

# The Election

By Tony Holman QSO

Did you vote? Did you like the result? Did you think that the younger vote would be much larger? Did you think that you would have to wait so long to see who would govern the country?



So why has it turned out this way?

Well, it may be because New Zealand is becoming more divided, or more “diverse”, which means more divergent needs, objectives, or loyalties. Or it may be because there are still many people who are completely uninterested in politics, because they feel that the politicians have deserted them, neither consulting them, nor representing their needs.

This disillusioned section of the community seems to feel that the political parties are introverted, talking mostly among themselves rather than finding out and articulating the key issues that people are worried about. Alternatively, when a party does find some key issues, their ‘solutions’ may be too vague, too unrealistic, or too far in the future.

People who care about the really important things facing this country want to see brave and inventive leadership that galvanises caring people. And there are so many big issues:

- poverty
- housing
- health
- child abuse
- land speculation
- one-sided trade agreements
- loss of sovereignty and ownership of land, particularly of our productive land
- climate change
- environment
- water
- education
- increasing corruption
- international tensions
- immigration
- economy

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Finally, the uncomfortable feeling that the New Zealand way of life is being rapidly eroded.

While we've been waiting for the final outcome, the media has tried to manufacture news from no news, pestering *Winston Peters* and other party leaders in an attempt to get some detailed information.

Unfortunately, the opportunity was taken by a number of people and "pop" commentators, to disparage the MMP system and promote a return to First Past the Post.

They conveniently ignore the fact that a government was frequently elected with the largest number of MPs, but fewer voters than the 'defeated' party. This was not democratic and did not allow every person's vote to count.

The most important aspect of MMP, and the reason the country voted for it, is that now everyone's vote does count, rather than how many MPs of each party are chosen by each electorate. In the end it is the total vote for the party that gives the proportionate number of representatives for Parliament.

Thus with 50.4% voting for change and only 44.4% voting for the ruling party, a new government promoting significant changes is the outcome.

The people have voted for a number of parties and those parties offer a number of alternative policies and emphases. The parties which have the highest levels of support (National and Labour) required the support of



another party or parties in order to govern, and the discussion (via *Winston Peters*) has meant that they have all had to hone their key policies and priorities in discussions with one another – including *Winston*.

This is good. It sharpens up the chosen policies, it removes vague ideas and promises, and ensures that constructive criticism provides a stronger and more realistic base for the chosen policies.

For those who think that a FPP system is simpler and better, I suggest that view is somewhat simple-minded, especially in a country without any real constitution, and without a second house (like Australia or the UK) which enables rushed, defective, or very unpopular Bills to be re-debated, and if necessary sent back to the ‘Lower House’ for amendment or further debate.

In simple terms, the 2017 vote has been characterised as a choice between the status quo, or change. It seems that 44.4% of the country voted for the status quo, while 50.4% are in favour of some important changes to deal with some of the major challenges facing us, as listed above.

Whether *Mr Peters* was reflecting a central, common theme of the new government in his TV announcement or not is yet to be seen, but it must have sent a chilling message to some here and overseas when he referred to the failures of capitalism. To some that may have seemed (or will be interpreted by commentators) as communist talk. But I would refer them to many capitalists and some very rich people around the world who agree that excessive capitalism has become a monster, now referred to as “cannibal capitalism”.



Winston Peters

I hope that at least some of our major problems can be effectively faced and solutions put in place. But also, we must realise that these problems are so large, and have been ignored for so long, that they won’t be eliminated quickly or even in one term.

It is also up to us to do as much as we can to help solve these things at a local and individual level and not expect that any government can do it alone.