

Political Parties

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New Zealand Labour Party

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New Zealand Labour Party, political party established in 1916 in a merger of various socialist and trade-union groups, including the **Unified Labour Party** (founded in 1910) and the **Social Democratic Party** (founded in 1913). It has traditionally been strongest among trade unionists and low-income voters.

The party grew steadily so that by the 1930–35 term it had become the official parliamentary opposition; in 1935 it gained 53 seats, a clear majority, and formed the first Labour government, with Michael Joseph Savage as prime minister. It remained in office continuously until 1949 (under Prime Minister Peter Fraser from 1940) and enacted various pieces of welfare legislation, including social security, price and trade regulations, compulsory unionism, Maori protection, and other reforms but embracing only very limited socialization (of banks and broadcasting).

From 1950 to 1975 the party held power only for brief periods (1957–60; 1972–75). In 1984 it returned to power under the leadership of David Lange. Lange supported economic liberalization and enacted legislation prohibiting nuclear warships from using the country's ports. In 1989 he was succeeded as prime minister by Geoffrey Palmer, who was replaced by Mike Moore in 1990. Later that year the party was ousted from power by the New Zealand National Party.

In 1993 the party selected Helen Clark as its leader. Following internal divisions in the mid-1990s, the party became the largest in Parliament in 1999, and Clark became prime minister. Her coalition government won reelection in 2002 and 2005. In the 2008 election, however, the Labour Party was defeated by the National Party, and Clark subsequently announced that she was stepping down as Labour leader.

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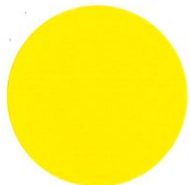
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