

May Day 2025

Unite the New Zealand and Pacific working class against war!

Tom Peters
12 May 2025

This speech was given by Tom Peters, a leading member of the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand, at the International May Day 2025 Online Rally, held Saturday, May 3.

The Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand extends revolutionary greetings to all listeners in this country and across the Pacific region, who confront the imminent danger of imperialist war, soaring social inequality and increasingly dictatorial repression by the state.

In New Caledonia, workers and youth have spent nearly a year under occupation by thousands of French troops and police. These forces violently suppressed mass protests, which erupted last May, fuelled by hostility to colonial rule and unprecedented levels of social inequality.

The same explosive social crisis exists in Papua New Guinea, a former Australian colony, which was shaken by riots last year in response to appalling levels of poverty.

All the imperialist powers are tightening their grip over the Pacific. In an alliance with the United States, Australia and New Zealand are militarising the whole ocean in preparation for war against China. Australia has established a special Pacific Policing Initiative which will be used to crush social unrest.

New Zealand's political establishment has furiously denounced the government of the Cook Islands—a semi-colony of New Zealand, with fewer than 15,000 inhabitants—because it signed economic agreements with China.

One right-wing columnist for the *New Zealand Herald* suggested that special forces could be sent to occupy the islands. This idea was endorsed by the

Labour Party-aligned *Daily Blog*, which hysterically declared that “China is invading New Zealand.” The blog has smeared the Socialist Equality Group as “traitors” because of our opposition to its anti-China war propaganda.

These are not empty threats. In the past 20 years New Zealand and Australian troops have repeatedly intervened to defend their predatory interests in the Solomon Islands, East Timor and Tonga.

New Zealand's right-wing coalition government is strengthening its integration into Washington's drive to violently redivide the world and reduce billions of people to the status of colonial slaves. It has sent military personnel to assist in the bombing of Yemen. It supports the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza. And it is providing training and other support to Ukrainian forces in the NATO-led war against Russia.

The National Party-led government, with bipartisan support from the Labour Party, is planning to double military spending from 1 to 2 percent of gross domestic product, in line with demands from the United States. Billions of dollars will be wasted on missiles and drones, and to recruit more youth into the armed forces. The media is already discussing the possible reintroduction of compulsory military training.

This militarist agenda must be opposed. It will be paid for by the working class, which is already facing brutal austerity measures in the healthcare, education and public services sectors, enforced by the pro-capitalist union apparatus. The country's biggest trade union, the Public Service Association, supports greater military spending, even as it helps to cut thousands of jobs.

Over the past year, there have been mass protests

against the Gaza genocide and strikes and protests against cuts to public health. To suppress opposition, the government, backed by the Labour Party, is preparing anti-democratic laws against so-called “foreign interference.”

The Socialist Equality Group is the only political organisation which is fighting to imbue the movement in the working class with the necessary socialist political perspective.

This requires a conscious struggle against all the efforts by the political establishment and the trade union bureaucracy to divide the working class based on race, nationality and gender.

The far-right parties in the coalition government, the ACT Party and New Zealand First, are following the playbook of Donald Trump, stoking racism and bigotry. Tens of thousands of people have protested against their anti-Māori demagoguery over the past year.

But the Socialist Equality Group warns that the Māori nationalism and other forms of identity politics promoted by Labour, the Greens, Te Pahi Māori, and the various pseudo-left groups, are just as divisive and reactionary. Their aim is to obscure the central division in society, which is not race but the class gulf between workers and the capitalist elite, and to subordinate workers to different sections of the ruling class, including indigenous capitalists.

The notion that Labour represents a kinder, gentler alternative is a fraud. Jacinda Ardern, long hailed by pseudo-left parties internationally, resigned as prime minister months before Labour lost the 2023 election in a crushing defeat. Her government oversaw rising homelessness and child poverty, it strengthened the alliance with the United States, and it endorsed Israel’s assault on Gaza. Ardern moved to the United States where she promoted the presidential campaign of Kamala Harris, and sought to whitewash the Democrats’ record of participation in genocide and its attacks on democratic rights.

The only way forward is the struggle for the political independence of the working class from the entire capitalist establishment. That includes building rank-and-file workplace committees to break the stranglehold of the union bureaucracy. And above all, I urge you to join the fight to build sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the World Party of Socialist Revolution, in New Zealand,

in China, and throughout Asia and the Pacific.



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