

May Day 2026

Unite the New Zealand and Pacific working class against imperialism!

Tom Peters
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This speech was delivered by Tom Peters, a leader of the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand, at the 2026 May Day Online Rally, organized by the WSWS and the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The Socialist Equality Group extends revolutionary greetings to everyone joining this rally from across the Pacific region, which is being plunged into economic crisis by the illegal US-Israeli war against Iran.

Many Pacific countries are geographically isolated and impoverished and depend almost entirely on diesel to generate electricity. In Papua New Guinea, where over half the population lives in poverty, diesel prices have risen by as much as 70 percent.

The imperialist powers are anticipating a resurgence of popular unrest. Thousands of French riot police continue to occupy New Caledonia, two years after violently suppressing a mass uprising against social inequality and colonial rule.

The Pacific is being militarized and dragged into the far-advanced plans for war against China.

New Zealand—an imperialist power allied to the United States—has strengthened its colonial grip on the Cook Islands by imposing an agreement which gives the New Zealand military unimpeded access to the archipelago and restricts its ability to make commercial deals with China.

During the 20th century, the New Zealand ruling class sent tens of thousands of youth to fight and die in two world wars, to secure British and American support for its own imperialist ventures in the Pacific.

As the Third World War rapidly escalates, the National Party-led government is determined not to be excluded from the violent redivision of markets and

resources.

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Foreign Minister Winston Peters endorsed the US and Israel's unprovoked assault on Iran, saying it was to defend "international peace and security." When Minister Peters visited Washington in April, he refused to condemn Donald Trump's genocidal threats to bomb Iran "back to the Stone Ages" and destroy its civilization.

For the working class in New Zealand, the war is intensifying a profound social crisis. Annual inflation is expected to climb from 3.1 to nearly 5 percent by the middle of the year; food prices have risen by almost 5 percent and electricity by 12 percent already in just one year.

Real wages are falling, while mass layoffs have driven combined unemployment and under-employment above 10 percent.

Half a million people—one in 10—rely on food banks; one in five children lives in poverty; and 100,000 people are effectively homeless.

Deputy Prime Minister David Seymour, leader of the far-right ACT Party, has dismissed the crisis with the claim that poor and homeless people "are living like kings and queens compared with most places and most times in history."

The ruling class is seeking to eviscerate public services and workers' living standards in order to funnel more money into corporate profits and to expand the military. The government has pledged to double military spending, with the support of the opposition Labour Party and the Public Service Association (PSA), the largest trade union.

The working class is attempting to fight back. Last

October, over 100,000 teachers and healthcare workers held a one-day strike—the largest in New Zealand since 1979.

The Socialist Equality Group warned, however, that as long as the union bureaucracy remained in control, it would collude with the state to isolate and betray these struggles. In recent months, the unions have imposed wage cuts on thousands of workers who joined the “mega strike.”

To carry out a real fight against austerity and militarism, workers must build rank-and-file committees that they themselves control. They must unite with workers in Australia and across the Pacific in a consciously socialist movement.

Building such a movement requires a political struggle against all the pseudo-left organisations of the upper middle class, which seek to subordinate workers and youth to the Labour Party and its allies, which have no fundamental differences with the government’s agenda.

Socialist Aotearoa has invited Labour and Green Party members and union officials to address its public gatherings and fraudulently posture as anti-war. Its leader Joe Carolan declares that “to get rid of this right-wing government [in the November election] we’re going to need Labour.”

Socialist Aotearoa and the International Socialist Organisation supported the Labour government of Jacinda Ardern—a coalition that included the Greens and the right-wing nationalist NZ First. Ardern strengthened ties with US imperialism, including by sending troops to Britain to help train Ukrainian conscripts for the US-NATO war against Russia. And in late 2023, the Labour government endorsed Israel’s genocidal assault on Gaza.

Labour and the Greens have called the war against Iran illegal, but they support the alliance with Washington and they support its central imperialist objective: the military encirclement and warmongering against China.

We call on workers, students and young people who are listening to this meeting to break with these parties and their pseudo-left apologists. The only way to stop the descent into barbarism and war is to fight for the political independence of the working class from all capitalist tendencies. The central task is to build sections of the International Committee of the Fourth

International in New Zealand and across the Pacific, as the revolutionary leadership of the working class.



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