

Thousands protest Trump in New Zealand

Our reporters
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Thousands of people joined anti-Trump protests in New Zealand on Saturday. About 1,000 protested in Auckland, 600 in Wellington and hundreds more in Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill. Those in attendance included students, workers and retired people, among whom were immigrants from the US.

The demonstrations were held in conjunction with marches across the US and internationally to coincide with the inauguration of Donald Trump as US president. Millions of people are deeply concerned about the installation of the billionaire demagogue, whose administration includes generals responsible for war crimes and a collection of extreme right-wing ideologues and fascistic figures.

Many of those in attendance were concerned about Trump's promotion of extreme nationalism and xenophobia, his anti-Muslim policies, as well as the growing danger of war and widening social inequality in the US and internationally. Some people spoken to by the WSWWS said they held both the Democrats and the Republicans responsible for these conditions.

However, the main speakers—including trade union officials, environmentalists, journalists and members of the opposition Labour Party and the Greens—limited themselves to denunciations of Trump, particularly his sexist remarks and boasts about sexually assaulting women.

Like the demonstrations in the US, the New Zealand events were billed as “women's marches,” in line with the Democratic Party's promotion of gender-related identity politics. The Wellington protest was advertised on social media using the slogan from Hillary Clinton's campaign, “Love Trumps Hate.”

In Myers Park, Auckland, the opening speaker, New Zealand-American journalist Tracey Barnett recalled the 2008 inauguration of Barack Obama, who she ludicrously described as “Albert Einstein, George Clooney and Gandhi all rolled into one.” She spoke of

the need for “respect, diversity, inclusiveness, compassion,” and called on the New Zealand government to accept more refugees. None of the speakers mentioned the Obama administration's record of imperialist war abroad and its assault on workers' wages and living standards at home.

Labour Party MP Jacinda Ardern (campaigning for a by-election next month in the Mt Albert electorate) spoke briefly, pointing to fears in the US about Trump's anti-immigrant policies, increased police violence and attacks on birth control rights.

Green Party MP Julie Anne Genter (originally from the US) told the Wellington rally that many Americans were “alienated” by politics because it was “mainly older, white males shouting at each other.” She glorified New Zealand's political system for its “greater diversity,” including women and Maori politicians.

The statements by Labour and the Greens are profoundly duplicitous. In fact, prior to the US election Labour Party leader Andrew Little told Radio NZ he wanted “as strong a relationship with the US as possible” and was prepared to work with Trump. The Greens have denounced Trump, calling his views “abhorrent,” but the party aims to become part of a Labour-led government and supports the military and intelligence alliance with the US.

Labour and the Greens have joined the right-wing populist New Zealand First in calling for economic nationalist policies and cuts to immigration, similar to policies advocated by Trump. All three parties support the National Party government's increased military spending and its integration of New Zealand into the US encirclement and war preparations against China.

Members of the Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand) spoke to protesters in Wellington and distributed the statement of the Socialist Equality Party (US): “The inauguration of Donald Trump: A day that

will live in infamy.”

Abby, an anthropologist originally from the US, had watched the protests unfold in the US after the election. She said she was concerned about “environmental issues, education issues, women’s rights, the rights of minorities, LGBTQ, it’s a broad spectrum.”

She thought the election of Trump would lead to the “promotion of inequity and hate and bigotry. It’s a tough thing to stand up against but I think it’s important.” Asked what she thought of the Democrats she said she had voted for Clinton but was “in full support” of rival candidate Bernie Sanders, who initially presented himself as a “democratic socialist.” She agreed that economic inequality “has gotten worse for many people; fewer people own more of the wealth” under the Obama administration, and she believed this would get even worse under Trump.

Abby noted that “a lot of Trump voters, it seemed, were voting for him because they were opposed to further military intervention” advocated by Clinton, yet “Trump wants to rebuild the military. It’s terrifying.”

Arlo, an unemployed 22-year-old from Wellington, said he had come to protest because he was concerned about “injustice, inequality and violence around the world. To have someone running the most powerful country in the world like an extreme racist and sexist such as Donald Trump, I’m very fearful of what that means. It not only affects America, it affects everyone around the world.”

He said the Democrats were not significantly different from the Republicans, that “when Obama first got in it was a great victory for black people, but he didn’t really live up to what he said he was going to do, nothing really changed. He encouraged more violence around the world. The issue is not one single party, the issue is the entire electoral system. It’s very unfair; it doesn’t work for ordinary people, it works for the most powerful, the richest. Donald Trump received less votes than his competition but he still managed to come to power. It’s all about who has the most wealth.”

Arlo had never voted in New Zealand elections because the political system “is very corrupt and doesn’t work for ordinary people. It’s the rich elite that have taken over.”

Nicole, an American IT worker who has lived in New Zealand for 15 years, was most concerned about “the xenophobic sentiment, the homophobic sentiment, the

anti-women sentiment that is trying to take us back to a time that I thought I would never see again in my own lifetime.” She said there was a “very high risk of the world being drawn into more conflicts with significantly higher costs in human life because of catastrophic weapons and the military-industrial complex.”

Nicole believed Trump had been elected because “there’s a lot of fear and a lot of feeling disenfranchised. Nobody trusts politicians, full stop. You see people who voted for Trump because they feel he’s anti-establishment, which is not even close to what he stands for.”

Nicole said she voted for Hillary Clinton but agreed that both parties were controlled by big business. She said there was a “real need for something that goes beyond the two-party establishment. Any third party pretty much doesn’t get a look in.”



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