

84th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION NEW ZEALAND (IPANZ)

Agenda:

- Welcome Liz MacPherson, Interim President IPANZ
- Apologies
- Minutes from the 83rd AGM, 29 July 2019
- President's report
- Financial report
- Appointment of Auditors for 2020-2021
- Constitutional amendments
- Election of IPANZ Board
- Guest Speaker Dr Bruce Edwards
- Refreshments and Networking



Democracy in the age of political scandal and turbulence

Dr Bryce Edwards
Victoria University of Wellington
Presentation at the IPANZ AGM
28 July 2020

Is NZ democracy being dirtied by scandal?





A strong democracy?

- The extraordinary changes and turbulences in NZ politics in 2020 illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of our political system
- An effective government

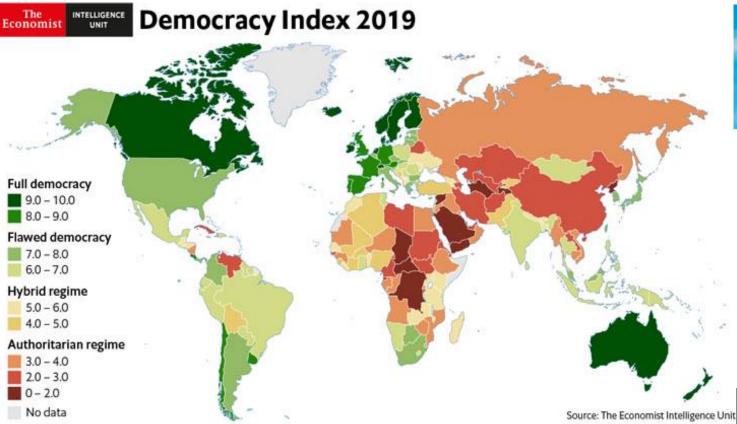




Economist Democracy Index



New Zealand tops world for civil liberties - Economist Intelligence Unit report





emocracy Index 2019 PP 5									
nk			Score						
		Norway	9.87						
		Iceland	9.58						
		Sweden	9.39						
		New Zealand	9.26						
		Finland	9.25						

What's happened this year?



- Some concerning trends of a political system in turmoil:
- An imploding Opposition, questionable MP ethics, and a Parliament seemingly plagued by scandal
- Where is the policy debate?
- Will the turbulence and scandal turn people off politics?
- Is politics becoming dirtier?
- Are MPs becoming less ethical?
- Are we becoming too focused on scandal and leadership?

Turbulence and scandal in this term of Parliament

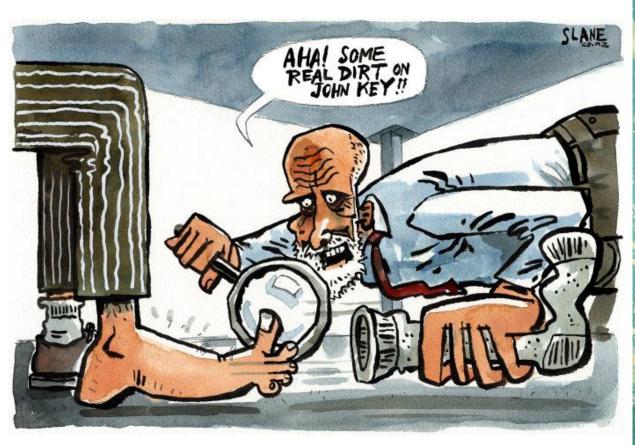


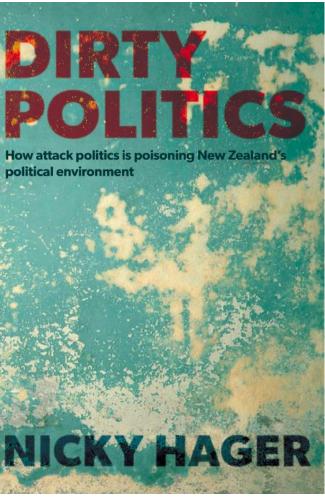
- Jami-Lee Ross
- Political finance scandals
- Cabinet dismissals: Meka Whaitiri, Clare Curran, David Clark
- Kris Faafoi
- 2020: National's turmoil: Bridges-Muller-Collins
- Hamish Walker and Andrew Falloon in disgrace
- National Party retirements
- Ian Lees Galloway dismissed
- Increasing volatility in politics due to Covid-19



An escalation of trends over recent decades







Dirty Politics





Dirty Politics media coverage







On the offensive: **Accusations** of leaks and smears



Key claims Labour are the real dirty tricksters as Hager's source appears to leak more drift.

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tons critim relation whip between his office and right wing blogger Cameron States. Key to picture distring a p

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National caught deep in the mire









Distractions from real politics?





Distractions from real politics?





Distractions from real politics?



Scandalmongering?





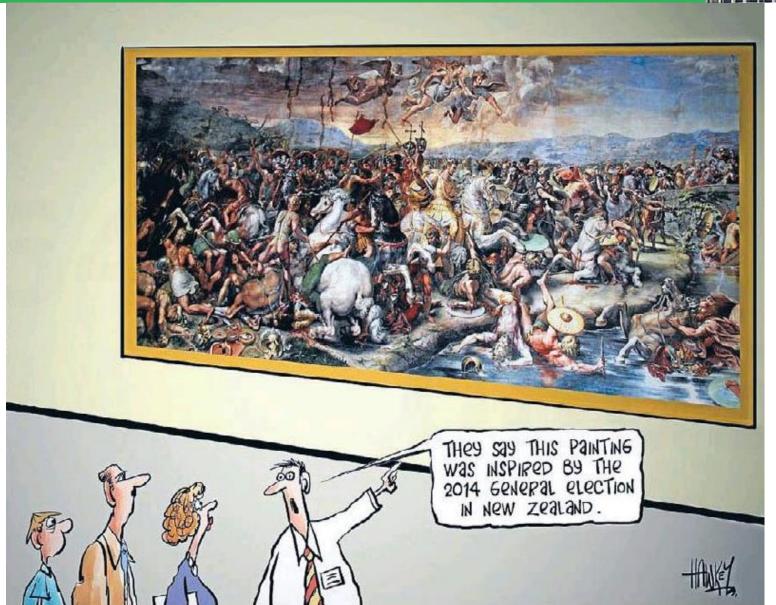
A chaotic, strange campaign





A chaotic, strange campaign





What's causing increased scandal and volatility?



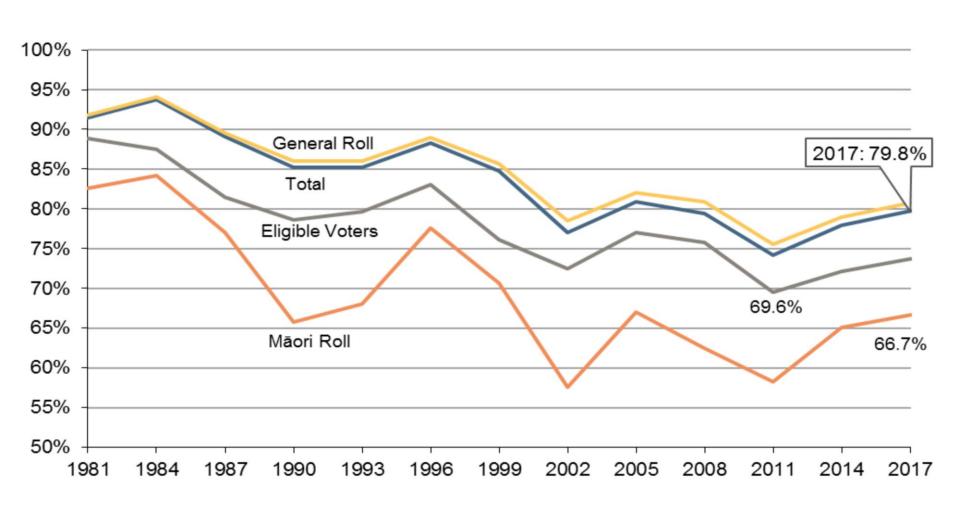
- Caveat: here has always been scandal in politics
- Long-term causes of increased scandal and volatility
- Political parties have had their anchors removed, allowing them to drift and sway dangerously
- A mix of positive and negative changes in democracy

1) Reduced participation in politics



A "hollowing out" of politics – voter turnout in decline

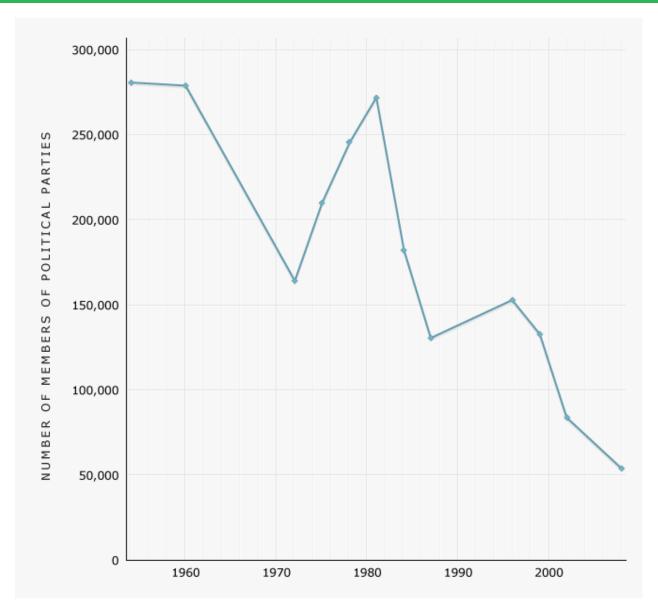
Figure 13: Voter Turnout by Roll, 1981-2017



Source: Parliamentary Library

Political party membership





Changes in societal-party linkages

- The traditional socioeconomic leftright political cleavage is in decline
- Flux in 2017: Labour's ascent from 24% to 37%
- Flux in 2020: National descent from 46% to 25%





Professionalisation of politics



- MPs are also increasingly "career politicians". This means that they come into politics generally at a younger age, via associated industries and jobs such as media, local government, public relations, and Parliamentary staffers
- A recent study suggested that about a third of the current Parliament fall into this category
- Does this make for more venal, ambitious, and less idealistic representatives?



A socially-economically narrower Parliament



Table 6: Previous Occupations of MPs as Share of Parliament (%)9

Occupation	1996	1999	2002	2005	2008	2011	2014	2017
Businessperson ¹	18	17	19	20	11	20	23	20
Manager/Administrator ²	8	6	8	9	16	13	17	14
Lawyer	8	8	10	7	15	10	8	11
Local Government	3	5	6	3	2	8	9	10
Public servant ³	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	9
Teacher ⁴	17	18	18	15	14	7	10	8
Farmer	13	12	8	10	8	7	5	7
Media	3	2	2	1	3	5	5	7
Consultant	6	8	6	7	2	4	3	3
Health professional ³	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Trade Unionist	7	6	8	7	5	4	2	3
Accountant	4	3	2	2	4	1	1	1
Engineer	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1
Other (or not stated) 5	11	13	12	17	16	19	6	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

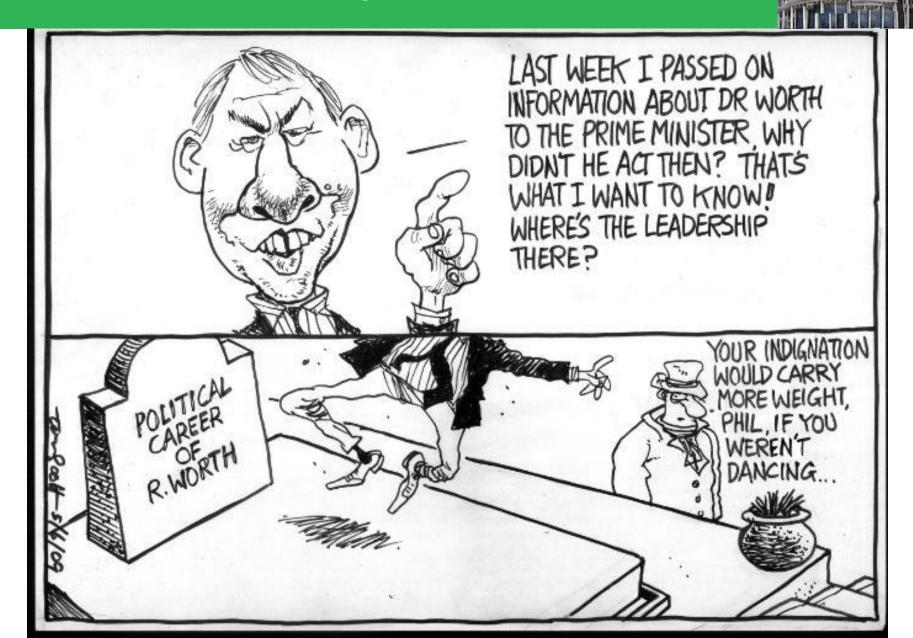
De-ideological changes



- De-ideological changes lead to a greater emphasis on personality and ethics
- In the absence of policy differentiation, there is a natural tendency for political parties to weaponise and focus on nonideological differences they have with their opponents
- This tendency towards expose, has traditionally been kept in check by a number of settings



Electoral gains from scandal







Breakdown of the pact?



- Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) an informal pact prevented the "nuclear button" being pushed
- Escalation then de-escalation
- John Key in 2013, he issued a warning to Labour MPs that he kept informed about opponents' misbehaviour and had "written it down and put it in my top drawer".
- John Key in 2014: "I have quite a long list. If Labour members really want to invite me to table all of those, they are welcome to do that, but I just make one little warning to them: do not go there. But if you want me to, I am more than happy to"

Other changes in society



- There are other changes in society, however, that are making the nuclear détente situation less tenable
- Revolutions in digital technology, media, and society's morals are leading New Zealand towards a more openness to the airing of controversies
- It's much harder to suppress information about the alleged misdeeds of politicians, when the #MeToo era expects sexual wrongdoing to be exposed, and when social media is democratising the sharing of information



Decline in trust



- Colmar Brunton survey 2018 about Parliament bit.ly/SurveyofNZpublic
- 60% "believe big business and vocal minorities are the ones who influence Parliament"
- 37% "feel there's no point in trying to influence Parliament as nothing will change"
- 21% "feel a sense of ownership of Parliament"
- 16% "feel connected to Parliament"



56% think politicians don't care

But over half of the country (56 per cent) say traditional parties and politicians don't care about people like them.



64% think the economy is rigged

And six in ten (64 per cent) of Kiwis agree that the economy is rigged to advantage the rich and powerful.

We need a democracy that can better deal with scandal



- Scandal politics and turbulence is the "new normal"
- Not necessarily a bad thing democratisation
- Requires greater sophistication and nuance
- "The public interest" Vs "what the public is interested in"
- Not all scandals are of equivalence We need better quality scandals!
- We need balance



Democray needs participation



- The problem of "Scandal fatigue syndrome"
- Scandal and political turbulence shouldn't be immobilising
- Politicians are becoming very risk-adverse
- The public might be put off politics and participation

Advertisement: The Democracy Project

- A new project: "Promoting critical thinking, debate, and engagement on politics"
- Independent, but hosted at Victoria University of Wellington
- New website: <u>www.democracyproject.nz</u>
- Existing email services: NZ Politics Daily; Political Roundup



