

The right-wing politics of New Zealand's Opportunity Party

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In the lead-up to the New Zealand election on November 7, The Opportunity Party (TOP, formerly The Opportunities Party) is receiving significant media attention and promotion as an “alternative” to the more established parties.

In a statement on May 27, party leader Qiulae Wong presented it as neither left- nor right-wing and against “ideology and tribal allegiance.” She declared that TOP stood for “workable, costed reforms” to deliver “real, tangible economic growth” and better living standards for all.

This is a sham. Founded in 2016 by millionaire economist Gareth Morgan, TOP is a right-wing party with significant backing from sections of big business. Its function is to divert the growing hostility to the established parties back into the dead-end of the capitalist and parliamentary system.

The working class and much of the middle class confront deepening austerity and inequality, and a developing third world war, which New Zealand is being drawn into. Workers are increasingly alienated from the National Party, the main party in the government, and the opposition Labour Party, which are now polling around 64 percent combined—well short of the 75-80 percent they historically commanded.

The right-wing coalition government is cutting spending on welfare, healthcare and education, while planning to double military spending and strengthening NZ's alliance with US imperialism. National's coalition partners, the far-right NZ First and ACT Parties, are seeking to whip up racism and division with Trump-style policies, including attacks on immigrants, Māori and transgender people.

The Labour Party, however, is no less a party of war and austerity. It supports the government's war spending, which will be paid for with cuts to public services and other attacks on the working class. Labour was dumped from office in the 2023 election with an historic low of 26.9 percent, after presiding over soaring living costs, increased homelessness and levels of rising child poverty.

Among Labour's allies, Te Pati Māori, a Māori nationalist party, has split in two amid rancorous internal turmoil.

Labour and the Greens have still refused to rule out forming a coalition government with NZ First, as they did from 2017–2020.

Under these conditions, TOP is offering its services to prop up the next government and help impose its reactionary agenda. The party has declared it is ready to work in a coalition with Labour or National. Wong recently wrote on Reddit that “we are a much more pragmatic and reliable partner than NZ First.”

TOP has not been in parliament before, but is now polling around 3 percent. The threshold to enter parliament is 5 percent.

On the most important question facing the working class—world war—TOP is silent. Its website does not have any statement about defence or foreign policy. It has made no criticism of the militarisation of society and the integration of New Zealand into US-led war preparations against China.

The party issued a brief statement on March 3 saying that it “unequivocally condemns US and Israeli attacks on Iran” as “a flagrant breach of international law.” But it makes no call for ending NZ's alliance with US imperialism and complicity in its crimes.

TOP issued a statement on August 26, 2025 “on the situation in Gaza,” which whitewashed Israel's genocide. It appealed to Israel to “protect civilian lives” and said there should be “meaningful dialogue and a commitment to justice and human rights on both sides.” This was after Israel's military had largely flattened Gaza, killing tens of thousands of innocent people, and after the International Criminal Court had issued an arrest warrant for Benjamin Netanyahu.

TOP is touting its “blue-green” credentials under Wong, a former KPMG consultant with a history of promoting so-called “sustainable” business practices. Wong says TOP's policies will include “pragmatic environmentalism,” prompting comparisons with Australia's teal independents, who split from the conservative Liberal Party and now have 8 seats in the federal parliament.

Like the teals and the NZ and Australian Greens, TOP's

main pitch is not to working people but to layers of the upper middle class. It peddles the lie that the existential threat of climate change can be addressed by minor reforms within the framework of the profit system. In fact, capitalism's division of the world into rival states and its subordination of all economic life to private profit is the essential barrier to the only real solution—a scientifically based, internationally coordinated plan to halt and reverse climate change.

While posturing as political outsiders, TOP has appointed as its general manager Iain Lees-Galloway, who served as Immigration Minister in the 2017-2020 Labour-NZ First-Greens government. Lees-Galloway oversaw draconian anti-immigrant measures, including class-based restrictions to visas and interminable delays to the processing of visa applications, which prompted protests and petitions from migrants.

TOP has not published an immigration policy statement, but the appointment of Lees-Galloway sends a clear message that it is prepared to support similar measures.

The party has a list of 28 candidates described on its website as “entrepreneurs, community champions and impact makers.” Prominent figures include food industry business owner Daniel Eb, TOP's deputy leader, and Dr Kayla Kingdon-Bebb, CEO of the NZ World Wide Fund for Nature.

TOP's main policy pitch is a 1.75 percent annual land value tax (0.5 percent for rural land), promoted as a way to “redirect investment towards business, innovation and hiring, and away from housing,” and projected to raise \$24 billion annually.

The land tax would place new burdens on home-owners. TOP's website notes that retired people who cannot afford the tax will be “incentivised” to make “different choices” such as “downsizing their home or shifting into renting.”

The tax would capture only a tiny fraction of the wealth held by the super-rich. In 2021, New Zealand's 311 richest individuals held about \$85 billion in property, business and financial assets—which remained largely untaxed under successive Labour and National governments.

TOP's website says nothing about company tax rates, which the party's founder Morgan stated should be lowered. The party calls for “boosting tax credits” for companies to carry out research and development.

The land tax would ostensibly fund a “Citizen's Income” of \$370 per week for all adults, with top-ups for pensioners and people with children. TOP itself acknowledges that this poverty-level payment—about the same as the current unemployment benefit for a single person—will not be enough for most people to survive on.

The current superannuation system would be replaced by

the much lower Citizen's Income. TOP proposes additional payments for some pensioners, but these would be means tested; in effect, pensions would be reduced for many retired people.

In addition, the party wants a revamped retirement savings scheme, called KiwiSaver 2.0, which would eventually require workers and employers to contribute 12 percent of the worker's income (6 percent each from employer and employee—up from the current minimum of 3.5 percent each). The aim is to direct more money into investment funds and further shift the burden of paying for retirement away from the state and onto individuals.

The class position of TOP is further confirmed by the wealthy individuals backing it. These include longtime Labour and Greens funder Phillip Mills—founder of the gym company Les Mills International and a member of the *National Business Review's* Rich List—who has given \$50,000 to TOP.

Tech entrepreneur Brian Cartmell (associated with numerous ventures including the anti-spam service SpamAlert and the cryptocurrency platform Coinbase) donated \$100,000 to TOP and hundreds of thousands to each of the three right-wing coalition partners—National, ACT and NZ First.

Alongside the corporate media, the pro-Labour Party *Daily Blog* is heavily promoting TOP as—in the words of editor Martyn Bradbury on March 6—“an alternative to both the traditional left-right divide and the influence of Winston Peters and New Zealand First.” Bradbury—who promoted NZ First in the 2017 election and echoed its anti-immigrant and anti-Chinese demagoguery—hypocritically declared that TOP would appeal to people “who are horrified by this Government's racism and culture war baiting.”

Workers and young people must reject this fraud. There is no such thing as a party that is neither right- nor left-wing. TOP is a capitalist party, which aspires to work with the more established parties in a government that will deepen the attacks on the working class.

The only way to address the climate crisis, and to end war and austerity, is by mobilising the working class internationally in a struggle for the socialist transformation of society. To build the necessary political leadership, workers should join the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand and fight to build it into a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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