

New Zealand workers and youth discuss the growing danger of global war

Our reporters
5 October 2017

An important cross-section of workers and students attended the Socialist Equality Group's public meeting in Lower Hutt on October 1. Those in attendance voiced their concerns about the danger of nuclear war, the promotion of anti-immigrant racism by New Zealand's political elite and the necessity for a socialist and internationalist movement of the working class.

Eugene, a university student and part-time hospitality worker, said he found the main report to the meeting "very persuasive and well-researched."

"I knew absolutely nothing about the rearmament and the preparations for war because this hasn't been made any kind of electoral or campaign issue. If we're going to get pulled into some broader strategy against China, the fact that no-one is talking about it is rather worrying, and points to an extreme failure in New Zealand's political class..."

"It seems like almost every major political organisation on what calls itself 'the left' in New Zealand is behind this in some way or another, which seems rather worrying."

Raised in a Labour Party household, Eugene said: "I assumed that Labour's positions were what they said they were. I called myself a socialist without really ever realising what it was."

Eugene said he wanted "to get more involved and get a better understanding of the processes and the history and what socialism actually means. Obviously there's been a considerable lurch rightward in New Zealand politics in the past few decades or so... It looked like the parties that I'd assumed to have left positions—Labour and the Greens—didn't seem to be actually taking any serious attempts to address the failures of capitalism and the world financial system that were exposed in the market crashes..."

"My movement toward socialism has been facilitated

by the same factors that have been moving a lot of young people toward socialism recently, which is the general collapse of the capitalist system's promise to try and uplift the lives of the people who live under it."

Daniel, a public servant and supporter of the SEG, said the trade union-funded *Daily Blog* "has been pursuing a nationalist agenda for a long time, blaming things on immigrants."

Daniel added: "I have absolutely no doubt that the US seeks to influence what happens here, and they've been involved in removing prime ministers overseas, in Australia." The anti-China campaign in New Zealand, he continued, "hasn't been very successful in shifting public opinion" because the vast majority oppose war.

The Maori nationalist Mana Party, he said, had "got worse and worse." Referring to Mana leader Hone Harawira's recent call for the death penalty for Chinese drug smugglers, Daniel said: "No reasonable people would advocate for executing people."

Commenting on Harawira's failure to regain his seat in parliament in the election, having lost it in 2014, Daniel added: "Maori nationalism only has so much traction. It doesn't provide social goods, it is simply based on ethnic politics which denies the essential class nature of the economy."

Ross, a rail worker, said the meeting report "exposed the contemptible conspiracy of silence by all parliamentary parties supported by the pseudo-left and unions of the danger of World War III."

English and Ardern—respective leaders of the National and Labour parties—Ross continued, "did not seriously discuss the threat of war because they seek to become the next leader of New Zealand imperialism. Labour, Greens and NZ First falsely pretended they were friends of the workers... by blaming Chinese workers, immigrants, for all the country's problems."

Not a word on the class character of the NZ Rich List...

“Whichever party makes up the next government with NZ First’s Winston Peters, it will be reactionary and devoted to attacking workers and preparing for war alongside US imperialism. It will also advance a New Zealand version of McCarthyism, where opponents of war and inequality are seen as foreign threats.”

Ross compared this with claims by former Democratic Party presidential candidate Hillary Clinton about Russia’s Vladimir Putin having “stolen” the 2016 US election from her. “In reality she lost because she is a hated enemy of the American working class.”

Ross said the question and answer session at the SEG meeting was interesting. He noted, in particular, the discussion on “how to ‘patiently explain’ to fellow workers, to develop their class consciousness and build new fighting organisations like rank-and-file committees that can actually wage a socialist battle, instead of class collaboration.”

David, a meatworker, also opposed the nationalist and anti-immigrant campaign that “pretends the problems of capitalism can be explained by blaming the Chinese.” He drew attention to a map displayed during the report that revealed the extent of US military bases across the Pacific. “This showed that it is not China that is the imperialist power in the region. The threat of nuclear war is very real, and it is not coming from China.”



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