

# An Election Strategy For Fishers and Hunters

by **Tony Orman**

The other day I did some figuring that for over 40 years I've spent much of my time - and money - helping to fight the threats to fishing and hunting. It started way back about 1970 when the government of the day, then National, decided to raise Lake Manapouri, despite it being in a National Park, to generate electricity for a smelter owned by a foreign consortium.

It sparked an absolute outrage and many like myself vented their anger on the government. Then about the same time, the same government decided trout farming would be a good venture for New Zealand. I was alerted to the threat of it by an Acclimatisation Society fisheries officer the late David Pike. I researched it writing to many overseas authorities and scientists and the view came back don't touch it, it will ruin your hatchery programmes and your trout fishing. Besides farm trout is a very poor product for the consumer.

So I took up the cudgels and I found others were strongly opposed such as the O S "Budge" Hintz of Auckland, Stan Thompson of Rotorua, Noel Voyce of Canterbury and others.

Another issue at the time was the same government selling crown public land at Te Anau to a wealthy American who was going to build a luxury lodge and exploit the trout fishing and hunting resources, "selling" them as an attraction for opulent Yanks while New Zealanders would be locked out of what had been their land unless they paid the high fees.

Because Hastings MP Duncan McIntyre was the Minister of Lands and Forests and publicly promoting all three government moves, and I was living in Hawkes Bay, I wrote letters to papers expressing my concern. McIntyre reacted angrily and often sarcastically with letters. From there it escalated into all-out political war.

The outdoor sporting groups were relatively well organised and massed forces, concentrating on several key electorates.

On election night in 1972 the National government was stunned as Duncan McIntyre was dumped by voters and with a swing much greater than the national trend. The ripples from Hastings were felt in other key electorates such as Gisborne where National minister Esme Tombleson was dethroned and National lost the trout fishing electorate of Taupo to Labour.

A figure to the fore in sporting ranks was John B Henderson, president of the NZ Deerstalkers' Association. But some in the deerstalkers who were members and supporters of the National government were angry and criticised individuals like John and myself.

But at the NZDA conference in Gisborne in 1972 John Henderson gave a brilliant presidential address and concluded saying there as nothing wrong with mixing politics in fighting for a cause you believed in.

"I believe you should continue to flush out the men who pull the strings and wield the power into the open where the spotlight of public scrutiny can be focused. If they are true blue they have nothing to lose."

The 1972 election was a landmark, underlining the immense potential political power that the outdoor sporting public has at elections.

But I have to admit sadly the 1972 election was an exception.

I have always been a "swinging voter" with no party allegiances so can claim to take a reasonably strong dispassionate view.

Earlier I mentioned I have spent over 40 years since the "Save Manapouri" campaign, involved in lobbying and advocacy in supporting political action, presenting submissions to select committees ranging from trout farming, sea fisheries, a Maori fisheries bill, Conservation Law Reform Bill and others, part of deputations to see Cabinet ministers and lobbying politicians face to face. But the victories can be counted on one hand - trout farming (the big victory), channel catfish, grass carp and one or two others.

But in election year 2011 I have to add the outlook is far from rosy. The fishing and hunting public are fighting erosion of the public ownership of fish and game, erosion caused by the sale of fishing and hunting rights. There is encroaching pollution that even sees dead trout in rivers such as the Tukituki, warnings about drinking water in rivers and even causing dog deaths, private power companies vying to dam rivers for their own profits and a racially divided country as epitomised by the Marine and Coastal Bill. Sea fisheries management, or rather mismanagement, is dominated by the fishing corporate companies to which a succession of fisheries ministers seem servants.

Then there's the anti-wild animal attitude of DOC, the indiscriminate use of 1080 poison, heli-hunting and a few hunting issues that rile hunters.

And politicians in government deaf to any verbal protests. Since the 1972 Kirk government the slide has been downward and politicians increasingly arrogant.

Since then, it has been a frustrating process with successive governments founded on and dominated by either Labour or National, whose politicians have indulged in arrogance, deceit and deception. In the background has been career bureaucrats adept at "double speak" and manipulating ministers

But not so long ago, I had a chance conversation a National Party stalwart that triggered an idea. The party member said the two main parties, National and Labour, were

underneath, nervous the public might learn how to use MMP largely through the party vote.

In other words if the public largely realised that the party vote is **totally independent** of the candidate vote, then National and Labour led governments would not be so dominant.

As I said before "the 1972 election was a landmark, underlining the immense potential political power that the outdoor sporting public has at elections."

In 2011 terms, the outdoor public sector is very large. I recently saw a figure that 1.3 Kiwis go sea fishing in one form or another. Okay, let's suppose 500,000 are of voting age. Add trout fishers, perhaps 120,000, deerstalkers and pig hunters 80,000, plus duck-shooters and in total even allowing for overlaps between the sports, it's one heck of an army of voters!

Would it be about 800,000 voters?

And today among adult New Zealanders there is a growing feeling that National and Labour are Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dumb.

But as that National Party stalwart whispered to me, MMP gives the public a choice. You see, a voter can still vote for a National or Labour candidate, but with his or her party vote, is totally free to cast a vote for either Labour or National, Green Party, NZ First, United Future, Kiwi, Act, Conservative or which ever.

Everyone has actually **two** votes - independent of each other - on election day, one for the party, one for the candidate?

MMP has been far from perfect with criticism being focused on an overlong number of list un-elected MPs and on the influence by minority parties who have gone into coalition with government. Exactly! The Green Party deeply influenced the Clark-led Labour government and now the Maori Party on the current Key-led, National-based government. However for all that, we believe MMP has been a considerable improvement on the arrogance of the FPP system it replaced.

Irrespective of the debate on MMP versus FPP, MMP is here for the 2011 election.

**What if minor parties that could be in coalition with either Labour or National after November 26, had good outdoor recreation, fishing and hunting policies? Therein lies the the possibility and the opportunity.**

I believe and hope, the outdoor sector grasps this opportunity. Time is running out. With each three year term, the slide is downward.

The significant vote is the party vote.

To get MPs into Parliament it has to either win an electorate seat as Peter Dunne has done in Ohariu or gain 5 percent of the total vote.

The 2008 election resulted in 2,376,480 votes cast. Five percent of that is about 117,000. The Green Party did not win an electorate but got 6 MPs through its 157,613 party votes. What if enough outdoors Kiwis rose up and voted judiciously - like the greenies do - using their party vote on a minor party with outdoor policies?

If enough people understood the importance of the party vote and that it has no relevance to the candidate vote and voted for a party that had sound outdoor recreation policies, then significant power and influence could be given in Parliament to the minor parties.

That is if enough of that 800,000 fishing and hunting Kiwis care.

The Fish and Game NZ questions featured in the last issue went to existing parties only. United Future is the only one in Parliament that has battled for the outdoor public. But there are other possibilities outside of them too.

Two parties - significant to outdoor recreation - not in Parliament are:- New Zealand First (Winston Peters) and Kiwi Party (ex-MP Larry Baldock). The irrepressible Winston Peters is still there and is rating at least 5 percent in credible polls. Another of interest is the Conservative Party led by Auckland mayoral candidate Colin Craig.

NZ First and Kiwi --have some empathy with the outdoors traditions. Winston Peters is reportedly a keen sea fisherman, and duck shooter. NZ First is showing significantly in polls. Kiwi through leader Larry Baldock, have made strong public statements against 1080, for game animals, sea fishing and other outdoor issues.

Now here's an interesting hypothesis.

Current seats are:- National 58, Labour 43, Green 9, Maori 5, Act 5, United Future 1, Progressive 1.

Suppose a hypothetical scenario after November 2011 of National 47, Labour 40, Maori 5, Greens 5 --- and NZ First, United Future and Kiwi had 25 seats between them.

Obviously then those 3 minor parties ( NZ First, United Future and Kiwi) could have a large measure of control and influence. It is negative to complain about the degree of influence of the Greens (with Labour) or the Maori and Act with (National). The fishing and hunting public should make MMP work **positively** for the outdoor recreation public.

' Study carefully the outdoor policies of all parties including the minor ones and the three interesting ones outside of current Parliament. Go to election meetings and ask questions. Write or e mail the parties or individuals.

And from my decades of advocacy efforts, apart from 1972, we've gained little and have overall lost ground under a succession of Labour and National regimes.

I might still vote for a National or Labour candidate but with my party vote I'm looking for another besides Tweedledee and Tweedledum.

In fact, public fishing and hunting is on a slippery slope downwards.

I believe it's time for bold, positive strategic action at the polls on November 26.

**Think about it. If enough of the 800,000 do we might have a "ball game"!**