

## Chinese Voice 19 September 1996 issue

Contributed by Lachlan  
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- National wins the Chinese            Pansy Wong - ranked 26 on the List
- Pansy Wong An impressive            CV
- Steven Young New editor            of Chinese Voice

National wins            the Chinese: Pansy Wong ranked 26 on the            List

Steven Young

The National Party looks set to reap the electoral            benefits of placing Pansy Wong at number 26 on its party list.

Although Chinese have been in NZ for 130 years, until            now they have never had one of their own in Parliament. Partly this was            because until now there has not been a Chinese person with the broad range            of skills and experience necessary to be a credible candidate in a general            seat, partly the Chinese community was neither large enough nor politically            sophisticated enough to create and support such a candidacy, and partly,            of course, the old FPP system demanded that a candidate have appeal to            a predominantly European electorate. In the 1960s Ron Waishing stood twice            for election for Labour, but he was pitched against Bill Birch in true-blue            Frankton and never had a chance. The fact that he stood as a candidate            in his own local area rendered moot the question whether either of the            two major parties would have offered a winnable seat to a person of Chinese            descent under the old FPP system.

But that was then and this is now. Since those days,            NZ has decided to change the system of election from FPP to MMP, and there            has been a huge influx of Asians, and particularly Chinese into NZ. Whereas            the Chinese population in NZ was only some 25,000 right up until 1988,            it is now estimated to be about over 110,000. Among all the parties struggling            with the new electoral calculus under proportional representation, it            appears only National has identified and acted on the huge potential of            the Chinese vote. (Labour has placed Ben Cheah its sole Chinese candidate            a lowly 56 on its list and other parties have apparently no Chinese on            their lists).

By placing Wong 26 on the party list National has            in one stroke captured the Asian vote over the whole country and all but            guaranteed a Chinese voice in the next Parliament.

Pansy Wong: An impressive CV

by Steven Young

Observed campaigning in Wellington Pansy Wong came across as a woman with plenty of brains and energy and enough political nous to go a long way.

Born in Shanghai she grew up in Hong Kong and emigrated to New Zealand in 1974. Studying commerce in Christchurch, she graduated as a senior scholar, with a Masters degree and honours. Shortly thereafter, she started a meteoric rise in her professional and business career, in local government and in community work. A serious over-achiever, her CV records an eye-watering list of directorships and appointments. She is a director of Trust Bank Canterbury Advisory Board, a member of Lincoln University Council, (and chairperson of Lincoln Ventures Ltd), a director of the NZ Tourism Board, chairperson of the Christchurch Town Hall Board, a director of Healthlink South CHE, a Canterbury Regional Councillor, a member of the Tax Simplification Taskforce and Examiner for the NZ Society of Accountants. To fill in her apparently spare time she has also undertaken community work as an adviser, trust member or organiser for groups and activities as diverse as the Girl Guides, the Festival of the Flowers, the Canterbury Medical Research Foundation, the Chinese division of the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce the Canterbury Chinese Cultural Centre, and Chinese community radio.

Equally fluent in English, Cantonese and Mandarin, Pansy Wong has just finished addressing the lunch-time crowd at the New Dynasty Restaurant. The diners' response, as expected, is rather difficult to gauge because the Chinese don't often allow politics to get in the way of eating. Unfazed she plunges in to work each table, picking up minute clues to decide which language she should use and delivering a message expressing appreciation, seeking support, emphasising the importance of having a Chinese voice in Parliament for the first time, answering questions about MMP and National's policy on immigration, language, education and health.

Although her message to the audience as a whole and to the small groups around each table is very simple, (almost too simple) she leaves no doubt that she is more than capable of debating policy issues in detail. Travelling from Auckland to Wellington to Christchurch in the lead-up to the elections, she is smart enough to know that the election will not won by debating details of policy but by the sheer appeal of her personality to the minds and hearts of the voters of her electorate in her case the Asian/Chinese community of New Zealand.

Steven Young: new editor of Chinese Voice

Steven Young has recently been appointed editor of Chinese Voice. A consulting engineer, Steven has had a long involvement in Chinese community affairs and is a former editor of two community newsletters and a

contributor to other publications. He is supported by a group of like-minded friends in the Chinese community. He can be contacted by phone 38 44 665, fax 38 44 800, mobile 021 932 352, email [syoung@stevenyoung.co.nz](mailto:syoung@stevenyoung.co.nz) and has a web page at [www.stevenyoung.co.nz](http://www.stevenyoung.co.nz)