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Below is the full transcript of new Internet Party leader Suzie Dawson's interview with *New Zealand Herald* reporter Sam Hurley. His exclusive feature appears in today's edition of the *Weekend Herald*.

Why did you decide to run for leader of the Internet Party?

When I was asked in late January to consider the leadership position it came as a huge surprise to me as I had never considered entering politics. But the more I examined the idea, the clearer the synergies were. My IT management experience, coupled with my media skills, and my first-person insight into political and activism events meant I had the qualifications and the unique perspective required. I have also had to develop a pretty big tolerance for both political risk-taking and a thick skin to deal with the inevitable criticisms. What finally sealed the deal for me was listening to what Laila Harré said in her first speech as Internet Party leader. She said *"If me standing here inspires younger people, especially women, to back themselves and their beliefs, then that will be my reward."* I interviewed Laila a number of times in the course of the 2014 campaign and she was always so kind and generous to me. It was Laila that, at the Moment of Truth press conference, famously dubbed me *"a real journalist"* before granting me an exclusive interview. I can't begin to fill Laila's shoes but I can walk my own path with the next generation Internet Party and hope that in turn, I can inspire and be generous with other women who will one day become the future of New Zealand politics.

What are your thoughts on the brief history of the Internet Party, and its campaign during the 2014 General Election as a coalition with Mana Party?

I am always impressed by people who are willing to set aside fundamental differences, empathise with each other, try to see things from each other's perspectives and build something together. It took a huge amount of political courage from both sides and had it worked and Internet Mana entered parliament, the same commentariat who were derisive of the pairing would have had to cheer it as a brilliant strategic move. While optimism is awesome, I think expectations were set too high in 2014, unrealistically so, and that this is a long game not a fast one.

What are the positives and negatives of now running as a stand-alone party?

I don't see the Internet Party as a standalone party but as part of a wider global trend, a movement towards the future of politics and governance, and New Zealand's first real opportunity to move beyond the chains of past paradigms and the old ways of doing things. Society is changing fast but our parliamentary system barely changes at all, unless it is to dole out annual pay increases to MPs. Internet Party brings the hope and inspiration of the Pirate Parties in Iceland, Europe and beyond. We have been working to forge international relationships so that we can bring the most innovative and modern political, technological and social progresses to New Zealand.

What New Zealanders are you hoping to attract to support the Internet Party? And how do you hope to achieve this?

The need for a technology-minded party is obvious, as is the gap that it fills. So many Kiwis are understandably sickened and disillusioned by the drudgery, corruption and puppetry of traditional politics. Showing New Zealand that we are about creative solutions, tech-savvy engagement and fun

is where it's at for us. You can expect us to be constantly innovating and setting our own trends, rather than following what everyone else is doing.

What do you want to achieve as leader, and for the party to achieve, during this General Election year?

The Party's primary goal must be longevity and sustainability. To be a Party of the future we have to look beyond any one Election cycle. To that end, several of the major innovations we will be implementing in the coming months are initiatives that will exist outside of and beyond September. For now, letting people know that we are here, we aren't giving up, and that we are committed to building incredible things for our country in the long-term, is the most important thing. Only a fool lets their enemies or their competitors define success for them and far too much of that went on in 2014. For us, to still exist and be fighting for meaningful change in 2020, 2023, 2026, and to incrementally grow our support base each time, as did the other Pirate Parties and the Greens worldwide before us, will be the definition of success.

What are your thoughts on the major political parties in NZ and the policies which have been rolled out so far?

The political situation 2014-2017 did not improve for Internet Party not being in Parliament. To the contrary, the living standards and outlook for Kiwis have dramatically worsened. We thought in 2011 that we were already at epidemic levels of homelessness and child poverty. Now look at the situation. Even working New Zealanders can't afford to live anymore. In servitude to its foreign Deep State masters, the New Zealand government has driven the country into the ground. Like the rest of the Five Eyes, New Zealand has been turned into an Orwellian nightmare. From the GCSB bill to the TPPA, New Zealanders don't agree with the legislative or fiscal agenda that they have been forcefully subjected to, yet are blatantly ignored by a government that has used its security apparatus to reinforce its structures of power in order to serve its own interests and not that of its people. This simply isn't sustainable.

Does the party's founder, Kim Dotcom, still have any role in helping to shape party policies and its direction?

Although many of the initial 2014 policy ideas were his, Kim is not a member of either the Policy or the Campaign Committees in 2017, and resigned from the Executive Committee in February. Kim was not involved in designing the strategic or tactical planning for the 2017 campaign, nor is he involved in its implementation. While the original vision for the Party was his, he never reigned over it with an iron fist as some like to fantasise. I understand the reasons why he stood up and took the blame on election night in 2014, however I personally felt that he should not have, because it was not representative of how things really were. In conceding to the narrative that his brand was 'poison', he was ratifying a message that had been pushed onto the public by those who had vested interest in, and benefitted from, making it so. In reality he is very altruistic and the Party was founded and funded as an act of altruism. The idea that it was some plot to benefit his extradition case is a manufactured myth. Even had the Internet Party entered Parliament, no laws would have been passed that would have altered Kim's legal circumstances. He himself stated at the 2014 launch his reasons for launching the party - but they were completely ignored by media, politicians and other interests who preferred to believe there was some hidden malign motive and led the public to believe there was. There was not.

What stage are you at with seeking temporary asylum in Russia?

I am still involved in the long and complex process of seeking temporary asylum. At this stage I have no idea whether I will ultimately be successful. In the case of the Hong Kong asylum seekers who helped to shelter Edward Snowden, their process took many years. As time goes on, further information continues to come to light about the seriousness of my circumstances and my own understanding and ability to prove my case, grows. I simply have to wait and see how things unfold.

You have previously spoken about a government's surveillance of its citizens given your experiences. What are your thoughts on the GCSB and the current NZ Government's stance on surveillance?

In 2014 the whistle-blower Edward Snowden told New Zealanders about some of what goes on within these agencies, and his leaked documents present the black and white business theory behind it, from the perspective of an intelligence analyst receiving the data. What my experiences illuminate is the real-world ramifications in practice, from the perspective of a target. The list of egregious, unconscionable breaches of the public contract by both the GCSB and the other security agencies of the NZ government is a very, very long one. From thousands of warrantless data requests on New Zealand citizens, to granting themselves the ability to place cameras inside Kiwi's residential homes without a warrant, to recently expressed wishes to remove the definition of the term 'national security' so that it simply becomes a catch-all phrase, to the illegal surveillance of New Zealand citizens for which there has been no meaningful redress, to the rampant problem of private security agencies sub-contracting from government agencies and operating with full legal protections yet with no oversight from the Inspector General of the Intelligence Services. Political oppression and domestic tyranny have been outsourced in New Zealand. Few are yet aware of the full extent of that. In collecting all of the data of every man, woman and child in New Zealand, the government are perpetuating every day, the mass surveillance that they deny exists. In packaging that data and literally selling it to foreign spy agencies, who in turn pass it to other governments, in my personal opinion they are committing treason. Regardless of how many unpopular laws they ram through under urgency to justify their actions.

Do you believe government surveillance is necessary to maintain "national security", given the significant terror attacks across Europe during the past two years?

I believe that if the government was serious about preventing terrorism, they would stop either directly or indirectly arming and funding those governments who are known to be in turn arming and funding terrorists. WikiLeaks' DNC releases included an email from Hillary Clinton where she states that she is aware that Saudi Arabia and Qatar were arming and funding ISIS. Yet the Clinton Foundation/Clinton Global Initiative continued to accept millions from those states, and the United States continued to sell them weapons. Likewise President Trump, who claims to be anti-ISIS and anti-terrorism, was most recently seen in Saudi Arabia literally holding a sword and dancing a war dance, before signing off on yet another mega-billion-dollar weapons deal. George Bush promised fifteen years ago that there would be a focus on preventing the funding of terrorism, yet much like the War On Terror itself, that effort has profoundly failed.

Do you still define yourself as an activist and citizen journalist?

I think activism is not a choice but a state of mind. It is the compulsion to attempt to fix something that is wrong in the world, rather than to be swayed into inaction by fear, apathy or the lure of personal gain. So in that sense, yes I am an activist. As far as my journalism, I always write truth - even if it is dangerous or controversial - for the benefit of citizens, rather than for money, career prospects, or reward. Which is why I still consider myself a citizen journalist despite my now-long list of credits. Perhaps the label should be citizen's journalist.

And do you intend to return to New Zealand at some stage?

Exile is not a choice and although I seldom talk about the price that I have paid it has been incredibly high and not just paid by me. While teams of reckless security agents profit off politically persecuting New Zealanders, with no hope of accountability or justice, I will not be able to return to New Zealand. If, however, they are eventually exposed and some redress is achieved, or if the price of their continued persecution of me becomes too high for their employers to bear, that may perhaps change. Only time will tell.

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Please direct ALL media enquiries to Sarah Illingworth (Internet Party NZ Communications Director and Party Secretary) at media@internet.org.nz.