

Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand) to hold online forum: Lessons of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation's sellout

20 August 2018

The Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand) invites health workers to take part in an online forum on Saturday September 1 at 4:30 p.m. (NZ time) to discuss the critical political lessons of the sellout pay agreement imposed by the New Zealand Nurses' Organisation (NZNO) on August 7.

The deal exposes the right-wing, pro-business character of the Labour Party-led government, which insisted there was "no more money" to pay hospital workers decent wages and provide safe levels of staffing. This was a brazen lie: billions of dollars are being squandered on war preparations, prisons, the police and intelligence agencies, and ultra-low taxes for the rich.

Nurses, midwives and healthcare assistants waged a determined fight for better wages and conditions, rejecting four union-backed offers over the past nine months. On July 12, nearly 30,000 public hospital workers held their first nationwide one-day strike since 1989. The final deal, however, is virtually the same as two offers workers previously rejected.

Health workers must draw critical lessons from this experience. They were betrayed by the NZNO, which isolated, wore down and demoralised workers by recommending one sellout offer after another. The union used anti-democratic methods including cancelling one strike and refusing to hold mass meetings where workers could debate the offers.

The health workers' fight is part of a resurgence of working-class struggle, including teachers who held a nationwide strike on August 15. Internationally, workers are seeking a way to fight back against austerity measures imposed since the 2008 financial crisis. The main obstacle is the privileged trade union bureaucracy, which works hand-in-hand with

governments and big business to suppress working-class resistance.

The Socialist Equality Group's online meeting will discuss the need for a rebellion against the NZNO and the formation of new, rank-and-file committees, democratically controlled by health workers themselves. It will also outline a socialist strategy to unite health workers with teachers, public servants and other workers in New Zealand, Australia and internationally, in a political and industrial campaign against austerity.

We urge workers to attend this vitally important discussion forum at 4:30 p.m. NZ time, Saturday September 1. Take part online via GoToMeeting or over the phone by calling (0064) 09 282 9510.

For more information, contact the SEG on Facebook or via email.



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