

WSWS holds public meeting in Wellington, New Zealand

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The following article is a report from last week's World Socialist Web Site public meeting in New Zealand. The address by John Braddock, New Zealand correspondent for the WSWS, is published today (see "The New Zealand Labour government and the 'war on terror'"). The report by Nick Beams, Socialist Equality Party (Australia) national secretary and member of the WSWS international editorial board, will be published tomorrow.

On September 28, the *World Socialist Web Site* held a public meeting in Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, on "Five years since September 11: causes and consequences of the 'war on terror'". WSWS speakers presented a comprehensive assessment of the deepening global political and economic crisis and clearly demarcated the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) from the national-based politics of the various New Zealand "left" organisations.

The keynote speaker at the meeting was Nick Beams, a member of the WSWS international editorial board and the national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia). John Braddock, the main WSWS correspondent in New Zealand, also spoke.

The audience included university and technical students, workers in the service and financial sectors, artists, IT workers and retirees. The majority were met in the course of the campaign for the meeting, conducted by Socialist Equality Party members in Australia in conjunction with supporters of the ICFI in New Zealand. Campaigns were conducted at Victoria and Massey universities, the Wellington Polytechnic trade school, the main rail and bus stations in central Wellington, the city library, and working class suburbs such as Lower Hutt, Johnsonville and Porirua. Some 4,000 leaflets advertising the meeting were distributed,

and hundreds of people introduced to the WSWS for the first time.

Opening the meeting, SEP assistant national secretary and meeting chair Linda Tenenbaum commented on the objective significance of the fifth anniversary of September 11. "The 'war on terror' launched by the Bush administration," she said, "has now lasted nearly five years, beginning with the US-led assault on Afghanistan and proceeding to the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq. It has defined the foreign and domestic policies, not only of the Bush White House, but of virtually every major—and minor—power".

Tenenbaum stressed that it was necessary "to probe beneath the official claims, hyperbole and outright lies, from governments and media alike, to uncover the real driving forces behind the eruption of US military aggression". Only in this way, she said, could "a genuinely progressive alternative perspective be developed".

The first speaker, John Braddock, gave a concise and clear answer to the frequent claim in New Zealand that the Clark Labour government was not implicated in the neo-colonialism being carried out in the name of the "war on terror".

Braddock reviewed how Prime Minister Helen Clark had given support and legitimacy to the Bush administration since September 2001 and its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Like its Australian counterpart, the New Zealand government had backed the "war on terror" to secure US support for neo-colonial operations in East Timor, the Solomon Islands and elsewhere in the Pacific region, where the Australian and New Zealand ruling elite have definite economic and strategic interests.

The main report was delivered by Nick Beams. His detailed speech established that, behind the propaganda

claims that the US was involved in a “long war” against “terror” and “Islamic fascism” were the growing rivalries between the major capitalist powers for dominance over resources, markets, profits and spheres of influence—a process which threatened humanity with another global conflagration. The militarism of the Bush administration, he emphasised, “only expresses in the most violent manner objective tendencies lodged in the very structure of the global capitalist system”.

Beams told the audience: “Definite political perspectives flow from this examination. Above all, it makes clear that the struggle against militarism cannot be conceived of as a campaign to somehow try and pressure the imperialist powers to change course, or to vote other parties into government. If the struggle against imperialist war is to go forward, if it is to be more than a protest to the powers that be, then it must be grounded on a socialist program aimed at the unification of the international working class, the overturn of the capitalist profit system and the establishment of a world socialist federation.”

Beams stressed that New Zealand, like every part of the world, was not apart from the global processes underlying the eruption of militarism. He pointed out that in World War I “the loss of life per head of population sustained in this small country was second to none”. Concluding, he appealed to the audience to take up the perspective of the ICFI.

A lively discussion followed the reports. Students asked questions about the attitude of the WSWS to the Chavez government in Venezuela and to the threat of an environmental catastrophe due to global warming. A retired worker wanted to know about the IC’s assessment of the working class and its capacity to embrace revolutionary politics.

In the course of the discussion, a member of a middle class protest organisation expressed opposition to the perspective advanced by Beams and asked what “immediate practical activity” was being proposed by the WSWS and ICFI for people in New Zealand.

Beams replied that the central activity of the WSWS was preoccupied with the most important question of all: overcoming the crisis of perspective in the workers’ movement produced by decades of betrayals by Stalinism, social democracy and the trade union bureaucracies.

Following the questions and answers, several young people remained to continue the discussion and to express their interest in participating in the fight to build the ICFI in New Zealand. Further meetings will be held in Wellington and other New Zealand cities in the coming period.



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