

Building a Brighter Future

National

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History of the National Party

The New Zealand National Party was formed in Wellington on the 13th and 14th of May 1936. It grew out of the coalition government of the Reform and Liberal Parties, which had formed the wartime National Government in 1915. The Reform Party had been essentially a rural based party, whereas the Liberals were dominated by city based concerns. These two parties united to form an alternative to the socialist Labour Government. The name "National" was chosen as the new party sought to represent all parts of the community.

The Party grew quickly and by the Third Party Conference in August 1938, shortly before the election, there were over 100,000 members. George Forbes, the United Party Leader opened the conference which formed the National Party in May 1936 and was Leader of the Opposition until October 1936 when Adam Hamilton was elected as the first Leader of the National Party. Hamilton led the Party into its first election in 1938. This election proved to be very disappointing with the number of National members rising from a mere 19 to 25 seats out of 80, well short of becoming the Government.

The onset of war saw National members entering a War Cabinet with the Labour Government of Peter Fraser. In 1940 Sid Holland was elected to be the Leader of the Party. He led the Party into the 1943 election and National reduced Labour's majority from 28 seats to just 12.

National's first woman Member of Parliament was Mrs Hilda Ross in the May 1945 by election in Hamilton. The 1946 election saw the removal of the "Country Quota", which had increased the number of rural seats, and this cost National victory. National won 38 of the General Electorate seats, the same as Labour, but the four Maori electorates remained firmly in Labour's hands. In the wake of the defeat Keith Holyoake was chosen as Deputy Leader in 1947. At the first meeting of the Dominion Executive of the Party



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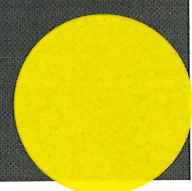
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