

New Zealand's Daily Blog attacks Socialist Equality Group over Wuhan lab lie

Tom Peters
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Martyn Bradbury, editor of New Zealand's nominally liberal *Daily Blog*, has doubled down on his support for the conspiracy theory that COVID-19 originated in the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) in China.

His January 29 blog post, titled "CIA now back lab leak theory—why both China and America might want to hide the truth," promotes the CIA's recent statement backing the far-right lie, which is aimed at scapegoating China for the tens of millions of deaths from the ongoing pandemic.

The twin purposes of the article are to display Bradbury's open, unabashed support for the CIA and US imperialism, while at the same time venting his pathological hostility to the Socialist Equality Group (SEG). This is only the latest in a series of increasingly hysterical attacks by the blog on the SEG, which is fighting to build the New Zealand section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world Trotskyist movement.

In 2022, Bradbury urged New Zealand's intelligence agencies—which work closely with their counterparts in the US—to investigate the SEG "as Chinese enablers and for possible treason" because of its fight for an international movement of the working class against the US-led war drive.

Bradbury's latest screed denounces the SEG as "lunatics," "thugs" and "quislings," i.e. tools of China. This is sheer slander. The opposition of the Trotskyist movement to the anti-working class regime in China is well-known. The US ruling class, however, is deliberately escalating tensions with China and actively preparing for war to redivide the world and ensure US global hegemony.

Bradbury specifically objects to an article by SEG member John Braddock, published on the *World Socialist Web Site* in September 2021. Braddock had pointed out that there was no scientific evidence for the lab leak theory, and that the *Daily Blog* was relying on

unsubstantiated claims by the US state to scapegoat Beijing for a pandemic that has now killed over 21 million people worldwide.

The theory, originally spread by associates of Trump's fascist advisor Steve Bannon, serves to divert attention from the homicidal "let it rip" policies pursued by governments around the world—including New Zealand, where the previous Labour government abandoned its COVID-19 elimination strategy at the end of 2021, leading to thousands of deaths.

The natural origin of the COVID pandemic, at the Huanan Seafood market in Wuhan, remains the only convincing explanation of the pandemic and is supported by the scientific evidence that has emerged over the last five years. In his recent blog post, Bradbury does not respond to any of this.

The only new "evidence" presented by Bradbury is the "reassessment" released by the Trump administration, drawn up by the CIA—the intelligence agency which fabricated evidence of "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq in order to provide a pretext for the criminal 2003 invasion by the US.

"Turns out I might have been right all along," Bradbury states triumphantly. He does not say why the CIA, which is mainly known for organising covert wars, assassination plots and coups, has any credibility on the subject of COVID's origins.

In fact, the agency's "reassessment" is not based on science, but on political imperatives. The CIA says it has "low confidence" in its own claim that a "research-related origin of the Covid-19 pandemic is more likely." This caveat is not preventing the entire US political establishment and media from using the report to whip up anti-China hysteria to bolster its trade war measures and militarist threats.

The far-right Republican Senator Tom Cotton said he was "[pleased] the CIA concluded in the final days of the

Biden administration that the lab-leak theory is the most plausible explanation. Now, the most important things are to make China pay for unleashing a plague on the world.”

The *Daily Blog* editor also cheers on the fascist-led witch-hunt against the scientist Dr. Peter Daszak and the EcoHealth Alliance (EHA), which Bradbury calls “a Circus Freak Show of an organisation.” EHA collaborated with the WIV for many years on international research into coronaviruses, and Daszak issued numerous warnings about the dangers of zoonotic spillovers of coronaviruses to the human population.

Bradbury declares, in language similar to Senator Cotton’s, that EHA and the WIV “played with fire and unleashed Pandora’s Box on the world!” Again, there is no evidence whatsoever to support this wild claim, which is promoted by the extreme right. (Caving into the witch-hunt, the EHA recently fired Daszak as its president).

Bradbury’s blog is politically aligned with the opposition Labour Party and its allies, including the Greens and Te Pahi Māori. He also rubs shoulders with right-wing media pundits and members of the National Party-led coalition government who appear on his politics podcast, the Working Group.

The blog supported former prime minister Jacinda Ardern’s decision to scrap public health measures preventing the spread of COVID-19 and presented the new policy of mass infection as inevitable. This is another reason for Bradbury’s hatred of the SEG, which opposed Labour’s criminal decision, and the ICFI, which is the only political organisation that fights for a global elimination strategy to end the pandemic, and has won significant support from scientists for this perspective.

The *Daily Blog* regularly makes nationalist demands for greater military spending and for New Zealand to be turned into a “fortress” against immigrants, particularly from Asia. While Bradbury sometimes calls for New Zealand to assert its “independence” from Washington, he constantly echoes US war propaganda against Russia and China, which he falsely depicts as an oppressor of New Zealand. He describes Beijing as “our economic overlord” and denounces the government’s support for trade with China, calling the National Party “slaves to China.”

The *Daily Blog*’s latest frothing attack on the SEG, and repetition of the Wuhan lab lie, appeared at the same time as the new Trump administration is dramatically escalating the trade war against China using tariffs, launching mass deportations of immigrants, and threatening attacks on Greenland and the Panama Canal.

It also coincides with an escalating campaign against socialism by the New Zealand political establishment. The far-right ACT Party leader David Seymour, a major figure in the government, gave a speech on January 24 that called for the wholesale privatisation of public services and a doubling of military spending in line with US demands while warning of the “danger” of young people and students being attracted to Marxism and “the hard left.”

The right-wing nationalist New Zealand First, also part of the government, is spearheading a vicious witch-hunt against pro-Palestine protesters while also frequently denouncing Marxism.

The Labour Party, meanwhile, joined the government in welcoming Trump’s re-election without criticising his fascistic and expansionist agenda. Labour also backs proposed “foreign interference” laws which will enable far greater surveillance and the criminalization of anti-war and socialist organisations.

However, as the WWS New Year statement explained, the historic crisis of capitalism is also paving the way for an eruption of class struggles in every country. In New Zealand there is mass opposition to the government’s austerity measures and its support for the US and Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Under these conditions, the petty bourgeois layers that the *Daily Blog* speaks for are desperately seeking to corral leftward-moving workers and youth behind Labour and its support parties, and to prevent the emergence of a consciously socialist movement against war and inequality.

This is why Bradbury is so enraged by the SEG and the ICFI. Basing itself on the principles and history of the Marxist-Trotskyist movement, the ICFI is the only organisation on the planet offering a cogent and consistent program to fight against fascism, dictatorship and imperialist war, based on the unification of the international working class to put an end to capitalism.

An essential part of this struggle is the exposure of all the lies and propaganda being spread, including by the *Daily Blog*, to justify the militarisation of the Indo-Pacific region and the further integration of New Zealand into US plans for world war.



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