

New Zealand election: Green Party AGM postures against social inequality, silent on war

Tom Peters
28 July 2026

New Zealand's Green Party held its Annual General Meeting in Auckland last weekend. It announced a campaign slogan for the November 7 election, "For all of us," and released a manifesto outlining various policies.

The event was held amid widespread hostility toward the major parties. The conservative National Party is polling around 29 percent and is in a coalition with the far-right NZ First and ACT Parties. The main opposition Labour Party is polling around 32 percent. It would need the Greens (currently polling 11 percent) and another party to form a government.

Both the current government and the 2017–2023 Labour-led government, which included the Greens, have imposed a worsening economic crisis on the working class. Real wages in NZ plummeted by 6.4 percent in the last five years, while the wealth of the billionaires increased. About 2 percent of people are severely housing deprived and 10 percent are relying on food banks.

Health, education and other public services are being starved of funds in order to keep taxes low for the rich and divert money into the military.

Under these conditions, the Green Party is seeking to contain mounting social anger and anti-capitalist sentiment by peddling the lie that it can pressure Labour to adopt progressive reforms as part of a coalition government. The Greens' record shows precisely the opposite: it has joined successive right-wing Labour administrations that imposed austerity measures, protected the interests of the financial and corporate elite, and strengthened the military in preparation to join US-led wars.

At the Greens' AGM, co-leaders Marama Davidson and Chlöe Swarbrick avoided mentioning the party's participation in the 2017–2023 Labour-led governments. Labour lost the 2023 election in a landslide defeat after its policies led to soaring living costs and increased homelessness and child poverty.

The Greens supported all Labour's budgets, which bailed

out corporations with billions of dollars during the COVID-19 pandemic and funnelled billions more to the armed forces, while imposing austerity in hospitals and schools and freezing wages for public sector workers. In April 2020 the Greens' then-co-leader James Shaw admitted that generations of people, meaning workers, "are going to be paying back the debt that we're currently racking up to get through this crisis for many, many decades."

In a demagogic speech, Davidson focused on denouncing the current government, which "spit on communities like those in South Auckland [a working class area], while they cheerlead for the super rich and big corporates." The Greens' policies, she said, would "ensure people can live affordable lives," improve the environment and water quality, and "make the super rich and big corporations pay their fair share of tax."

As the WSWWS noted, the Greens' proposal for a modest increase in tax on major corporations and a 2.5 percent tax on wealth above a \$10 million threshold would increase government revenue by only 3.5 percent. This would not be enough to even begin to address the crisis of under-resourced hospitals and decades of cuts to schools, universities and social programs.

Swarbrick's AGM speech emphasised the Greens' pro-business credentials by hailing the party's "Buy Kiwi Made" policy, originally implemented under a 2005 agreement with the then-Labour government. The Greens worked closely with the trade union bureaucracy and the corporate lobby group Business NZ on the scheme, designed to boost the competitiveness of NZ capitalists against imported products.

Swarbrick said the idea was to "build support for our own communities, building the jobs, spaces, events and infrastructure that ensure we're all happier, healthier, safer and having more fun."

In fact, Buy Kiwi Made gave free advertising and grants to businesses, including the supermarket duopoly and various

manufacturers. These handouts did nothing to prevent the destruction of thousands of jobs when the 2007–2008 financial crisis hit, in construction, manufacturing, transport and other industries.

Swarbrick also touted the Greens’ proposal to spend \$980 million to establish a government-owned power company, Kiwipower, “to lower bills” by increasing renewable energy generation.

There is no reason to believe that ordinary people would benefit from such a policy. The Greens are not proposing price controls for electricity bills—which surged 12 percent in the past year—or to re-nationalise the existing power companies.

The Kiwipower proposal recalls the creation of the state-owned Kiwibank by a Labour-led government in 2001, enthusiastically supported by the Greens based on the false claim that it would improve affordability. Bank profits continued to soar, underpinned by house price inflation: the four biggest banks increased their annual profits by 80 percent between 2013 and 2022, while household debt nearly tripled in the same period.

The Greens’ AGM ignored the most urgent issue facing the working class: the rapidly expanding world war. Swarbrick and Davidson did not mention the illegal US-Israeli bombing of Iran, the genocide in Gaza, the US-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine, or US-led preparations for war against China. As an imperialist power allied to the US, New Zealand’s ruling class is supporting all these crimes.

The Greens are silent on the agreement between Labour and National to double military spending from 1 to 2 percent of GDP and rapidly expand recruitment. Conscious of widespread opposition to war, the established parties are determined not to discuss this shared militarist agenda during the election campaign, and to keep workers in the dark about the immense dangers they face.

The Green Party manifesto states that the National-led government has “turned a blind eye to atrocities and authoritarians and has deepened our military integration with the United States.” It does not mention that the previous Labour-Greens government pursued the same course.

The manifesto calls for New Zealand to withdraw from the Five Eyes, the US-led intelligence-gathering network, and to decline to join AUKUS, the security pact between the US, Australia and UK aimed at militarising the Pacific for war with China. It also calls for NZ to “sanction Israel” and recognise Palestine as a state.

None of these are principled positions; they are designed to be discarded as soon as the Greens enter a coalition government with Labour. Davidson downplayed the manifesto’s significance, telling the media that it reflected

the Greens’ “longer-term ambitions” rather than immediate election priorities.

The promotion of the Greens as an “anti-war” party, including by its pseudo-left cheerleaders the International Socialist Organisation and Socialist Aotearoa, has always been a fraud.

During the 2000s and 2010s the Greens supported the New Zealand participation in the brutal imperialist war in Afghanistan and the Australian-led military interventions in East Timor and the Solomon Islands.

In January 2017 the Greens’ then co-leader Metiria Turei told Radio NZ that the party’s supposed opposition to the Five Eyes was no obstacle to working with Labour. “We disagree, that’s perfectly fine, we can still work together to change the government,” she said.

In October that year the Greens entered a coalition government with Labour and the right-wing nationalist NZ First Party, which proceeded to strengthen New Zealand’s alliance with Washington. In 2019, Green co-leader James Shaw and NZ First Defence Minister Ron Mark produced a document arguing for a stronger military able to deploy rapidly throughout the Pacific.

In 2022 the Greens glorified NATO’s proxy war against Russia as the government deployed New Zealand troops to Britain to train Ukrainian conscripts.

The Green Party’s claim to stand “for all of us” is a lie. No party can speak for “everyone” in a society riven by historic levels of social inequality and class warfare. The Greens represent sections of the bourgeoisie and the affluent upper middle class, whose wealth and privileges depend on ramping up the exploitation of workers and maintaining New Zealand’s status as a minor imperialist power allied to the US and Australia.

If it enters the next government, the Green Party—just like the Greens in Australia and Germany—will support deeper austerity measures and militarism, which is the only answer the ruling class has to the historic breakdown of capitalism.

To fight against war, social inequality and dictatorship, the working class must oppose all capitalist parties and join the struggle for the socialist reorganisation of society. We call on workers who agree with this to contact the Socialist Equality Group.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact