The overturn of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision has sparked mass protests across the United States and outrage throughout the world. As the WSWS stated: “For the first time in American history, the Supreme Court eliminated a fundamental constitutional right broadly recognized and supported by the overwhelming majority of the country’s population.”

A group of unelected, extreme right-wing Christian judges suddenly made abortion illegal for hundreds of millions of people. The ruling sets a precedent for further attacks on basic rights and freedoms, including access to contraception and protections for same-sex relationships.

The attack on these rights, while it is sharpest in the US, is by no means a purely American phenomenon. Internationally, the ruling class is promoting far-right forces in order to divide and suppress working people, who are beginning to fight back against the never-ending attacks on their living standards, the expanding imperialist war, and homicidal “let it rip” pandemic policies.

The US Supreme Court ruling threw New Zealand’s conservative National Party, the main parliamentary opposition, into something of a crisis. It lifted the lid on the anti-abortion views espoused by a majority of its members of parliament, including leader Christopher Luxon.

Soon after the overturn of Roe v. Wade, National MP Simon O’Connor posted on Facebook: “Today is a good day,” in large lettering surrounded by love hearts. Among those who “liked” the message were fellow party member Simeon Brown and far-right activist Chantelle Baker.

Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki, notorious for anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and anti-LGBT demagogy, applauded O’Connor’s stance and invited him to join the church.

Several hours later, after Luxon spoke to O’Connor, the post was removed. The party went into damage control, with Luxon issuing a statement saying the post “was taken down because it was causing distress and does not represent the position of the National Party.” O’Connor later told the media he had deleted it because the comments were “getting worse and worse and it was very clear to me that people were distressed.”

Thousands of furious responses to O’Connor appeared on social media, including calls for his resignation. A typical comment in the r/newzealand Reddit forum, which received hundreds of upvotes, stated: “US politics and conservative religious views can f— right off. How can you honestly look at how they are treating women’s rights and think ‘yeah that’s pretty good ae.’”

Others wrote that notwithstanding Luxon’s assurances, the National Party cannot be trusted to keep abortion legal. Luxon, who is a fundamentalist Christian, was asked by Newshub last December whether he thought abortion was “tantamount to murder.” He replied in the affirmative: “That’s what a pro-life position is.”

Luxon could become the next prime minister if the National Party wins the 2023 election. A Roy Morgan poll published on June 7 found support for National at 40 percent, compared with just 31.5 percent for the ruling Labour Party. While this reflects the lack of popular support for both these parties of big business, National would be able to govern if it formed a coalition with the far-right ACT Party.

Abortion was only fully legalised in New Zealand in 2020. Prior to that, women had to gain approval for the procedure by declaring that the pregnancy posed a
danger to their mental or physical health, or on other
grounds such as incest or foetal abnormality.

The 2020 Abortion Legalisation Bill was opposed by
51 out of 120 members of parliament (42.5 percent),
including 35 of the National Party’s 55 MPs at the
time.

While the Labour Party-led government has criticised
Luxon’s anti-abortion views, in 2020 Prime Minister
Jacinda Ardern allowed a conscience vote on the issue.
Nine Labour MPs voted against legalising abortion,
including Nanaia Mahuta, now the foreign affairs
minister. Mahuta has tried to cover her tracks by
hypocritically tweeting that the overturn of Roe v.
Wade is “draconian and does not support the right of
women to choose.”

Seven members of the right-wing nationalist NZ First
Party, which played a major role in the Labour-led
coalition government at the time, also voted against the
law change.

In contrast to parliament, popular sentiment is
overwhelmingly in favour of abortion rights. The 2021
Gender Attitudes Survey, conducted by Research NZ,
found that 74 percent agreed that “a woman should
have the right to choose whether or not she has an
abortion.” This had increased from 66 percent in the
2016 survey, demonstrating that most people’s views
are becoming more progressive. This correlates with
declining religious beliefs: in the 2018 Census, nearly
half the population, 48.2 percent, recorded no religion,
up from 41.9 percent in 2013.

The entire political establishment, however, is
lurching to the right. Labour’s support has plummeted
from over 50 percent in the 2020 election, to just over
30 percent in recent polls, as its policies have produced
a social and healthcare crisis for the working class.

The Labour-led government, which includes the
Green Party, has used the pandemic to engineer an
historic transfer of wealth to the rich, through bailouts,
tax breaks and quantitative easing. Living costs are
soaring as wages remain stagnant, leading to a reported
30 percent increase in demand for food banks. A
speculative housing bubble has produced a windfall for
investors and the banks, while pushing up rents.

Meanwhile, the government has implemented the
demands of big business and the far-right, including
Destiny Church and the New Conservatives, for the
removal of vaccine mandates, mask mandates in
schools, and other public health measures. As a result,
COVID-19 is out of control, killing more than 10
people each day and placing extreme pressure on the
underfunded public health system.

The Ardern government is spending millions to
integrate New Zealand into the US-NATO proxy war
against Russia in Ukraine, and to prepare for war
against China. It has sent NZ troops to Europe to train
Ukrainian forces, and is helping to arm the country’s
military, in which far-right extremists play a major role.

A series of recent incidents show that right-wing
extremists have been emboldened. In February a
Russian church in Auckland and a Russian-owned shop
in Christchurch were vandalised, and a suspected arson
damaged the Contemporary China Research Centre at
Victoria University of Wellington. This month, an
LGBT community centre in Tauranga was destroyed by
arson, and a gay church in Greymouth was defaced
with homophobic and antisemitic graffiti.

The policies of war abroad, and record levels of
social inequality and mass infection at home, are not
compatible with democratic rights, in New Zealand any
more than in the United States. The US Supreme Court
ruling must serve as a warning to workers in every
country that the defence of basic rights, including the
right to abortion, requires a fight by the working class
for the socialist reorganisation of society.