



## Election Wishlist 2023

David Hines © 22 January 2023

My original subject for today was Gonna lay down my sword and shield, which was about concentration camps in World War 2, and how this appalling story was the background to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

But it was such a complicated story I couldn't get my head around it. And I was looking for a new topic.

And then Jacinda came up with the idea of resigning .... And it was obvious.

### **The topic had to be Election Wishlist 2023.**

And I didn't even need to wonder what to say about it. Our newspapers and other media have excelled themselves.

But what can I add that would be of use. You may have already read this stuff.

Then I thought. **We've heard what the media think. But we haven't heard what Auckland Unitarians think.**

**So I just need to ask the questions that the media have already raised.**

### **The first question was the title of the Weekend Herald editorial yesterday – the Crucifixion of Jacinda Ardern**

**So who were they accusing?**

**The main accusation of the article is in a quote from Helen Clark.**

*The pressures on prime ministers are always great, but in this era of social media, CLICKbait and 24/7 media cycles Jacinda has faced a level of vitriol which in my experience is unprecedented in this country.*

**And the article is not just pointing the finger at social media, but also at the growing crowd of critics who have been making unfair and sexist attacks on her.**

I was shocked, but on reading it I'd say yes. After starting off her leadership five years ago, when she had a period of charismatic leadership ... over the Christchurch mosque attacks, over Covid, over the White Island volcano, there was a time when this admiration was being replaced by vitriol.

In particular this was shown at the blockade of parliament. But that is only the worst of many criticisms.

A section of the public got tired of her government's restrictions, and many degenerated into sexist attacks and threats of violence. And in the last few months National has overtaken Labour in the polls, and it's not surprising that Jacinda says she hasn't got enough fuel in the tank to fight another election.

But I admit I hadn't appreciated how large a part these attacks had played in Jacinda resigning.

The Herald also quotes Sam Neill in saying the attacks on Ardern are getting into a disgraceful and embarrassing pile-on by bullies, misogynists and the aggrieved.

So my sympathies are with Jacinda. I wouldn't rate her 10 out of 10. Several of her policies seemed very rigid to me ....

But I agree that history will rate her one of the best prime ministers New Zealand has seen. And her leaving should not be taken as a sign of failure, but a sign of a job well done, and the baton effectively passed to other members of her team, who will probably remain on the same track. I don't think anyone in Labour's side will want to undo her achievements.

## **2 My second question for you is: What policies will you be looking for in this year's election ... from whatever party you support?**

I'll give you some of **my** selection, but I hope your discussion won't be limited to these:

- a) Top of my list will be action against global warming. I am trying to set a better example myself ... with a low carbon diet and a low carbon car.
- b) Also on my policy list: **Be kind** – that's part of Jaciinda's trademark, and I hope that continues.

- c) Isn't it time we revisited a capital gains tax. Jacinda dropped that from Labour's policy in her first year, and said it will not be on Labour's agenda **as long as she is leader**. So if Labour wants my vote they will put this back on their agenda. House prices are now coming down without the help of a capital gains tax; but I still think capital gains taxes would be fairer... capital gains help rich people, and hurt poor people. That should be fixed
- d) The poverty gap is too wide.
- e) Services such as the health system are seriously short of staff.
- f) Dealing with ram-raiders and other teen crime. National is rightly going to make an issue of this, and I hope that Labour will match them.
- g) The Covid crisis is not over. Many are getting bored by it, but hundreds of people are still dying because of it. New mutations are coming.

I hope you all can come up with a similar shortlist.

### **3 Third question: What is your rating of Chris Hipkins as potential prime Minister? His strengths and weaknesses?**

I personally would have preferred Grant Robertson. IMHO he is more direct and honest in his answers to the media. By contrast Jacinda and Hipkins often hedge their answers, or put the questioner down.

However I rate Hipkins highly as a trouble shooter in all his portfolios: education; he put through a review of the Entire Education Act two years ago. He took over the Covid Portfolio, and did it brilliantly for the first year at least. He then took on police.

He is also one of the most approachable of politicians. I say that after 12 years of lobbying. When I asked to see him for half an hour, he gave me his full attention at a café in K road.. When I sent him personal letters, he answered them promptly and courteously.

Hipkins is also bipartisan.... During the third stage of the debate on the Education and Training Bill .... Hipkins made a long, genuine tribute to Natonal's education spokesperson Nikki Kaye who has now returned the compliment by paying tribute to Jacinda. In this same Herald editorial.

Hipkins and Kaye are two of the most genuine and courteous politicians I have met. So I hope Hipkins will be another centrist politician, who will endeavour to unte the country, and keep the fight clean.

But I was disappointed that after promising to remove Bible in schools and replace it with multifaith education Hipkins only delivered a half of that. And I'll continue to fight on that issue, though I don't rate my chances that high. **My tank is also running low.**

#### 4 If Hipkins becomes Prime Minister, will it improve Labour's chances at the election?

I think so. Because Labour has been acting like a team for the past five years. No blood was shed when Jacinda took over the lead from Andrew Little. And so far no blood has been shed over Hipkins taking over from Jacinda. Compare that with National, which has been through about four leadership coups in the past few years.

For the last two leadership changes, Labour politicians have known when to pass on the baton. It is a sign of humility. It is a sign of realism. It is a sign of team work.

**Changing the leader is a chance to bring new energy, but also a chance to correct past mistakes.** So we will watch closely as Chris Hipkins takes up new policies, or new emphases. There is no guarantee he will get it right, but he will have a golden opportunity to turn his party's losses around.

#### 5 Who should Labour pick as deputy Prime Minister?

I don't know .... On reading the media the last two days Kiri Allen seems to have some obvious advantages ... she is a woman, she is a lesbian, she is Maori. On the strength of record, Grant Robertson would be my pick for that position as well. But as the Herald said, it would seem bad to have two male politicians from Wellington in the top team.

So One News and NewsHub last night were both suggesting Carmel Sepuloni who is of Samoan, Tongan and New Zealand European descent .... And living in Auckland is another one of the boxes she would tick.

So the Labour caucus is expected to be wrestling with these issues in an hour's time.

In the meantime I look forward to what Auckland Unitarians think. The Labour party is on trial, following the resignation of Jacinda Ardern ... but so are we. So are all the other political parties.

Have we given our politicians support when they need it? Have we given our feedback?  
Have we shown gender and ethnic bias in our votes and our example.

The 2023 election campaign is under way.

Our next song points the finger back at us. What are we doing to shine a light on the issues  
of our change of prime minister?

**Meditation / Conversation starter:-**

- Have we just witnessed the crucifixion of Jacinda Ardern?
- What policies will you be looking for in your politicians this year?
- How would you rate Chris Hipkins as incoming Prime Minister? What do you see as his strengths or weaknesses?
- Will the selection of Chris Hipkins turn around Labour's chances in the election?
- Who should Labour pick as deputy prime minister today?