

Oppose the TPP and the drive to war against China!

The Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand)
13 November 2015

The Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand) will distribute this statement at “It’s Our Future” rallies in Wellington and Auckland on Saturday.

The Socialist Equality Group (SEG) unequivocally opposes the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), agreed last month after years of secret negotiations led by the US and including Japan, Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, Mexico, Canada and New Zealand.

US imperialism has pushed the TPP as part of its “pivot to Asia,” which is aimed at strengthening its domination of the vital Indo-Pacific region. Urging ratification of the deal, President Barack Obama bluntly declared that “the TPP means that America will write the rules of the road in the 21st century... And if we don’t pass this agreement — if America doesn’t write those rules — then countries like China will.”

The TPP is the economic spearhead of a US strategy that aims at nothing less than the complete subordination of China to American economic and strategic interests. It goes hand-in-hand with the US military build-up throughout the region, its strengthening of alliances and accelerating preparations for war against China.

US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter openly drew the connection between the TPP and the Pentagon’s war plans when he remarked in April that the agreement was “as important to me as another aircraft carrier” to “cement our influence and leadership” in Asia. Confronted with its own historic decline, the US is driven to use military force to ensure it can “write the rules” in Asia. Its reckless provocations against China, most recently in its naval challenge to Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea, threaten war between two nuclear-armed powers.

At the same time, the TPP will have devastating

economic consequences for workers throughout the region. The TPP will roll back obstacles to profit-making, including environmental protections, democratic rights and social services. Investor-state dispute settlement provisions will allow corporations to sue governments in international tribunals if national regulations cut into their profits. The cost of medicines will increase, with stronger patent protections and other provisions strengthening the monopoly power of multinational drug companies.

The Socialist Equality Group’s opposition to the TPP has nothing in common with the nationalist and protectionist perspective of the organisers of the “It’s Our Future” protests. We insist that the only way to defend living standards and stop the drive to war is to unify the working class in the region and internationally, based on a socialist perspective to abolish capitalism, which is the source of austerity and war.

Those backing the “It’s Our Future” protests include the Council of Trade Unions (CTU), the Greens, the Maori-nationalist Mana Party and the openly right-wing Maori Party. The anti-Asian xenophobic New Zealand First Party also opposes the TPP.

None of these organisations represent the interests of working people. They speak for less competitive sections of New Zealand business, which fear being driven to the wall by the TPP and call for protectionist policies. If the TPP could be shown to benefit all New Zealand capitalists, these parties would wholeheartedly back it.

Green co-leader James Shaw spoke for them all when he accused the National-led government of “governing in the interest of foreign companies at the expense of local interests.” Mana and the Maori Party, which is a partner in the government, view increased foreign

investment as a threat to Maori tribal-based businesses.

The CTU promotes the lie that the New Zealand government and businesses are kinder than their overseas counterparts. Its web site says it “opposes the TPPA unless it is shown to be in the national interest.” It claims to be “concerned that [the deal] will stop future New Zealand governments from doing things that are in the interests of working people.”

What a fraud! For three decades the unions have worked with Labour and National governments and big business in the “national interest” to suppress resistance to mass redundancies and pro-market restructuring. The biggest private sector union, E Tu, is currently enforcing thousands of sackings at mining company Solid Energy, New Zealand Steel and NZ Post.

Social inequality and poverty have skyrocketed. Ministry of Social Development research shows that a household at the top of the poorest 10 percent of society earned just \$10,300 after tax and housing costs in 2013—an 8 percent decline compared with 1982. As many as 800,000 people, including one in four children, now live in poverty, while those on the New Zealand rich list continue to expand their fortunes every year.

Not accidentally, the “It’s Our Future” campaign is completely silent on the role of the TPP in the US build-up for war against China. The same parties backing the anti-TPP protests have whipped up anti-Chinese xenophobia that dovetails with the US war drive. Mana, along with Labour and New Zealand First, has scapegoated Chinese immigrants and investors for the soaring cost of housing, job losses and other social problems.

The entire political establishment backs the US military alliance and New Zealand’s integration into the US war plans, as the means of securing Washington’s support for the predatory neo-colonial interests of New Zealand imperialism in the Pacific.

National has increased New Zealand’s participation in military exercises with US forces, including Southern Katipo, currently underway in the South Island, which aims to prepare troops for war in the Pacific. Documents leaked by Edward Snowden earlier this year revealed the vital role played by New Zealand’s Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) in spying on China on behalf of the US National Security Agency.

The Socialist Equality Group insists that the struggle against war and austerity has to be based on the unity of the working class in New Zealand, Asia and around the world on a socialist perspective. We call on workers and youth to reject all forms of nationalism and chauvinism, which in one way or another subordinate the working class to the New Zealand ruling class and divide it from its class brothers and sisters internationally.

The working class must build a unified global movement to abolish the capitalist system, with its irrational division of the world into competing nation states, which is the source of war and exploitation. This historically outmoded system must be replaced with a planned socialist world economy, based on meeting human needs, not the profits of a wealthy few.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact