

# New Zealand pseudo-lefts support Labour and Greens in election

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The New Zealand pseudo-left groups, the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) and Socialist Aotearoa (SA), are supporting the pro-business, pro-war Labour Party and its ally the Green Party in today's national election.

The ISO declares that workers should vote Labour because "Labour is in theory for gradual reforms to improve the lives of workers." SA writes that "the government under Ardern's leadership have done a brilliant job in keeping New Zealanders safe" and deserves a second term. The group calls for a vote for the Greens, a partner in the current coalition government, and for Labour candidates in some electorates.

These statements are further proof of the vast chasm that separates the pseudo-lefts from genuine socialism and internationalism. These organisations, which work closely with Unite and other trade unions, represent layers of the upper middle class whose aim is to improve their own position within capitalism at the expense of the working class. They seek positions within the political establishment, academia, the unions and the state bureaucracy.

Significantly, neither the ISO nor SA has anything to say about the global danger of war and dictatorship, particularly in the United States, New Zealand's military and intelligence ally. The Ardern government, which includes the rabidly anti-Chinese NZ First Party, has strengthened ties with the US and its fascist President Donald Trump. NZ First leader Winston Peters, who Ardern made foreign affairs minister, has called for more American forces to be moved into the Pacific to prepare for war against China.

The government is spending tens of billions of dollars on upgrading and expanding the military. This has the full support of the Green Party, which absurdly claims that new warships and air force planes will be used for "humanitarian" operations. The pseudo-lefts say nothing about this because they speak for sections of the upper middle class whose privileges depend, in the final analysis, on New Zealand's imperialist alliances.

The ISO's parent organisation in the United States dissolved itself last year following a murky sex scandal and its leading members have flocked to the Democratic Party, reflecting their pro-imperialist politics. The ISO (NZ) has remained silent on this development.

In 2017, the ISO and SA, along with the nationalist, trade

union-funded *Daily Blog*, threw their support behind the Labour Party and its new leader Jacinda Ardern, joining in the fraud perpetrated by the media that she represented a "progressive" alternative to the conservative National Party government.

After Labour reached a deal to form a coalition government with the Greens and the right-wing NZ First Party, the ISO gushed: "Labour has announced plans better than the International Socialists dared hope possible. There are real reforms set up here, and proposals which, if implemented, will bring real benefits to the lives of working people."

Three years later, the global coronavirus pandemic has triggered a world economic crisis more severe than anything since the Great Depression. The Ardern government, like governments throughout the world, has imposed the burden of the crisis on working people, who are facing an unprecedented assault on their living standards.

The ISO writes as though the attacks on the working class over the past three years never took place. Its October 7 statement asserts: "The Ardern government has followed a classically reformist path. It came to power with a list of promises, and in its first year actually delivered on some of them."

The ISO does not elaborate on what "reforms" Labour has delivered. A few meagre welfare increases have done nothing to stop a catastrophic decline in incomes. In the 12 months to June, the median income fell 7.6 percent—the first drop since records began. Nearly 12 percent of working-age people are on welfare and the number will continue to soar as companies implement more redundancies.

The same corporations sacking tens of thousands of people, with the collaboration of the unions, are receiving tens of billions of dollars in the form of subsidies, tax concessions and bailouts from the Labour-led government. The government is scapegoating immigrants for the crisis and denying welfare payments to thousands who have lost their jobs.

Even before the pandemic hit, the Socialist Equality Group (SEG) noted that the pseudo-lefts' perspective was in tatters. Ardern's promises to address child poverty and homelessness were already exposed as a fraud.

In its first two years the government opposed workers'

demands for an end to austerity. For the first time in decades, tens of thousands of nurses and other public hospital workers held a nationwide strike in 2018, followed by strikes by primary and secondary teachers. This is part of an international upsurge of the working class in opposition to social inequality.

The teachers and healthcare workers were betrayed by the trade union bureaucracy, which echoed the Labour government's false claims that it had no money to address the crisis of understaffing and low wages in schools and hospitals. SA, the ISO and Organise Aotearoa (OA) opposed the campaign by the SEG for workers to break from the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) and the teacher unions and establish new, independent rank-and-file committees controlled by the workers themselves.

The betrayal of the nurses' struggle left the country's health system badly unprepared to deal with a severe measles outbreak which spread from New Zealand to Samoa in 2019, killing more than 80 people. This was followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed 25 people.

Contrary to the pseudo-lefts' claims, echoing the media, that Ardern saved the country from the pandemic, a greater death toll has so far been avoided only because tens of thousands of teachers, healthcare workers and others demanded a lockdown in March. The teacher unions and the NZNO opposed the petitions calling for a lockdown until it was finally imposed by the government, which feared the development of a working class movement outside the control of the unions.

The government then moved to appease big business by lifting restrictions before it was safe to do so, and failed to carry out mass testing, leading to a second outbreak of the virus in August.

Socialist Aotearoa (SA) glorifies the Green Party's "Poverty Plan," a set of extremely modest policies including a wealth tax of just 1 percent on assets worth over \$1 million and 2 percent on assets worth over \$2 billion. This would supposedly fund an expanded welfare system with payments of \$325 a week as a guaranteed minimum income (\$75 more than the present standard unemployment benefit).

These policies would do almost nothing to address inequality and in any case, as SA knows, they will never be implemented. The Labour Party has ruled out any wealth tax and the Greens have said they would not insist on the policy as a "bottom line" for supporting a Labour-led government.

SA falsely asserts that the Greens have a "left wing" led by co-leader Marama Davidson and a more conservative wing represented by co-leader James Shaw, a former business consultant. The reality is that the whole party represents "environmental" sections of big business. It supports New Zealand imperialism and the Ardern government's pro-business response to the economic crisis, and opposes the only real solution to climate change: the reorganisation of the world's economy on socialist lines.

The pseudo-lefts have a long history of dressing up minor

capitalist parties as "left wing" props for Labour. This includes the Alliance Party, which joined a Labour government in 1999 only to fall apart in 2002 after its MPs voted in favour of sending NZ troops to join the US-led invasion of Afghanistan.

From 2011 to 2014 the ISO and SA, along with leading members of the Unite union, joined the Maori nationalist Mana Party. SA and the ISO campaigned for Mana even after it formed an alliance in 2014 with the Internet Party, led by the libertarian multi-millionaire Kim Dotcom. The pseudo-lefts promoted Mana's race-based identity politics as "left wing," when in fact it aimed to secure greater wealth for indigenous business interests and divide the working class.

Mana collapsed in 2017 after its leader Hone Harawira, once hailed by the ISO as "the only principled MP in parliament," carried out a racist campaign demanding the death penalty for "Chinese" drug dealers. The remnants of Mana this year re-joined the overtly right-wing Maori Party, a former partner in the conservative National Party-led government from 2008-2017.

SA makes the ludicrous and unsupported claim that the Maori Party has "made a sharp left turn" in 2020. In fact, it is running a vicious anti-immigrant campaign and has little support in the working class because of its record of support for National's austerity measures.

Workers and young people who are looking for a way to fight against social inequality and war must completely reject the politics of the pseudo-lefts, which operate as adjuncts of Labour, the Greens and the union bureaucracy.

A re-elected Labour government, with or without the Greens, will expand its assault on workers' living standards and immigrants, and further align New Zealand with US war plans. This can only be opposed by building a new socialist party, completely independent of all the bourgeois parties and based on the internationalist perspective fought for by the Socialist Equality Group (NZ) and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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