

# The Jobs Letter

No. 168

1 July 2002

Essential Information on an Essential Issue



## Election 2002 The Jobs Policies

WE INTERVIEW  
THE MAJOR PARTIES

### Question 1: What are your employment policies? What employment initiatives will your government take?

**Steve Maharey, Labour:** Labour believes that work is central to our lives. Paid or unpaid, work is the way we meet our needs, create wealth and distribute resources. It helps define who we are. It is at the heart of wealth and well-being.

The Labour-led government developed a comprehensive Employment Strategy that, for the first time, provided whole of government coordination and accountability for specific goals, activities and results. The Employment Strategy established the following goals:

- ensuring macroeconomic policies enable sustained economic growth and its accompanying job creation;
- promoting an employment rich economy
- developing a flexible, highly skilled workforce;
- developing strong communities
- improving participation in employment for Maori and Pacific people; and
- improving participation in employment for people with a disability and other groups at risk of long-term and persistent unemployment

Labour believes that employment policy needs to focus on both the demand for labour, and ensuring that workers are in the right place, with the right skills, and the right incentives to take the jobs that are being offered.

**Bob Simcock, National:** The New Zealand population is ageing. That will have a negative effect on our capacity to grow the economy and yet we will need growth to provide the services we need to support that ageing population. We need every person who is able to be in a job.

The National Party will be announcing a comprehensive package of initiatives to ensure that can happen.

The best thing any Government can do for employment is to maintain policies that support job rich growth. The Government's own projections are for growth rates that will see us falling further behind

comparable western countries. And many people believe those growth rates are optimistic.

The National Party has announced a comprehensive economic package that would increase New Zealand's chances of achieving rapid growth to maximise the value of jobs we need to increase the skills of our people. That means getting it right for every child from the day they are conceived! A good secondary or tertiary education system is of no use to a young person who has already lost the ability to access it. National will place a high priority on ensuring that every child gets a good start in life, and that they then have access to a dynamic and innovative school sector, and a world class tertiary system that is freed up to deliver for future needs not past needs.

Beyond that, a range of active employment initiatives will be announced that will:

- ensure that no young person moves from education to welfare
- eliminate long-term unemployment and keep short-term unemployment to a much lower level
- stop the waste of skilled motivated mature workers who are increasingly being marginalised in the workforce

Under a National Government every dollar saved by reducing welfare roles will be reinvested in helping the next person to get a job.

**Jim Anderton, Progressive Coalition:** "When the tide comes in, all boats rise." Our policy is to bring in the economic tide, for every region, every industry, every business.

In the last two years as Minister of Economic, Industry and Regional Development, I launched a new development strategy based on the co-ordination of policy to foster growth and employment. This was integrated with comprehensive policy for education and training.

The strategy was opposed at every stage by the National Party and by ACT. The key goal of The Progressive Coalition will be to deepen and broaden the economic development strategies I pioneered and which have only just started to make a real difference.

Full employment of a skilled workforce is the long-

term goal. We will make steady and effective steps towards that. The wood processing strategy will create thousands of skilled jobs, especially in the East Cape/Tairāwhiti region and in Northland. And there are similar steps in (for example) design, tourism, the entertainment industry, farming, manufacturing, and in the export sector generally. We aim to open one major initiative per region over 3 years.

**Sue Bradford, Green :** We are committed to working towards full employment with dignity and an income that's enough to live on. We reject the idea that that economic stability requires either a significant level of unemployment or a low level of protection for those in work. Initiatives we would take include:

- encouraging a shift in the emphasis of overall Government policy towards job creation in ecologically and socially sustainable work.
- supporting cross-sectoral strategies which encourage resourcing and support for community economic and small business development.
- shifting tax from work and enterprise onto pollution and wasted resources.

**Muriel Newman, ACT :** The creation of real jobs comes from business; from new businesses being established and from existing businesses growing. New Zealand is also short of investment capital.

ACT's surveys of over 90,000 businesses has confirmed that the way to create real jobs is to reduce taxes on individuals and business, creating better conditions for attracting domestic and overseas investment, creating greater demand, and by reducing red tape, compliance costs, and other impositions on businesses.

While Labour has sold the perception that their subsidies and programmes create jobs, any examination of the Household Labour Force Survey and Statistics show that the overwhelming majority of permanent jobs are in private sector areas such as retail, manufacturing, forestry, and so forth.

The majority of new jobs trumpeted by Labour have come through the public service, paid for by the taxes on workers and business. This is not sustainable without a thriving private sector, which is why ACT places prime importance on reducing barriers to small business growth and establishment.

**Laila Harre, Alliance :** The Alliance believes that full employment is essential in a modern thriving democracy. We reject the idea that unemployment is somehow natural, or the result of economic equilibrium. Unemployment occurs because the government tolerates it. Policies designed to foster full sustainable employment will be a top priority for an Alliance government.

The Alliance supports a broad definition of work and employment that recognises the contribution that everyone can make to society and the role that participation in work plays in people's lives. For the Alliance, full employment means full participation



**STEVE MAHAREY**  
Labour Party, Minister of Social  
Services and Employment  
[www.labour.org.nz](http://www.labour.org.nz)

in, and belonging to, society by all its members with an adequate income and a rising standard of social well-being for all.

Full employment will only be achieved if employment policy is co-ordinated with workplace relations and social security policy that enables people to achieve a fair standard of living. The Alliance has pledged to give particular priority to Maori and Pacific Island unemployment which is three to five times the pakeha rate. We will work with Maori and Pacific Island communities to develop policies that are appropriate, sustainable and self-determining.

The Alliance rejects "work for the dole" schemes as oppressive and doomed to failure. We will alleviate unemployment in the short term through government investment in jobs that are useful, valued and pay a fair wage. We will work in partnership with the community and private sector to ensure such jobs do not displace existing jobs, and can lead to long-term employment.

Long-term sustainable employment is only possible if a different approach is taken to our macro economic policy. The Alliance will restructure Treasury and re-orient the Reserve Bank's monetary policy to ensure that full employment is a key economic goal. The Alliance will work with communities and local government to prepare plans for their long-term development and will make funding available for the implementation of those plans.

**Brian Donnelly, NZ First :** No reply by deadline.

## Question 2. How do you rate the success of “the jobs machine” initiatives under the Ministry of Economic Development? What would you do differently?

**Steve Maharey, Labour :** Labour recognises that while new investment and innovative ideas will stimulate economic activity, change is at the margin: most people will continue to engage in the industries they are in, in the regions they now live in. Labour believes that there is a role for a smart and active government to protect existing industries, to facilitate their evolution in response to new opportunities and to maximise their potential contribution to exporting, to production, and to employment. Labour will develop and extend the industry and economic development programmes that have been initiated during the first term of office.

**Bob Simcock, National :** The ‘jobs machine’ gets a ‘C’ as rhetorical propaganda and an ‘E’ as a description of effective interventions. A more detailed response has been published in “The Jobs Letter” previously. Given the favourable economic environment inherited by the current government, the outcomes after two years have been disappointing. Long-term unemployment (>2 years) went up 27% under Labour!



**BOB SIMCOCK**  
National Party, Social Services and  
Employment Spokesperson  
[www.national.org.nz](http://www.national.org.nz)

**Jim Anderton, Progressive Coalition :** The ‘jobs machine’ is only just warming up. Thanks to good policies and favourable economic conditions, this government has presided over the lowest levels of unemployment for more than 14 years. However, there is more to be done. Just over 5% of the workforce remains unemployed and our economy remains too dependent on primary commodities. In time, we will coordinate the development activity of Government in a “One-stop Development Shop”.

Meanwhile, the existing agencies will broaden and deepen economic growth. Some 86% of NZ businesses employ less than 5 people. The key lies in growing small businesses.

More generally, regional development strategies have been a spectacular success, with positive growth recorded in every single region for the first time in most people’s memory. It was not long ago, that regions like the East Cape, Southland and the West Coast were being written off. We will build on the strengths of each region, rather than taking investment from one area and putting it in another so that there is no net overall gain for New Zealand.

Finally, our goal is to leave New Zealand better than we found it for our children and grandchildren. This means that the “sustainable development” phrase in the statute for Industry New Zealand must be given real meaning in practical steps from Government, business and the public. That starts with such things as minimising waste, conserving energy, and building a community and family-centred workplace.

**Sue Bradford, Green :** From the limited information available to us, we don’t perceive the ‘jobs machine’ initiatives as having been particularly useful in creating jobs, especially when the amount of money which goes into the Government bureaucracy of INZ/MED is put up against jobs actually created in local communities. We would prefer to see more support and money going into actually helping community-owned and small businesses.

Such enterprises often start by creating only a few jobs but in time build up the economic capacity of a district. Currently they suffer from a huge shortage of capital and the Greens want to address through initiatives such as a community development fund and a genuine community-owned banking network.

**Muriel Newman, ACT :** ACT believes the “jobs machine” is a political gimmick that fails to address the real challenges to creating real jobs. Few commentators disagree that the prime reason for the growth in the last three years is the fortunate coincidence of a low dollar, high commodity export prices, and positive climatic conditions for the rural sector.

This cannot last, and New Zealand has failed to take advantage of the opportunity to reduce taxation and attract investment.

Overseas investment is at nine year low, and unless we reduce taxes and make New Zealand a better place to invest, we will continue to fall behind other nations.

The jobs machine is without credibility. No numbers of the claimed new jobs created have been given despite constant questioning. This is in part because it is impossible to tell whether these “so called new jobs” would have been created regardless of the taxpayer’s assistance.

ACT would commit to dealing with the concerns raised from surveying over 90,000 businesses; reduce taxes on individuals and business, thereby creating better conditions for attracting domestic and overseas investment, and creating greater demand.



## The Jobs Letter

ACT would also slash red tape, compliance costs, and other impositions on small and other businesses.

**Laila Harre, Alliance :** The work by MED has been a good first step. The Alliance would like to see more funding so that more organisations have access to it. We would also like to make sure the money invested is delivering jobs as promised. There is a need to assess if the jobs are good quality and sustainable.



**JIM ANDERTON**  
Progressive Coalition Party, Minister  
of Economic Development  
[www.progressive.org.nz](http://www.progressive.org.nz)

### **Question 3. What are your policies and initiatives on education and training for the unemployed?**

**Steve Maharey, Labour :** Labour is committed to continuing to support people to build their skills and talents to reduce barriers to employment and to move towards economic independence and full participation in society. Labour will continue with the range of programmes designed to lift individual capacity and create opportunities in the labour market (including work confidence, Training Opportunities and Youth Training programmes, wage subsidies, self-employment assistance, work transition grants, and alternative education).

Labour will continue to pilot innovative measures such as Individual Job Seeker Accounts designed to maximise the flexibility of employment assistance and ensure sustainable employment outcomes.

**Bob Simcock, National :** A lack of skills and basic literacy remains one of the major barriers to employment. The last National Government put a lot of effort into ensuring that training programmes were targeted at specific work opportunities and the most successful trainers today do work closely with em-

ployers to ensure trainees can make a successful transition into work. This relationship between trainers and employees needs to be further developed and we will increasingly train people who have already gained employment.

The connection between DWI and trainers is still weak. DWI should be assessing the training needs of its clients and referring them to appropriate training. But most trainees are still finding their own way to training without DWI assistance. That is unacceptable.

Our training policies will be focused on competence and quality and will be blind to ownership. National will fully support the role of competent private education providers.

**Jim Anderton, Progressive Coalition :** We will foster a culture of flexibility and initiative where people take control of their own economic futures. One specific goal is that all young people under 20 should either be in free education, training, or in work. We are determined to minimise the poverty traps which give incentives to remain dependent (or break the law), rather than getting into paid work. With a long-term goal of free education, we will take progressive steps to extend opportunities for education and training.

One such step is to steadily wind back the student debt problem, initially by giving students the opportunity to pay off debt by working in priority sectors or regions. Another is to make the first year of tertiary study free. We will extend the Modern Apprenticeships Programme so that school leavers who do not enter tertiary education can participate. It will be progressively extended to older workers who wish to change careers or enhance skills.

**Sue Bradford, Green :** We support:

- ensuring that all people who are registered unemployed have access to careers advice and vocational guidance from the time they register with the Department of Work and Income.
- the expansion of the modern apprenticeship scheme.
- financial support for the appropriate re-training and other particular direct assistance to people who are long-term unemployed.
- increased resourcing for community based employment resource centres and similar groups which work to train and support people going into small business and cooperative and community-owned enterprise.

**Muriel Newman, ACT :** ACT believes all jobseekers should be involved in 40-hour weeks involving organised job search, training or work, and would provide the funding to do this.

It is essential to retain and develop all jobseekers work skills and motivation by involving them in 40 hour weeks, in training or work suited to their needs. This policy is a stronger commitment than any

previous governments, and reflects ACT's view that it is fundamentally wrong to pay able people money to do nothing, that everyone deserves the dignity of being valued and work, and will fund this commitment accordingly.

People need the dignity and purpose of being valued, and to pay able people a dole to do nothing is simply a tragic waste. People need to feel valued, and needed.

**Laila Harre, Alliance :** Training for the unemployed should be re-oriented so that it becomes part of a high quality vocational training strategy which meshes with the employment development programme of government and leads to genuine career and employment opportunities. The Alliance will review the current approach taken to training including the roles of NZQA, Skill New Zealand and the ITOs in order to develop a co-ordinated vocational training plan for New Zealand.

Our vocational training plan will ensure that training provision has clear employment, industry, and local economic development objectives. It must be meeting defined needs, and be able to be evaluated and monitored to ensure quality provision.

Skills development must promote portable skills for workers rather than narrowing their employment options. The vocational training plan must adequately provide for generic skills training such as critical literacy, numeracy, and Taha Maori as well as meeting local vocational training requirements.

#### **Question 4. What is your party view on the future of work and livelihood in New Zealand?**

**Steve Maharey, Labour :** Labour is committed to building on the progress made in creating a stakeholder informed research and communication resource on Future Work, and work-life balance in particular. Labour's 1999 Manifesto committed the Party, in government, to undertake a number of initiatives in the area of 'Future Work'. In the Government's first Budget funding of \$2.09 million over four years was provided, beginning in the 2001 / 02 financial year, for research into future trends in work and their implications for the workplace, the workforce, and employment opportunities.

In March 2001 the Government released *Workforce 2010*, a publication designed to inform public debate about the challenges facing the labour market. Through the Department of Labour a Future of Work Advisory Group has been established, bringing together people from different industry and organisational backgrounds to assist with management and oversight of Future Work research projects.

Work-life balance is one of the key topics identified for the Future of Work programme and progress has been made in two main projects in this area - a public information initiative to raise awareness of work-life balance issues and potential solutions, with a Future of Work website as the primary resource; and researching employer and employee perspectives on work-life balance.

**Bob Simcock, National :** National totally rejects the idea that progress will exclude some people. We are committed to delivering increased prosperity through employment for all New Zealanders. A successful economy in the future will provide opportunities for a wide range of skills. The bottom line will be sound literacy numeracy and social skills, not a tertiary qualification.

Role changes will continue to be frequent for many and the idea of life-long education will need to become more real than it is today.

Employers will learn to value mature workers more than they do today, and the idea of retirement at a specific age will totally disappear. We will develop more flexible career paths that allow movement up, down and sideways to meet the needs of people at different times in their careers.

**Jim Anderton, Progressive Coalition :** "No-one on their death beds wishes they had spent more time in the office, but many wish they had spent more time with their families". This saying captures the goal here. The situation has long since passed that the household economy comprises a sole (male) family earner. Debate about work and livelihood must address the realities of New Zealand families and economic change.

We will establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the need to restore a balance between work and family life. This will look at issues like stress and health, childcare costs, after-school care, hours of work, trading hours, holidays, employment equity, and family taxation. We seek wide debate and strong public support for a policy platform which is realistic in economic terms but also makes sense in the real human terms which virtually everyone admits are, in the end, more important.



**SUE BRADFORD**  
**Green Party, Labour and Employment**  
**Spokesperson**

[www.votegreen.org.nz](http://www.votegreen.org.nz)

## The Jobs Letter

**Sue Bradford, Green :** We would like to establish a high level Future of Work commission to examine the role and nature of work. Its role would include:

- visioning and policy development broadly across work, income support and taxation.
- overseeing serious Government funded research into the possibility of implementing a Universal Basic Income (UBI).
- tackling issues of overwork generally, including looking at developing a timeframe for implementing a shorter working week.
- examining the complex of issues around over and under work; the relationship of family to work and improving the status of voluntary and unpaid work.

**Muriel Newman, ACT :** The nature of work will continue to change, affected by technological developments and business needs. That is in part why New Zealand, as a small isolated nation, needs to match and better conditions in bigger countries to attract more investment and businesses. It is clear part-time work, and skilled work, are important options in the medium future.

**Laila Harre, Alliance :** The role and nature of work is changing radically. Those economies which can mobilise labour in a co-operative and creative way enjoy the highest level of wellbeing. Advanced technology has made it unnecessary to work forty hours a week to meet our collective needs. This higher productivity should be used to reduce working hours for all rather than make some redundant. The allocation of work between people is often unfair. Whilst some work excessively long hours under high stress, others have no job at all and the stresses that a low income brings.

Successive New Zealand governments have, however, not only failed to explore imaginative new approaches to these developments but have, through their workplace policies, prevented and discouraged the development of such approaches. The Alliance, as well as having a new approach to workplace relations believes that there are immediate initiatives which can be explored for developing an approach to employment more suited to the twenty-first century. These include:

- A shorter working week. We believe that the ordinary hours of work before the payment of premium rates should be progressively reduced. Overtime should be discouraged in favour of increased employment opportunities, while recognising the requirement for income maintenance. The Alliance would move towards a gradual shortening of the standard working week as overall labour productivity improves. The Alliance will legislate for all workers to receive four weeks paid leave per year, and as a first step towards a shorter working week will encourage workers to spread some of this leave throughout the year to improve opportunities for more widespread work sharing.
- Sharing work. An Alliance Government will

investigate ways of spreading the available work more fairly. A practical start is the proposed reform of the social welfare system to enable people to work shorter hours and retire earlier if they wish. Abatement rates will be reduced. Protection of job security, wage rates, promotion opportunities and other normal conditions of work will be extended to part-time workers. A portion of all public sector jobs will be offered as part-time or job-share positions. A pilot work-sharing scheme will be set up, voluntary for both employers and workers.

- Equal employment and job retention. Losing workers can be costly to employers, and adds needlessly to the number of underemployed and unemployed. It particularly affects women and people with disabilities. The Alliance will establish an Employment Equity Bureau to develop, promote and monitor the provision of equal employment opportunities in the public service, state owned enterprises, local government and private sector. The Bureau will be proactive and able to investigate and take action on complaints. Legislation will be introduced to ensure the provision of equal employment opportunities. The Ministry of Employment will promote public education on the employment needs and rights of people with disabilities. They will provide advisory assistance and expertise on workplace accommodations to meet the needs of employees with disabilities.
- Paid parental leave. The government's 12 week paid parental leave scheme that came into force on July 1 is an achievement of the Alliance in government, and the Alliance will extend this scheme to 14 weeks to cover 7000 more working mothers, with two weeks paid leave for 32,000 working fathers. We will increase the level of payment to 80 per cent of wages with a cap of the average male wage (\$807), which will be paid for by an employer levy of an average of 80 cents per average wage worker per week.
- Skills development and retraining. The Alliance will prepare a national vocational training strategy. This strategy will include the access of people in the workforce to training opportunities that improve their skill base and increase their employment options.

**Question 5. What is your view of the restructuring of Winz and other agencies into the new Ministry of Social Development? What would you do differently?**

**Steve Maharey, Labour :** The Labour-led Government took the initiative to merge of the Ministry of Social Policy and the Department of Work and Income into a Ministry of Social Development. The process was a



merger, as distinct from a restructuring, designed to minimise any adverse impacts on staff, while at the same time ensuring continuity, and over time, improvements in service delivery to clients of the Ministry. The Ministry is building its relationships with external stakeholders, including groups representing the interests of beneficiaries, while at the same time taking a whole of government leadership role in strategic social policy.

**Bob Simcock, National :** The National Party opposed the restructuring of the Ministry of Social Development. There is little to suggest that DWI has improved its performance and the policy function has become acquiescent to the demands of the political leadership at a time when rigorous and independent social policy advice is desperately needed.

The Department will be required to ensure that better leadership is provided so that DWI becomes more responsive to community needs, and that policy advice is not just designed to keep ministers happy!

**Jim Anderton, Progressive Coalition :** The restructuring is an important step in co-ordinating Government efforts to help people in need and steer families and individuals out of poverty traps into productive and satisfying work.

**Sue Bradford, Green :** The Green Party has supported the restructuring of WINZ and MSP into the Ministry of Social Development but we continue to seek improvements to the way this Department operates, including:

- continued efforts to change the culture from that of the 90s, so that those who depend on the Department for their livelihoods are treated with dignity and respect, and are offered the maximum amount of benefit they are entitled to as a matter of course.
- a greater focus on the 'Work' side of 'Work and Income', so that staff are enabled to offer all unemployed people, at whatever stage of life and unemployment, proper, individually tailored assistance in finding appropriate employment and training opportunities.
- further building of capacity within the Social Policy side of MSD so that the Department can improve the quality and scope of its research and policy development, including having a greater understanding of the realities of the not-for-profit sector in the relevant areas (including housing, income support, poverty, employment/unemployment, child and social services).

**Muriel Newman, ACT :** The one stop shop costs \$24 million dollars less a year to run than the previous two separate Welfare and Employment departments, and means jobseekers no longer have to run between two separate offices for their income and job search help.

Despite Labours pre-election rhetoric around splitting the Department to get rid of Christine Rankin, no one is advocating a return to the old structure.

The addition of a few hundred policy advisers and the new label of Ministry of Social Development has not changed this major Department, with the integrated individual case management continuing undisturbed. ACT would not change the structure.

ACT would however hold the Department accountable for cutting the growing number of registered long term unemployed.

It is a fact that under this Labour government, the number of persons registered unemployed over 2 years has exploded 25%, from 44,500 to 55,000 today.

**Laila Harre, Alliance :** The Alliance supports a more coordinated approach to the provision of social services and supported the formation of the new Ministry of Social Development, as it will help with this. The resourcing of the organisation needs to be enough to ensure that they have the tools to do the job properly as many low-income people rely on good service delivery.

**Question 6. Do you support the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs and their primary goal of that no young person under 25 years will be out of work or training in our communities, by 2005? What would your government do to help achieve this?**

**Steve Maharey, Labour :** Labour supports the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs and the Mayors' goals.

The Labour-led Government entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs in September 2000. At the time Government Ministers stated that:

"The agreement we are launching today is historic because for the first time the Government is committing to an active partnership with local government which recognises the expertise both parties have in employment creation.

"We accept that growing jobs is something that central government cannot do on its own. Unlike our predecessor this Government is prepared to involve all the key partners – business, labour and central and local government – in employment creation.

Labour's tertiary education and training policies will provide a significant step towards realising the goal of having no young person out of employment, education or training.

**Bob Simcock, National :** Yes, we do support the Mayors Taskforce and its primary goal of eliminating unemployment for people under 25. But the goal of employing youth should not be allowed to overshadow the need to deal with the employment needs of all age groups. Specific initiatives aimed at ensuring that no young person goes from education to the dole will be announced shortly.

## The Jobs Letter

**Jim Anderton, Progressive Coalition :** We remain enthusiastic proponents of this objective. Our policies, particularly in supporting regional development partnerships with local government but also in employment generally, will contribute to this goal.

**Sue Bradford, Green :** We support the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs. The goal of working towards 'zero waste' of young New Zealanders fits very closely with the Green Party's statement that "zero waste begins with our people". As stated above the Green Party is committed to full employment. Green policies support the Mayors Taskforce by re-focussing policies on creating an economy that is rich in meaningful work and uses resources sparingly.

To succeed, initiatives such as the Mayors Taskforce need to be part of an overall commitment to developing meaningful work in New Zealand. As part of this we support:

- better coordination and planning across public, private and community sectors in this area so policies do not act against each other.
- further resourcing for the infrastructure of the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs.

**Muriel Newman, ACT:** ACT not only supports the goal of no young person being out of work or training, but has made a far greater commitment in its commitment to having all jobseekers being involved in work, training or organised job search.

This would need the assistance of not only the Mayors, but also business and the huge range of voluntary, community and government organisa-



**MURIEL NEWMAN**  
Act Party, Employment and Social  
Welfare Spokesperson  
[www.act.org.nz](http://www.act.org.nz)

tions that in the past have shown they can make a major contribution to providing jobseekers with experience and training.

**Laila Harre, Alliance :** The Alliance supports the primary goal of the Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs that no young person under the age of 25 should be out of work or training in our communities. It will support this goal through a package of measures, including the fostering of youth development opportunities for all young people as set out in the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa. Alongside this the Alliance will be progressing a programme of regional development and job creation in the regions. We will also remove the barriers to tertiary education and other training opportunities by abolishing student fees and the student loans scheme and reinstating non-means tested student allowances for all New Zealanders in education or training.

### **Question 7. The recent Agenda for Children report has set "ending child poverty" as a major national objective. In the light of this, what will your party do to end poverty in New Zealand families?**

**Steve Maharey, Labour :** The Labour-led Government is already working to address child poverty. One key aspect is social investment - investing in policies that lead to sustainable employment, reducing the risks of families falling into poverty and providing a pathway out of economic hardship.

As a result of these policies, we have more people in employment than ever before with unemployment at a 14 year low and 104,000 new jobs created since March 2000 - meaning thousands of families now have a working breadwinner.

- the minimum wage has been increased, and fairer labour law and paid parental leave introduced. The Government has also invested in the social supports, for example:
- the introduction of income-related rents for state house tenants with most saving between \$20 and \$80 a week.
- provision of \$410 million over three years to substantially improve access to primary healthcare services and invested in Education.
- providing increased support and services to families receiving a benefit - providing better information about assistance, treating people fairly, and improving access to hardship assistance.

Over the next term Labour will continue to focus on ensuring families receive adequate support to improve the status of children. This will include looking at opportunities to ensure family income assistance meets the needs of families.

The real answer to child poverty lies in a balance of complementary economic and social policies - stimu-



lating job rich growth, increasing GDP and improving opportunities on the one hand - and sensible taxation and redistribution policies that protect those who are struggling to improve their situation on the other.

**Bob Simcock, National :** A wide range of National party initiatives will impact on child poverty. The entire growth strategy is aimed at delivering increased prosperity and opportunity for all New Zealanders. National will deliver on a comprehensive strategy aimed at ensuring that every child gets a good start in life. This will include support for families, mentoring families that face particular challenges with parenting, a strategy to reduce transience, new housing initiatives, initiatives to reduce family violence, support for foster and kin carers, and a refocusing of CYFS. Child poverty will only be reduced if we focus on getting it right for every child from day one.

**Jim Anderton, Progressive Coalition :** Again, we strongly supported this goal in Government. The policies outlined above will all work to this end. The policies on state housing and rentals need strengthening. Other relevant initiatives include a commitment to free GP visits for *all* school kids, and we will review family support.

**Sue Bradford, Green :** The Green Party aims to:

- work towards eliminating child poverty by 2010 – as a first step to achieving this, we will urgently develop indicators to measure poverty and regularly monitor poverty levels, especially for children.
- introduce a Universal Child Benefit. This non-income tested, non-transferable payment will be to the primary caregiver, similar to the Family Benefit that was scrapped in 1991. The benefit would provide a payment of \$15 a week for the first child, and \$10 a week for every subsequent child.
- review and reform family assistance policies, to ensure they keep pace with the cost of living. We would also review targeting provisions and adjust abatement rates to reduce poverty traps.
- work towards a total reform of the welfare system, including setting benefit levels at amounts families can live on, ending work-testing and sanctions for parents who rely on the DPB or widows' benefits, and supporting universality, simplicity and sufficiency as underlying principles.
- work towards improving access for all children to affordable primary health care and quality housing.
- proper resourcing for schools so that all children can receive a quality education without the need for school fees.



**LAILA HARRE**  
**Alliance Party, Minister of Youth Affairs**  
[www.alliance.org.nz](http://www.alliance.org.nz)

**Muriel Newman, ACT :** The high level policies needed to end “child poverty” must deliver a stronger economy and higher standards of living. These are fundamental to providing the government with the revenue to provide the welfare, education, health and other organisations with the level of resources needed to really eliminate poverty.

There are 400,000 working age adults supported by a benefit. Many thousands of New Zealanders are trapped on poverty level incomes. In 1970, there were 28 full time workers for each full-time benefit; today there are only four full-time workers for each full-time benefit.

New Zealand must deliver higher average incomes for all, through tax cuts and consequent growth, and support and strengthen the family unit, to begin to remove poverty, child abuse and other equally abhorrent features of our society.

**Laila Harre, Alliance :** The Alliance negotiated for a commitment to ending child poverty in the Agenda for Children report, while Labour favoured a commitment to addressing it. Ending child poverty is a key Alliance policy for election 2002. It is unacceptable that a third of New Zealand children live in families with an income below the unofficial poverty line. The Alliance believes that investing in our children is not just socially responsible, it is economically sensible, and that the most effective law and order policy would be one which addressed inequality. The Alliance believes that policies such as free doctors visits, free education and a universal child support payment are vital to supporting a population capable of growing New Zealand's economy.

### **Question 8. How will your party encourage community groups working in employment and social service fields?**

**Steve Maharey, Labour :** The Labour-led Government has put considerable effort into rebuilding the capacity of the Community Employment Group (CEG), and in 2000/01 CEG made a record 30,125 fieldwork interventions with community groups and issued 1,286 grants worth nearly \$19 million. New initiatives taken through CEG include funding and supporting Community Employment Organisations and Artworks Organisations, both of which create additional employment opportunities in community businesses and the arts. CEG has also worked with Maori organisations to improve capacity and capability.

The Stronger Communities Action Fund is being used to build social capital and stronger social services in local communities.

CEG, the Department of Internal Affairs and the Department of Child Youth and Family Services have all funded 'social entrepreneurs' working in community employment, community development, and social services.

**Bob Simcock, National :** National is committing itself to a goal of social and economic improvement for all New Zealanders. This will be impossible to achieve without broad community engagement. National has a history of supporting the energy and innovation of community groups. It is our belief that Government has a role to provide leadership co-ordination and resources in partnership with communities. We are strongly biased toward delivery by non-Government providers wherever they have the ability to deliver good outcomes. The relationship between Government and community organisations needs to be one of ongoing development and learning for both partners.

**Jim Anderton, Progressive Coalition :** These remain important in bridging to employment, especially for the most vulnerable. We support more assistance for such groups and their greater involvement in policy formation and the implementation of relevant programs.

**Sue Bradford, Green :** The Green Party seeks to:

- improve the capacity of Government and local Government to understand, resource and work with community organisations through improving resourcing, training and accountability arrangements at all levels (noting that accountability goes both ways).

- support community initiatives that keep finance and production of goods and services local, including through creating an enabling environment and better resourcing.
- double COGS funding immediately.
- improve Government support for the networking, information sharing and advocacy functions of the community sector
- enhance mechanisms and resourcing to allow policy input from community organisations at all levels of Government.

**Muriel Newman, ACT :** ACT believes in devolving the control over the use of resources to the local level as far as practical.

Resources currently provided through a huge range of head office driven programmes would be more radically devolved, which would allow more local decision making by managers and staff. This would include not just the removing of many of the rules around the 60+ employment programmes, but the merger of many.

It would be ACT's aim to bulk fund Regional Commissioners and other managers involved in employment and welfare fields, to provide them with both the freedom and accountability to eliminate long-term unemployment.

**Laila Harre, Alliance :** Local communities have an essential role to play in the creation of jobs. Truly sustainable development occurs from the community outwards. Communities will be encouraged to develop local strategies to resolve local employment and economic issues.

Industry, union, small business, local government, community and the education and service sectors will be encouraged to plan together for the economic advancement of the region. The Alliance will fund local development projects through a regional development planning process. The Ministry of Employment will work with local economic development agencies, local authorities, industry groupings, unions and communities to develop proposals that promote employment, use local resources, and are sustainable.

#### **Editor**

Vivian Hutchinson

#### **Associates**

Dave Owens

Jo Howard

Rodger Smith