

New Zealand: Auckland youth and workers concerned over US election result, danger of war

Our correspondents
24 November 2016

Over the past week-and-a-half members and supporters of the Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand) have been campaigning in Auckland for its public meeting this coming Sunday. Entitled “The political causes and international implications of Trump’s election: A Marxist assessment,” the event is one of a series of meetings being organised by the International Committee of the Fourth International to discuss a socialist and international strategy to fight against the dangers of war, fascism and dictatorship.

SEG supporters have spoken to workers about these vital issues in the city centre and working-class suburbs, such as Onehunga, Mangere, Avondale and New Lynn. We have met hospitality workers, stevedores, truck drivers, teachers, retail workers and many others, including dozens of immigrants and students from the Pacific Islands, India, China and other countries. Auckland is one of the most diverse cities in the world, with 39 percent of the population born overseas.

There is widespread concern over the victory of Donald Trump, particularly his extreme nationalist plans for trade war with China and his intention to deport millions of immigrants and attack the rights of Muslims and other minorities. Several people remarked that the US presidential election had increased the danger of World War III.

Auckland is currently hosting naval contingents from the US and dozens of other countries as part of the NZ Navy’s 75th anniversary celebrations. The first visit by the US navy in 33 years marks the complete restoration of the US-NZ military alliance and New Zealand’s integration into Washington’s war preparations against China. There is deep-seated opposition among workers

and youth to the promotion of militarism and New Zealand’s ties with US imperialism.

Thomas, a Chinese student who bought a ticket to the SEG meeting, said Trump’s threat to build a massive wall between the US and Mexico was “really, really crazy.”

“I think his policy on immigration is very bad, especially toward people from Asia and Muslim people. He’s very anti-China. Chinese people are very nervous about him, including my friends in America. They plan to move to New Zealand because of the election.”

Thomas denounced the US military build-up and encirclement of China, saying: “I think America should not be in the South China Sea.” He added that if China positioned its navy off the coast of California the US would respond with “world war.”

Jonas, 20, arrived in Auckland from Germany a week ago. He is on a break after finishing high school. “I think that Trump’s campaign was very populist,” he said. “His opinions on women, on immigrants are really terrible. He said he would ‘make America great again,’ and provide jobs and more money for the poor. Except that he didn’t say how he would do it.”

Commenting on Trump’s attacks on China, Jonas said: “I said before the election that if Trump got elected it would mean World War III. I think there actually is a real chance.”

Doug, who works as a septic technician, denounced “the elite in the US” who supported Hillary Clinton. He described Trump as “a buffoon” but added that the Democrats had “managed to put 15 percent of the entire population out of their minds, as if to say ‘they don’t vote anyway, so they don’t matter.’ So 15

percent of the population stood up and voted for Donald Trump.

“Hillary Clinton turned up to a rally with someone who gets paid \$18 million a year to sing a song, while people are having to go to food banks to feed their children. People thought: ‘You obviously don’t even know we exist, and you want to be our president’.”

Vijay, a young hotel worker who moved to New Zealand from India, also bought a ticket to the meeting. Hillary Clinton lost, he said, because of her pro-war policies. “She wanted to make Syria a no-fly zone. If any plane flies, she’s going to shoot it down. That’s horrible; and then she would go to war against Russia! How many people will die if there’s a world war?”

Vijay said both US presidential candidates represented the rich. He went on to describe the worsening social crisis in New Zealand, which parallels the situation in the US, including the lack of affordable housing and the exploitation of migrant workers in the hospitality sector. “More than half of my friends work for \$10–\$12 an hour,” he said. “They get paid in cash. I work two jobs just to pay the rent. I’m lucky because I work in jobs where I’m paid above the minimum wage (\$15.25 an hour).”

Vijay opposed the attempts by New Zealand’s political establishment to scapegoat immigrants, saying: “I don’t blame the Chinese workers. They’re looking for jobs. They’re desperate. Imagine you come to a country with \$2,000 in your pocket, and your rent is \$600 a month. It’s so hard to find work.”

Sogra, whose family had emigrated from South Africa, also denounced both candidates and said Trump had won because there was “nobody else” to vote for. She blamed the collapse in support for the Democrats on the US military interventions in the Middle East and said: “There are people being killed in Syria, all over. Clinton is responsible. Not only her, but also Bush, all the other administrations are responsible for the war.”

Sogra voiced her concerns about Trump. “He doesn’t like black people, he doesn’t like brown people. He’s against immigrants. I’m from South Africa and we went through the racism of the apartheid system, so we know what it’s like.”

Like many other workers who spoke to the SEG, she said social inequality played a large part in the election result: “The rich are getting richer and the poor stay poor, all over the world. In the US they are funding the

military while the poor stay poor and there’s people living on the street. I haven’t been to America but I’ve seen polls showing that people are really struggling there.”

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SEG public meeting

The political causes and international implications of Trump’s election: A Marxist assessment

Sunday November 27, 2:30 p.m.

Grey Lynn Library Hall

474 Great North Road, Grey Lynn

Tickets: \$5, \$3 concession



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