



Helen  
**Clark**

INSIDE STORIES

CLAUDIA POND EYLEY AND DAN SALMON

New Zealand's first elected woman prime minister; nine years in power through Afghanistan and Iraq, the 'Corngate' and 'Paintergate' affairs, the foreshore and seabed turmoil; head of the UN Development Program and ranked among the most powerful women in the world. Helen Clark's public life is well known. But what about the inside stories?

During 2012–2013, documentary-makers Claudia Pond Eyley and Dan Salmon interviewed a host of participants about the life of Helen Clark: Clark herself and her family, political friends and enemies, mentors and staffers, journalists and lobbyists. The resulting transcripts from those interviews, woven together here into a compelling narrative, offer a brilliantly multi-faceted, inside account of Helen Clark's life and career.

From her father George Clark to friend Cath Tizard, Richard Prebble to Jim Anderton, Winston Peters to Don Brash, Jacinda Ardern to John Key, Helen Clark and her contemporaries bring to life the tumultuous life and times of one of our most important political leaders.

Through the words of the players themselves, sometimes raw, sometimes angry, we find ourselves taken inside the major political developments of the last fifty years. This is a frank, revealing account of Helen Clark and her world.

**Claudia Pond Eyley** is a visual artist and film maker. She studied at Elam and has lectured at the University of Auckland. She is the author, with Robin White, of *28 Days in Kiribati* (New Women's Press, 1987) and *Protest at Moruroa* (Tandem Press, 2006) and her documentaries include *Departure and Return: The Final Journey of the Rainbow Warrior*. **Dan Salmon** is a multi-award-winning director and producer of documentary (*Made in Taiwan, Here to Stay*) and drama (*Licked, The Day Morris Left*). His documentaries have screened on TVNZ, ABC, Al Jazeera and EBS in Korea, and at festivals in Tahiti, Canada and the United States. Pond Eyley and Salmon's documentary *Helen*, for which the interviews for this book were made, was screened on television in August 2013 and December 2014, as well as at the 2014 Documentary Edge Film Festival.

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## CHAPTER 2

# Getting extremely involved in politics

**H**elen Clark joined the Labour Party in 1971, becoming active in the university-based Princes Street branch. She also became the representative of Labour Youth and ran for local body elections in Auckland Central.

When Labour Prime Minister Norman Kirk died in 1974, Bill Rowling replaced him. The following year Labour lost the general election and National Party leader Robert Muldoon began the first of three terms as prime minister. In that 1975 election, twenty-five-year-old Helen Clark, by then a member of the Labour regional executive, stood in the safe National seat of Piako. The electorate was heartland Waikato, and close to her family home. It was a valuable learning experience for future campaigns.

Helen travelled to International Union of Socialist Youth conferences in Europe and built up a strong network of associates across the globe. She continued in her academic career, taking a mixed-tenure scholarship for overseas study to research her doctorate on rural political representation in the UK and Sweden. Returning to Auckland

she lived with Cath and Bob Tizard in Freemans Bay. Bob was a senior MP and a former cabinet minister in the Kirk government. Cath was a city councillor and would later become mayor of Auckland. At this time Helen met her future partner, academic sociologist Peter Davis.

In 1978 she was elected to the New Zealand Labour Party executive, where she worked closely with Jim Anderton, Margaret Wilson and others to help reorganise and revitalise the membership of the party.

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HELEN CLARK In the 1969 general election, Labour lost for the fourth time in a row. I was involved in various protests but I hadn't actually joined the Labour Party. In 1970 I paid a sub to the Labour Club and when I was a graduate in 1971, I joined the Princes Street branch and got extremely involved.

JONATHAN HUNT Phil Goff was in the Manukau Youth branch down in South Auckland, and Helen was in the Auckland branch, but they worked quite closely. I always said, even at the Princes Street branch, that any member was entitled to be a member of the university branch and also in the area in which they lived. They should be building up membership because that is how you build support. The younger membership was very strong – indeed, one of Helen's legacies.

JOAN CAULFIELD, FRIEND AND ELECTORATE SECRETARY I knew Helen from the age of nineteen. She was part of a group who were involved in local body politics [when I was married to Jim Anderton]. They used to gather at our place before canvassing. I remember her and Jim having a very firm bond in terms of politics. One of my first memories is of her sitting on our couch in our living room and saying that she wanted to be an MP. I do remember thinking how could someone so young be so sure that this is what they wanted to do.

JIM ANDERTON, POLITICIAN AND EARLY MENTOR I was the mayoral candidate for the Auckland City Council in 1974, and Helen was very enthusiastic, very intelligent and extraordinarily committed to the cause, worked day and night really, a workaholic like I was, so we had something in common. I was a student at the university but I wasn't much of an academic and she clearly was. She had a lot of practical energy and enthusiasm for causes and the Labour Party at that stage, and the mayoralty in Auckland and the council was one of them. So that was my first introduction and she never lost any of those qualities.

HELEN CLARK We worked in parallel. I was president of the Princes Street branch, and he [Jim Anderton] was eventually elected to the Auckland regional council. We both went on to the executive of the Labour Party together in 1978. We were incredibly close up until the time of the fourth Labour government in the 1980s, during the Roger Douglas economic reforms.

JIM ANDERTON I was the full-time organiser of the Labour Party in Auckland. I'd had a varied career from working on the waterfront to child welfare to teaching and running a medium-sized engineering company, and being an export manager for the largest carpet company in New Zealand at UEB Textiles. So, in the middle of all this I got elected to the executive of the New Zealand Labour Party and Helen was elected the same year, and we started to turn the Labour Party around organisationally. The other key persons were Margaret Wilson and John Hercus, who was then the principal of the polytech in Christchurch, and an extraordinary talent in terms of organisational capacity. We had inherited a party that was virtually incapable of winning a bun fight in a bakery actually – organisationally it was completely hopeless and none of us were prepared to put up with that. At that time the National Party was run by George Chapman, later Sir George Chapman, and they ran a 'mean machine'. It was a



## CHAPTER 7

# Tough years in opposition

**I**n November 1988 Roger Douglas was forced to resign as minister of finance. Initially, Prime Minister David Lange had supported the Douglas reforms as a solution to the financial crisis, but the scale and speed of privatisation of government assets and economic deregulation drove Lange to destabilise his government and lose the support of his caucus. He resigned in August 1989. Deputy leader Geoffrey Palmer then became prime minister, bringing Helen Clark with him as deputy leader. With the Labour Party facing disastrous polls eight weeks out from the 1990 general election, Mike Moore took over as Labour Party leader.

The National Party won a landslide victory, with Jim Bolger becoming prime minister. Reforms continued under Minister of Finance Ruth Richardson, with her ‘mother of all budgets’ in the wake of the government bailout of the Bank of New Zealand. The Labour Party fared better in the 1993 election, losing by a few seats. That election saw the New Zealand public voting in a referendum for a new electoral system in the form of MMP, allowing minor parties to gain representation in Parliament in future elections.

After the election Helen challenged Mike Moore's leadership and won, becoming Labour's first woman leader on 1 December 1993. For the next six years Helen worked on bringing the Labour Party back to a more centrist position. Her challenges included recovering from the worst election result for Labour at that time to build a strong and unified party.

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GEORGE CLARK I remember being in Hamilton one day when Helen got to be deputy prime minister . . . I walked past a shop and could hear on the radio there was something going on so I called in. The shop lady asked, 'What do you want?' 'I'm just listening to the radio,' I replied. 'My daughter's now the deputy prime minister.'

GEOFFREY PALMER Lange resigned. I was up in the Cook Islands having a rest, going to the Cook Islands celebrations and I got a call from David Lange: 'Come back, I am resigning.' So I flew back and thought I'd better stand for the leadership, I didn't want to, I never wanted to . . . but I couldn't see how we could see out the term. So I stood and tried to carry on the best that I could. I didn't think we would win the election, the fallout was so enormous that I couldn't see us winning, and you can't change when you are running a policy, you can't change midstream. After Lange resigned, Helen was a good deputy prime minister but she was so involved in her portfolios that she didn't spend a lot of time on the general problems of the government, which were considerable up to the next election. So she carried on and Mike Moore took over for eight weeks – the rest is history.

JIM BOLGER They went from Geoffrey Palmer to Mike Moore and there was constant change. They were on the *Titanic* changing the chairs around. In the 1990 election, I totally captured the essence of New Zealand in building a decent society because I thought we'd lost

that. You knew the government was in trouble when they moved to Palmer then to Moore, you knew that was desperation so from the opposition benches it would have required a miracle to save them . . . They had all their chips on Roger Douglas's model, that collapsed, they had no chips left, they had lost their social conscience, that had also been shattered and New Zealanders said, 'Go away.' . . . That was the biggest win that National has known ever.

WINSTON PETERS It was shambolic. Lange really went because at that point he was down to 11 per cent popularity and falling, so they go for the person who was an excellent deputy prime minister but never going to be prime minister, Geoffrey Palmer, and in a fit of desperation, I think five weeks out from the election, they choose Mike Moore. You've got to go back to the 1880s to find a prime minister who lasts so short a time. And then of course 1993. We all know that Mike put in a pretty good effort in that campaign and got rolled on the question of progressive taxation, as though he was saying something novel, new or revolutionary. In fact at the time we had a progressive taxation policy but the media did him in on a very close election and then of course he got rolled by Helen.

JUDITH TIZARD By this time she was the deputy leader of the opposition. One of the things that seems a problem is that when you are the leader or a minister, people are seeing you for the first time, and probably the only time, so they dump everything that is wrong with the world on you: their lives, their jobs, their families, their nation, and it can be depressing. I've watched Bill Rowling crushed by people's demands and expectations. I said to Helen, 'To be a leader you have to enjoy yourself and you've got to have things to enjoy. You also have to look as if you are enjoying yourself, there is nothing quite so depressing to your opponents than looking like you are having good fun.' And Helen started going to concerts again, she was always interested in music, always interested in film; it was then that it occurred



## CHAPTER 17

# End of an era

**H**aving led the Labour Party through four elections since becoming leader in 1993, the 2008 election was Helen's fifth and final. She faced a series of televised leaders' debates against National's John Key, whose party had adapted President Obama's 'Time For a Change' slogan. The sentiment worked, and after nine years of Labour-led government, National won overwhelmingly.

In her election-night speech, Helen Clark announced to her supporters that she would be standing down as leader of the New Zealand Labour Party.



MICHAEL CULLEN You fight as hard as you can. You think, Is there something else we can do? But everything is telling you that people like your key policies like Working for Families, like KiwiSaver, like interest-free loans, like superannuation, all the big stuff. Big ticks but they say it is 'time for a change', so what do you do? You fight as hard

as you can to keep the party together and try to keep as many seats as you can. What is often forgotten is that we came out of that election with about as many seats as National got winning in 1996. I think particularly under MMP, the media decides that you are going to lose, you deserve to lose and you haven't yet deserved the right to win, so you have an uphill battle.

SANDRA CLARK I am not a natural person at canvassing – ha ha! I didn't like canvassing before my sisters came and joined me. I hated knocking on doors in some seedy Auckland street.

JENEFER WATERWORTH CLARK A different world to us. Since everyone comes, it [canvassing] has been more fun. It's something we've done for Helen as a family, to wholeheartedly support her.

SANDRA CLARK The things you do for your sister! We do our duty on election day.

BRIAN EDWARDS I don't think I was ever worried about her in a personal sense but during the last election things were pretty tough. We knew that Helen had lost that first leaders' debate. To our amazement John Key had triumphed in that debate; we knew that, and we knew that we had all got it wrong on how he would perform. We all went home and quite late that night Helen called and said that she would like to come around to our house, and that was quite unusual. She came round and she was very low, very, very low that night, bewildered I think as well. 'How could this have happened?' We'd all assumed that she was going to crucify John Key, and it hadn't happened. And the reviews that next day we knew were going to be bad, and it was kind of difficult for Helen to accept. There is a moment in that debate which I think is quite crucial, [where] there is a question thrown in and the question is: 'What does it mean to have money or to be rich?' And Helen was asked first

and she gave this very academic, obscure answer, and then we come to John Key, ‘the 50-million-dollar man’, and he says, ‘It means not having to worry.’ And that is the right answer, that is what it means to have money.

Some considerable time after that we were discussing this with Helen, who would not accept that her answer was wrong; it was very strange and very unusual because we very rarely have these complete disagreements. And Heather Simpson said, ‘Yes, that was the wrong answer’, and we said, ‘That was the wrong answer’, and everyone in the room said that wasn’t a good answer and she found that difficult to accept. So being wrong was something I think Helen had difficulty with. Maybe that goes back to the farm again, maybe that is being the kid who was never wrong, who read all the books, a brilliant young student and all the rest, but she had difficulty being wrong, I think.

JOHN KEY Those television debates are a funny environment in a lot of ways. They are kind of made for TV and I don’t know if they are a real debate per se. They are almost a statement of values if you like, because they are just not long enough to be a really intense debate, but they are interesting. I remember the first one, being a bit terrified to be honest, at one level going to do the debate. I mean I was happy to do it, I felt confident in myself that I could do it, but you are just never quite sure how it is all going to go. But I settled into it and I was really happy with the result. We did well, actually, on all of them.

BRIAN EDWARDS As an advisor you have to take into account the opposition absolutely. You’d be foolish not to. You might think that if you were debating against a woman you might not be quite so brutal or ruthless, but you probably don’t want to be brutal and vicious to a Don Brash. As I remember during that debate [in 2005], he was accused of being too ‘gentlemanly’ because he gave way to her. Now Helen would never have done that, would never have given

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