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Greening the inequality debate

The Green Party of Aotearoa/New Zealand is an environmental or ecological party that also favours a more equal society (Ford 2015). On the economic left–right dimension of the New Zealand party system, the Green Party occupies a position somewhat to the left of Labour. Some commentators argue that to become more politically successful, the Green Party should move to the centre by moderating its egalitarian and social justice principles. Others argue that the Green Party has already begun that process. On the social progressive–conservative dimension, the Green Party occupies a distinct space: as well as being an ecological party, the Green Party is a left-liberal or libertarian party and strongly defends social rights and individual freedoms.

Beginning this chapter with the historical background of the Green Party's development and ideology, we move on to an analysis of the party's innovative tax proposals that would have shifted current business taxes toward paying for pollution costs. In the context of claims that the tax policies shifted the party to the right, we examine how voters positioned the party, vote flows between the Greens and other parties, and vote splitting. We then examine the foundations of Green Party voters in the class structure. Next, we examine the proposition that values rather than social structure best explain the position of the Green Party, examining possible interactions between old politics and new politics ideological dimensions. This provides the foundation for an analysis of how the Green party's policies to address inequality, how the preferences of Green voters for action on that matter structured voting choice, and how attitudes

about inequality interact with attitudes about environmental priorities within the Green vote. We conclude by discussing the party's coalition options and its lack of success in participating in governments hitherto.

Background and history

The beginnings of the Green Party of Aotearoa/New Zealand can be traced back to the establishment of the Values Party in 1972, the first Green Party in the world to contest a national election.¹ That year, Values won 2 per cent of the vote and three years later 5.2 per cent. The party's first manifesto addressed environmental quality, conservation and ecological sustainability, mounting a critique of the organisation, management and control of modern societies. The Values Party embraced the need to focus on people, communities and humanitarian values, rather than individualism, economic growth and profit (Dann 1999). Social equality through a moderately left-leaning collectivism was also an underlying principle.

In the late 1970s, the Values Party succumbed to conflict between those who took a moderately liberal or left approach and those who saw the party as eco-socialist. It contested the 1981 and 1984 elections but ran no candidates in 1987. Values activists instead concentrated on social movement politics and the campaign for proportional representation. In 1990, some former Values Party members and a new influx of activists formed the Green Party. It contested the 1990 election and gained nearly 7 per cent of the vote. In 1992, the Greens joined the left-wing Alliance, but withdrew in 1997 after the first election under the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system. The party won just enough votes for parliamentary representation at the 1999 election. By 2008, the Greens had emerged as New Zealand's third largest parliamentary party, a position they continued to hold after the 2014 election, in which they won 10.7 per cent of the vote and 14 seats in the 121-seat parliament. This represented a slight dip in the Greens' vote share, down from 11 per cent in 2011. The party was disappointed with the result. Co-leader Russel Norman (2015: 147) had hoped to win 15 per cent. Polling had suggested the Greens might reach that goal.

1 Some Australian commentators contest this point, as the precursor to the Tasmanian Greens, the United Tasmania Group, was established in March 1972 and ran candidates in the state election held in April 1972.

Some New Zealand commentators sympathetic to the centre-right often seek to portray the Green Party as 'extreme'. The initial intake of Green Party MPs did include Sue Bradford and Keith Locke, both of whom had been active in socialist organisations in the past. But by 1999, both had left those groups to engage in broader, less sectarian political formations. Both Locke and Bradford became spokespeople for NewLabour after its formation in 1989, before joining the Greens (Bradford and Locke 1999). The Greens have come a long way since their reinvention in 1990, in terms of vote share, leadership and membership (Edwards and Lomax 2012). In 2014, this reinvention was best represented in announcements on building a 'Green economy' that spanned formal economic policy as well as sustainability, conservation and income equality.

From the outset, the Values Party had sought to develop an economic platform that represented a green alternative to both mainstream and social democratic economics. Environmental, ecological or green parties must inevitably engage with economics, because economic development often comes with environmental costs, both in terms of damage to natural ecosystems and to human health and wellbeing. In the days of the Values Party, much of the damage was also being done at the behest of government, with past Labour governments as much to blame as the business community. Under the influence of neo-liberalism, governments have drawn back from driving economic development directly. Contemporary Greens therefore direct their policies more toward the ways that government provides the incentives shaping business activity. This requires thinking more deeply about markets, taxation and the most effective means of affecting behaviour.

The breadth of Green thinking goes beyond the environment, and left and right in economic terms. It has another axis of human liberty. Homosexual law reform, the rights of indigenous peoples, a focus on youth representation and the rights of future generations have regularly featured in speeches and manifestos of the Green Party, just as they had earlier in those of the Values Party. Such values are common among Green parties globally (Ford 2015). Ecologism is central but supplemented with notions of respect and tolerance without violence, inclusivity, social justice and responsibility (Carroll et al. 2009; Talshir 2002). In Ronald Inglehart's (1990) terms, Green Parties are 'postmaterialist'. They stand for the liberation of human potential beyond the basic needs of economic and physical security that they also wish to ensure. Human beings should

be free to create, to experiment and to live the lives they wish to live. This makes the Greens 'libertarian' as well as 'left'; indeed, in this sense, the Greens are much more extreme liberals than they are extreme left. This puts them strongly at odds with social conservatives whose ideas about human behaviour are conventional and traditional. The New Zealand Election Study (NZES) no longer estimates postmaterialist values but, in 1990, at the first election fought by the Green Party, it found that over half of its voters could be classified as postmaterialists or leaning in that direction, compared with 36 per cent overall among New Zealanders in general (Vowles and Aimer 1993: 143).

Tax and economic policies in 2014

Articulated in its 'Green charter' (Green Party 2014b), the Green Party's broad principles informed a raft of detailed policies in advance of the 2014 election. Rather than championing economic growth, co-leader Russel Norman (Green Party 2014d) announced their economic policy as one of economic transformation to support businesses to become 'smart, ethical and responsive'. He spoke of an economic plan that involved tackling unacceptable levels of inequality and environmental damage through reorienting taxation, regulating markets and bolstering environmental protection. The Greens' specific economic policy announcements during the campaign included establishing a government-owned and profit-making Green Investment Bank to act as an independent facilitator of private sector capital, a commitment to cheaper, sustainable energy sources, as well as encouraging organisations, public and private, to pay a living wage. Nonetheless, initially it was the carbon tax switch that attracted the media limelight.

Framed as an ecological tax reform by Norman, the idea was synchronous with Green Party principles. The reform would shift taxes off work and enterprise, and on to waste, pollution and scarce resources. The process was to begin with an Ecological Tax Commission that would review all existing taxes and discuss where eco-taxes would work best. This announcement did not undermine the Green Party's other aspects of its taxation platform: a progressive system that supplemented the goods and services tax (GST), a tax-free income threshold, adjustments to benefit abatement rates and the introduction of a capital gains tax, all aimed at reducing material inequalities. Most commentators, however, overlooked

the latter, championing instead what they perceived to be the Greens' strategically smart decision to 'move just a little bit more towards the centre' (Edwards 2014c).

In contrast to the existing Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), a measure the Greens had previously supported, the new carbon tax would result in costs for industry polluters: a tax of \$25 per tonne of carbon, and a reduced rate of \$12.50 per tonne for farmers. There would be a climate tax cut on the first \$2,000 of income for households and businesses. When announced at the Greens conference, was greeted by 'rapturous reception' (Armstrong 2014c). Polling indicated that voters were not averse to the idea. UMR Research revealed that a 'personal tax cut funded by a charge on climate change polluters' would make 32 per cent of those surveyed 'a little more likely' to vote for the Green Party; 44 per cent said it would have no impact on their party choice, with 13 per cent indicating they would not vote for the Green Party anyway (Vance 2014).

Not everyone on the right expressed opposition to the Green Party's carbon tax proposals. National party supporters and political commentators Matthew Hooton and David Farrar, the Taxpayers Union and several economists argued that the shift away from the ETS towards a tax made good economic sense, and some businesses would ultimately benefit (Edwards 2014c). Both moderate and left-wing commentators concluded that with this initiative the Green Party had begun a raid on National's more centrist voters, who might think National's so-called Blue-Green group had not yet gone far enough to combat climate change. But given the proliferation of parties left of centre, and given the claim that those on lower incomes tend not to vote Green, the Greens' alleged repositioning on costing climate change could be hailed a strategic success story (Edwards 2014c). This reflects similar trends internationally. Green parties have regained momentum from the mid-1990s onwards, and have positioned themselves in ways that have opened up representation in both left- and right-leaning coalition governments in various parts of Europe (Dolezal 2010; Müller-Rommel and Poguntke 2002; van Haute 2016). In many European countries, centre-right parties have also come to recognise that more effective environmental policies are required, bringing them in closer proximity to Green parties.

Admittedly, the thrust of Green tax policies was not strongly redistributive, and there were non-party political grounds on which they could be justified that might appeal to wavering voters on the right (Campbell 2014).

Repetto et al. (1992) argued in the beginning of the 1990s for the use of ‘Green Fees’, which would begin to shift the tax burden away from worthwhile activities such as work, investment and clean, efficient production, onto activities governments would want to discourage, like pollution, inefficiency and waste. Since then there has been considerable comparative research into the economic viability of a carbon tax switch, which, if fiscally neutral, could result in wide ranging political support (Albrecht 2006; Speck 1999). In the end, the attention given to the economic and environmental possibilities associated with the carbon tax switch was fleeting at best. Unsurprisingly, business and farming interests believed it would be detrimental to their businesses (Vance 2014). A few mainstream outlets covered the prime minister’s opposition to the idea, and the possibility that the Greens’ initiative would produce tax cuts in 2017 in line with what the government was promising.

The *Dirty Politics* controversy (Hager 2014) and the 24-hour campaign news cycle also ensured it was difficult for the Greens’ tax message to stay in the public eye. Russel Norman did his best to remind voters, arguing that the Greens were pro-market and that the major issues of sustainability could be ‘solved by setting the right incentives and prices’ (Rutherford 2014). Norman claimed that the Greens would be open to working with any government committed to implementing Green policies (Radio New Zealand 2014e). This was taken to be ‘code’ for working with National. There remained some journalistic scepticism about the Greens’ capacity to go ‘mainstream’ (McLauchlan 2014b). The very low likelihood of the National Party moving to an environmentally based tax system seemed not to be considered. However much Green tax policies might potentially appeal to the intellectual centre-right, the odds of the New Zealand National Party adopting them were extremely low.

Party positioning, proximities and social structure

If the Greens intended their adoption of feasible, well-costed and innovative economic and tax policies to signal a shift to the right and attract National voters in 2014, the strategy failed. Figure 7.1 shows that in 2014 NZES respondents continued to view the Greens as a party marginally to the left of Labour. Meanwhile, National remained firmly to the right of centre, closer to the Conservatives and ACT than to New

Zealand First. Respondents placed three parties just to the right of centre (Māori, New Zealand First and United Future). Returning to the flow of the vote estimates discussed in Chapter 1, Table 1.2, we can note that about half of the 2014 Green Party vote was from those who had voted Green in 2011. While this data must be treated with caution, it suggests that the apparent stability of Green voting support is something of an illusion; as in a railway station, some got off and others got on the train, in this case in about equal numbers. The Green Party lost about 1 per cent to National and gained somewhat less from that source. It also may have lost a little more to Labour than it gained, but most of the inflow into the Green vote in 2014 was from Labour and previous non-voters.

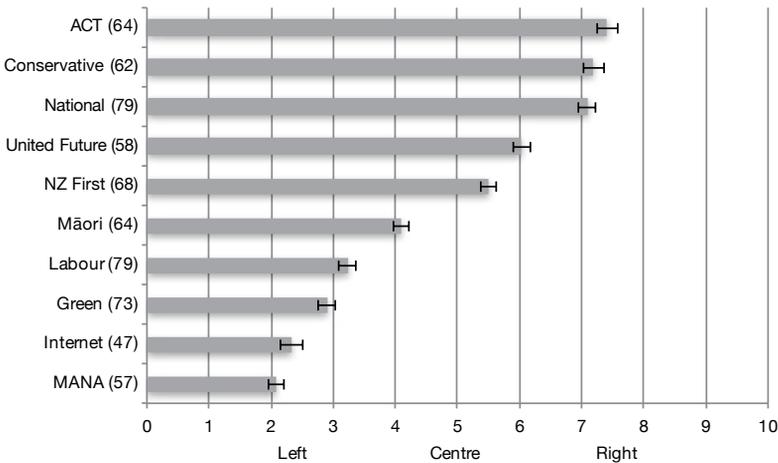


Figure 7.1: Left-right positioning of NZES respondents, 2014 election

Note: Labels include percentage of sample assigning a position to the various parties. Data excludes those not answering the question or who indicated don't know.

Figure 7.1 introduces the left-right positions of all the parties as ascribed by NZES respondents in 2014. The Labour and Green parties clearly remained much closer than the Greens and National. Split voting tells the same story, sourced from the official data produced by the Electoral Commission (see Appendix Table 7.A2). Green Party voters were 10.7 per cent of those who placed a ballot in the box. Those casting both party and electorate votes for the Greens were only 3.7 per cent, not much more than a third of the Green party vote. But no one expected any Green Party candidates to win an electorate, so it made sense for Green party voters to cast a vote for another candidate, assuming that they had a preference for one of those over another. That more preferred candidate

was much more likely to represent Labour: 5 per cent of the voters cast a party vote for the Greens and an electorate vote for Labour. Only just under 1 per cent cast a party vote for the Greens and an electorate vote for National. In 2011, about 1.5 per cent did so (Vowles 2014b: 31). Fewer National Party voters gave an electorate vote to the Greens in 2014 than in 2011. Choices have tightened within the camps of National and Green voters, with fewer flows between the two votes across their boundaries. New Zealand voters did not see any convergence between the National and Green parties in 2014.

Some journalists have also suggested that the Greens' failure to attract voters on the right was less about the ability to demonstrate a capacity for economic management and environmental pragmatism, and more about how their position on issues of social justice connected or did not connect with their electoral support. For example, political commentator Duncan Garner (2014) argued that 'the Greens talk poverty and social justice, but the poor aren't listening—and they're certainly not voting for them'. He identified 'telling statistics' from party vote data across electorates: the Green Party polled much better in upper-income electorates than in those with high proportions of people on lower incomes. But Garner's observation is based on what is known as the ecological fallacy: it is dangerous to infer individual behaviour from differences between large groups of people such as those contained in electorates. At the individual level, as Chapter 4 has shown, the Greens were slightly more likely to gain votes from people on lower incomes than those on upper incomes.

Garner concluded that 'the Greens need to evolve and be open to formally supporting a National Government'. This evolution appeared to require a move away from a left position on social justice. This is not a particularly new claim. In 2009, Carroll et al. explored whether the New Zealand Green Party's left-of-centre social justice policies were stopping them from obtaining a much higher percentage of the vote and thus increasing potential to be a coalition partner (see also Batten 2005 and, for the Australian Greens, Manning 2002).

This argument is wide open to scepticism. Aside from the acceptability of Green tax proposals, there were equally significant policy differences between the Green Party and the National Party on core Green business: the environment. Cooperation between parties requires both to make a commitment. In 2008, the Green Party were not averse to working with the new National Government, and took part in a program to encourage home insulation and develop a New Zealand-based regulatory

system for natural health products (Green Party 2009). After the 2011 election, cooperation continued on home insulation, the management of toxic industrial sites and the development of cycle ways. By 2014, most of these arrangements had lapsed and John Key sharply rejected a Green overture for continued and renewed cooperation after the 2014 election (Newshub 2014b).

Green voters in other countries tend to be employees in white-collar service sectors of the economy, and in the public sector, and are occupationally different from both the traditional ‘old politics’ economic cleavage (Dolezal 2010). In New Zealand, as shown in Chapter 4, Green voters are more likely to live in non-manual than manual households, but the probability estimates are not outside confidence intervals. Farmers are particularly less likely to vote Green. In New Zealand, the sector of the economy in which people work does not appear to matter for the Green vote. Other structural divisions of relevance for the Green vote are hypothesised to be gender, education and religion. As Chapter 4 has shown (Figure 4.4), education and absence of religiosity do matter in New Zealand. Dolezal (2010) suggests that Green supporters view ecologism as a form of religion, that there is an urban–rural divide (also confirmed in New Zealand) and that impact of age may be complex (youth versus the now ageing protest generation). Examining these characteristics alongside attitudinal factors in a multivariate analysis of 12 European countries, Dolezal’s findings confirm that the stability of the Green vote in recent years is connected to shared social characteristics as well as values.

Green voters in New Zealand in 2014 were young, higher educated, tended to have a European ethnic identity, be a union member and live in an urban location. There is no evidence of an older ‘protest generation’ that bulges for Green voting. Contrary to Garner’s claims, lower incomes and fewer assets are associated with Green voting. However, as Figure 7.2 shows, Green voters are not working class and do not see themselves as such. They also do not identify as middle class, given the width of the confidence intervals, mainly identifying with no class at all. The effect of identifying with no class on the probability of voting Green is statistically significant when compared with working-class identifiers. Yet the relationship between not identifying with a class and Green voting loses substantive and statistical significance once the socio-economic characteristics included in the basic social structure model are controlled for, indicating that social structural locations ‘explain’ these perceptions of class or non-class identification.

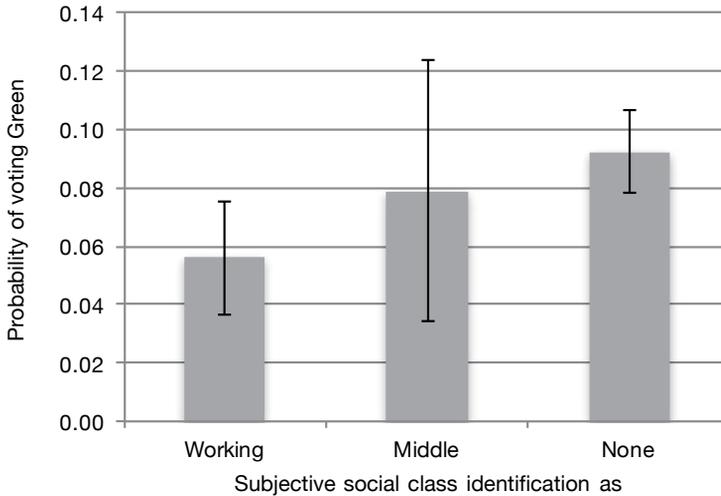


Figure 7.2: Probability of voting Green by subjective social class

Note: A simple regression of vote Green or not against the subjective social class categories.

Source: New Zealand Election Study 2014.

The Green Party and ‘values’

Most of the debate about the positioning of the Green Party has focused on economic and social policies. But there is another side to the Green Party. As discussed in Chapter 3, materialism and post-materialism form one set of labels for a dimension that represents the ‘new politics’, as distinct from the ‘old politics’ reflected in the left–right dimension. One can define this dimension slightly differently as socially progressive against socially conservative, or simply as liberal versus conservative. As explained in Chapter 3, in the NZES we define it in terms of the difference between libertarian and authoritarian values.

The NZES measures authoritarianism with three questions, all soliciting agreement or disagreement with statements with which authoritarians will tend to agree. For this reason, it is biased somewhat in favour of authoritarianism, but measures its variation quite well. The statements are: ‘Most people would try to take advantage of others if they got the chance’; ‘A few strong leaders could make this country better than all the laws and talk’; and ‘What young people need most of all is strict discipline by their parents’. We combine this into a 10-point scale with authoritarianism scoring high, libertarianism or social liberalism scoring low.

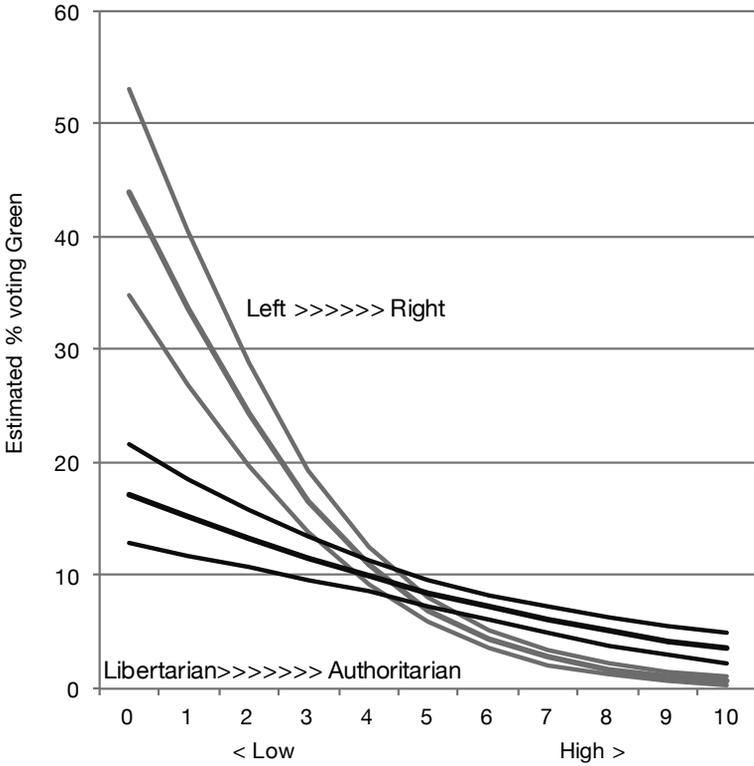


Figure 7.3: Left–right and liberal–authoritarian attitudes as predictors of voting Green, 2014 election

Note: Based on a logistic regression of left–right and libertarian–authoritarian positions on vote for the Green Party or not. The two scales are also interacted together, but Figure 7.3 shows the estimated probabilities generated by each scale leaving the interaction in the background. Each set of probabilities remain controlled for the effects of the other and the interaction between them.

Source: New Zealand Election Study 2014.

Libertarian–authoritarian attitudes correlate weakly ($r=.15$) with the left–right positions. Being economically right is associated with being authoritarian, and being economically left tends to be associated with libertarianism. This is consistent with NZES findings from previous elections (Vowles 2004b) and the nature of party systems in most developed democracies (Bornschieer 2010). However, the correlation is modest. The most authoritarian person is likely to be only 1.5 higher on the 10-point left–right scale than the person who is most libertarian or liberal. Left–right and libertarian–authoritarian therefore form two underlying dimensions of the party system.

Figure 7.3 shows that both the left–right and libertarian–authoritarian position predict voting for the Green Party quite strongly. The strongest effect on the Green vote is the left–right position, with those who are most to the left voting for the Green Party at a probability of 30 per cent or higher. Those at 8 or higher on the left–right scale have a less than a 2 per cent probability of voting Green. The libertarian–authoritarian slope is not as steep as the left–right scale, but libertarians are nonetheless three times more likely to vote Green than authoritarians.

Figure 7.4 plots the interaction between left–right and libertarian–authoritarian. The combination of being right (8 and above) and authoritarian produces a flat line; as already noted, a person scoring 8 on the left–right scale has a less than 2 per cent chance of voting Green, and this is almost regardless of where they sit on the libertarian–authoritarian scale. People on the right who have libertarian values seem to extend those values into their position on the role of the state in the economy. For this reason, this flat line running parallel and very close to the X-axis is not plotted in the figure, and Figure 7.4 only presents the interaction between left–right and libertarian–authoritarian for people leaning towards the centre-left (score 4 on the left–right scale) or left (score 1 on the left–right scale).

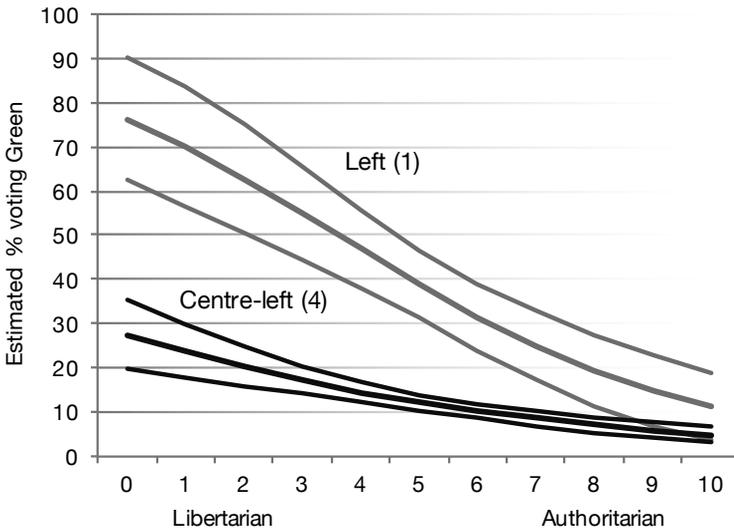


Figure 7.4: The interactive effects of libertarian–authoritarian positions and left positions on the probability of voting for the Green Party

Source: New Zealand Election Study 2014.

Figure 7.4 reveals that the combination of being economically left and socially libertarian has a potent effect on voting Green. The Greens are a majority party on the libertarian left: more than 75 per cent of the left-libertarian electorate supports the Green party. But this is, of course, a very small slice of society. Libertarian attitudes pull the centre-left towards the Greens too, but not as strongly. These findings are robust even after the baseline social structure variables are added as controls. Although both libertarian and economic left attitudes are important in predicting voting for the Green Party, being left is about three times more important than being libertarian (see Figure 7.3). While most Green voters do not feel that they belong to the working class, they are to the left in their political attitudes and tend to care about those who are less fortunate than they are.

The Green Party and the issue of inequality

This all casts considerable doubt on claims in the post-election media analysis that the Green Party needed to reassess its principles and add a ‘more blueish tint to their supposedly red-green hue’ (Edwards 2014d). We return to the two questions on income inequality included in the NZES: ‘Differences in income in New Zealand are too large’; and ‘Government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels’. Put together in Chapter 6, these two questions form a scale in which action to reduce inequality is the highest value with a theoretical maximum of one, and no action at all is a theoretical minimum of zero. As Figure 6.11 indicated, voters for the Green Party were significantly more likely to want action on inequality in 2014 than they were in 2011, and indeed they were slightly more concerned than Labour voters. Differences between the Greens, National, New Zealand First and Conservative voters were statistically significant, and hold even with controls for socio-demographic characteristics.

Around the world, Green voters tend to reject income inequality and believe that the government should seek to reduce it. Significant correlations can be found between willingness to pay increased taxes for social services and greater social equity, and a willingness to pay increased taxes to ensure environmental protection (Carroll et al. 2009). Contrary to Batten (2005), Carroll and co-authors concluded that the Greens would not necessarily fare better electorally by confining themselves to environmental issues and taking a less committed position on social justice and inequality, arguing that the Greens’ left-of-centre social policies might prove even

more attractive to those for whom environment was a priority. In our data, as reported in Chapter 6 (Figures 6.2 and 6.3), we also found strong support among Green Party voters to pay for universally provided services such as health, education and taxpayer-funded pensions, equivalent to the level of support among Labour voters. Green voters were also only slightly less supportive of expenditure on targeted benefits, such as unemployment and other welfare benefits than Labour, and significantly more supportive than National voters and voters of other parties to the right.

The Green Party did address the issue of inequality and poverty during the election campaign. The headline of a 'Billion-dollar plan' included a commitment to harnessing additional tax from high-income earners and trusts by creating a top tax rate of 40 per cent, and redistributing it through a children's credit, a parental tax credit and additional investment in child health and education (Green Party 2014a). Several weeks later, the Greens launched a document titled 'Fair reward for fair effort' (2014b). Their proposals included increasing the minimum wage to NZ\$18 per hour, and introducing a living wage for core government and contracted workers. They also appealed to union members, through their commitment to making workplace bargaining more democratic and requiring companies to report on the income gap between the highest and lowest paid employees. While the Greens argued their policies were pro-market in advancing a Green economy, they remained firmly interventionist on creating a fairer economy. They promised to set benefits 'at a level such that beneficiary income is sufficient for all basic needs' (Green Party 2014a)

The environment

Despite its suggestions for new tax policies and the attention given to issues of social justice and inequality, the Green Party's focus remained firmly on the environment. Among its policy highlights for the 2014 election was strong action to restore freshwater quality; a response to high levels of water pollution as a result of urban development and, in particular, the rapid expansion of the dairy industry. The Greens demanded rivers in which people could swim safely; National regarded the ability to wade in them safely to be sufficient. Air pollution followed in Green priorities, with particular emphasis on the emissions from road transport. The Greens promised to stoutly defend the Resource Management Act from which the National-led government was seeking to remove some

key principles underpinning environmental protection. The Green Party strongly opposed exploration for deep-water offshore oil, which was also strongly encouraged by National. All these policies stood in stark contrast to those of the government that, at best, promised slow and incremental action to address environmental problems.

The 2014 NZES asked respondents whether environmental protection should be prioritised over economic development (or vice versa). Reversed from its original questionnaire order, the scale ranges between 1 and 7 where '1 indicates do more to encourage economic development' and 7 refers to 'prioritising protecting the environment'. Figure 7.5 presents average scores for each party.

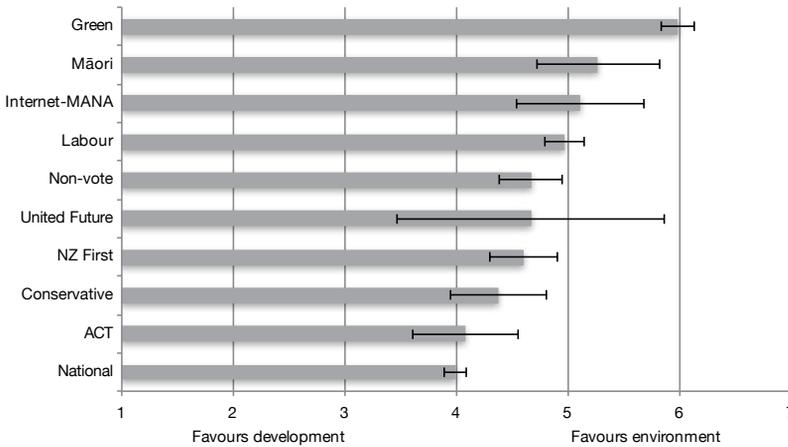


Figure 7.5: Environment versus economic development (comparison of means) per party choice

Source: New Zealand Election Study 2014.

Figure 7.5 indicates that the average National voter was the least likely to prefer environmental protection over economic development, compared with all other parties' voters. Environmental protection is not unimportant to many National voters, who score at 4 on average. Yet they show the largest difference of all party vote groups with Green voters. Unsurprisingly, the Green voters are most likely to be in favour of environmental protection, followed by supporters of the Māori Party and Labour. Even if the Greens dropped their economic 'leftism', their current voters are significantly different from National voters on environmental issues, and, while there is still a gap, Green voters are closer to Labour voters.

As argued above, Green Party principles articulate strongly both protection of the environment and promotion of social equality. If these opinions are correlated among voters, particularly among those who vote for the Greens, the claim that the Greens could drop their left-leaning policies and widen their support will not stand up to scrutiny. The 2014 NZES indicates that opposition to inequality and a desire to protect the environment do positively and significantly correlate ($r=.20$). Those who are strongly against inequality tend to be more supportive of protecting the environment than encouraging economic development. As Figure 7.6 shows, both attitudes also positively and significantly relate to Green voting and interact together.

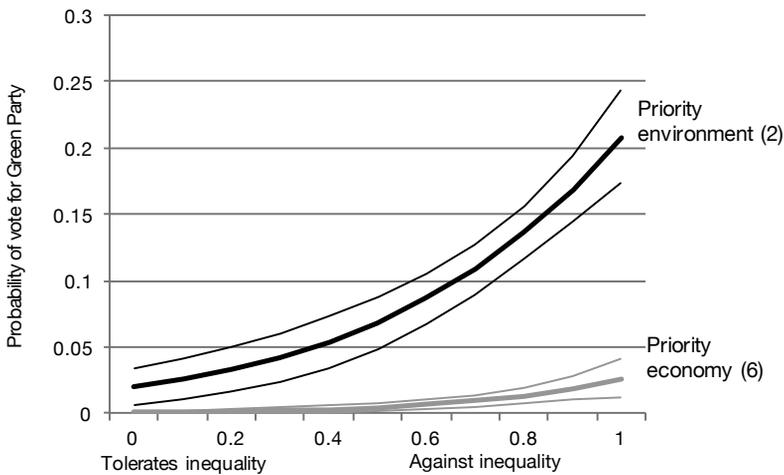


Figure 7.6: The interactive effects of environmental opinions and preferences about reducing inequality on the probability of voting for the Green Party

Source: New Zealand Election Study 2014.

Figure 7.6 reveals that the likelihood of voting Green increases significantly the more one is against economic inequality. The effect of not tolerating inequality is substantially stronger among those who prioritise protecting the environment than among those who are supportive of developing the economy. If the Greens move to the right, they might well lose rather than gain votes. Admittedly, parties to some extent shape the opinions of their supporters. A shift to the centre or right might carry some Green voters with it, but that remains speculative at best. Core Green support is based on a left environmental ideological base.

Seeking government: Office versus votes

While Green parties have entered governments around the world, Katz and Mair (1995) have argued that governing parties such as Labour and National in New Zealand operate in ways that will preserve their dominance as *formateur* parties. They seek to prevent new entrants encroaching on their access to office, media and political donors (on Australian, see also Brenton 2013; on New Zealand, see also Curtin and Miller 2011). The assumption is that Green demands will ultimately be accommodated and co-opted by the major parties without the need to include the party in government.

Alongside this, Green parties are often assumed to be less office-oriented than other types of parties, primarily because of their focus on grassroots participation and their early scepticism of the capacity of governments to make change. *Formateur* parties prefer to work with parties that are prepared to trade policy for office and have a centralised leadership structure (Warwick 1996). Participation in government is likely to present electoral challenges for Green parties, when their supporters criticise them for becoming captured by the system, and for sacrificing policy and participatory principles for incremental gains (Carter 2007; Dumont and Bäck 2006; Poguntke 2002).

Dumont and Bäck (2006) go on to hypothesise that Green parties are only likely to enter government under certain conditions: when a surplus majority government is formed, when they win a large proportion of non-major party seats in parliament, and have longevity in parliamentary experience. In terms of type of government, Dumont and Bäck suggest that inclusion of the Greens in government is most likely to occur when the policy distance between themselves and the *formateur* party's left–right position is small, and when the main party of the left wins government. These arguments build on early theories that maintain the importance of ideological proximity, whereby coalitions will be formed between parties that are ideologically 'connected' along a policy dimension, with minimal ideological diversity. Using a dataset comprised of 51 government formation opportunities where the Greens were represented in parliament in Europe, Dumont and Bäck conclude that longevity in parliament, experiencing vote loss and ideological proximity to a *formateur* party on the left are significant in explaining the cases where the Greens have succeeded in entering government. By September 2014, nine countries had experienced Green parties in government (Little 2016).

Entering government was one of New Zealand Green Party's objectives in 2014—and it was not unrealistic, given what is theoretically required. They had been in parliament continuously for 18 years, and had experienced both gains and losses in term of vote share since 1996. Party positioning, vote flow and split voting data examined above do also indicate a proximity to the Labour Party that is close enough to make coalition an option.

Prior to 2014, the working relationship between Labour and the Greens was seldom smooth. Although the Green Party supported Labour-led governments on confidence and supply in 1999 and 2002, they agreed only to abstain between 2005 and 2008, and there has been ongoing tension over a range of policy issues of significance to Green voters and party members. Of these, the most problematic has been the question of genetic modification of animals and plants, particularly for human consumption (Bale and Bergman 2006; Ford 2015). Differences between Labour and the Greens put the parties at odds in 2002, and while the Greens did support the Labour-led government formed that year, it almost certainly destroyed the best opportunity hitherto for the Green Party to have been fully included in a New Zealand government. This has meant that the Greens have never received the benefits of additional ministerial staff, or similarly enabling resources, despite the advent of minority governments, where they could have held the balance of power. Instead, they have watched other parties take up ministerial posts in government. In 2005, both New Zealand First and United Future demanded the exclusion of the Greens from ministerial positions as part of the price of their support for Labour. Nevertheless, the Green Party has continued to position itself on an increasing number of issues of public policy and as a potential governmental partner.

In advance of the 2014 election campaign, the Greens made it abundantly clear that they were interested in working alongside Labour during the campaign with a view to forming a Labour/Green government. The proposal sought agreement that Cabinet posts would be in proportion to the number of seats won by the respective parties, and to build a common strategy to facilitate a relationship with New Zealand First, should the latter's support be required. On 10 April 2014, Labour leader David Cunliffe rejected the proposal. He said that Labour wanted to be open to *all* prospective partners joining a *Labour-led* government, and cited Labour's 100-year history of independence. That history of independence had not prevented Labour from campaigning with the Alliance in 1999, presenting themselves as a government-in-waiting (Campbell 2014).

Some media commentators suggested it was a lost opportunity for Labour, a position Cunliffe admitted to be a mistake after National won and reclaimed government (Watkins, Rutherford and Kirk 2014).

As previously examined in Chapter 5, Table 5.2, the 2014 NZES asked three questions about coalition preferences: ‘On election day 2014, between National and Labour, which party did you most want to be in government?’; ‘Of all the parties, which one did you most want to be in government?’; and ‘In addition to your first choice of party, were there other parties you wanted in government?’ Table 7.1 shows all those who indicated ‘Green’ in the second and third questions tabulated in row percentages against the responses to the ‘Labour or National’ question. The table thus shows to what extent those who preferred a Labour-led government and those who preferred a National-led government also wanted the Greens in government. The right column of Table 7.1 presents the overall percentage of people wanting a National-led or Labour-led government in the form of percentages by column.

Table 7.1: Major party most wanted to be in government and preferences for Greens to be in government

Major party most wanted in government	Greens in government		Labour or National in government
	No	Yes	
	Row %		Column %
Labour	36	64	29
National	80	20	56
Neither	57	43	9
Don't know	91	9	6
Total	65	34	
N			2,807

Source: New Zealand Election Study 2014.

Table 7.1 indicates that nearly two-thirds of those who wanted Labour in government rather than National also wanted the Green Party in government with Labour. Among those supporting a National rather than Labour government, only 20 per cent also wanted the Greens in government. In all, 34 per cent of respondents wanted to see the Greens in government. Going through the list of the National-led government's support partners, estimated in the same way as for the Green Party, this contrasts well with the 7 per cent who wished to see ACT in government, the 9 per cent who wished to see United Future

in government, the 18 per cent who wished to see the Māori Party in government and the 25 per cent who wanted New Zealand First. Of the minor parties, the Green Party was thus clearly the most preferred party to enter government.

Ultimately, the Greens' fate in terms of government formation is likely to be tied to the electoral success of Labour. In the medium term, at least, the Greens will not be in a position to be the *formateur* party in the process of coalition formation, but Green parties are not power-shy (Strøm 1990). In 2014, the fragmentation of the left undermined the potential success of the Greens, with Internet-MANA and Labour determined to appeal to both the left and the centre. Green policy positions on the environment, the economy and on inequality were well received by commentators and the Greens' core voters, but the party's hope to achieve 15 per cent of the vote may prove difficult to attain. Elsewhere, Green parties have rarely exceeded a 10 per cent seat share in national parliaments, and their ideological proximity with parties on the left restricts their coalition options. More than other types of party, Green parties tend to make major decisions through processes of internal party democracy, such as whether or not to enter a coalition government (Little 2016). Thus, when Green parties are presented with strategic choices between maximising votes, achieving policy gains or taking part in government, votes, and sometimes policy, tend to win out over government.

Conclusion

If the Green Party were to take the advice of political commentators and weaken its commitments to promoting social equality and social justice, its cause would be significantly weakened. In the context of a trend towards greater public concern about inequality and poverty in New Zealand, it seems odd advice for a vote-seeking political party to abandon its commitment to help address the problem.

Admittedly, the Green Party's promises to address inequality in 2014 were secondary to its tax proposals that would have shifted current business taxes toward paying for the costs of pollution. In emphasising the connection between climate change and economic policy reform, commentators from both the left and right assumed that the Greens were looking to reach beyond their traditional base of support, appealing to the liberal centre as well as the progressive left. If that was indeed the objective, the Greens

made no progress in achieving it. While Green voters tend toward lower incomes and fewer assets than average, apart from opposition from farmers, the Green Party vote largely transcends the 'old politics' manual/non-manual cleavage. Greens tend not to see themselves in class terms, or otherwise, like most others, consider themselves 'middle class'.

This does not mean that Green voters form an incoherent group. They come together on a combination of left-liberal/libertarian and environmental values that are mutually reinforcing and consistent. For a Green voter, being left tends to mean being liberal on social values and wanting more action to protect the environment. Many of these values are held outside as well as inside the Green tent. Pulling back from any one of those value sets runs the risk of weakening rather than strengthening the Green vote. The Green Party commitment to a more equal society is almost as important in its objectives and principles as its commitment to protecting the natural environment.

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