

New Zealand's Daily Blog attacks WSWS as “sectarian”

Tom Peters
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The *World Socialist Web Site's* September 22 article “New Zealand PM ‘pleased to see’ AUKUS military pact” provoked a hostile response from the *Daily Blog*, a pseudo-left publication, which supports the Labour Party-Greens government.

In a post entitled “Daily Blog Branded Upper-Middle-Class, Pseudo-Left, Imperialists! Who Knew?” (September 24), Chris Trotter, a well-known pro-Labour commentator, objected to the WSWS's characterisation of himself and the blog's editor, Martyn Bradbury, as apologists for the government's foreign policy agenda.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern publicly welcomed the AUKUS agreement, under which the US, UK and Australia will vastly increase military cooperation as they ramp up preparations for war against China. It includes an agreement to equip Australia with nuclear-powered submarines.

The WSWS warned that Trotter and Bradbury were “promoting the illusion that the government will stay out of the escalating preparations for war.” We pointed out that the *Daily Blog* depicts China as a threat to New Zealand, and has “repeatedly echoed US propaganda against China—including the lie that the coronavirus pandemic originated in the Wuhan Institute of Virology.”

The WSWS quoted Bradbury's demand for a “vastly larger military” to guard New Zealand's semi-colonies in the Pacific, and territory claimed in Antarctica. We concluded that the *Daily Blog* “represents a layer of the upper middle class that has embraced New Zealand imperialism” and has no principled opposition to the US-led war plans.

Trotter makes no attempt to refute these points. Instead, he accuses the WSWS of engaging in “sectarianism” and complains that the site does not support “other leftists in a spirit of solidarity and comradeship.” The WSWS's “excellent analysis,” he says, is spoiled by writers “spewing needless (if unintentionally hilarious) invective all over their ideological foes.”

What Trotter labels “sectarian” is the completely legitimate and justified exposure of the *Daily Blog's*

positions, which are not left-wing. The blog's editor and contributors advance a political perspective based on nationalism, support for Labour and other capitalist parties, and the defence of New Zealand's interests as a minor imperialist power.

Explaining these facts has nothing in common with sectarianism, which, properly understood, means the refusal to actively intervene in the struggles of the working class, including the struggle to build an anti-war movement.

Workers and young people, if they are to carry out a real fight against imperialism and war, as well as social inequality and the pandemic, require, above all, political clarity—especially about the role of the Labour Party, the trade unions and their apologists such as the *Daily Blog*.

The question arises: why does Trotter only now make this appeal to the WSWS to cease our polemics against the *Daily Blog*? The WSWS has criticised the *Daily Blog* in dozens of articles since the latter was founded in 2013.

Trotter and Bradbury are highly sensitive to growing popular discontent with the Ardern government's right-wing agenda. They are clearly concerned that the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Group, which have repeatedly warned about this agenda and sought to mobilise workers against the government, are finding a growing audience.

In response to the pandemic, the government has handed out billions in subsidies and tax breaks to big business, while imposing austerity across the public sector, leading to soaring social inequality. Recently, Ardern indicated the government would “transition” away from its previous policy of eliminating COVID-19, which had overwhelming support in the working class. The shift threatens to accelerate the spread of the deadly virus.

At the same time, since it was first elected in 2017, the Ardern government has continued to spend billions on expanding and upgrading the military, and has strengthened ties with US imperialism. New Zealand continues to depend heavily on trade with China. However, as the US ruling class ramps up its military preparations against China, and insists that its allies must follow suit, it has become much more

difficult for Ardern to pretend to Beijing that NZ remains neutral.

The *Daily Blog* represents sections of the middle class close to the unions and the political establishment. The privileged position of this layer depends on the stability of New Zealand imperialism, which in turn depends, above all, on New Zealand's alliances with the major imperialist power, the United States, and Australia.

Trotter dismisses the fact that New Zealand has long-standing neo-colonial interests in the Pacific, and the notion that the *Daily Blog* supports US imperialism. He writes sarcastically: "That sneaky Bradbury has obviously been squirreling away the CIA's Bitcoin down the back of his computer!"

This is a straw man. The WSWS never suggested that the blog was funded by Washington. The fact is that for years, the *Daily Blog* has played a central role in whipping up anti-Chinese sentiment, which is aimed at dividing the working class, defending local capitalism against foreign rivals, and supporting those sections of the political establishment that want a much closer alliance with US imperialism.

Following the inconclusive September 2017 election, Bradbury wrote that "the major issue" facing New Zealand was Chinese "influence" over the 2008–2017 National Party government. He depicted Chinese immigration as a threat akin to "a second great wave of colonisation."

Bradbury supported the US-backed academic Anne-Marie Brady's claim that National was beholden to the Chinese government and her branding of Chinese-born MP Jian Yang as a spy, without any evidence.

Trotter, meanwhile, urged the right-wing anti-Asian NZ First Party to form a coalition government with Labour, instead of National, to prevent New Zealand from becoming "an economic, political and cultural colony of the People's Republic of China" (October 19, 2017).

The 2017–2020 Labour-NZ First-Greens government proceeded to strengthen relations with Washington. It labelled Russia and China the main "threats" to the international order, and called for a greater US military presence in the Pacific, to push back against Chinese influence and to support New Zealand interests in the region.

New Zealand is increasingly involved in provocative military exercises. The naval frigate *Te Kaha* and an Air Force *Orion* were this month dispatched to the *Bersama Gold 21* war games, alongside the UK Carrier Strike Group and allied forces in the South China Sea.

With the increasingly imminent danger of a conflict erupting between nuclear-armed powers, the *Daily Blog* is now seeking to block the development of opposition by promoting fatal illusions in the Ardern government.

Trotter, unable to defend the blog's record, resorts to anti-

communist attacks on the WSWS. In addition to denouncing "sectarianism," he outrageously compares the WSWS critique of the *Daily Blog* and himself to "the Soviet Show Trials of 1937."

The Stalinist show trials were used to justify the counter-revolutionary mass murder of Bolshevik revolutionaries, especially those who supported the exiled leader Leon Trotsky. Trotter, like all anti-communists, promotes the right-wing lie that the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in Russia in 1917, led by Lenin and Trotsky, led inevitably to Stalin's murderous dictatorship. (The WSWS previously responded to Trotter's slander of the Russian Revolution).

It is completely disingenuous for Trotter to now write: "Just imagine how far the revolution could be advanced if the Marxist Left confined itself to spreading the word that there are still chains to be lost—still a world to win." This is someone who vehemently opposes socialist revolution.

Trotter's rejection of socialism and defence of the Labour Party are bound up with his contempt for the working class, which he depicts as racist and backward. He routinely justifies the Ardern government's refusal to seriously address poverty and homelessness by blaming "the deeply embedded racism of Middle New Zealanders" (December 22, 2020) and supposedly widespread "brutal prejudices against the poor and marginalised" (Feb 18, 2021). In a September 3 post, he falsely claimed that the "white working-class... no longer exists," having all become privileged small business owners.

For genuine, revolutionary socialists, exposing the pro-imperialist politics of Labour and its supporters, including Trotter and the *Daily Blog*, is an essential task in the fight to build a genuine anti-war movement.

Such a movement can only be based on the fight to abolish the source of war: the capitalist system and the division of the world into rival nation-states. It must be firmly grounded in the socialist and internationalist perspective fought for by the International Committee of the Fourth International, the Trotskyist movement, aimed at uniting workers of all nationalities and backgrounds in opposition to the nationalist and militarist poison promoted on the *Daily Blog*.



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