

New Zealand pseudo-lefts give green light for Mana-Internet Party alliance

John Braddock
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The Mana Party's AGM on April 12-13 highlighted the role played by New Zealand's pseudo-left organisations—the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), Socialist Aotearoa and Fightback—as an integral part of this bourgeois party and as defenders of the capitalist system.

The groups ensured a unanimous vote for Mana to pursue an alliance with the openly pro-business Internet Party, recently founded by millionaire Internet entrepreneur Kim Dotcom, a right-wing libertarian (see “New Zealand: Mana Party AGM endorses talks with Internet Party”).

Speaking for all the pseudo-left groups, Fightback declared on April 18 that even though there was “no sign that [the Internet Party] represents a progressive force ... Fightback will continue to belong to and support” Mana if it decided to formalise an alliance with the Internet party.

Mana is a capitalist party that was established as a safety valve to divert mass discontent into safe parliamentary channels. It emerged in 2011 as a split from the Maori Party. The Maori Party was widely discredited over its role as a junior partner in the conservative National Party-led government, which was imposing its austerity agenda on the working class, including oppressed Maori communities.

Mana's leader and sole MP Hone Harawira established Mana to head off hostility to the Maori elite, particularly in his own impoverished electorate. Mana's program is based on middle class identity politics, designed to split the working class on ethnic lines, and defend the interests of a privileged layer of Maori business entrepreneurs.

From the outset, Mana required the services of the pseudo-left organisations. After all, Mana's claim to represent a break from the Maori Party and the National government was threadbare. Harawira had supported National's assault on living standards for two years. So the pseudo-left organisations were called in to dress up the new party as one committed to social reform and the interests of working people. In return, Mana provided them with an entrée card into the New Zealand political establishment.

The pseudo-lefts are all members of Mana and some hold significant positions within it. Fightback's Grant Brookes,

for example, is the chairperson of the party's Wellington-based Te Tai Tonga branch and stood as a candidate for Mana in the last Area Health Board elections. All the pseudo-left organisations are campaigning for Mana in the September 2014 elections, with the aim of helping to install or even joining a Labour-Greens government. Such a government would deepen National's assault on working people.

The purpose of Mana's proposed electoral alliance with Dotcom is to secure a greater role for the party within the political establishment. Notwithstanding the tepid and phony misgivings expressed by the pseudo-lefts, they fully support this agenda. As the entire political spectrum lurches to the right under the impact of the global economic crisis, they use whatever influence they have within the working class, through their activities in the unions and among youth, to provide Mana with a “progressive” colouring.

Their role at the Mana AGM was totally quiescent. Like Mana as a whole, they were flattered by the extensive media attention and attracted by Dotcom's money and his celebrity. Dotcom was given the floor of the main session without any challenge by the pseudo-lefts. The pre-vetted question and answer session was allowed to proceed without interruption. The Mana leadership had instructed any potential dissenters not to speak to the media. None of the pseudo-lefts attempted to defy the leadership, who were clearly intent on driving through a vote in favour of pursuing the alliance.

Nor did anyone object to the line-up of right-wing guest speakers brought in to promote the party's rightward turn, including businessman and broadcaster Willie Jackson, millionaire investment banker Gareth Morgan, one-time Labour MP Georgina Beyer and former MP for the big-business party ACT, Donna Awatere.

During a lunch break, the pseudo-lefts gathered together to discuss their response to Dotcom's proposal, but refused to divulge whether they would vote for a deal. In any case, the result was soon displayed. Mana's seven branches and its youth wing all voted in favour of pursuing the deal. The

unanimous vote was assured when former Greens MP and founding Mana member Sue Bradford, and a group of about 10 supporters, staged a protest stunt and left before the vote was taken.

Bradford later told the *New Zealand Herald*: “There was deep debate, deep dissension and resistance to the idea of going into an alliance with the Internet Party” and Dotcom, a “neo-liberal millionaire.” According to the *Dominion Post*, the opponents had “mainly raised concerns about Dotcom’s ‘capitalist agenda,’” in particular his support for “increased foreign investment in New Zealand.”

This is sheer hypocrisy. Bradford’s entire political history has been as a mouthpiece for a succession of capitalist parties, including the Alliance, the Greens and now Mana. Any “differences” do not stem from defending the interests of the working class, but the reactionary nostrums of national economic protectionism. This perspective, which represents the interests of weaker sections of NZ business, including its “indigenous” layer, is the banner under which Mana and the pseudo-lefts have mounted recent protests over state asset sales and the US-dominated proposed economic agreement known as the Trans Pacific Partnership.

Prior to the conference, the ISO raised concern about the impact of the talks with Dotcom on Mana’s image. Fightback had refused to oppose the anti-democratic FBI-led raid in 2012 on Dotcom’s house over allegations of copyright infringement by his Megaupload web site. At that time, Fightback denounced Dotcom as “simply a businessman with an amoral attitude toward commerce” and said it would not defend him any more than it would a drug dealer.

All these “reservations” evaporated at the Mana AGM. With the unanimous vote, the pseudo-lefts revealed their thorough integration into Mana and commitment to a deal with the right-wing Internet party.

Moreover, some pseudo-lefts were instrumental in campaigning behind the scenes for a deal. Joe Carolan, a leading figure in Socialist Aotearoa, supported it. He told the WWS before the vote that he “could be” for the alliance, but would not explain why. According to one Mana supporter, Carolan had been justifying a vote for an alliance by drawing a parallel between Dotcom and businessman Alexander Parvus, who supposedly funded Lenin and helped him return to Russia in April 1917 after the Czar was overthrown.

The analogy, which is false from every standpoint, reveals there is no limit to the historical falsifications to which pseudo-lefts will resort to justify their wretched manoeuvres. In his *History of the Russian Revolution*, Leon Trotsky exposed the claim that Parvus funded Lenin’s return, establishing that it was part of a slander campaign to brand

the Bolsheviks as “German agents.” Carolan then piles one distortion on another, ludicrously comparing Harawira, who has headed numerous businesses and now the pro-business Mana party, to Lenin, leader of the 1917 October Revolution and the first workers’ state.

In a recent article, Carolan declared that he opposed Mana joining “any capitalist government” but supported its collaboration with Labour. He compared Mana to the German Left Party and Italy’s Rifondazione Comunista, which have both been instrumental in subordinating widespread opposition in the working class to German Social Democracy and to Romano Prodi’s bourgeois government in Italy in 2006.

Carolan declared that Rifondazione made a tactical error in being “captured in a coalition” with the Prodi government and supporting its deployment of troops to Afghanistan. In reality, Socialist Aotearoa and the other pseudo-left organisations, for all their “anti-capitalist” posturing, are part of a capitalist party that is angling to be “captured” in a coalition government with the Greens and Labour that would be ruthless in implementing the ruling class agenda of austerity and militarism.

The integration of the pseudo-lefts into Mana is not an error, but flows from their class orientation to layers of the upper middle class. The pseudo-left organisations have been instrumental in promoting various forms of identity politics based on gender, sexual preference and race, including the pervasive Maori politics that underpins Mana and the small, privileged layer of Maori businesspeople and bureaucrats that it represents.

Having embedded themselves into Mana, the pseudo-lefts are now seeking to integrate themselves further into the political establishment. They are offering their services to provide a “socialist” or “progressive” camouflage to an anti-National coalition headed by Labour and the Greens and to block any independent movement of the working class against its reactionary agenda.



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