Christchurch terrorist’s fascist manifesto promotes trade unions

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Shortly before carrying out the March 15 terrorist attack in Christchurch, in which 50 Muslim worshippers perished, fascist Brenton Tarrant posted on the internet a 74-page “manifesto,” justifying his actions and inciting further right-wing violence around the globe.

The manifesto, titled “The Great Replacement” outlines the gunman’s white supremacist ideology and influences—including US President Donald Trump—and his connections with extreme right-wing circles internationally. It largely resembles the anti-immigrant rhetoric of established political parties and governments around the world.

In a highly revealing section headed “Break the back of cheap labour,” Tarrant calls on his followers to support the trade unions. He advances the same nationalist and anti-immigrant demands put forward by the unions and nominally “left” bourgeois parties, which have become increasingly explicit as these organisations have shifted sharply to right in response to the deepening capitalist crisis.

Tarrant declares that nothing drives the “invasion” of refugees and migrants “more than the greed that demands cheap labour.” The “global market,” he writes, must “never be allowed to compete” with a white “European market.” Opposing the importation of both goods and labour is an “essential pillar” of his fascist program.

The manifesto blames the decline in “white” workers’ living standards on immigrants and advances policies to drive immigrants out. These include “**furthering the unionization of workers**; increasing the native birth-rate and thereby reducing the need for the importation of labour; increasing the rights of workers.” [Emphasis added]

The section concludes: “human greed and the need for increasing profit margins of capital owners needs to be fought against and broken. Cheap labour is slave labour, refuse to import modern slaves.”

Nothing highlights the reactionary essence of trade union nationalism and anti-immigrant chauvinism more than these statements. Similar calls for an end to the importation of foreign workers can be found in countless union press releases and speeches by bureaucrats all over the world.

Tarrant’s pretence to oppose “cheap” labour and corporate greed is a fraud, as is his claim that the trade unions defend “workers’ rights” and oppose private profit. What the fascist shooter and the trade union bureaucracy have in common is their commitment to the defence of capitalism and intense hostility to socialism and internationalism, that is, the perspective of uniting the working class across borders in the fight to abolish the private profit system and the reactionary division of the world into competing nation states.

Instead, fascists and trade union leaders alike advocate protectionist and anti-immigrant policies to defend the interests of “their” country’s corporations. The unions long ago abandoned any resistance to finance capital and became adjuncts of big business and the state in increasing the exploitation of workers. Opposed to any struggle in defence of jobs and working conditions, the unions in every country have turned to the vilest forms of nationalism in order to blame “foreign competition” for deteriorating living standards.

The auto unions in the US and Canada, for example, support the trade war agenda of Donald Trump, who has made anti-Mexican chauvinism central to his attacks on the working class, the militarization of the southern border and mass deportations of undocumented workers. The United Auto Workers

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union has aligned itself with Trump's demands for cutbacks at General Motors plants based on the lie that such concessions will protect "American jobs."

These positions are not limited to a few individual union leaders, but are a universal phenomenon bound up with deep-going objective processes. In the early 20th century, the unions sought to extract limited gains for workers within protected national economies, without challenging capitalist rule. Globalisation and transnational production, particularly since the 1970s, removed any rational economic basis for national-based industries and reformist policies based on the nation state.

Like Tarrant, the unions defend capitalism while opposing "globalism" on the basis of a reactionary, and impossible, return to self-contained national economies through trade tariffs and other protectionist measures. Such attempts to turn the clock back, in any country, would see finance capital flood elsewhere, virtually overnight. Vast transnational corporations have produced a global labour market, systematically shifting production to those countries where wages, taxes and social and democratic rights are the most brutally suppressed.

The logic of economic nationalist policies, like Trump's "America First" agenda, is trade war and preparations for military conflict to determine which imperialist power will control the world's resources and markets. That is how the capitalist class seeks to resolve the contradiction between globalised production and the division of the world into nation states. The trade unions are assisting the development of militarism by stoking xenophobia to divide workers and derail the deepening class struggle internationally.

In New Zealand, since the 2008 global financial crisis, Labour, the Greens and the trade unions have aligned themselves with the racist NZ First Party. They have enforced austerity measures and scapegoated migrants for unemployment and low wages, while ratcheting up anti-Chinese chauvinism as New Zealand's ruling class aligns with the US war preparations against China.

The unions' suppression of the class struggle and extraction of concessions from workers has produced the poverty and social misery which, in the absence of an independent socialist movement in the working class, are being exploited by the extreme right.

In the wake of Tarrant's terrorist attack, New Zealand's unions are falling into line with calls from the Labour government and the media for national "unity" and opposition to "division." The teacher unions seized on the Christchurch massacre as the pretext for cancelling a nationwide strike over pay and staffing. They are seeking to assist the Labour government in suppressing opposition among teachers, part of an international upsurge, so as to prepare the way for a sell-out.

The fascist Tarrant's support for the trade unions must come as a sharp warning to the working class. Workers must break from these nationalist, pro-capitalist organisations and establish their own independent organisations: rank-and-file workplace committees, controlled by workers themselves. Above all, the working class must recognise the impossibility of defending living standards without a political struggle against capitalism and the nation-state system. The only way to fight against social inequality, war and the danger of fascism is for workers to unite on the basis of socialist internationalism.

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