

New Zealand's Daily Blog denounces state surveillance of right-wingers, but demands it for the Socialist Equality Group

Tom Peters
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Martyn Bradbury, editor of the “left wing” *Daily Blog* in New Zealand, concluded his weekly “Working Group” podcast on December 6 with a lying and hypocritical statement in which he postured as a defender of free speech and freedom of political association, against the anti-democratic powers of the state.

He declared: “I refuse point blank to be manipulated by the Security Intelligence Service [SIS] and their odious new mark-line to do in enemies of the state that they launched last month. I refuse point blank to see my fellow Kiwis as my enemy. Just because you have a different political opinion and a different point of view to mine doesn’t make you my enemy.

“Just because you are right-wing, vote ACT or National, or listen to [right-wing broadcaster] Sean Plunket, doesn’t make you my enemy... I refuse to be played by the f—ing SIS into believing my fellow citizen is my enemy.”

All of this is a fraud. While Bradbury says conservative National Party and far-right ACT Party supporters should not be treated as “enemies of the state,” that is precisely what he has demanded in the case of the Trotskyist movement, which opposes the Labour Party-led government (and its backers including the *Daily Blog*) from the standpoint of international socialism.

On April 16, and again on April 27, Bradbury wrote: “The SIS should openly investigate Socialist Equality Group [SEG] as Chinese enablers and for possible treason.” In language indistinguishable from that of the extreme right, Bradbury slandered the SEG as a “quisling,” i.e. a puppet, of China’s Stalinist regime.

This attack on the SEG, the New Zealand supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International, was in response to our exposure on the WWSW of the *Daily Blog*’s support for imperialist propaganda against China. This includes Bradbury’s promotion of the far-right lie that COVID-19 originated in a Chinese laboratory, and his constant statements that New Zealand is economically

“enslaved” by “Chinese overlords.”

Bradbury agitates for a more explicit alignment with US war preparations against China, along with “a vastly larger military” and anti-immigrant policies to turn New Zealand into a “fortress.”

The *Daily Blog* also supports the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, which is developing into a global conflagration involving nuclear-armed powers. The Ardern government has sent troops to Europe to help train and deliver supplies to the Ukrainian military.

Bradbury has repeatedly sought to whip up racism and xenophobia against Chinese people. In a typical article on June 2, he declared: “China has managed to gain enormous power in NZ by economically owning us, [and] having a huge diaspora living here.”

He has also promoted pro-US academic Anne-Marie Brady, who calls for the SIS to spy on Chinese community groups in New Zealand, including student and media organisations, and for recent migrants to be stripped of voting rights. Clearly, Bradbury does not regard this section of the population as “fellow Kiwis” whose rights should be protected.

The SIS “mark-line” that Bradbury refers to is an initiative launched on October 27, which is part of the Labour government’s expansion and normalisation of state surveillance. The spy agency released an extraordinary pamphlet titled “Know the signs: A guide for identifying signs of violent extremism,” and encouraged members of the public to “report suspicious behaviour” via the SIS website.

The pamphlet contains a sweeping definition of “extremist ideologies” as beliefs “based on faith, social or political beliefs that exist on the fringes of society, outside the more broadly accepted views and beliefs of most people.” It refers to “politically-motivated extremists” as people who “may seek to radically change the nature of government, religion or society.”

Such a definition can easily be used to target left-wing

organisations and workers as they enter into struggle against social inequality and war. While the SIS declares that it is only concerned about “violent extremism,” rather than extremism *per se*, the pamphlet encourages people to see the two as interconnected.

The SIS lists around 50 different signs that someone may be a “violent extremist,” many of which are obvious, such as a person donating to a terrorist group or praising acts of terror. Other supposed indicators, however, include a person developing “a hostile us-versus-them worldview,” becoming socially withdrawn, and “using Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) or proxy servers” to keep their online activity private.

Bradbury’s suggestion that the SIS is targeting right-wing supporters of the opposition National and ACT parties is frankly ludicrous, and he knows it. The New Zealand spy agencies and police have a long record of surveillance of left-wing organisations and individuals, including supporters of the Soviet Union, members of the Pabloite Socialist Action League, opponents of the Vietnam war, and more recently journalist Nicky Hager, who exposed New Zealand war crimes in Afghanistan.

The fundamental purpose of the intelligence agencies is to defend the capitalist state. That is why Bradbury’s decision to “dob in” the Socialist Equality Group to the SIS should be taken as a serious warning by all working people and anyone concerned with defending democratic rights.

The SEG and the ICFI fight for the mobilisation of the working class to put an end to capitalism and the nation state system—the root causes of militarism, war and social inequality—and to reorganise society on a global scale in the interests of human need. Sections of the ruling elite and middle class layers close to the Labour Party are deeply concerned that this socialist program is resonating with growing numbers of workers and young people.

The working class is moving to the left under the impact of war, soaring living costs and the raging COVID pandemic, which has killed roughly 2,500 people in New Zealand over the past year following the government’s dismantling of all public health measures. Support for the Labour Party and Ardern is plummeting as the government warns of a recession and rising unemployment next year.

As it prepares to confront the working class, the entire political establishment is lurching to the right, whipping up nationalism and militarism. Meanwhile the government promotes censorship of the internet and strengthens the powers of the spy agencies, using the pretext of combating terrorism and “extremism.”

The *Daily Blog* exemplifies this shift among sections of the upper middle class around Labour, the Greens and the trade union bureaucracy, which is tasked with blocking

workers from taking unified action against austerity. On October 8, Bradbury urged the unions to suppress workers’ demands for strike action during 2023, despite plummeting real wages, because strikes would lead to “a National Party win” in the election. This follows his similar denunciation of a nationwide nurses’ strike in June last year.

As well as demonising China and Russia, the blog seeks to whip up other forms of right-wing backwardness to divide the working class. It has published articles attacking Australian immigrants fleeing bushfires, and defending far-right rallies against public health measures to contain COVID.

Bradbury has even defended Kyle Rittenhouse, who became a hero of Trump’s fascist supporters after he murdered two people during a protest against police violence in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Alongside Bradbury, the blog’s regular contributors include Unite union leader Mike Treen, liberal commentator Chris Trotter, former doctors’ union leader Ian Powell and former union official and Mana Party member John Minto. None of these individuals has raised any objections to the provocative call for state repression against the SEG, nor have they opposed any of Bradbury’s other right-wing rants. This is because they agree with him.

The various pseudo-left groups—the International Socialist Organisation, Fightback, Socialist Aotearoa, the Canterbury Socialist Society, Organise Aotearoa and Peace Action—which support Unite and other unions, have likewise remained silent.

Meanwhile, on his podcast, Bradbury regularly engages in friendly discussions with a host of right-wing commentators, including leading members of the National Party and ACT, who advocate a stronger military and police, privatisation of public services and ultra-low taxes for the rich. “The Working Group” has also provided a platform for the pro-business lobby groups the Taxpayers’ Union and the New Zealand Initiative (formerly the Business Roundtable).

There is, in short, nothing remotely left-wing about the *Daily Blog*. It is a middle class nationalist publication, which works hand-in-hand with the entire political establishment to prevent the development of a socialist movement in the working class. Workers and young people who want to fight against inequality and war must decisively reject the right-wing politics of the *Daily Blog*, and turn to the socialist and internationalist program fought for by the SEG.



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