

Workers and youth voice disgust over New Zealand election

Our reporters
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WSWS reporters spoke to workers and youth at the main shopping centre in the working-class suburb of Lower Hutt, near Wellington, the day after the election, which revealed deep disaffection from the political establishment, particularly among young people.

Those spoken to by the reporting team expressed disappointment and disgust at the election outcome. They identified the National Party and Prime Minister John Key as representing the “rich” and did not regard Labour as offering any alternative for the working class.

The interviews were conducted after the election because any form of political campaigning, discussion or advertising on polling day is outlawed under the anti-democratic provisions of the 1993 Electoral Act. It is an offence, punishable by a \$20,000 fine, to approach a voter on the way to a polling station and attempt, directly or indirectly, to persuade them to vote in a particular direction. The ban applies to protests, opinion polling, leaflets and clothing as well as social media and on-line commentaries polling.

James, a Maori worker, began by saying he didn’t like Key. He explained he had “always been inclined to go to Labour” but the last two elections he voted for the Maori nationalist Maori Party, which has been in coalition with National. He said: “They only got one seat yesterday because they got caught in with Key too much. I think a lot of the Maori voters have said, aw, we’ve had enough of them, buddying up with Key.”

Maori voters had now “all gone to Labour.” Labour, however, “has lost touch with the working class people... not just this election but the last election as well, they’ve lost all touch of reality with the genuine working, Pakeha [European] working class people.”

James said he was concerned about such issues as schooling and the loss of basic rights. He said “the old

days where the government used to fund training for the kids and for the students that are coming—trade training—has gone.”

Commenting on US National Security Agency whistle-blower Edward Snowden’s revelations of mass spying on citizens, James said there wasn’t any “concrete proof,” but it was “definitely possible.” He commented: “Key likes to buddy-buddy with Obama. He thinks he’s a key player, but he ain’t. He’s basically a small fry, but the Americans like to keep all the little nations thinking that they’re big fish.”

Cameron, a young fast-food worker, said he “wasn’t pleased” with the election outcome. He thought John Key was “not trustworthy as a prime minister. He’s too two-faced.” Cameron added: “I never agreed with their whole idea of asset sales, and this whole GCSB [security apparatus] happening.”

Cameron complained that “the economy’s gone up, but the wages haven’t gone up. They’ve been getting stuck into people’s living standards for the last six years.” In the coming period, “the country is going to go a lot more downhill.”

On the Labour Party, Cameron said, “They’re trying to get a bit of everything, and I think that’s where they... lost it. They were trying to get the rich people’s vote as well. I honestly never thought from day one that David Cunliffe would be enough to have people voting for Labour.” He thought that Labour “used to be all for the working class, but now they’re trying to get the business people behind.”

High school students **Antonio** and **Cyrus** took a close interest in the election. Antonio said Key “doesn’t care about any of the poor people, and he only cares about the rich people... I don’t like him at all.” Antonio said he had been following the Green Party. He said he would be “just trying to get a decent job that pays well

money when I'm older." Asked what he thought the chances were, he replied: "With John Key as the prime minister I don't think there is any chance".

Antonio said he supported a rise in the minimum wage to at least \$16 an hour. "That would've been more decent. Everyone would've been getting paid quite a bit, and that's why New Zealand people are going over to Australia because they have better money." He said there should be more equality and it was getting very hard for people to live from day to day. "You see homeless people all the time," Antonio noted.



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