

# Thousands join protest in Wellington, New Zealand

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New Zealand saw its biggest political demonstrations in over two decades when thousands turned out to protest the planned war against Iraq in 18 urban and provincial centres—from Whangarei in the north to Dunedin in the south. The Clark Labour government has indicated that it would support a war on Iraq if it received UN endorsement.

In the capital Wellington, 7,000 marched on parliament through the central business district on Saturday. The protesters represented a wide cross-section of the population—young and elderly, workers, students and family groupings—with many participating in a political event for the first time.

The marchers chanted slogans such as “One, two, three, four, we don’t want your bloody war!”, “No blood for oil!” and “Listen Bush, listen Clark—we don’t want to bomb Iraq!”. A prominent group of young Americans entertained the crowd with antiwar chants set to cheerleading routines. Outside parliament, the marchers listened to a reading by Emad Jabbar, a well-known Iraqi poet now resident in New Zealand.

The main political speaker was Green MP, Keith Locke. He received his loudest round of applause when he declared that it would not matter to the children of Baghdad whether the rockets falling on them had “US” or “endorsed by the UN” painted on them. Locke, however, has previously endorsed UN-led military interventions, in particular in East Timor where the interests of New Zealand capitalism are at stake.

Several hundred copies of the WSWS statement were distributed, and received considerable interest. A number of marchers specifically requested copies, having seen others with them and said they intended to read them carefully.

In Auckland, the country’s largest city, an estimated 15,000 marchers jammed Queen Street while a plane

pulling a huge “make peace, not war” banner flew over the Viaduct Harbour where crowds had gathered for day one of the America’s Cup yachting regatta.

In Christchurch, on the South Island, an estimated 3,000 people joined a peace picnic sit-in at Victoria Square. In Dunedin, further south, 3,000 people attended a march and rally.



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