

women talking politics women talking politics

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PRIME MINISTER for 2000: A choice between two very different women?

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‘It will be said that this is a petticoat-government parliament. We shall have to look well to our laurels and assert our prerogatives as the lords of creation before long.’

Richard John Seddon, 1886.

Was New Zealand the first country in the world to have a woman Prime Minister and a woman Leader of the Opposition? Well no, Bangladesh first achieved that distinction when the Begum Khaleda, widow of assassinated General Zia, a former Prime Minister, became Prime Minister in 1991. The opposition leader was Sheikh Hasina Wajad, daughter of Sheikh Mujibar Rahman, (Bangladesh’s first Prime Minister, assassinated in the coup which brought General Zia to power). In 1996 the positions were reversed and Sheikh Hasina Wajad is now the Prime Minister.¹

New Zealand, however, has the distinction of having the first two women political leaders of the major parties who are not descendents of male political dynasties.² It seems New Zealand politicians were mature enough to elect two women as their party leaders because they regarded them as the best for the job, not because of the political prominence of their husbands or fathers. But neither woman has yet been elected as Prime Minister by the public. In 1996 the Labour Party, led by Helen Clark, lost to the incumbent National

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Party Prime Minister Jim Bolger who negotiated a National - NZ First coalition to retain power. Just over a year later he was toppled by his Minister of Transport, Jenny Shipley. In November 1999 New Zealanders, for the first time, will give a woman the mandate to be Prime Minister.



¹ Discussion with Bangladesh Consul to NZ, 23/7/99

² MP Judith Tizard recalled recently that when she was elected to the Auckland Electric Power Board “I discovered many people hadn’t looked too closely and thought they’d voted for my father.”

THE AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND WOMEN AND POLITICS NETWORK

The idea was born out of a meeting of the NZ Political Studies Association Conference.

The aim is to promote communication between women teaching, researching or interested /involved in politics/public policy (in paid or unpaid work).

The newsletter will be published twice a year. Until 1998 it was published by women from the Department of Political Studies at the University of Auckland, and the School of Social Sciences at the Auckland Institute of Technology, and by Bronwyn Hayward of Lincoln University. At the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference in December 1998, women from Victoria University of Wellington offered to take a turn at publishing the newsletter. The Editors for this issue are Margaret Hayward and Kate McMillan.

The Victoria women extend their thanks and appreciation to those who have put so much time and effort into the newsletter up until last year. In particular we would like to thank Heather Devere and Liz Hambly from the Auckland Institute of Technology, Jane Scott from the University of Auckland, Alison Wilson from the Manakau Polytechnic and Bronwyn Hayward of Lincoln University.

Contributions and shared resources. We are interested in receiving material for publication in the newsletter – articles, book and conference reviews, information about teaching and research, relevant conferences, and letters to the editor are all welcome. Student input is also welcomed. We would also appreciate information on relevant books, papers and webpages.

Please forward contributions to: The Editor, *Women Talking Politics*, School of Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington. Disk copies, preferably in MSWord, would be appreciated.

Back copies of Network newsletters are available from the above address at \$5.00 per issue

Family Background

Family Background

Jenny Shipley was born in 1952, in Gore, the second of four girls. Her father, the Rev. Len Robson, was a Presbyterian minister. Her mother Adele Goodall had a political link through her grandfather, a cousin of former Prime Minister Sir Keith Holyoake, who was Sir Keith's electoral chairman. Jenny Shipley was never aware of her father's political affiliations but he imbued his daughters with confidence and with definite values – morality, ethics and social responsibility - which Jenny Shipley described as almost a political philosophy. 'He would often say, "Gifts are not given for no reason..." That element of confidence and certainty about what you were doing and why you were doing it was something that we were able to pick up.'³ Life at the manse meant contact with many different types of people and their problems. The Robson children were encouraged to have 'a hard head and a soft heart' and individual responsibility and initiative were important.⁴

The family had moved to Marlborough when Jenny was five. She has described her family up-bringing as close-knit but with little money.⁵ Her sister, Nelson artist Anne Rush, described the young Jenny as a bossy, tomboyish child who once frightened old ladies at a garden party by pulling white rats from her pockets.⁶ Her father died when she was 18 and her mother had to move, with the two younger sisters still at primary school, to Motueka.⁷

Helen Clark was born in 1950, and grew up on the family farm in the Waikato, the eldest of four girls. She described her childhood as 'plain food, plain living' in a secure home, but a home with little spontaneous emotion. When she went to school she said she was 'terribly shy' and developed a lot of psychosomatic illnesses such as asthma, bronchitis and a collapsed lung, in part from having to mix with others. Reading was her great occupation.⁸

When Helen was 15 or so her attitudes became far more liberal than her parents who were

³ Janet McCallum, *Women in the House*, Cape Catley, Picton, 1993, p.228. See also McLeod, Rosemary, 'Jenny & Ruth: The Story of an Enduring and Powerful Friendship,' *North & South*, August 1991, pp. 48-58

⁴ McCallum, p.229

⁵ McCallum, p.229

⁶ Bain, Helen. 'Shipley a force to be reckoned with', *The Dominion*, 4/11/97, p.9.

⁷ McCallum, p.229

⁸ Virginia Myers. *Head & Shoulders*. Penguin Books, Auckland, 1986, p.150

‘inclined to be rigid on moral and social issues’. By the sixth form she had stopped playing the organ at her mother’s church. Her father became chair of the Te Pahu branch of the National Party and was very supportive of Marilyn Waring (National MP for Raglan).⁹ ‘But he didn’t become active in National till I became active in Labour, in competition as it were.’ She found her father extraordinarily argumentative and it took her years to realise that he enjoyed arguing and would deliberately take an opposing view.¹⁰

However, since she became an MP she has had a close relationship with her family, and they are proud of her achievements.

Education

Jenny Shipley attended Marlborough Girls’ College and then attended Christchurch Teachers’ College where she qualified as a primary school teacher, a profession she thoroughly enjoyed. An important influence on her thinking was *Significant Sisters*, a history of 19th century feminists by Margaret Forster, which made her realise that today’s battles ‘are almost trivial compared with the monumental challenges those women faced in terms of women’s status in the eyes of the law, particularly matrimonial law and family law, and issues of control of fertility’.¹¹

Helen Clark says she gained an education because she didn’t have brothers. But she found Epsom Girls’ Grammar at Auckland ‘heavy going’, particularly as country girls were perceived as rough and uncivilised. The headmistress gave her a ‘rotten testimonial - quite knocking’ saying she didn’t know what Helen was looking for in life and perhaps when she found out she’d make a contribution to something. That document brought out Helen’s characteristic stubbornness and she decided she’d prove the headmistress wrong. She was good at schoolwork and wanted something more stimulating than Teachers College so attended Auckland University and was involved in student politics, especially in anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and HART.

She graduated, majoring in political science and in 1976 took a post-graduate scholarship to

do a PhD but, because of her political activities, didn’t complete her thesis which was to be about farmers’ influence on legislatures. When she was about twenty she was greatly influenced by Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* and Germain Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* because ‘the main impact was that women can do anything, which gave me support for what I wanted to do’.¹²

Early employment and entry into politics

Jenny Shipley was employed as a primary school teacher at South Hornby when, at 21, she married Burton Shipley, a Darfield farmer. She had a daughter and a son and discovered how personally stifling rural and family life can be. ‘But it was a critical time for me: to make a decision whether I would retain my own identity as a mother...and the wife of Burton, but still [be] Jenny in her own right.’ She became involved in community organisations, including Plunket, and the Playcentre movement.

At an election meeting in 1981 she and Burton had been impressed by the National candidate for Selwyn, Ruth Richardson, and as part of Ruth’s electorate committee Jenny became more active in the National Party. Eventually she chaired the Canterbury/Westland division of the National Party’s policy section and from 1983-86 she was a Malvern County Councillor. Again in 1984 she campaigned on behalf of Ruth Richardson in Selwyn. When she tried to gain selection for the Ashburton seat it ‘took the most concerted and strategic attack’ to break through the ‘anti-democratic’ selection process. However, ‘I wouldn’t condemn the system in so far as it was able to work for me against the most extraordinary odds’.¹³ Ruth Richardson became Jenny Shipley’s mentor when she was first elected to Parliament as Ashburton’s MP in 1987.¹⁴

Helen Clark, at 23, became a junior lecturer in the Department of Political Studies at Auckland University and then, encouraged by Professor Robert Chapman, gained a lectureship. ‘I’d found something that I was really interested in and that totally absorbed me... I became so involved that politics was me, in a sense.’¹⁵ In 1973 she was chairperson of the Princes Street

⁹ Arthur Baysting,, Dyan Campbell & Margaret Dagg. *Making Policy ... Not Tea*. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1993, p.11

¹⁰ Myers. pp.51-53

¹¹ McCallum, p.235

¹² Myers, p.154.

¹³ McCallum, p.229-230

¹⁴ Bain, , p.9. See also McLeod, Rosemary, ‘Jenny & Ruth: The Story of an Enduring and Powerful Friendship. *North & South*, August 1991, pp.48-58

¹⁵ McCallum, p148

branch of the Labour Party and also became President of Labour Youth. In 1975 she was candidate for the strongly National Piako seat because no one else was interested. She was 'as different from the people there as chalk from cheese' but she did increase the Labour percentage of the vote. She was elected to the National Executive of the Labour Party, was a member of the Policy Council and secretary of the Labour Women's Council. In 1980 Warren Freer retired from the Mt Albert seat after 34 years in Parliament and Helen Clark won the nomination and then won the seat, substantially increasing the previous majority.¹⁶

Family life

Jenny Shipley's husband, Burton, has described himself as 'economically so far to the right I think we should change the side of the road we should drive on'. He says his wife is 'a real liberal compared with me'.

Burton was the brother of a friend and, as it was the ball season in Canterbury, Jenny asked him to partner her. They've been together ever since.¹⁷ When she was asked to stand for the Ashburton seat Jenny Shipley worried about her commitment to her family but was sure their relationship 'could weather the pressures'. Burton encouraged her and offered to look after their children, Anna and Ben. When she won the Ashburton nomination they decided to live within the electorate rather than remain in the adjacent Selwyn electorate so the farm, which had been in the family for five generations, was sold. Burton, with the help of a housekeeper, took care of the children on the 20-acre property that they had purchased near Ashburton.

In 1991 both children were attending boarding school and Burton Shipley became general manager of the New Zealand Deer Farming Association based in Wellington.¹⁸ The children now have their own lives and Burton is a banker. He is very supportive and when Jenny Shipley first became Prime Minister, Burton 6ft 4in and well-built, was sometimes mistaken for her bodyguard.

Helen Clark is married to Peter Davis a medical sociologist, recently appointed Professor of Public Health at the Christchurch Medical School. They were introduced by a Labour Party

friend. Peter has always been encouraging but has kept a low profile. 'When the question of my standing for Mt Albert came up, I pointed out that it could be a thirty year commitment. But Peter still thought I should stand. He's always pushed me, always been supportive.'¹⁹ They married shortly before the 1981 election. Helen said that as a single woman she was really hammered: accused of being a lesbian, of living in a commune, of having friends who were Trotskyites and gays. 'I was fighting on all fronts. On top of all that I could do without the 'living in sin' label. That's the only reason I married the man I'd been living with for five years ... When I married a lot of the personal criticism stopped. But I felt really compromised. I think legal marriage is unnecessary and I would not have formalised the relationship except for going into Parliament.... But we're very compatible.'²⁰

In 1986 she described their relationship as non-traditional in that Peter runs the house. 'He's always done that. He does the shopping and I pay half... If we both need the car I get it because I have to have it. But he has four days in the week in which to do what he wants.'²¹ But she says a commuter marriage is more difficult and they both make a real effort. They have no children, and Helen has said that 'having children has never been something I've wanted to do...'²²

Political Career

Jenny Shipley says the women in the House are a very diverse group 'but there is a thread that binds us'. She, Ruth Richardson and Katherine O'Regan were the only National women MPs when she entered Parliament and they met regularly on an informal basis. When, in 1990, five more women were elected as National MPs they held a regular women's caucus and were a strong group.²³

When National became government in 1990 Jenny Shipley was appointed Minister of Social Welfare and announced cut-backs, reasoning that only 7% of GDP was spent on welfare in 1975 compared with 13.5% in 1990. This would make the system more affordable and 'help ensure that social security benefits are paid only to those who are in genuine need'. Another

¹⁶ McCallum, p.148-149

¹⁷ McLeod, pp55-58

¹⁸ McCallum, pp.229-230

¹⁹ Myers, , pp.159-60

²⁰ Myers pp 158-159

²¹ Myers, p.172

²² Baysting, p.38.

²³ Baysting, pp.98-99

move was asset checks on benefits paid to superannuitants but this was later considered too costly and the Government returned to a modified form of Labour's superannuation surcharge which had also been unpopular. She appointed Margaret Bazley as the first woman to head the Social Welfare Department and as Minister for Women's Affairs defended that ministry against National MPs who wanted it disbanded.²⁴ In 1996 she became Minister of Health and her decision to make free contraceptive pills available to women gained international media coverage. However cut-backs in health services resulted in protest marches, even in her own electorate, and again her 'tough-love' attitudes were criticised.²⁵

There was speculation that Prime Minister Bolger had given Jenny Shipley difficult portfolios as a way of reducing her popularity because as early as March 1994 party sources were predicting she would be leader of the National Party by 1998. Caucus members mentioned her 'strong leadership qualities'.²⁶ Asked whether she had mapped out a career path, she was evasive: '...if you've got leadership skills you tend to gravitate towards positions of responsibility. I've been doing that since I was knee-high to a gnat.'²⁷ In 1997 she became Minister of Transport, State Services, State-owned Enterprises and ACC. Her moves towards privatising roading and ACC were criticised by many. For example, Public Policy Professor Jonathan Boston considered her views 'would be regarded as very radical if not extreme in many democracies around the world'.²⁸

Early in November 1997, on returning from an overseas trip, Prime Minister Bolger was informed that Jenny Shipley now had the confidence of Caucus and he should resign. A time line was negotiated that enabled him to attend an APEC leaders' meeting and undertake a State visit to China before he resigned as Prime Minister in December 1997.²⁹ At 45, Jenny Shipley became New Zealand's first woman Prime Minister.

²⁴ McCallum, p.234

²⁵ Anthony Hubbard. 'Shipley's golden silence', *Sunday Star-Times*, 9 November 1987, p.C3

²⁶ Gordon Campbell. 'The Shipley Option', *Listener*, 5 March 1994, p.17-19

²⁷ Warwick Roger, Face to Face with Jenny Shipley, *North & South*, February 1998, p.

²⁸ Hubbard, p.C3.

²⁹ Jim Bolger. *A View from the Top*, Viking Auckland, 1998.

Helen Clark said that when she entered Parliament in 1981 with Fran Wilde and Margaret Shields they were treated pretty badly. 'The whole tone of the place was appalling. It was almost indescribable how awful it was...'³⁰ There was a time she felt very bruised because in her first three years in Parliament people would get totally out of control in caucus. Men in particular 'scream and shout and are personally abusive'. She learnt to deal with this behaviour by taking notes while they were shouting and screaming to make sure that she replied to all the points they made. 'That infuriates them.'³¹

However, when Labour became the Government in 1984 and more women entered the House, the atmosphere improved and she was appointed Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

In 1987 Helen Clark was given the Conservation and the Housing portfolios and was in no doubt that she was appointed to the latter 'because David Lange saw me as a block to the New Right approach.' But Roger Douglas was determined to make Housing an SOE and it was a constant fight against him and Treasury officials to prevent this happening.³²

In August 1989 Helen Clark was elected Deputy Prime Minister to Geoffrey Palmer and became Minister of Labour and Minister of Health. She found the previous minister, David Caygill 'had sensibly kept the public policy framework of the health system' and it was a hectic period setting up area health boards, working out their charters and goals and trying to do something about smoke-free legislation. She promoted wellness: 'I came through with a health charter and health goals and said the objective... was to try to raise the health status of the population. And that is revolutionary...'³³ Faced with continuing difficulties, she became famous for dismissing the Auckland Health Board, of which her husband was a member, and appointing a commissioner to sort it out. Her emphasis on wellness and the Smoke-free Environment Act which broke new ground, 'made a lot of enemies. The pharmaceutical industry actively campaigned against Labour. The alcohol industry funded National rather than Labour.' She was attacked by Dr Ridley-Smith

³⁰ Baysting, p.12

³¹ Myers, p.160

³² Baysting, p.86

³³ McCallum, p.152

with a 'scurrilous leaflet' and he was found guilty of criminal libel.³⁴

As Minister of Labour she pledged to do something about pay equity and even when the bill was drawn up, Cabinet, the Labour Department and the State Services Commission were still writing submissions against it. It was passed and seemed a step forward for social equity, but instead was immediately repealed when National became Government.³⁵ Helen Clark remained Deputy Prime Minister when Mike Moore replaced Geoffrey Palmer as Prime Minister in 1990. Following Labour's defeat in 1990 she was Deputy Leader until she deposed Mike Moore as Leader of the Opposition in 1993.

Personal interests

Jenny Shipley enjoys swimming and was a Marlborough swimming champion at school. 'I used to always swim in the morning, and it's harder when you're over forty to get out of bed and get into the water. But I love to swim and I'm still a very good swimmer. I'm very fortunate, I've got the constitution of an ox and can stand enormous physical pressure.' Her other interests include gardening: 'gardens are wonderful. You put something in, they give something back.'³⁶ She also enjoys reading and outdoor recreation; she and Burton regularly go for long walks around the Wellington waterfront.

Helen Clark put in nine years of 'total dedication' to her job but then began reordering her priorities so she had some personal space. She enjoys the opera, classical music and films and speaks fluent Spanish.³⁷ She attends the gym regularly and particularly relishes mountaineering and cross-country skiing. She recently so enthralled members of the Wellington Alpine Club with her account of climbing Kilimanjaro that a political scientist who attended joked if she went around addressing all the alpine clubs like that she would probably win the election.

Women politicians and the media

The main similarities between the two leaders are their experiences with the media.

Jenny Shipley, on becoming Prime Minister, told the 100th anniversary dinner of the News-

paper Publishers Association that she was frustrated at the media's interest in whether she'd decided something for herself 'or somebody has in fact made me over, or indeed who my advisers are or whether Burton is my single primary adviser'. Too much media attention was devoted to her glasses, her clothes and her haircut and not enough to her policies.

Helen Clark said that the media likes cutting someone down and then moving on to the next target. "Once they decide to go for you they go in ways they wouldn't go for men. So they'll go for your clothes and your haircut and that sort of silly stuff. But in the end I'm not sure it's more poisonous, it's just a different kind of poison from what would be applied to male politicians."³⁸ But now she says that their attitude has changed.

Both have taken a personal hammering from the media but have gone on to climb further up the political ladder. Helen Clark has survived feature articles entitled 'In From the Cold: The Slight Warming of Helen Clark'³⁹ in 1994, and 'Helen Clark and the Dead Cat Effect'⁴⁰ in 1996 and now, in 1999, is smilingly describing herself as 'the come-back kid'.⁴¹ Jenny Shipley survived 'the most hated person in New Zealand' label following the social welfare cuts in 1991 by responding strongly that that label was 'political garbage... Being hated is not the important thing. Doing what is *right* is important.'⁴²

Unlike many male politicians who seem reluctant to appear vulnerable, both women have spoken openly in the media about their illnesses: Helen Clark about illness brought on as a child by her shyness and Jenny Shipley about post-natal depression following the difficult birth of her son.⁴³

Party affiliations aside, in November voters will have a choice of two very different women as their Prime Minister.

³⁴ McCallum, p.152

³⁵ Baysting, p.125

³⁶ Baysting p.54-55

³⁷ Baysting p.56

³⁸ Baysting, p.159

³⁹ Bill Ralston, 'In From the Cold: The Slight Warming of Helen Clark', *North & South*, February 1994, pp.59-67

⁴⁰ Warwick Roger, 'Helen Clark and the Dead Cat Effect', *Metro*, February 1996. Pp.48-54

⁴¹ Interview, 3/4/99

⁴² McLeod, p.57

⁴³ McCallum, p.229

The 1998 Local Government Elections - How Did Women Fare?

by **Jean Drage**, School of Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington.

The 1998 local government elections were notable for the vigorous and expensive campaigns waged by many candidates in our larger urban areas as well as for the number of mayors who lost their seats. This was quite unprecedented in an area of political representation which has been known for its high incumbency rate. The number of mayoral candidates standing for city council mayoralties reached an all-time high with 15 in Palmerston North, 14 in Christchurch and 13 in Hamilton - all councils with vacancies for this leadership position - while 14 stood for the Auckland mayoralty despite the incumbent mayor also standing. Further evidence of increased competition for council positions was seen in the high levels of spending on election campaigns. Christchurch mayoral candidates were reported to have spent \$265,000 and in Auckland some mayoral candidates were reported to be spending \$80,000 to \$100,000 each on their campaigns.⁴⁴ The 10 October election resulted in new mayors in 27 of the 74 city and district councils, 18 of whom unseated incumbents; a stark contrast to the 1995 election when only 3 sitting mayors were defeated.⁴⁵

So how did women fare?

Figures collated in a survey of all those elected to councils in 1998 by Local Government New Zealand show that 29% of city, district and regional councillors are women.⁴⁶ At the same time the proportion of women elected to community boards increased to 35%, a 2% increase on the 1995 figures.⁴⁷ The number of women mayors also increased with 19 (26%) elected, an increase of 4 since the 1995 elections

when 15 (20%) women became mayors. Overall this gives us a total of 31% and continues the pattern established over the last two decades of a 2 to 3% increase each election.

A more detailed breakdown of these statistics shows that women had the greatest success in the larger urban areas, most of which are in the North Island. Three local authorities have more women than men - Upper Hutt City (6 out of 10), South Waikato District Council (6 out of 10) and Taupo District Council (6 out of 12 councillors plus a woman mayor). Eight of the 15 city councils now have about equal numbers of women and men councillors (Auckland, North Shore, Waitakere, Palmerston North, Porirua, Upper Hutt, Wellington and Christchurch). Four cities have about a third women councillors and the other three are made up of about a quarter women councillors. Of the 59 district councils only 9 (15%) have about equal numbers of women and men councillors (Rodney, Papakura, Thames-Coromandel, South Waikato, Rotorua, Kawerau, Taupo, Kapiti Coast and Hurunui) while 16 (27%) councils have about one third and 33 (56%) have a quarter or less women councillors. The Waimate District council is the only local authority with no women councillors. In 58% of the 12 regional councils less than a quarter of those elected are women; 3 (25%) have one third women and 2 (17%) have similar numbers of women and men (Auckland and Otago).⁴⁸ A quick comparison with figures collated from the 1992 local authority elections results on city and district councils which have about equal numbers of women and men show there has been a slight increase in women in the 1998 results.⁴⁹ Community board election results show that, of 148 boards, 11 have no women. This figure is slightly better than in 1995 when there were 16 boards with no women members.

Eleven of the 19 women mayors elected are incumbents and 8 are new to the job. Of the 8 new women, 3 are political leaders of city councils (Christine Fletcher in Auckland, Jill White in Palmerston North and Jenny Brash in Porirua) and the other 5 are leading districts councils (Iride McCloy in Kapiti, Audrey Severinsen in Manawatu, Maureen Reynolds in

⁴⁴ Kevin Taylor, "Candidates spending tops \$250,000", *The Press*, 22 September 1998;

Kim Newth, "Poorer candidates want spending cap", *Sunday Star-Times*, 20 September 1998, A8.

⁴⁵ *The Department of Internal Affairs, Local Authority Election Statistics 1995*, pp. 37 & 45.

⁴⁶ Local Government New Zealand website: <http://www.localgovtnz.co.nz>, Elected Members Survey Results 1998.

⁴⁷ Department of Internal Affairs, Local Authority Statistics 1998.

⁴⁸ I am grateful to Charlotte Connell for her assistance in helping me break down election results and survey data to collate these statistics.

⁴⁹ Jean Drage, *Weaving a New Pattern: Women Political Leaders in Local Government*, Local Government Research Monograph Series, Paper No. 6, March 1997, pp. 23-24.

Tararua, Heather Maloney in Franklin and Yvonne Sharp in the Far North). Of the 19 women mayors in office at this time, the majority (15) are district council mayors. A further breakdown of the 8 new women mayors shows that half of them had previously been councillors and the other half are new to elected positions in local government. As well, 2 of the new women mayors were previously Members of Parliament, one of them being Minister of Local Government in the 1996 coalition government. One interesting comparison can be drawn between these new women mayors and those who were elected previously. Eighty-eight percent of women mayors elected previously had been councillors, some for long periods of time. However the trend that has developed over the last 3 elections, and is even stronger in the 1998 election, is for more women to be elected to leadership positions who have not served long apprenticeships in local government.

Are we making progress?

At first glance these statistics can appear reassuring in that the proportion of women elected to local government continues to rise. But if we look at Table One which records the actual number of women elected in the last 4 local authority elections we can see that in 1998 there were only 2 more women councillors elected to city councils, 4 more women mayors and one less woman elected to both district and regional councils and the same number of women elected to community boards as in 1985 - a total of 4 more women elected. (See Table One). What is also clear is that the number of women being elected has slowed considerably. When compared to the last two elections when 13 more women were elected in 1992 than in 1989, and 18 more again in 1995, 4 more women this time shows the rate of increase has slowed significantly.

The progress assumed in the rising statistics on women’s electoral success is explained when we look at the evolving structure and number of electoral positions in local government. Since the 1989 reforms when the number of authorities and elected positions were greatly reduced, the Local Government Amendment Act No. 2 has required councils to review boundaries and membership numbers every three years.⁵⁰ As can

be seen from Table Two, subsequent council debate during each council term has resulted in the numbers of elected councillor positions continuing to reduce, mainly due to cost and efficiency reasons.⁵¹ So there are fewer electoral positions available. And if the trend set in recent years continues, there will be even fewer in the future. (See Table 2)

Yes, 4 more elected women can still be seen as progress, but with women having had the right to stand for local authority positions now for well over 120 years one might have expected us to achieve rather more. As well, with the considerable increase in the number of women MPs at the last general election, one might also have expected that this heralded a greater acceptance of women in elected representative positions.

Clearly the first-past-the-post electoral system continues to be an obstacle to increasing the number of elected women in local government. A bill to give local authorities the right to use a single transferable voting system to elect council members has been up for consideration in recent years but was defeated last year. We need look no further than the success women candidates had in the 1996 general election with a proportional representation system of election to see how STV would aid the electoral chances of women in local government.

NOTICE:

Friday, 17 September, 12-2pm.

The Association of Victoria University Women and the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer of VUW are holding a **meeting of women candidates of the major political parties** in the Ian Gordon Room of the Victoria University Staff Club. Bring your own lunch. All women welcome.



local authorities and the numbers have continued to reduce since then.

⁵¹ Figures in both tables are based on Department of Internal Affairs statistics and Local Government New Zealand statistics.

⁵⁰ Prior to local government restructuring in 1989 there were more than twice the number of elected positions on

Table 1: Number of women elected to Local Government between 1989 and 1998

	1989	1992	1995	1998
City councils	87	87	80	82
District councils	149	164	178	177
Regional councils	44	33	38	37
Mayoralties	10	13	15	19
Community Boards	271	277	281	281
Total	561	574	592	596

Table 2: Number of elected positions in Local Government between 1989 and 1998

	1989	1992	1995	1998
City councillors	246	247	239	223
City mayors	14	15	15	15
District councillors	769	705	684	668
District mayors	59	59	59	59
Regional councillors	198	130	131	133
Community board members	948	866	864	796
Total	2234	2022	1992	1894

Sources: Department of Internal Affairs and Local Government New Zealand

But is it as straight-forward as changing the electoral system? A Department of Internal Affairs survey of candidates who stood for election in the 1992 local authority elections identified five factors associated with electoral success: incumbency, gender, income, occupation and ethnicity. In relation to gender, this research found that 61% of the women who stood for election in 1992 were successful compared with 55 % of the male candidates. This contradiction between women being elected at a higher rate than men while the numbers of women elected only increases slowly, points to the fact that there are not enough women standing as candidates for local government seats to ensure a greater increase. Some of the reasons for this are well known.

The campaign costs for candidates are too high, particularly for mayoralties. There is no cap on campaign spending as there is for central government seats.⁵² As well, few local government candidates stand for election on a political party ticket which may provide them with some financial support.⁵³ Secondly, the rate of remuneration for the almost full-time position of councillor is often not adequate for many who

have no other source of income. And there is no childcare allowance.

Arguments frequently put forward for women being more attracted to local rather than central government politics are often based on the premise that local government is more relevant and closer to their lives while also giving them more ‘hands on’ opportunity to make change occur. As well, many women MPs have described politics at central government level as a brutal place for them. Recent comments by Margaret Evans who retired as Hamilton’s mayor last year after 9 years in the job, suggest that similar difficulties can be experienced by women in local government, particularly those in leadership positions. Margaret described the ‘growing ugly bug in politics’ – the physical abuse women can be subjected to while in office, anonymous phone calls, attempts at character assassination, and suggests that this is one of the reasons why quality candidates are not prepared to speak out and ultimately put themselves forward for elected positions.⁵⁴

To conclude

The last two decades has seen a growth in research evidence that isolates the factors that

⁵² Although legislation aimed at restricting campaign spending was introduced in 1995 this has not been passed.

⁵³ In the 1995 elections 78 percent of candidates were not associated with any party.

⁵⁴ *Spectrum, National Radio*, “The Pleasures and Pains of Public Life” an interview with Margaret Evans, 3 January 1999.

help or hinder women's electoral success. One can only hope that such evidence can ultimately lead to changes which will see equality in representation become more of a reality in the future. Through the significant contributions that women have already made to the health and wellbeing of our communities they have established a path for other women and proven that they are an essential part of community government. Although the number of women elected continues to increase, with only four more women being elected in 1998 it is clear that this progress is slowing.

However, one encouraging statistic that emerges from recent local body elections is that women candidates are more likely to be elected than male candidates. Statistics show that in 1995 54% of women candidates were successful in comparison to 50% of male candidates. In 1998 the same trend is seen, as 51% of women candidates were successful compared to 44% of male candidates. Recent research shows that the major determinant of women standing for election to a local government seat is the encouragement of others.⁵⁵ A clear message for the year 2001 – encourage more women to stand for local government seats!

A *postscript*: Many women who have contributed a great deal to local government over a lengthy period of time finished their terms of office in 1998.

Outgoing Mayors

Two very prominent and long term women mayors did not stand for re-election - Margaret Evans in Hamilton and Vicki Buck in Christchurch. Both of these women had been city mayors since 1989 (following about 15 years previous experience as councillors) so had overseen a great deal of change as leaders of their councils, particularly during the local government reform period and the widening of council responsibilities to include the health, welfare and advocacy of communities. Margaret has described herself as 'thinking globally, acting locally' and has now moved on to a greater involvement in the sustainable communities movement at an international level. Vicki has been a very popular mayor, pushing the boundaries of council responsibility while in

⁵⁵ Jean Drage, 'Women's Involvement in Local Government: The Ultimate Community Group?', *Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 2, January 1999, pp. 195-208.

office to focus on growth and promotion which delivered employment and a better environment, as well as developing strategies which ensured the inclusion of children and young people.

Two women mayors lost their seats: Sue James, the Far North district council mayor for 6 years; and Elizabeth Davidson who after one term as mayor of Marlborough district has been returned as a councillor.

Outgoing councillors.

Some of the long-term women councillors who retired from local government either through personal or voter choice in 1998 include Marion Miller who chaired the Southland Regional Council for 6 years following a long term as an elected hospital board member; Joyce Ryan, whose 25 years in local government included her being elected the first women mayor of Whangarei City in 1983, a position she held for 6 years, following which she became a member of the Northland Regional Council. Others are; Margaret Murray, elected initially in 1977 to the Waimairi County Council, became the first woman chair of the Waimairi District Council in 1983 and following amalgamation changes in 1989 was elected to the Christchurch City Council; Betty Van Gaalen who had been a Hutt City councillor since 1977; Anne Turvey, first elected to the St Kilda borough council in 1977 and a Dunedin City councillor since 1989; Joan Minty, a Rotorua councillor since 1980; Nan Evans who has been a Gisborne councillor since 1980; Dorothy Wilson who had been deputy mayor of the Waitakere City council and previously on the Waitemata City Council; and Pat Clapham, deputy mayor of the Rodney District Council who was the first woman elected to the Rodney County Council in 1977. When Pat was sworn in following her election she was given a parcel to mark the occasion. It contained a tie and cuff links!

A First for Women in Local Government - Woman President of Local Government NZ

Louise Rosson, Chair of the Otago Regional Council, was elected President of Local Government New Zealand in July 1999. This is the first time a woman has been elected to this position.

Louise has considerable experience in local government, having been first elected to the Dunedin City Council in 1986. From 1989 she was also a member of the Otago Regional

council and she was elected chair of the regional council in 1992, a position she has held since. On the national scene she has been involved in committees looking at resource management, biosecurity, regional affairs and animal health, and was a member of the women's consultative committee, set up in 1994 because there were no women on the National Council at the time. She was elected to the National Council of LGNZ in 1995 and in 1996 became one of the two vice presidents.

Her election is both a reflection of her commitment and hard work in local government and the considerable progress being made by women in leadership positions in local government. As well as Louise there are now four women on the thirteen-member council of LGNZ. The CEO is also a woman.

Why should New Zealand keep its present number of MPs?⁵⁶

By **Elizabeth McLeay**, School of Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington

At the heart of the issue of how many Members of Parliament we should have in New Zealand is the whole question of what we expect our Parliament to do. In broad terms, Parliament:

- Makes law;
- Provides the ministers;
- Scrutinises the activities of government and holds it accountable;
- Influences policy;
- Debates issues; and
- Represents the citizens.

What New Zealand needs, therefore, is a Parliament that carries out these functions well. It needs enough MPs to do this. All the arguments put forward in favour of reducing the number of MPs have to answer the question of whether or not reduction will help or hinder the NZ House of Representatives from carrying out its democratic tasks. I argue here that there are no good reasons for having a smaller Parliament. On the contrary, all the arguments are in favour of having at least 120 MPs.

⁵⁶ This is a slightly revised version of a talk given at the AGM of the Wellington branch of the Women's Electoral Lobby, 13 April 1999.

Before looking at the arguments for keeping 120 MPs, what are the arguments for reducing the size of Parliament? I can find four poor arguments for reducing Parliament and one mediocre one.

The arguments in favour of reducing the number of MPs

1. 'MPs behave badly in the House, so we should get rid of some of them'.

It is indeed the case that some MPs – certainly not all of them – appear to behave badly. But why would having 21 fewer MPs produce a situation where everyone was better behaved? Other solutions are needed, a parliamentary Code of Conduct, for example. Note also that, if we reduce the size of Parliament, there is no guarantee that the incompetent and inadequate MPs would be the ones who did not gain re-election.

2. 'We don't trust MPs because they leave their parties and they don't carry out their promises. Therefore we should have fewer MPs.'

Again, how would fewer MPs improve this situation? Only two parties have had defections: NZ First (nine out of the original seventeen) and the Alliance (two out of the original thirteen, and two of the Greens will leave the Alliance at the time of the 1999 general election). Most MPs have remained with their parties since the 1996 election: 44 National MPs: 37 Labour MPs; and 8 Act MPs. As far as parties carrying out their promises are concerned, having a smaller Parliament might result in parties that are even more likely than at present to go against their party manifestos when they are in Government. This is because of the dynamics of institutional size. In small parliamentary parties – a consequence of creating a smaller House – the views of the backbench MPs of a governing party or parties can easily be outweighed by those of the ministers. Thus, ministers can easily win arguments in caucus, including arguments in favour of departing from their election promises or coalition agreements.

3. 'We don't like politicians. Therefore we should have fewer of them.'

Would we like politicians better if there were fewer? We might, if the politicians who remained were of superior quality. As I argued above, however, this is highly unlikely to be the case.

4. *'Small governments tend to be of better quality than large governments. Our cabinets are too big. Therefore we should reduce the size of Parliament.'*

The problem with this proposal is that the one suggestion – concerning the size of the Parliament – does not follow from the other, the size of the Cabinet. There is indeed a good case for reducing the size of Cabinet. And most cabinets (under FPP as well as MMP) have had their shares of incompetent ministers who might have been better left languishing on the backbenches. But it does not follow that, because cabinets might be more efficient and capable were they smaller, Parliament itself should be smaller.⁵⁷

5. *'MPs cost too much...the country can't afford them. We should get rid of some of them.'*

Ordinary MPs are paid about \$80,000. On top of this they get allowances to enable them to do their work properly. (These allowances are being reviewed.) Then there are the other institutional overheads (officers and staffers etc.). If we reduced the House to 100 MPs, we would save the country money. But the sum involved should be balanced against the arguments for keeping 120 MPs.

The arguments for keeping 120 MPs

These arguments are based on the functions of Parliament listed at the beginning.

1. We need at least 120 MPs in order to provide an adequate pool of MPs from whom the ministers are chosen. Under the Constitution Act 1986, Ministers must be drawn from Parliament. The smaller the Parliament – and therefore the parliamentary parties – the less choice there is. (And unlike many other countries, New Zealand cannot draw on an upper house to supplement the ministerial team.)

A government needs a team of about 22 ministers (including ministers inside and outside cabinet). Also two whips are needed and the Speaker usually comes from the governing party or parties. (I am assuming that the Deputy and Assistant Speakers are drawn from the opposition parties.) In a House of 120, as at

present, with a total of perhaps 66 MPs in the governing parties, there will be 41 backbench MPs left after the ministerial team and so forth are chosen. In contrast, in a House of 100 only 30 MPs are left on the backbenches. Some of these MPs will have little or no parliamentary experience. Take another example. A minority government is formed with a total of 37% of the seats in Parliament, the position of the National government during 1999, if we do not include the Independent and Mauri Pacific MPs. In a House of 120 MPs, the governing party (or parties) receive 44 seats, leaving 19 backbench MPs. In a House of 100, with 37 seats in total, there are a mere 12 MPs remaining. In other words, there will be scarcely any choice, if any at all, of ministers.

Thus, the smaller the size of the Parliament, the fewer MPs there are to serve in Cabinet; and the more likely it is that the inexperienced, the mediocre and the incompetent become ministers.

2. We need at least 120 MPs to help make ministers and cabinet accountable to Parliament and parties. In small governing parties, ministers can easily dominate their backbench colleagues. Inevitably, ministers have a range of advantages over their backbench colleagues. Ministers have access to expert advice, detailed 'on the job' knowledge, and status. When they can dominate their parties by sheer force of numbers also, all the power is in their hands. The bigger the parliamentary party, on the other hand, the easier it is for the backbench MPs to question and monitor the activities of the government. Because of party discipline, when the governing party or parties is dominated by the cabinet, it is easy for the cabinet to dominate Parliament. This means that the executive becomes unaccountable to the elected representatives. If we shrink the size of Parliament we are more likely to return to having the dictatorial cabinets which were a feature of our past.

3. We need at least 120 MPs to do the work on the parliamentary committees. There are 16 permanent committees, plus (usually) several ad hoc committees. This is where the major part of the work of Parliament is done: scrutiny of legislation; inquiries into agencies and policies; examination of budgets and expenditure; scrutiny of government agencies; and the hearing of petitions. Most committees comprise eight MPs (several have more). Committees need MPs who have the background and time to

⁵⁷ (Note that the sizes of Cabinet and the total ministry have actually been reduced during the present parliamentary term.)

build up expertise on the subject areas. Committees need MPs who are competent to chair them. The fewer the number of MPs, the less influential and efficient the committee system of the House of Representatives is likely to be. This aspect of the parliamentary work of MPs goes hand-in-hand with the need for MPs who can develop policy specialisation. In today's world we need MPs who are prepared to specialise in particular policy areas. How otherwise can they effectively perform their scrutiny and policy development functions? Parties need capable, knowledgeable MPs who can perform well in their parties, in debate in the House, in parliamentary select committees, and in coalition negotiations. Fewer MPs would mean more work for those who remain, and less time to specialise.

4. We need at least 120 MPs so that our Parliament develops worthwhile non-ministerial, parliamentary careers. In a small House there is only one goal for ambitious MPs: to get into cabinet. This has always been the case in New Zealand. With such a small Parliament, an MP has to be inexperienced, very unlucky or extremely incompetent *not* to get into cabinet if his or her party wins office. In large legislatures, because the chances of getting ministerial posts are slight, many MPs build alternative careers, especially through the committee systems. MPs put their energies into being good committee members, instead of (or as well as) grandstanding in parliamentary debate. This results in more capable committee memberships and committee chairs, and more independent and assertive committees generally.

5. We need at least 120 MPs so that we can continue to have fair Maori representation. At present there are: five Maori seat MPs; one General seat MP who is Maori; and nine Party list MPs who are Maori. Under MMP, with 120 MPs, at long last we have a fair proportion of Maori MPs. If Parliament were to be reduced in size, there would be fewer opportunities for Maori to become MPs. If the number of list places were to be reduced in order to take 20 or 21 MPs from Parliament, Maori would have fewer opportunities to enter Parliament because historically Maori have found it very difficult to gain nomination for general electorate seats. If we have fewer party list seats, this means fewer winnable seats for each political party and more difficulties in 'balancing' the party ticket.

6. We need to have at least 120 MPs in order to represent women fairly. Nearly three-quarters of the women in Parliament today entered through the party lists. Women, like Maori, have found it difficult to gain party nomination for winnable electorate seats. Today we have 30 per cent of the Parliament who are women, the highest in our history: do we want to go backwards?

7. We also need to have at least 120 MPs in order to represent members of minority ethnic groups fairly. Again, MPs from the ethnic minority groups entered Parliament in 1996 through the party lists. Shorter lists would result in fewer opportunities to enter Parliament because shorter lists are likely to produce less 'balanced' party tickets, especially in the top, winnable places.

8. We need to have at least 120 MPs so that elected representatives can be fully responsive to the needs and interests of groups and constituents. The fewer the number of MPs, the more difficult it is for those MPs to respond to community and sectoral problems and needs. The more MPs there are, the more adequately local needs can be met by electorate and party list MPs. The more MPs there are, the more likely it is that MPs can build up special links with (and knowledge about) particular groups in society. New Zealand is a scattered community. Remote areas in particular need their MPs to be accessible. The fewer the number of MPs, the more thinly spread will be their representation. In particular, the South Island and rural districts would suffer.

It is simply too early to start altering bits and pieces of the new electoral system. This brings me to another point: the practical problem of reducing the present number of MPs.

How would the number of MPs be reduced?

The indicative referendum to be held at the time of the 1999 general election will ask us to choose between retaining the present number of MPs and reducing the House of Representatives to a total of 99. To achieve the lower number we could cut the electorate and party list totals equally. This would produce 55 electorate seats (including perhaps a reduced number of Maori seats) and 45 list seats. The electorate seats

Table 1: Populations and sizes of parliaments in selected countries

Country	Population (in millions)	Number of seats in legislature
<i>Ireland</i>	3.6	<i>lower house: 166 upper house: 60</i>
<i>New Zealand</i>	3.7	120
<i>Norway</i>	4.4	165
<i>Denmark</i>	5.3	179
<i>Israel</i>	5.4	120
<i>Sweden</i>	8.9	349
<i>Australia</i>	18.5	<i>lower house: 148 upper house: 76 (plus state parliaments)</i>

would then become unacceptably large (and would cause the parties huge problems as sitting MPs tried to gain renomination). Alternatively, we could leave the present number of electorate seats and reduce the number of list seats. This would give us 67 electorate seats after the 1999 general election (including 6 Maori seats); and 32 list seats. We might or might not then still have a proportionate Parliament, and there might well be problems of ‘overhang’ seats where parties might win a higher percentage of parliamentary electorate seats than they were entitled to gain under the party vote. The other problem is that Maori, minority and female representatives would find it difficult to gain winnable places on the party lists.

How does the size of the New Zealand Parliament compare with that of other countries?

Almost all countries of comparable populations have national parliaments as large – or larger – than has New Zealand at present, as the table above shows. (The populations are approximate figures) There might be a variety of reasons for different countries having different sized legislatures. But the above figures might also indicate that there are certain democratic functions that can only be undertaken properly in a parliament which has an adequate number of MPs.

Reforming the system

There are a number of ways of improving the parliamentary system. Some of these are:

- Reforming parliamentary Standing Orders so that parties must have a minimal number of members to be defined as parties that qualify for research and leadership financial subsidies;
- Instituting a Code of Conduct for MPs;
- Instituting a register of financial interests of MPs;
- Instituting a Register of Parliamentary Lobbyists;
- Servicing parliamentary committees better;
- Giving new MPs better introductory training; and
- Improving the quality of the research services available to MPs.

As for the MMP electoral system itself, at present we should leave it alone until it has been in operation for at least three parliamentary terms. The Electoral Act 1993 requires the Electoral Law Committee of the House of Representatives to report on the operation of the new electoral system by June 2002. There are no good reasons for altering MMP before then. Good government and effective political representation cannot take place when the rules

are being constantly changed. Stability, not change, is needed at present. The need for stability should not prevent us debating the pros and cons of the MMP system, of course, and we might start to debate some of the changes that might eventually be made. Possible reforms that might be considered, for example, are:

- Abolishing the one-seat threshold for party parliamentary entry;
- Abolishing the nationwide party lists and replacing them with regional lists (perhaps creating three regions with 17 or 18 MPs in each);
- Ensuring that candidate selection is fair and democratic; and
- Finding a new way of subsidising parties' media expenses.

Whatever the form of the electoral system, however, we need a Parliament that can adequately perform its primary functions. **Without at least 120 MPs, New Zealand is unlikely to have a Parliament fit for a modern democratic state.**

Some experiences as Associate-Minister of Women's Affairs

Address by **Deborah Morris**, former Minister of Youth Affairs and Associate Minister of Women's Affairs.

The following is an abridged extract of an address by Deborah Morris to a 300 level 'Women and Politics' class at VUW in August 1998. At that time Deborah Morris had just resigned from her Ministerial portfolios, and from New Zealand First. She has since resigned from Parliament. It is reprinted with her kind permission. Full drafts of the address are available from The Editors, c/o School of Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington.

People are often interested in how I came to be a Minister. Basically, after graduating from University I worked in Parliament as a researcher for New Zealand First. At that time the party had only two members, Tau Henare and Winston Peters. As 1996 was the first MMP election and having campaigned for electoral reform since 1992, it was great to have been invited to stand. It was daunting but definitely a very exciting prospect.

Essentially I moved from the research room to the campaign trail. Or as some would say, out of the frying pan and into the fire, addressing public meetings and discovering the demands of politics and public life. I entered parliament as a list MP and was then involved in the coalition negotiations – an eye opening experience to say the least. When the National/New Zealand First Coalition was finally formed I was appointed Minister of Youth Affairs.

During the Coalition talks I first really experienced the sexism that exists in Parliament. As I sat around the negotiating table, a group of other MPs were outside waiting to come in. One of them just happened to make an extremely sexist comment about me to another of my colleagues. That comment was repeated to me later for my information. I quickly realised that Parliament would not be easy.

Two days after the Cabinet was announced, I attended my first Caucus meeting as the Minister of Youth Affairs. Without warning a full-on personal attack was launched at me from certain other NZ First MPs who were disappointed they had not been appointed Ministers. In their view a young woman should never have been given the responsibility of a Ministerial position. I can tell you that those same people that got stuck into me that day now respect my work.

One of the most important things for me to learn was how Cabinet and Cabinet committees worked, I enjoyed the opportunities to influence the shape of Cabinet papers before they got to Cabinet. Throughout the Coalition Government, those meetings were often the scene of bloody battles – with as many as ten National Ministers present at times and often only one or two NZ First Ministers.

I recall one discussion we were having about the labour market and minimum wages. The former Prime Minister made a comment which prompted me to say, "well if that is the case we will need to introduce legislation to address the gender pay gap" His response was nothing short of dismissive. He replied, "Oh, we've got a cheeky young thing there in Deborah Morris." And on the meeting went. In an environment where I have needed to be co-operative and constructive, it has been equally as important to counter the challenges and comments up-front. And that is what I have tried to do.

I was appointed Associate Minister of Women's Affairs in September 1997, after the resignation of Christine Fletcher. In Women's

Affairs the main areas of my work included the Maori Women in Decision Making project, a cross-sectoral strategy for Maori girls, assessing the impact on women of a range of Government policy proposals including ACC reform, and CEDAW. A highlight was presenting New Zealand's report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in July. I presented the CEDAW report on behalf of the Prime Minister and Government. The result was the *Status of Women in New Zealand 1998* Report, which was sent to the CEDAW committee in March 1998.

The committee commended NZ on its domestic violence legislation and the range of cross-sectoral programmes which were initiated to combat family violence. They commended New Zealand's sensitivity to the situation of Maori women and the progress made since our last report in 1994 on improving the status of Maori women.

Getting better data on women was one of the areas which the government agreed to focus on following the Beijing Conference in 1995. So the Committee was pleased to note that NZ is now joining other countries in conducting time use surveys. When this is completed it will provide unique and invaluable information about how we all use our time, particularly about the amount of time in unpaid work which people, especially women, are doing in their homes and in the community.

We also talked about women's and family health—such as the Sexual and Reproductive health strategy, the breast screening programme, the Strengthening Families Strategy and free health care for under-sixes.

Moving on to some of the other concerns about the status of women in New Zealand, the Committee noted that women still earn around 80% of men's average hourly earnings. This seems to compare favourably with comparable countries, however we must continue to work to close this gap. The projects we currently have underway include research on whether our industrial relations framework discriminates against women.

The final major concern the Committee expressed was about the disparities in the lives of Maori women compared with non-Maori women. Te Ohu Whakatupu – the Maori policy unit in Women's Affairs – is working with Te Puni Kokiri on a comprehensive response to the issues raised at CEDAW and also in the *Closing the Gaps* Report.

Despite the committee identifying important areas where further progress is required, it considered that NZ was a role model for other countries.

SCHOLARSHIP

Te Wakahuia o Puao-te-Ata-tu Scholarship. The Social Policy Agency is offering a scholarship to assist one person of Maori descent to obtain a tertiary qualification relevant to the work of the Social Policy Agency. The scholarship is open to Maori who are attending a tertiary institution, and is for a maximum period of 3 years. It is worth \$4,000 per year. Scholarship forms are available from the Human Resources Advisor, Social Policy Agency, Private Bag 21, Wellington. Phone 04-916 3837.

Applications will be accepted until 24 September 1999.

Conference Reports

Pacific Islands Political Studies Association Conference (PIPSA) at the University of Canterbury.

By **Rae Nicholl**, School of Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington.

About 60 people from around the Pacific attended the sixth Pacific Islands Political Science Association (PIPSA) Conference which was held at the MacMillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Canterbury in December 1998. With the general theme, *Preparing for the 21st Century*, the conference was designed to focus attention on many of the key issues which have dominated post-colonial Pacific politics with a view, among other things, to understanding and theorising on their trends for the future.

PIPSA was established in June 1987 during a meeting convened and funded by Brigham Young University, Hawai'i campus, to discuss means of furthering research into the political systems of the Pacific Islands,

The objectives of the Association are three-fold. Firstly, to exchange information about government and political systems of the Pacific Islands – Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Secondly, to inter-link Pacific Island teachers, researchers and government policy-makers and lastly, to provide a forum for discussion of a variety of political issues affecting the Pacific.

Very few women attended this conference, either as presenters or participants. This was unfortunate because there are many issues of huge importance to women in the Pacific. The lack of female representation at central government level, and the high incidence of family violence throughout the Pacific, are major challenges facing Pacific peoples. It would have been valuable to hear about initiatives being taken in various Pacific countries from Pacific people, but this did not eventuate. For instance, the work done by the United National Development Fund for women (UNIFEM) could have been discussed. Experienced New Zealand politicians, such as Margaret Shields and Marilyn Waring have, under UNIFEM's auspices, organised training programmes in a number of Pacific countries. Run as practical workshops, the session covered negotiation skills, gender awareness, political organisation and campaign strategies and making parliamentary procedures more gender responsive. Some women who have undertaken the UNIFEM training have gone on to become politically active and have organised campaigns, with varying degrees of success.

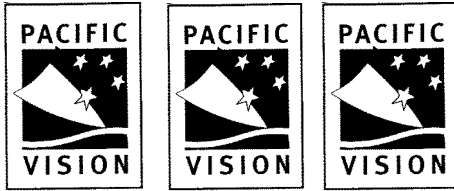
Three women gave papers in the Gender and Politics stream, which was very poorly attended although this was, in part unavoidable. Pressure from people wishing to present papers meant that the organisers had allowed for three streams to run simultaneously and, as the attendance overall was not large, this meant that the audience for all speakers and streams tended to be spread very thinly. Also, interest in the sessions relating to foreign policy and, in particular, the Bougainville peace process was very great, and those sessions attracted a large proportion of the participants.

Jean Drage of Victoria University began the session by giving an overview of women's political representation in central governments throughout the Pacific. Jean has been working for five years on documenting the political fortunes of women throughout the Pacific and has compiled an extensive database: her latest findings were presented in a report entitled

Women and Politics in the Pacific. Her presentation was followed by Rae Nicholl, also of Victoria University, who discussed the disappointing performance by women politicians in Guam. Her paper, *Vanishing Breed: What is happening to the Political Women of Guam?* detailed results from the 1988 Guam election, which saw women's representation fall from a critical mass of 33.3 percent in the late 1980s and early 1990s to a precariously low level of 13.3 percent. The final paper in the Gender and Politics session was given by Jacqueline Leckie of the University of Otago, entitled *Women and Political Agency in Fiji*, and represented a work in progress.

Papers given by women other than those presented in the gender stream included those by Julie Anastacio, from the Palau Community College, who delivered a paper on *Endangered Paradise: Development*, and Kate McMillan, of Victoria University of Wellington, whose topic was *Pacific People in New Zealand: Citizenship Rights in the Current Policy Environment*. Maria Borovnik from the University of Canterbury talked about *The Consequences of Labour Migration from Kiribati: A Research Proposal*, Elsie Huffer, University of the South Pacific, Fiji, spoke on *Meanings of Governance: The Cases of Vanuatu and Samoa* and Alaine Chanter, University of Canberra, discussed *The Possibility of Postcolonial Identity in New Caledonia*. Finally, Karen Stevenson, University of Canterbury, gave a paper which many participants felt was one of the highlights of the conference entitled *Politics and art – being your own culture's critic*.

Overall, 32 men gave papers as against nine women. Only one session was chaired by a woman, although two other women were invited to do so but for one reason or another declined. Fifteen men chaired sessions, four of them performing the task on two or three occasions. The good news from the conference was that Sandra Tarte from the University of the South Pacific, Fiji, was elected President *in absentia* and Rae Nicholl was elected Vice-President. It is hoped that this feminisation of the organisation's leadership will encourage more women to attend, to give papers and to chair sessions. The next conference will be held in Fiji in 2000 and the following one in Northern Queensland in 2002.



Pacific Vision Conference in Auckland

By **Rachel Lockwood**, School of Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington.

The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs hosted the 'Pacific Vision' conference at the Aotea Centre in Auckland from the 27-30 July. The international conference attracted close to 1000 delegates, key-note speakers, public servants, Government Ministers, politicians and other interested parties over four days.

'Pacific Vision' was part two of a three part strategy developed by the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs in 'Navigating the Currents of a New Millennium' for Pacific people living in New Zealand. Part one of the strategy was the release of the *Social Economic Status of Pacific People Report 1999*. This report painted a very bleak picture of Pacific communities in New Zealand, who, according to the report, fared worse in comparison to the Maori and general populations in health, education, housing, employment, reliance on income support, and violent crime. The purpose of the Pacific Vision conference was to address these problems and discuss possible solutions, but also to celebrate the successes of the community - particularly those in the sporting, music, art and entertainment fields.

The New Zealand Pacific population is exceptionally youthful and fast growing, and this was an issue that was repeatedly touched upon throughout the conference. Currently, one child in every ten is of Pacific origin and in twenty years time this ratio will increase to one in five. The social and economic difficulties facing Pacific communities in New Zealand are therefore issues that affect all New Zealanders, and all New Zealanders need to participate in ensuring positive outcomes for Pacific communities. This endeavour began at the Pacific Vision Conference.

The conference was based around five broad themes: Leadership, Identity, Society, Prosperity

and Partnership. Each theme was introduced with a plenary session of speakers which included the Hon. Bill English, Treasurer; Len Cook, Government Statistician; Dr. Rajen Prasad, Race Relations Conciliator; Dr. Jean Mitaera, Independent Consultant; and the Rev. elder Leuatea Sio, Presbyterian Minister. These plenary sessions were followed up by 'break out' sessions with various speakers presenting on a variety of topics and audiences being given an opportunity to debate the issues. Delegates were also asked to form their own discussion groups; either based on individual Island groups or with a focus on one of the five broad themes. The task was to debate the issues concerning these individual groups, and present a report suggesting some possible solutions to the conference on the final day. The conference culminated with the main 'players' working out solutions to promote Pacific People's status: in other words, expressing the 'Pacific Vision'.

The Ministry is collating these findings into a report due for preliminary release in September. A full report in January 2000 will complete stage three of the strategy, and provide the Ministry with some strong policy directions. It should also help the Ministry communicate these policy goals to other government agencies, Ministers, and related groups.

The most disappointing factor about the Conference was the lack of mainstream media reporting on issues that ultimately impact on every New Zealander. The conference highlighted the need for everyone to get involved to help overcome the difficulties the Pacific community suffers. It was surely the responsibility of the mainstream media to assist in this cause.

Global Century/Local Century: Conflict, Communication, Civility.

By **Jon Johansson**, School of Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington.

The International Society of Political Psychology ISPP recently held its 22nd Annual Meeting in Amsterdam. The conference theme included two specialist sessions concerning the political life of women. An interesting range of Social Psychology and Political Science scholars

delivered papers focusing on various political phenomena, including:

- Women Candidates: How They Reshape US Congressional Races
- Perceptions of Female Candidates for Public Office
- Women and Nationalism in Post-Soviet Georgia
- The Development of Feminist Consciousness and Praxis in Cyprus: A Case of Political Activism?

Although separating the effects of gender from other socializing and cultural influences proved problematic in one or two cases, the field of political psychology provided fertile soil for scholars interested in researching the effects of gender at different points of the political process. From a New Zealander's perspective, the lack of cross-cultural studies on the effects of gender was a disappointment. Few, if any, overseas scholars were aware that New Zealand had women leading both major political parties.

Aside from the ISPP invariably choosing wonderfully vibrant conference venues, New Zealand scholars in Women's Studies, Psychology and Political Science can contribute much to the international body of research by virtue of New Zealand's current political situation. Inter-disciplinary and/or case studies in leadership, political socialization, impression management and voting behaviour studies are but a few of those areas where New Zealand scholars can lend their expertise to advance the international study of women in politics.

Conference Diary

24-25 September

'Political Communication and The Law, The Media, Political Parties, The Parliament'

The Australasian Study of Parliament Group Parliament House, Sydney. Contact: Carol Rankin, Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Wellington or go direct to:
Web: <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/gi/asp>

26-29 September

Annual Conference, Australasian Political Studies Assn, to be held in Sydney. Contact APSA 1999, Dept of Govt & Public

Administrator, Merewether Building H104, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.

E-mail: apsa@econ.usyd.edu.au

1-2 October 1999

'Global Justice/Women's Rights'

The Ninth Annual Women's Studies Conference will be held at the Southern Connecticut State University on October 1-2. Inquiries to Women's Studies, MO B10 Southern CT State University 501 Crescent St., New Haven CT 06515

E-mail: Womenstudies@scsu.ctstateu.edu

5-7 November 1999

The New Zealand Women's Studies Association Conference will be held in Wellington at Victoria University. Preliminary enquiries to :

E-mail: Womens-studies@vuw.ac.nz

Women's Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington.

There will be a 'Women and Politics' stream. Anyone who wishes to give a paper in this stream please contact Rae Nicholl:

E-mail: rae.nicholl@vuw.ac.nz

School of Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington. Please note: papers will be published.

1-3 December 1999

'New Perspectives for a New Millennium: Local, National, Regional and Global'

The School of Political Science and International Relations at Victoria University will be hosting a joint conference of the third Wellington Conference on World Affairs, the European Community Studies Association of New Zealand and the New Zealand Political Studies Association. The Conference will be held in the old Government Buildings (now the VUW Law School), Wellington.

For further information, and to express interest in giving a paper please contact:

The Conference Administrator, School of Political Science and International Relations Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600 Wellington, Ph: 04 4715351, Fax: 04 496 5414
E-mail: Politics-conference@vuw.ac.nz
Web: <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/pols/>

Book Review

**Linda McDougall, *Westminster Women*,
Vintage, London, 1998, pp.215**

Reviewed by **Margaret Cousins**, School of Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington.

This book is the written outcome of a documentary series filmed over six months. The subjects were those women newly elected to Westminster in May 1997. (Twenty percent of newly elected MPs in 1997 were women) The fact that the author is the wife of the long serving MP for Grimsby, Austin Mitchell (a well known ex-resident of New Zealand) enabled her access to the corridors of that institution.

Of interest to the serious political observer is that the book covers the early months of the new Blair Labour Government. Although the main focus is on the women in that parliament, there are some interesting insights into the wider question of what happens when a new Parliament is elected to Westminster.

It is focussed predominantly on the Labour Party women and their struggle for representation, but the contrast between the cultures of the Labour and Conservative parties, as they affect women, can be also be discerned. McDougall believes that a "critical mass" of women (one quarter of the Labour members and a fifth of the House itself) has now been elected. She states that this will have the effect of changing slowly but permanently the male culture that has permeated Westminster: not only as it relates to the behaviour of MPs but also in the way the House is administered, and in particular how it meets the needs of its members.

The book covers well the ambivalence women still feel about putting themselves forward for selection as a candidate. They still face the problems of coping in a male culture, their different treatment by the media and the problems brought about by the impact of their public life on their personal (relationship and family) responsibilities.

Of particular interest is McDougall's coverage of the quota debate within the British Labour party, the consequent legal action, its outcome and overall impact. Also, her Appendix I, a summary of the Fawcett Society Report which consists of a survey of women MPs, could be of use to researchers in the area.

However, the lack of an index does detract from the book's usefulness.

The following quote sums up well how the women of Westminster saw their role:

Women in Parliament were always aware of themselves as a minority...The demands of colleagues, the press and women voters made it impossible for them to keep gender-related issues separate from their professional lives...Some resent this...others welcomed it.

For those particularly interested in women in politics this book is an enjoyable read.



Resources for studying Women and Politics

Web Pages:

Women Prime Ministers Contains biographies of all the women Prime Ministers from Sirimavo Bandaranaike to Jenny Shipley

<http://web.jet.es/ziaorarr/00women3.htm>

Women & Politics: a quarterly journal of research and policy studies, American University, Washington, DC.

<http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/wandp>

Inter-Parliamentary Union: Studies and Surveys on women in politics from 1975 to 1999.

<http://ipu.org/wmn-e/studies.htm>

Global Centre for Women's Studies and Politics.

This relatively new site has been developed by the Feminist Institute of the Henrich-Boell Foundation, Berlin. Its mission is to connect women globally and build up an international forum for women's issues, discussed from many cultural, national and political perspectives. Check it out at:

www.glow-boell.de

NB: The Editors would appreciate information on any other sites that would be useful for women researching women and politics.