

Socialist Equality Group holds public meeting following New Zealand election

Our reporters
5 October 2017

On October 1, the Socialist Equality Group (SEG) held a public meeting entitled “After the New Zealand election: The way forward in the fight against war,” in the working-class suburb of Lower Hutt, near the capital, Wellington.

The meeting discussed the looming threat of war and the suppression of this vital issue throughout the election campaign. Following an inconclusive result in the September 23 poll, National and Labour are both vying to form a coalition government with the right-wing, anti-Asian NZ First Party.

The audience was a cross-section of workers from a range of industries, including hospitality, rail, meat processing, the public service and childcare. Several workers attended following the intervention of the SEG in recent struggles in the meat industry and railways, where it is fighting to advance a socialist perspective for workers to defend jobs and living standards against the betrayals of the trade unions.

In the main report, leading SEG member Tom Peters began by declaring: “The danger of war is the most pressing question facing the working class in every country. As the election campaign was unfolding, US President Trump was making ever-more reckless threats to annihilate North Korea. The US is in a deep economic crisis and its ruling class is trying to reverse its decades-long decline using military force.”

While the entire planet risks a war between nuclear-armed powers, this issue, Peters continued, was barely discussed during the election campaign by any of the parties or the corporate media. He explained there was political silence by all the major parties on this question because all agree with the military-intelligence alliance with the US. “In the working class there is widespread opposition to war. None of the parties wanted to make it an election issue,” he said.

When Prime Minister Bill English was earlier asked what he would do if Trump asked New Zealand to join a war against North Korea, English said: “We would consider it.” Peters also noted that Labour Party leader Jacinda Ardern was carefully promoted as a progressive leader and appeared at protests early this year against Trump’s inauguration. He said: “She claims that her ‘values’ are not Trump’s, but she and the Labour Party are fully in favour of an alliance with American imperialism.”

The speaker said the National Party government had sought to strengthen military ties with the US, while not endangering New Zealand’s relationship with China, its second-largest trading partner.

Peters explained that “sources close to the US government and intelligence agencies intervened in the New Zealand election in an effort to whip up anti-Chinese hysteria, and to push New Zealand politics into a much more explicit alignment with the US drive to war against China.”

Anonymous claims were published 10 days before the election that the Security Intelligence Service (SIS) had investigated National MP Jian Yang as a potential spy. Just three days before the ballot, the *New Zealand Herald* produced a lengthy article based on a report by Anne-Marie Brady, from the Washington DC-based think tank, the Wilson Centre.

Peters described Brady’s document as “a McCarthyite screed that essentially implies that because of the close business ties between New Zealand and China, Beijing has achieved a high level of control over the National Party government in particular, and also the Labour Party to a lesser degree.”

The speaker warned: “Make no mistake this is not a piece of academic research; it is part of a campaign

directed by elements close to the US government, including its political supporters in New Zealand, aimed at shifting official politics further into line with the build-up to war.”

NZ First leader Winston Peters, who founded his party on the basis of opposing Asian immigration and is an admirer of Trump, has taken up Brady’s demand for a special commission of inquiry to investigate Chinese influence in NZ politics.

The speaker stressed that the Maori nationalist Mana Party and its allies in pseudo-left groups, such as Socialist Aotearoa, have played a key role in stoking anti-Chinese xenophobia since 2011. Mana leader Hone Harawira recently called for Chinese drug dealers to be “executed” and the party joined Labour in scapegoating Chinese immigrants for the housing crisis.

The SEG speaker warned: “There are great dangers in the present situation, because of the lack of a party that genuinely represents the working class and fights for socialism. This is highlighted in the New Zealand election, where a Trump-like party of nationalism, racism and militarism now holds the balance of power and all other parties are adapting to it.

“This is why it is urgent to build genuine Marxist parties in every country to unite the working class internationally. In just a few weeks we will mark 100 years since the Bolshevik Party led the Russian Revolution. The revolution was the first and only time when the working class seized power, overthrew the ruling class and established a workers’ state. Against every other tendency in World War I, the Bolsheviks insisted on the need to transform the war into a class war. This experience contains immensely important lessons for us today.”

Peters concluded by urging those in attendance to read the *World Socialist Web Site* and join and build the SEG as the New Zealand section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement.

Peters’ report was followed by extended discussion with audience members seeking clarification on a range of crucial issues. This included questions on Chinese operations in the South China Sea, the definition of imperialism, the practical steps necessary to carry out a socialist revolution, and life in a socialist society. There was also lengthy discussion on how to form politically independent rank-and-file workers’

committees.

The authors also recommend:

No clear winner in New Zealand election
[25 September 2017]

No to war and social inequality! For world socialism!
Statement of the Socialist Equality Group on the New Zealand election
[19 September 2017]



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