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## **Media Release - Embargoed against delivery**

**Rt Hon Winston Peters address to Grey Power AGM, 11.30am 21 April 2008,  
College House, 100 Waimairi Road, Christchurch**

### **“Rebuilding the New Zealand Way of Life”**

Mr Graham Stairmand – National Grey Power President. Board Members and all the office holders from around New Zealand.

Thank you for asking me to speak to your Annual General Meeting.

Grey Power's role as an apolitical advocacy group for those over 55, and New Zealand First's strong advocacy over many years of a fair deal for our seniors, ensures that our paths often cross.

Like any group of people who work closely together it is sometimes easy to take each other for granted.

So today – on behalf of New Zealand First – let me thank your organisation for the fine work you do as an advocacy group and as a support and social network for some of the more vulnerable and often forgotten sections of our society – our seniors.

While we may not agree on everything – those things on which we agree far outnumber those on which we might disagree.

You know we do what we do because we believe it is right. We believe it is right that our seniors live in dignity.

We believe it is right that those who helped build this country should have security in retirement.

It is no coincidence that our nation was the envy of the world, socially and economically, when your generation was running the show.

And we share your concern at the erosion in values and the demise of that sense of community which used to define New Zealand society.

And we are here today to issue you a challenge – to help us rebuild the New Zealand we remember and that way of life that enriched all of us.

To build the sense of community and values which once made us great and could make us great again.

You see we believe that with your help – your knowledge, your experience and your genuine passion for this country – we could achieve this ambitious goal.

You might be interested to note that your meeting coincides with the real birthday of the Commonwealth's most well-known senior citizen.

It is of course, our Head of State – Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the 2nd.

No lady likes to advertise her age but the Queen is 82 years old today, and I am sure we all extend to her our very best wishes.

Marking such an occasion reminds us of a different era with a different set of values.

Most of us can still remember a loving grandparent and the sage advice given when we were in trouble at home or at school.

We wonder if many of our social ills could have been prevented if the old system of extended families had not been broken up by the rapid changes brought about by the technology revolution of recent decades.

There seems to be something amiss when we start dividing up society along age groups, creating retirement ghettos and removing the leavening effect of senior citizens from communities.

We need to blend the young, the old and those in between.

Artificial division of these groups leaves us all the poorer even if it is done with the very best of intentions like creating retirement villages.

One of the reasons for this social phenomenon is the safety and security needed by older people.

New Zealand in 2008 is not the safe place it used to be when we were young.

We would venture to suggest that everyone in this building can remember the days when people did not bother to lock their houses when they went out.

You could even walk down the streets of any suburb after dark on your own – and be perfectly safe.

And the paint on the fences was the paint that was painted on!

There was no graffiti, no tagging – just the odd political slogan here and there.

However – we can't live in the past and it is important to realise that despite the evils of the age, there are some good things happening out there.

And we must never lose hope that someone, somewhere is prepared to do the right thing.

This year New Zealand First will be fifteen years old.

We were formed as a political party to represent the views of ordinary New Zealanders concerned about the economic and social direction of their country.

Those people worried about the sale of public assets to foreign control, and the decline in employment and social services.

We have simple policies like the right of every New Zealander to live in their homes and walk their streets without fear,

That all New Zealanders must be treated equally under the law,

And that we should have financial security in retirement with easy access to health services.

We believe that many senior citizens are having trouble making ends meet with rising costs of food, power and transport.

Superannuation now stands at the rate of 66 percent of the net average wage for a married couple, up from the 63.28 percent it was on the last election night.

It is better than it was, but New Zealand First is your only guarantee that it will not drop to 65 percent or even lower following the next election night.

But the problem is in fact more pressing. We in New Zealand First know that it is not enough to keep pace with rising costs.

You see with the cost of basics now rising faster than inflation, the current rates of New Zealand superannuation, even with the increases we secured at the last election, is falling further behind.

Grey Power members need to ask every political party which ones are committed to raising superannuation.

If we have sufficient support, New Zealand First will push it up to at least 68 percent of the net average wage – and will make this a central part of our next confidence and supply agreement after the next election.

We will ensure that the funding for the eldercare sector continues and that this sector has the planning in place to address our aging population.

We will ensure that issues surrounding the non-qualified spouse are addressed. We will change the rebate rate from 70 to 30 cents in the dollar and increase the amount from \$80 to \$100 for when the rebate kicks in.

We also want to see changes in the way superannuitants pay tax on extra income they earn.

At present you have no choice about how the tax system treats you – and the options are both bad. Either any extra income earned is taxed at 39 percent or your superannuation is taxed at 39 percent.

While the IRD then issues a return annually if one is due – most superannuitants actually need this extra money as they earn it.

New Zealand First will ensure that IRD rules are changed so that you are taxed at the lower rates – and that you will only be taxed at the higher rate should you regularly earn over \$60,000, or whatever the income for the top rate becomes.

Put simply, you will get to keep more of the money you earn when you need it.

Now talking of tax cuts – some of you may be aware that the government has promised tax cuts in this year's budget.

My office has been contacted by some of you concerned at the impact of these cuts on your rate of superannuation.

We have an assurance from the Finance Minister that those who receive New Zealand superannuation will not be disadvantaged by any changes.

Now let us turn to the progress of the SuperGold Card.

Did you realise that it has been just over six months since it was launched? That's right just over six months.

Since that launch the number of business partners has risen dramatically.

We said it would grow – and quite clearly it has.

From 188 businesses at launch, to 764 business partners through 3,960 business outlets now – that is significant growth in anyone's language.

To put this in some context, SuperGold Card New Zealand is now as large as the cards operating in several Australian states in just over six months, and they started well over a decade ago.

We know it might not be good enough for some – but to the tens of thousands of cardholders that are making savings every day, and we know from the businesses on board that there are tens of thousands using it, it is making a real difference.

And there are still literally hundreds of businesses coming on board.

Despite this significant growth there was one dimension of the card which needed further consideration – the enhancement of government services.

Having successfully launched the card, bedded it in, the time has now come for government services to be enhanced.

And that is exactly what will occur in Budget 2008 and beyond.

In Budget 2008 we have secured greater access to public transport.

In fact Budget 2008 will contain funding which will ensure not a further 50 percent discount on off-peak travel, or 70 percent or even 80 or 90 percent.

**Budget 2008 will contain funding which will ensure that SuperGold Card holders will travel free – that's right, free, during off peak times!**

But we have not stopped there.

**We have also secured a significant funding boost to ensure greater access to hearing aids in this year's budget.**

We are also working with the government to secure power rebates for SuperGold cardholders.

It is only the beginning as we said at the launch.

And we will keep working on this initiative, despite the knockers, because we believe it is right to give something back.

But there is a greater challenge which confronts us – a direct threat to the New Zealand way of life from within.

Grey Power members must be awake to the possibility that unless they act at the ballot box – the Maori party or the Green party or, even worse, the Act party may determine the next government.

This is the same Maori party that believes gang members are victims, not the violent criminals they are. Violent crime and graffiti will go through the roof.

It is the same Green party which wants to legalise all sorts of drugs, creating a more delinquent society and also open our immigration doors to all and sundry with no view to our security.

And it is the same Act party which has resurrected the grandfather of asset sales and benefit slashing – Roger Douglas.

Their view of a great New Zealand is not yours yet that is what you will get if you do not vote for a party with your interests at heart.

At the end of the day you will get the government you vote for and it will be three long years before you get the chance to change it again.

So election 2008 is the time for you to regain your rightful stake in this country you helped build.

You see neither Labour nor National will be able to govern on their own.

New Zealand First has said we will talk with whichever of these parties gets the most seats – in the first instance.

Put simply – we are your safeguard against the further erosion of the values and beliefs you hold dear.

But we are only as strong as you make us.

Our aim is to more than stop the rot – we want to turn it around and make New Zealand great again.

We are calling on you today to join us in the struggle of rebuilding the New Zealand way of life.

Help us fight violent crime.

How can we, New Zealand's senior citizens, stop violent crime you might ask?

Well with your support New Zealand First will ban gangs, we will put even more police on our streets and we will declare war on drugs.

With your support we will battle for New Zealanders to own more of New Zealand.

With your support we will ensure that we own more of our assets, that our exporters get the tax breaks they need, and that more of New Zealand is for New Zealanders.

And most importantly, help us help you with better security in retirement.

Help us ensure your superannuation keeps pace, that you can increase access to healthcare and social services.

But we cannot do it without you.

The equation is simple.

The more votes we get – the more we will be able to deliver.

Politics is about many things, but it is always about numbers. The more numbers you give us the more we can do for you. This is a historic, present and future fact.

**ENDS**