

SEP candidate Nick Beams addresses meeting in New Zealand

Our reporters
26 August 2013

Workers, students, unemployed people and pensioners attended a public meeting on Saturday in New Zealand's capital, Wellington, addressed by Nick Beams, a Socialist Equality Party (SEP) candidate for the senate in the September 7 Australian election. Beams, the SEP national secretary, is a member of the *World Socialist Web Site* Editorial Board and a leading authority on Marxist political economy.

The meeting was part of the SEP's campaign to mobilise the working class and young people throughout the Asia-Pacific region and internationally against the growing dangers of a US-led war against China. It followed recent public meetings in Sri Lanka addressed by SEP assistant national secretary James Cogan, and SEP election meetings around Australia.

WSWS correspondent Tom Peters, who chaired the meeting, gave an initial report outlining the attacks on democratic rights and preparations for authoritarian rule by governments internationally. He denounced the imprisonment of US army private Bradley Manning and the persecution of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden for exposing US war crimes and its vast international spy network.

Peters explained that the persecution of these individuals was driven by the ruling elite's fear of the working class. Referring to the law passed by the New Zealand parliament last week, expanding the power of the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) to spy on New Zealand residents, Peters stated: "As in the US and around the world, such police-state measures are pre-emptive: they are aimed at suppressing the mass opposition which will inevitably emerge to spiralling social inequality and imperialist war."

Beams, the main speaker, reviewed the major turn in US foreign policy and the military deployments bound up with the Obama administration's "pivot" to Asia. He

explained that the removal of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in June 2010, in an anti-democratic coup within the Labor Party, was the result of US hostility to Rudd's proposal for a limited accommodation with China's rise in the Asia-Pacific. WikiLeaks cables revealed that key Labor Party and trade union faction leaders who played the central role in Rudd's removal were "protected sources" of the US embassy.

Beams explained that immediately after being installed as prime minister, Julia Gillard "appeared at a press conference with US Ambassador [Jeffrey] Bleich—with the US and Australian flags prominent in the backdrop—to emphasise the importance of the US alliance." In November 2011, he continued, Obama visited Australia to announce the US "pivot" to Asia, as well as the decision to establish a US marine base in Darwin. This and other military facilities on the Cocos Islands and in Western Australia were central to "US plans to cut off China's vital supplies of oil and other resources that pass through very narrow sea lanes to the north of Australia in the Indonesian archipelago."

Beams outlined how the US was "stoking up territorial disputes between the countries of South-East Asia and China," adding that "the whole region is increasingly coming to resemble the pre-1914 Balkans, where regional disputes intersected with great power rivalries, eventually leading to war." The danger of war was highlighted by events in Japan, where the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was building up its military capabilities and "reviving all the reactionary traditions of Japanese militarism."

The speaker said war was not inevitable, but emphasised that the ruling elites in each country were "being driven on by the mounting geo-political and economic tensions set in motion by the deepening economic breakdown of the global capitalist system... American imperialism has no intention of passing

peacefully from the scene but is seeking to use its military might to counter its economic decline.” War could only be prevented, Beams said, “through the mobilisation of the international working class for the overthrow of the outmoded and reactionary capitalist system which gives rise to it.”

Beams’ report exposed the reactionary role of various pseudo-left groups internationally, which have lined up behind US imperialism in the Middle East and Asia. These groups, he said, represent sections of the affluent middle class, who have a “material stake” in the “imperialist domination and control of vital resources and the exploitation of the cheap labour of the working class arising from capitalist globalisation.”

The speaker reviewed the experience of the revolutionary upheavals in Egypt and the bloody crackdown by the US-backed military regime. Beams explained that Egypt’s Revolutionary Socialists (RS)—who are supported by all the pseudo-lefts, including those in New Zealand—had played a critical role in suppressing the mass movement of the working class. Terrified at the prospect of revolution, the RS had promoted the Tamarod movement “organised by powerful wealthy figures in Egypt and backed by sections of the former Mubarak regime, to support the military as it carried out a coup at the end of June.”

Beams explained that in New Zealand the groups Fightback, Socialist Aotearoa and the International Socialist Organisation, which are all affiliated to the Maori-nationalist Mana Party, had stepped forward “to play their part in facilitating the war drive of US imperialism against China.” These pseudo-lefts had joined “an anti-China front encompassing the NZ First Party of Winston Peters, the Labour Party and the trade union leadership, the Greens, [and] Mana.”

The speaker refuted the pseudo-lefts’ claims that China is an imperialist power with designs on countries, including New Zealand. China, Beams said, is “the cheap labour platform of major transnational corporations, based not in China, but in the old imperialist powers. China operates within a financial and political framework dominated by the finance capital of the major capitalist powers. But the false characterisation of China by the pseudo-lefts serves a definite political purpose. It provides the justification and rationale for their integration into the camp of US imperialism as it intensifies its war drive.”

Beams read from a 2011 article by Socialist Aotearoa (SA) which quoted approvingly a US military think tank’s proposal for “high-end capabilities to deter

potential Chinese aggression and maintain freedom of action in the Asia-Pacific region.” SA declared that “as American elites prepare to deter Chinese aggression and domination in the new century, so should the international working class.”

Beams commented: “We are dealing with an unabashed pro-imperialist organisation, utilising all the reactionary and racist campaigns of the past depicting ‘Asian hordes,’ to try to poison the political consciousness of the working class and prepare the way for it to be plunged, once again, into an imperialist war.”

The speaker concluded by calling on those in attendance to fight to join the International Committee of the Fourth International and fight to resolve the crisis of leadership and perspective in the working class through building a section of the party of world revolution in New Zealand.

The report was followed by a number of questions from the audience regarding the economic ties between China and the US, the SEP’s policy on US-Australian military bases, and the problems of raising the political consciousness of the working class. A number of those in attendance remained afterward to talk with Beams and other members of the SEP, and left their details to remain in contact.

Ryan, a construction worker, said he had not become politically aware until two years ago. “The financial crisis,” he said, had “exposed the ruling class. They pushed the maths too far, the bridge was too weak and it cracked. And before that no one noticed that they were doing fractional lending... So that sort of exposed to me the corruptness of the financial order... It’s clearly just a way to rake in money.”

Gary, from Britain and currently unemployed, said the meeting was “very significant”, adding that he “agreed with a lot of it.” “What I find difficult to foresee,” he added, “is how this can develop into a viable opposition to the status quo. But it’s got to start somewhere, that’s what I can see... I agree with the philosophy and I agree with what [the SEP] is saying but I can see it’s going to be a very hard path.”



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