

1972

(Richardson, D., 2002: 461)

International Encyclopedia of Environmental Politics

Edited by
John Barry & E. Gene Frankland



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Values Party

The world's first national green party, the Values Party was founded at Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, on 30 May 1972. Its inspiration was Tony Brunt, a former journalist who was alarmed at the rapid urbanization of New Zealand and the increasing materialism of New Zealand society. He saw the contemporary political system as morally bankrupt and wanted to regenerate politics through infusion of nonmaterial values, with particular emphasis on respect for the environment and the rights of the individual.

In essence, the Values Party represented green ecological principles before standard green terminology had been developed. Much influenced by the increasing degradation of the New Zealand environment and by the contemporary *Limits to Growth* debate worldwide, the party produced a manifesto for the general election of November 1972 based on the groundbreaking *Ecologist* magazine publication, *Blueprint for Survival*. Entitled *Blueprint for New Zealand*, it envisaged a society that was 'just, sustainable, community-based, participatory, diverse, co-operative, internationalist, but above all, humanitarian'.

The Values Party was the political product of the ferment of social and cultural ideas of the time. In many ways, it was a New Zealand reflection of the concerns and the interests of the new social movements that had become active across the industrialized world as the post-Second World War generation began to challenge the more conservative ideas of the past. In this respect, the party put

special emphasis on the rights of women and respect for cultural diversity – Maori in particular. It opposed the Vietnam War and campaigned against French nuclear testing in the Pacific.

In the 1972 general election, standing in 42 out of 87 constituencies, the Values Party gained 2 per cent of the votes but no parliamentary seats. Three years later, standing in all constituencies, it increased its votes to 5.2 per cent, only 0.4 per cent short of the percentage gained by the West German Greens (*Die Grünen*) when making their *Bundestag* breakthrough in 1983. However, under New Zealand's majoritarian (first-past-the-post or FPP) electoral system, the party once again obtained no seats in the national parliament. In this respect, the lack of success of the Values Party in terms of parliamentary representation can be compared with that of other green parties in FPP systems, notably Britain and the USA.

The parliamentary scene in New Zealand continued to be dominated by the Labour Party (1972–5) and the National Party (1975–8). The fortunes of the Values Party declined and after a dismal result in the 1978 general election (2.4 per cent of the votes) it was engulfed by internal wrangling. In the 1981 and 1984 general elections, standing for 17 and 30 respectively, it obtained a mere 0.2 per cent of the votes.

During the 1980s, New Zealand's electoral system became increasingly discredited. In the 1978 and 1981 elections, the Labour Party received more votes than the National Party, but the National Party gained more seats. In 1981, the Social Credit Party gained 21 per cent of the vote but only two