideologies which underpinned each party's campaign discourse. It also revealed the discourse practices engaged in each party's struggle for the power of representation, both in the physical sense of representation of the non-professionals of civil society in the political field, and in the symbolic sense of ideological representation of a particular reality constructed through language. The power struggle engaged in through language is the power to determine what constitutes "common sense" and, thus, which discourse exercises hegemonic power.

Critical discourse analysis also, importantly, facilitated the identification of difference - between parties and within the discourse of individual parties. Difference between parties was indicative of the scope of the political field and of the relationships between the individual parties at a given time and the changes in those relationships. Changes in the discourse of any one party can indicate a change in the political field, brought about through changes in and struggles for what is politically thinkable. These changes are typically a manifestation of social change in civil society - a change in the social and political practices which gain dominance as "common sense", as political parties in the political field seek endorsement of their policies from social fields. The emergence of new debates and new and creative language constructions are indicative of hegemonic breakdown and associated power struggles and social change. They are also indicative of more functional changes, such as a change in the political system or a change

in the discursive strategies associated with attempts to gain or maintain representative power.

The discourse changes identified in the political field of New Zealand, 1996, clearly demonstrated a struggle over the role of the market in social policy. This was the key issue of contention between the two major parties, National and Labour, at the centre-right and centre-left of the political field, respectively. At the same time, it demonstrated an acceptance of the role of the market in economic policy, with its removal as an issue in the neutral centre of the political field. These discourse changes were evidenced by the parties' campaign texts which demonstrated new mergings and separations of left/right distinctions. National's texts, for example, provided evidence of a strong shift away from Keynesian social democratic principles but with some recourse to government provision of social services. Their discourse on health, for example, was creatively constructed through articulations of the economy and social spending. The rearticulations placed responsibility for the economy, and, as by association, for social spending, on the individual. Labour, on the other hand, distanced itself from its own neoliberal perspective of 1984 -1990, to separate economic from social discourse. The clear distinctions in ideological perspective between the two major parties were, to an extent, made transparent by the adoption of a proportional system of representation, as explored further below, but they were also indicative of discontent and struggle within civil society.

The analysis of the discourse of each protagonist resulted in a view of the dynamic nature of the political power struggles in New Zealand, 1996.

Thus, not only were the social and discourse practices of each party

separately identified, but they were seen in their relationships with other parties. The analysis revealed the ways in which the discourses were shaped in reaction to each of the protagonists as well as in reaction to the demands from the social fields of civil society. The application of Bourdieu's concept of the political field, combined with a critical analysis of campaign discourses, facilitated the analysis of political party interactions, and the range of interactions, in a way which has not before been effected. The relevance and importance of the findings of the analysis, both as a contribution to knowledge and as a framework for future research is discussed in the following section.

### **The political field**

The political field of New Zealand, 1996, was of historic significance because it was the first in the country in which an election campaign was contested under an electoral system of proportional representation. The practical implications of the new system for the political field and political campaigning lay in the fact that the scope for viable competition in the field was greatly expanded. The application of Bourdieu's theory of political fields facilitated the analysis of the nature of the political field with its range of available stances, and the adoption of particular stances by each of the contending political parties. Such an analysis has not been carried out before in New Zealand. Nor, as far as a search of the relevant literature has been able to

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determine, has any comparable analysis of a political field been made internationally.

What the literature does reveal, however, is that in western democracies, particularly those which operate under a first-past-the-post electoral system, there is a tendency towards the formation of “catch-all” political parties which campaign on differences of personality rather than on issues of substance with a strong basis of ideological difference. For example, Michie (1998) describes Clinton and Blair as steering the middle ground without declaring themselves on issues. The application of Bourdieu’s theory of political fields places these parties in the neutral centre of their political field. However, the formation of “catch-all” parties is dependent upon both an electoral system which minimises the range of competitive discourses and a period of relative stability in social space, or civil society.

As described in chapter two, “catch-all” parties can form in the centre of a political field because of the relative weakness of the poles of that field. Weak poles are indicative of the strength of dominant ideologies of the field by virtue of their being widely accepted as common sense. In the centre of such a field, then, there is consensus - or a lack of obvious conflict or dissent. However, while parties may agree, in principle, upon particular policies, ideological differences can remain. For example, National and Labour agreed, in principle, upon the need for a market economy, but Labour sought to direct the market through legislation while National’s approach was essentially *laissez faire*. The difficulty for citizens can be that the underlying differences

between parties is not always apparent and so the potential for polarisation and a range of opinions is minimised. Mouffe (1993) maintains that a pluralism of opinion is essential for a radical democracy as without it there is no challenge to the status quo.

The findings of this thesis demonstrate that the political field of New Zealand, 1996, was characterised by a separation of political parties on grounds of issues and policy. This was, no doubt, indicative of the social unrest and dissent which led to the wide-spread demand for a change in electoral system. It was also, however, a result of the switch to a system of proportional representation (MMP) whereby competition in the political field was greatly increased. In Mouffe's terms then, the introduction of MMP increased the scope for exercising radical democracy in New Zealand. Counter to the findings of research internationally which demonstrate a reduced influence of political parties, MMP also reinforced the strength of the political party structure in New Zealand as maximisation of the party vote was the primary focus of the campaigns. This left little room for individual campaigning.

Under a system of proportional representation, a minor political party can hope to win parliamentary seats and to influence government policy decisions. Influence alone can be a valid goal for a political party without expectation of ever forming a government in its own right or even gaining a large number of seats. In terms of the political field, this thesis has demonstrated that such parties can take a position for themselves at the

margins of the field which does not necessarily comprise a new articulation of political ideologies or theories designed to maximise voter support. These parties can adopt a relatively more theoretically pure position in that they are not required to make new discursive formations. Such was the case for the Alliance. This thesis also demonstrated, however, that a political party which is positioned at the poles of a political field may have to rearticulate its policy positions in order to prevent further marginalisation which may, if the field shifts further to the left or right within the universe of political discourse, remove the party beyond the scope of what is politically thinkable. With the shift of the political field in New Zealand to the left and the subsequent formation of a coalition Government made up of Labour and the Alliance as a result of the 1999 general election, Act may find itself marginalised outside future political fields. Again, the potential for such marginalisation would be dependent upon the degree of difference of opinion within social fields. In some countries there exist political fields which are characterised by a weak centre and strong left and right poles.

This thesis applied critical discourse analysis to one particular political field. Of wider, international and national interest, however, would be an extension of the research to an international and historically comparative project which analysed not only discursive differences in constructing new forms of “common sense”, particularly through the discourse practice of interdiscursivity, but contextualised each particular discourse within the context of the social practices which shaped them. Such a critical perspective

of the social context of discourse production would facilitate an analysis of the external influences, such as the nature of the political system and influences of civil society, upon the formation of political discourse. In this way, global differences in shifts of political fields within the universe of political discourse could be further measured against differences in social context.

### **Implications for public relations, organisational communication and marketing**

The theoretical framework developed in this thesis has practical application for the fields of public relations, organisational communication and political marketing. What it underscores is the need for practitioners from all of these fields to thoroughly research the scope (the nature, range and outer limits of available and occupied stances) of the field in which an organisation functions, be it a political field or a social field. Such research must also include the system (legal, political or cultural) which regulates the field. In addition, other fields which impinge upon the primary field must be understood. These other fields will include those fields in which the organisation's various publics reside by virtue of their social practices (for example, the education system and/or religion).

Knowledge of social and political fields will facilitate the discursive positioning of organisations and/or the repositioning of others who seek to co-exist within the same field. Critical analysis of the discourses of competitors

will facilitate an understanding of the real or assumed stances of those competitors. As explained below, discrepancies between the social practices, the texts and the proclaimed positioning of an organisation can expose fundamental organisational problems.

### **Identity**

Close parallels can be drawn between the adoption of a stance in the political field (or in a social field) and the creation of an identity. For political parties or candidates contesting an election, the whole process of identity creation is intensified because of the short term of election campaigns. Observations of the process, however, can be usefully applied to the creation of identities by other organisations in other fields. For this reason, election campaigns can be regarded as an empirically useful “laboratory” for the analysis of interactions and processes which have wider applications for the fields of organisational communication and public relations.

In the case of political parties’ identity creation, the need to articulate stances or identities with popular opinion is clear. Reflective of that need, identity creation is almost purely poll driven - core ideologies remain but even these are negotiable and open to compromise as the “centre” shifts with changing social and, hence, political fields.

As stated in chapter two, Cheney and Christensen (in press) observed that “the public relations activity of large organisations today .... is identity-related in that each organisation must work to establish its unique ‘self’ while

connecting its concerns to those of the ‘cultural crowd’ ” (p. 4). The theoretical framework developed in this thesis allows the extension of Cheney and Christensen’s observation to accommodate the perspective of competition in the construction of a “unique self”. If another organisation which offered a similar set of goods or services and was, thereby, competing in the same social field, attempted to target the same “cultural crowd”, that is, the same market group, the construction of a unique identity would be difficult. As with the political field, the greater the numbers of contenders in a social field, the less likely it is that contenders will be able to successfully cluster in the centre of the field by virtue of a wide range of shared attributes (or policies). As has been demonstrated in this thesis in the case of political fields, the construction of “uniqueness” in social fields could be facilitated by the discursive repositioning of the opposition to elsewhere in the field. Such attempts are sometimes evident in commercial advertising, but they have not been theorised in terms of repositioning. In New Zealand, directly negative advertising by commercial competitors is illegal. It is, however, permissible to offer product comparison in advertisements which may be to the detriment of the opposition. An analysis of such advertising could usefully be carried out within the theoretical framework of discursive positioning and repositioning.

The theorising of the notion of repositioning of an opponent away from a preferred position or identity has greater scope for practical application if that theorising is extended to incorporate the range of stances available in a particular field. The theory of discursive positioning and repositioning of

political parties developed in this thesis, in line with Bourdieu's (1991) notion of a range of stances available within a particular political field, can be applied to any one of multiple social fields. Social fields, like political fields, are polarised, and power is invested in the accumulation of social capital relevant to the particular social field (*ibid.*). If a particular market place were to be theorised as having the same attributes as a social field, a marketer would do well to consider the range of stances available within that marketplace and the extent to which a stance taken resonates with consumers. In an adaptation of Bourdieu's terms, the researcher should assess what is considered socially acceptable (or "thinkable") within that competitive market place.

The analysis of the range of stances adopted within a particular social field and the outer limits of those stances can also be usefully applied to the public relations and organisational communication field of issues management. The issues management practitioner should constantly monitor particular social fields for evidence of change in what is socially acceptable and what is not. Organisations must adapt their behavioural practices and their associated discourses in order to avoid marginalisation beyond the field in which they expect to remain competitive. With modern communication technologies facilitating the rapid dissemination of information, not only from organisations such as corporations but also from activist groups (for example, Coombs, 1998), the nature of a social field can change rapidly. It is not sufficient, however, for an organisation to merely alter its discourse practices, leaving its

behaviour unchanged. Consistency between behavioural practices and discourse practices becomes increasingly important, as explored below.

### **Consistency of identity**

This thesis demonstrates that, in some cases, the proclaimed adoption of particular stances within the political field was not supported by a close analysis of the party's policy documents. That is, there was a discrepancy between where a party claimed to be positioned and its policies. This was particularly so for New Zealand First, which claimed a position at the "centre" of the political field under study. Its position, however, was dependent upon the party's own discursive construction of "centre" as neutral in the sense of "independent" (see chapter six). Rather than accommodating the key policy stances of both National and Labour, New Zealand First's texts revealed that the party was actually positioned in a range of stances - some right of centre and some left of centre. Furthermore, while the party positioned itself strongly as the party to get rid of National, it enabled National to retain power after the election by forming a National/New Zealand First coalition.

A further inconsistency in New Zealand First's proclaimed and actual stance lay in the party's identification with dual but incompatible constituencies: the elderly conservative pakeha, and Maori. The party did not overtly claim multiple identities nor did it attempt to articulate the interests of the two constituencies to create a new discursive formation acceptable to both.

The differences at the time were such that their successful articulation would have been extremely difficult. Rather, New Zealand First attempted to downplay its inherent identification with Maori. It was successful in that New Zealand First was elected to a position where it held the balance of power and could enter government through a coalition agreement with either of the two major parties. Beyond the election, however, with the inconsistencies in its identity exposed, New Zealand First's support dropped dramatically. By the 1999 election, the Maori faction of the party had departed to form its own party and neither the new party nor New Zealand First was successful. Winston Peters, the only New Zealand First candidate to be re-elected in 1999, held his Tauranga electorate by only a very small number of votes.

### **Multiplicity**

Successful parties did attempt to adopt multiple subject positions or identities for themselves in order to maximise their appeal in social fields. On the other hand, they also attempted to minimise the appeal of their opponents by discursively constructing them as uni-dimensional. For example, the National Party drew upon the diverse subject positions of its own individual candidates in order to emphasise its multiplicity. At the same time, it attempted to reduce the appeal of the Labour Party by repositioning it to the far left of the political field with the Alliance, with little discernible difference between the policies of the two parties. The only instances where parties aimed to construct opponents as having multiple identities were when those multiple

identities could be exposed as mutually incompatible. Then a party could be constructed as unstable. This was the case in National's, Labour's and the Alliance's repositioning of New Zealand First.

The Alliance, unlike National, failed to capitalise on its own multiplicity and constructed itself with a narrow range of representation and as single-minded in purpose. Its failure to articulate the multiple dimensions which comprised the totality of its component members not only limited the appeal of its campaign discourse but served to alienate those of its members who were thus denied a voice. The notable result of the Alliance's alienation of member parties was that the Greens chose to leave the Alliance and, in 1999, contested the general election independently. Their success in that election indicated the extent of the loss to the Alliance.

The research undertaken in this thesis of campaign discourse within a political field in relation to identity creation has direct implications for the creation of identities in social fields. Whereas the adoption of multiple identities can result in an increase in the scope of identification of an organisation with multiple publics, the identities adopted must be potentially compatible. That is, the differences must be within the limits of what can strategically be brought together. A conflict which arises from incompatibility between target publics is likely to impact on the successful functioning of the organisation, as was the case for New Zealand First. Similarly, the discourse practices of an organisation must be compatible with its behavioural practices.

In some cases, an organisation needs to be careful not to construct its own uniqueness at the expense of those other organisations with which they must work. This is particularly so if the construction of its own uniqueness involved the discursive repositioning of its opponents. In the political field in New Zealand, 1996, the introduction of proportional representation meant that it was highly likely that some political opponents would have to work together after the election. The (re)positioning of those opponents, however, by some parties, rendered post-election co-operation particularly difficult. The discourse technologists who constructed the campaign messages of those parties had failed to sufficiently assess the political field in the context of the changed electoral environment. The Alliance 1996 campaign illustrates the problems associated with pre-election repositioning of an opponent and post-election collaboration with that opponent. The Alliance's discursive repositioning of Labour made it difficult for voters to accept that the two parties could form a stable coalition. Recognition of the 1996 problem was evident in the two parties' mutually supportive campaign discourse of the 1999 campaign. From this perspective, the political field at the time of future elections in New Zealand would provide an appropriate case study for the field of relationship marketing.

### **Implications for the public sphere and democracy**

The public sphere is an essential component of civil society (or of social space) and its functioning is necessary for a viable democracy. Without engagement in open debate about political issues, citizens tend to disengage themselves from the democratic process (Mouffe, 1993). This study provided evidence that political contenders did attempt to align policies with the concerns of voters in social space in order to obtain their mandate to act as voters' representative in the political field. However, such alignment of policies was, in many cases, derived from a political rationality rather than ideological convictions. For example, National publicly rejected the suggestion that it would privatise health and education because the weight of public opinion was so heavily against it. In a coalition with Act, however, National may well have proceeded with the privatisation, perhaps under another guise. In yet other cases, ideologies were articulated with concerns of voters in order to produce policy statements which were couched in terms which would appeal to those voters in social fields and conceal the fundamental ideologies underlying them. Such was the case, for example, in Act's campaign discourse which articulated neoliberal policies of individual responsibility for health and education with concerns of a Maori crisis.

Campaign messages, through the discourse practices of public relations professionals, were primarily targeted to individuals in the private sphere (Garnham, 1990), via television advertising or direct mail. These practices of message dissemination did not provide an avenue for feedback or interaction between candidates and voters, as prescribed for a viable public sphere. Further, the construction of campaign messages

based upon market research, including pretesting by focus groups, was aimed towards bypassing the process of opinion formation in the public sphere (Mayhew, 1997).

There was one new discourse practice which was commonly undertaken by all of the parties of the political field in New Zealand, 1996, in the dissemination of campaign messages which did not maximise the use of discourse technologists. This was the construction of party political sites on the World Wide Web. Because of the limited use made of these sites and because of the degree of commonality in their use between the parties, they have not been analysed nor discussed within the body of this thesis. Instead, they are discussed as a post-script to this thesis with respect to their potential to contribute to the revitalisation of the public sphere.

## **POSTSCRIPT**

### **THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING ON THE INTERNET**

Mass media theory, from a political economy perspective, has for many years looked at the encroachment and subsequent domination by free market politics in the arena of public communication. The focus has largely been on the traditional media of newspapers and television. Today, however, it is to the new technologies of public communication that media theory must turn. The Internet, or, more specifically, the World Wide Web, is being used increasingly as a medium for public information and debate. As such it provides scope for the development of a new public sphere. However, the Web is already being affected by the same forces of political economy which have changed the basis of traditional media production and distribution.

Much has already been written about the potential of new technologies for the development of new public spheres, building on the Habermasian ideal of the early seventeenth and late eighteenth century bourgeois public sphere in which private interests and social barriers were put aside in favour of open discussion of matters of public concern. Nicholas Garnham (1990; 1992) has used the notion of the public sphere to argue for the maintenance of public service broadcasting. He makes his argument on the basis of public service broadcasting as “an embodiment of the principles of the public sphere” (Garnham, 1992, p. 109), divorced from control by

either forces of economy or of the State. Garnham's arguments for public service broadcasting need now to be expanded to new media forms. In this post-script I explore the notion of World Wide Web sites being used by political parties to such an extent that a plurality of interests may provide the range of perspectives required to form a basis of informed public debate, particularly during the pre-election campaign period. The notion is rejected, however, if the information provided by these web sites takes on an entertainment form which is increasingly targeted to individuals in a private domestic sphere. It is suggested that an ideologically independent vehicle for public service communication via the Internet is needed. This vehicle may be community free nets in which case, following Garnham's rationale for the maintenance of public service broadcasting, it can be argued that they should be publicly funded in order to protect their independence and integrity.

For large societies, Habermas (1979) stressed, open communication can only be achieved through the agency of the mass media, including newspapers and magazines, radio and television. To these, I would add computers and, indeed, Morris and Ogan (1996) have argued convincingly for inclusion of the Internet as a mass medium. Other new technologies have also expanded the list beyond traditional television and radio with the development of cable television; televised town hall meetings; telematics, such as Minitel in France; and various "talk" media, including those which have resulted from the convergence of television and computer technologies. However, the contribution of these alternative media to a public sphere is again dependent upon their use in an interactive manner, allowing for participation

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in discussion rather than simply serving as alternative means of information dissemination.

Public Access television in the United States has been set up through the introduction of cable television and has allowed the production and broadcast of alternative programmes free from the constraints of political economy and diplomacy. With minimal resources of equipment, money and technical knowledge, in some centres anyone who wishes can produce a programme and have it broadcast through cable television (Kellner, 1992). Computer networks such as PeaceNet and HandsNet have enabled discussion and dissemination of information at a grass roots level. PeaceNet and similar networks exist in order to facilitate a sharing of resources, hosting conferences in which members can provide such items as news releases and alternative news services. Members can also discuss openly and laterally a wide range of issues (Downing, 1989; Friedland, 1996; Sachs, 1995). Used in such ways these alternative media do, to a limited extent, fulfil the criteria of enabling general accessibility of information and the elimination of privilege, especially if we accept Kellner's (1995) argument that, at least in the United States, most individuals will soon have access to computers both through schools and as standard household items (p. 439). They also provide a forum for debate, allowing for interactive participation by interested citizens and in this way can certainly contribute to the formation of public opinion.

Habermas laid the blame for the demise or “transformation” of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century public sphere at the feet of monopoly capitalism as it caused the public sphere to become “more an arena for advertising

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than a setting for rational-critical debate” (Calhoun, 1992, p. 26). The public sphere thus became depoliticised while its members adopted a mass consumption mentality. Similarly, while the Internet is held up as a potentially democratic space, available to diverse groups and individuals, so is it feared this potential will be diminished by the drive for increased commercialisation of cyberspace (Calabrese & Borchert, 1996).

Calabrese & Borchert (*ibid.*) have suggested that the rapid encroachment of capitalism on to the economy of the Internet will result in two separate but interdependent models of electronic network activity, based on dictates of political economy: the civic and the consumer models. In the civic model an elite class of technological and professional members will emerge. They will form a new class of intelligentsia who, although still important members of a consumer public, will demand input in debates of public policy making. Because of their concern with political discussions and policy formation, coupled with resources of knowledge and income, they will access relevant information and, in many ways, will function in a manner similar to the eighteenth century bourgeoisie. The consumer model, on the other hand, will be targeted towards those of lower socio-economic status and will centre on the sale of goods, services and political ideas and representatives. In this model the bulk of the flow of information will be broad and downward (*ibid.* pp. 251-53). In line with the prediction, use of the Internet is already increasingly following a consumer model with a growing proportion of activity geared towards entertainment and the sale of goods and services. These include Internet related merchandise such as software and consulting but there is also an increasing use of the Internet for on-line advertising and direct selling (McChesney, 1996).

## **Elections, Public Relations and New Technologies**

One of the institutions within which public opinion is formed is that of the media of public communication. Another is that of elections (Garnham, 1990). 1996 was a year for general elections in several Western democracies, such as the USA, Australia and New Zealand while in Britain campaigning was underway for an election to be held in 1997. Consistent with a trend which has developed since 1988, the use of new technologies in the context of election campaigns has increased enormously. New technologies provide the means for increasingly sophisticated marketing to target specific consumers, and the domain of political campaigning is certainly no exception (Maarek, 1995; Newman, 1994). Ever more sophisticated demographic computer software has resulted in databases which allow increasing precision in the targeting of direct mail; the development of cable and satellite technology has allowed, at least in the USA, broadcasts of candidates on media other than the traditional television channels; and a convergence of telecom, computer, television and radio technologies has resulted in televised talk shows and debates with immediate voter evaluation of candidates' comments and responses. It is argued that the use of new technologies, from early effective use of television to recent use of computer bulletin boards is related to successful election campaigns (Kellner, 1995). Senator Edward Kennedy's staff claim that his winning the 1994 US Senate election was due to his being the first US Senator to have a World Wide Web page (Mann, 1995).

While the debate about the commercialisation of the Internet continues, use of the Internet as a political marketing tool has emerged. In both the 1988 and the 1992 US elections a “Presidential Campaign Hotline” offered, upon payment of a monthly subscription fee, a computer service to candidates and news media. In October 1994 the US White House established an Internet site (*ibid.*), an addition to the existing White House-citizen email system (Hacker, 1996). However, the broader application of the World Wide Web to set up freely accessible (notwithstanding the question of access to computers and Internet software) web sites by political parties for campaign purposes does not appear to have featured prior to the run up to general elections of 1996.

Resources permitting, these political parties used what they could of new technologies as aids to election campaigning. The campaign manager of the incumbent, National Party, for example, claimed that their computers and demographic software were second to none (interview, March 1996). As a member of the International Democrat Union, an association of centre-right political parties world-wide, the party was privy to advancements made by its affiliates such as the Republicans in the USA and the Conservatives of Britain. However, not all of the other parties could afford access to databases and extensive market research. What many of them did manage was to set up a web site on the Internet, the content and implications of which I will discuss below.

Despite the urgency of accurate and effective political marketing practices, the reasons given for the parties' setting up web sites were surprisingly simple. When campaign managers were asked for reasons the general responses were: “We have to be

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seen to be keeping up with technology” and “the site cost so little to set up”. Neither of these reasons betrays any consideration of empowering the voter to make a rational decision informed by access to a diverse range of opinions. Nor do they indicate that the sites form part of any political marketing plan. Indeed, the campaign manager of one of the major parties commented that the direct mailing of letters is a practice which is virtually obsolete for that party as their main demographic group of supporters does not read (interview, April 1996). It is unlikely that a group of people who are unwilling to or cannot read will seek access to information provided by a party political site on the Internet. It is more likely, at this stage, that the sites were established because the political parties believed that they could not, especially given the relatively low monetary cost, afford the risk that another party might gain an advantage, as yet undefined, through the Internet. Such a fear would bear out the potential effectiveness of the advertisement cited by McChesney (1996) which promoted the Internet as a business' “secret weapon against the other guys” (p. 105).

What constitutes a party political web site? Some of the New Zealand sites were set up by political party members with technological enthusiasm and skills (for example, Act - interview, December 1996) while others were set up by companies which specialise, in a technological sense, in Internet sites. In either case a lack of knowledge of the potential of the medium has resulted in the content and format of the sites resembling those of more traditional media, with little or no attempt at appealing to any one of a variety of publics. Although the medium is as controlled as that of any advertisement, standard political advertisements produced by public practitioners and advertisers are carefully targeted, usually on an issue basis. Web sites, like

advertisements, are paid for by the political parties and are used for the promotion of a party's policies; the dissemination of that party's interpretation of events; and occasionally for the denunciation of opposing party policies (for example, the National Party). The format of each of the party political web sites, both from New Zealand and elsewhere, is similar and basic (as at November 1996). Essentially, most sites provide access to copies of press releases put out by the party and by candidates; speeches made by candidates and policy statements of the party's stance on key issues. Many provide a link to an email address to which comments and questions can be directed. The New Zealand Labour Party during the 1996 election campaign claimed to select key issues from email messages received and to address those issues weekly. In fact the "key" issues remained consistent with the party's campaign agenda, suggesting that they were chosen with the party's needs in view rather than those of any public. Some party web sites (for example, the National Party) provide links to other parties and to related international sites. Certainly, during the election campaign period, none of the New Zealand party political web sites allowed for open, direct interaction with or between users. New Zealand First did open their site with a link to a bulletin board but the link was soon removed, probably because of the negative comments which were being posted. Political parties, especially when facing an election, are likely to believe that they cannot afford the risk of opening themselves up to such negativity, either from voters or from political opponents.

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## Party Political Web Sites and the Public Sphere

Although email links are a common feature of party political web sites, unless email messages are given a personal reply and questions are answered or assertions directly addressed, then such email facilities cannot be said to be interactive (Hacker, 1996) and, therefore, cannot be claimed to be contributing to a public sphere. Providing personalised feedback is clearly problematic when the volume of incoming mail is great. There are, however, other features of the party political sites which are worth examining for their potential in increasing the range of opinions available to the voter for consideration. The foremost of these is shared with other forms of alternate media - direct access to a voting public which bypasses traditional media filters (Lemert et al., 1996). Many of the sites provide links to speeches made by candidates and to news releases. Traditionally, the voting public has to rely on journalists of the mass media and their editors to sift through such material, the processes of which are well documented (Tuchman, 1978). The consumers of the edited product receive a narrative constructed out of concessions to forces of political economy (Keane, 1991). The product is crafted to suit a target audience or public, the purchasers of the particular newspaper or the viewers of the television channel. As such, mass media products are arguably far removed from the variety of perspectives required for the rational formation of public opinion.

There is no disputing that news releases and political speeches are just as carefully crafted as the news stories of the mass media. Nor are they any less ideologically biased - almost certainly more so. They are usually written by a public relations practitioner trained in the art of "spin doctoring". That is, the writers know

how to write a “news” story from the perspective which best serves their organisation's or client's needs. They also understand the institutional practices of the media and use this understanding to provide “news” in a format and at a time most useful to the target media. Their success in having the story published depends upon a range of factors, including “newsworthiness”, such as the pre-eminence of the subject of the story (Gans, 1979; Leitch, 1990; Tiffen, 1989).

The posting of news releases through the Internet presents an opportunity for public relations practitioners to by pass traditional media restrictions and to present their clients' perspectives. Is this further demonstration of a public sphere being transformed through the agency of public relations practitioners? In some ways it is yet it can be argued that if the whole range of political parties uploads their news releases to the Internet, those people who are interested are able to freely assess the range of viewpoints for themselves. Garnham stresses the need to recognise the communicative functions of the public sphere: dissemination of information and provision of a forum for debate (Garnham, 1990). In line with this he argued for greater access by public groups to direct dissemination of information, if necessary by the use of journalists to function as knowledge brokers (Friedland, 1996). This is essentially a public relations function which many journalists, because of their knowledge of the news industry, have “crossed the line” to adopt.

Within party political web sites are commonly found hypertextual links not only to news releases and speeches but also to other political parties, nationally and globally; and in some cases to selected on-line newspapers, television news pages, the US White House and organisations such as the World Bank and OECD (for example,

the New Zealand National Party site). The provision of these links begins to parallel the vertical layering of information put forward as a model for multimedia journalism which enables a merging of the functions of information dissemination and provision of a forum for public debate discussed above (Friedland, 1996). Friedland's description is in the context of public journalism, put together by teams of "citizen-editors" and is thus removed from the advocacy of party political agendas. However, as proposed above, the existence of multiple party political web sites, linked together hypertextually, could be said to approach the range of information required to provide the means of rational debate.

### **The "transformation" of the party political web site**

Despite the absence of well developed motives for the establishment of party political web sites there is no doubt that the use of these sites will continue to be a practice - one which will become increasingly sophisticated as the technology develops further, as more people gain access to computers and the Internet, and as the developers consider more fully the marketing potential of the medium. As argued above, with the addition of a forum for open debate, the plurality of views available through party political web sites could provide a new public sphere and so act as a tool for democratisation. However, it is more likely that this public sphere will, in turn, be "transformed" in the same way as the Habermasian one. By building on Calabrese and Borchert's vision of civic and consumer models of the Internet discussed above, I will map out below the direction which I believe the format and use of party

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political web sites will take once they are “transformed” by public relations practitioners and advertisers.

To date surprisingly little thought or attention has been given to how the Internet can be used for political marketing aimed at target groups of voters or publics. This may well be because it has not yet been truly integrated into the campaign strategy, overseen by the same professionals who direct political marketing through traditional media. Garnham (1992) in his appeal for the continuation of public service broadcasting described the division of public communication into a two-tier market, one for the “information-rich” and one for the “information-poor” with the latter characterised by “homogenised entertainment services on a mass scale” (p. 362) delivered to individuals in a privatised domestic sphere. Paralleling the civic and consumer models proposed by Calabrese and Borchert, this principle will be increasingly applied to new electronic communication. Used uni-directionally, the Internet, like television, addresses the individual privately rather than providing a forum for discussion. Such is the case with party political web sites whose added feature of email merely creates an illusion of participation. Without the true function of interactive debate, Garnham's proposal that “[i]nteractive capacity may indeed be useful for financial and commercial transactions, but claims that it allows the consumer in some way to talk back or the voter to be more fully involved in political decision-making are highly misleading” (1990, p. 126) can be equally applied to party political web sites.

Press releases and transcripts of speeches to voters can be of little interest to those who do not read. How can the information be otherwise delivered? The format

of party political web sites has so far failed to use the full range of available technology. There is, typically, more of visual interest to be found in graphics offered by traditional media. Apart from interest derived from the novelty of their existence, the sites so far do little to encourage examination of their contents. The trend in both political advertising and traditional media coverage of political campaigning has been towards ever shorter “sound bites” (Steele & Barnhurst, 1996) and an increasing factor of entertainment, particularly in the case of television. This is likely to also be the case for party political web sites. Instead of a written news release or commentary, the “story” will be relayed as a short video narrative which will portray the desired version of events with the relevant ideological interpretation. Ideology will also be encapsulated in on-line video games - good versus evil with “good” winning by following the policies of the sponsor political party. Prizes will be offered to “winners” of the games. Prizes will also be offered as an incentive to log on to a particular site. Web sites, and what they have to offer, will be advertised through the purchase of links through more popular web sites, in the form of banner advertisements already common in commercial web sites. Similar techniques have already been used in traditional media: The New Zealand party, Act, has offered attractive prizes for those who respond to data collecting questionnaires and has repeatedly used a narrative format to present scenarios in newspaper articles which condemn the status quo in favour of its own neoliberal ideology (Roper, 1996). The scenario described above is not far away. The technology is available and is already in use in some commercial web sites with the producers including the necessary software to make it available to receivers. For example, the Levis site

(<http://www.levi.com.menu>) contains two full length commercials as QuickTime movies. The adaptation of the technology for advocacy advertising by political parties will signal the end of the already limited contribution made by those parties to the use of the Internet as a public sphere. Instead, political marketers would be able to use entertainment to more effectively target their voting publics and appeal directly to their perceived interests. The target voting publics would fit within the consumer model of the Internet and would be reached in a private domestic sphere without the information nor the facility to join in debate on public policy making. Traditional media, subject to editorial processes, would continue to be the primary source of political information.

Although one of the main existing reasons for setting up a party political web site may be the low cost of doing so, the maintenance of an entertainment format with the incorporation of video links created for the site, prizes and interactive games will be expensive. In the absence of appropriate legislation, limits to the use of the Internet will be drawn only by the purchasing power of the political party in question. Even now advertising through the Internet is a grey area for electoral law in New Zealand. Campaign spending is strictly limited but in 1996 only some political parties declared the cost of their web sites. All campaign billboards are to be removed before election day when all political advertising is banned; the party web sites remained in place. Their introduction has moved more quickly than the legislators.

It is unlikely that anything can be done to stop advocacy advertising through the Internet's developing in the ways described. As the use of the Internet continues to increase, community networks such as PeaceNet appear to be the most likely

vehicle for the dissemination of information and provision of a forum for debate in the tradition of a public sphere. As such they must be encouraged to continue to operate in order to provide access to a diverse range of data and opinions. Indeed, their use must be expanded internationally to provide material relevant to the diverse voting publics world-wide. The ongoing and increasing cost of personnel for the maintenance and updating of these sites is high and reliance on volunteers is, arguably, unrealistic in the long term. Community networks must be able to maintain their integrity by not selling banner advertisements to sites of advocacy advertising such as those of political parties. These requirements allow for an extension of Garnham's appeal for public service broadcasting to the funding of community networks as a public service. Public funding would be required to allow such networks to remain independent and to avoid being encroached upon by capitalism in the same way as public service broadcasting.

Although individuals may well choose to seek entertainment and/or consumerism over information, others have expressed a desire for access to information and for new ways of participation in the processes of public policy making (Hacker, 1996). As this thesis demonstrates, actors in the political field must ultimately respond to demands from social space. Collectively, then, citizens do have the capacity to exert sufficient pressure from social fields to ensure satisfaction of their desire for information and for participation in politics.

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