

New Zealand Labour-aligned Daily Blog posts pro-war, anti-China tirade

John Braddock
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The *Daily Blog*, an on-line commentary site funded by several New Zealand trade unions, has posted a reactionary article fomenting anti-Chinese xenophobia and endorsing stepped-up preparations for a US-led war.

The self-styled “left-wing” blog is a support base for the Labour-NZ First-Green Party government. Edited by Martyn Bradbury, a former student newspaper editor and “alternative” media figure, it provides a forum for a layer of commentators, academics, trade union officials and pseudo-left activists. Bradbury has had affiliations with the Maori nationalist Mana Party and tech entrepreneur Kim Dotcom’s Internet Party.

On July 8, Bradbury posted a commentary following Defence Minister Ron Mark’s appearance on TV1’s “Q+A” program. Mark, a leader of the anti-immigrant NZ First Party and former soldier, was interviewed about the Labour-led government’s Strategic Defence Policy Statement, released two days earlier.

The statement explicitly targets China and Russia as principal global “threats.” It represents a sharp shift by the ruling elite, echoing the Trump administration’s demand for increased military preparations for looming inter-imperialist conflicts.

The document demands expanded measures to protect New Zealand’s “national security.” These include, externally, “engaging in targeted interventions offshore to protect New Zealand’s interests,” particularly in the Pacific, and internally, preventing “activities aimed at undermining or overturning Government institutions, principles and values”—a clear warning to the increasingly restive working class.

Mark used his television appearance to confirm a \$NZ2.3 billion purchase of anti-submarine aircraft, the first step in a \$20 billion military expansion to more fully integrate NZ armed forces with those of Australia

and the US. He brushed aside questions about competing restraints on health and education expenditure.

Bradbury’s commentary on Mark’s interview fulsomely praised him as “a Hawk’s Hawk.” Bradbury declared: “Finally someone has pointed out that China is using soft power to extend its power into NZ.” As supposed evidence, Bradbury denounced a Chinese-born MP from the opposition National Party as a “spy” and cited the defence document’s “righteous” warning about the rise of China.

Bradbury claimed that a negative response by Beijing to the statement could see China “slow imports to hurt us, or they could stoke pro-China protests on the streets of Auckland to cause domestic unrest.” The second accusation is intended to cast suspicion on the country’s nearly 200,000 people of Chinese descent as potential fifth-columnists.

The *Daily Blog* is reviving the anti-Asian history of the Labour Party and trade unions. From its founding in 1916, Labour was fiercely nationalist and encouraged divisions in the working class by using racism and xenophobia. Like its Australian counterpart, Labour supported a “white New Zealand” policy, which imposed drastic restrictions on immigration from Asian countries until the 1970s.

Under conditions of a drive to war internationally and social breakdown at home, Bradbury and his cohorts are moving to divert rising social discontent away from its source in the capitalist profit system and toward immigrants and “foreigners,” particularly Asians.

The *Daily Blog*, the Labour Party, NZ First and the trade unions have combined to mount anti-immigrant agitation. In 2016, they denounced the then National government’s immigration cuts as “window dressing” to “our overheated and deeply corrupt immigration

system,” saying the cuts failed to go far enough. The *Daily Blog*’s regular anti-Chinese rants have seen it accuse Beijing of starting a “trade war” and trying to colonise New Zealand.

Bradbury’s column endorsed the Defence Statement’s war-mongering. He conceded that it “locks in” New Zealand with “Trump’s America,” but dismissed any concern by saying that, with Wellington being a member of the Five Eyes spy alliance, “it’s difficult to not be run by Washington.”

Bradbury praised NZ First for its “smart politics.” He lauded Mark for aiming “to make the military combat-ready again,” adding: “If he wants the military to be offensive rather than just defensive, it’s going to happen.” Bradbury hailed the purchase of the anti-submarine aircraft as “an enormous ramping up of militarisation of our military and looking at gaining a capacity we currently don’t have.”

Former Green Party MP Keith Locke, a regular *Daily Blog* contributor, had on July 7 posted a mild criticism of the Defence Statement on the grounds that it “edges NZ closer to Trump’s America.” Locke, previously a leader of the now defunct Pabliste Socialist Action League, described its anti-China stance as “fear-mongering ... straight out of the American playbook” and lamented the loss of “New Zealand’s independent foreign policy.”

In a fresh post on July 18, Bradbury presented an expanded version of his July 8 article. He moderated his enthusiasm for the aircraft purchase by declaring “the price tag is a joke.” He repeated Locke’s call for an “independent foreign policy,” saying: “We do not want America expanding its military control or mass surveillance state powers into the Pacific any more than we want China to.”

Bradbury proclaimed Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern as a leader who could “articulate a vision” of “more peaceful, productive and collaborative co-operation in the Pacific.” In fact, Ardern confirmed last November that the Labour-led government opposes Beijing’s territorial claims in the South China Sea and would intervene militarily in North Korea if backed by a United Nations resolution.

The call by sections of the petty-bourgeois milieu for an “independent” foreign policy is bogus. New Zealand is a minor imperialist power whose ruling elite has always relied on a major power to support its neo-

colonial operations in the Pacific. Labour’s short-lived “anti-nuclear” policy of the 1970s and 1980s was designed to push back against rival powers in the Pacific, including France.

The Greens, who posture as a “peace” party, are part of the government and its strengthening alliance with Washington. While offering token protests over the aircraft purchase, the Greens have made no substantive criticism of the Defence Statement.

In the *New Zealand Herald* on July 16, academic and commentator Bryce Edwards observed that there has so far been “barely a banner raised in anger or sadness” by any protest groups over the massive military upgrade.

By contrast, many nurses who struck nationwide on July 12 over pay and conditions have on social media expressed contempt for the aircraft purchase, contrasting the government’s commitment of \$2.3 billion on war planes with its insistence that it has “no more money” for the decrepit health system.

Bradbury and the *Daily Blog*, who deride working people as “sleepy Hobbits,” speak for a privileged layer of upper-middle class former “radicals” who have found positions in the political establishment. Their rancid promotion of nationalism, racism and imperialist war-mongering stands them in direct opposition to major sections of the working class now coming forward in struggle against austerity and war.



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