

New Zealand election: Labour's fraudulent "non-aligned" posturing in the US-China confrontation

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As New Zealand approaches an election on November 7, the entire parliamentary establishment and the media are conspiring to downplay, if not completely bury, the immense dangers facing the working class from the expanding global war.

Only the Socialist Equality Group's campaign is warning that behind the backs of the population, the ruling elite is conspiring to further integrate the country into US-led imperialist wars and war plans against Iran, Russia, China and elsewhere. That will be the agenda of the next government, whether it is led by the incumbent National Party or the opposition Labour Party.

Neither Prime Minister Christopher Luxon nor Labour leader Chris Hipkins is speaking openly about these plans. Both parties are extremely nervous about the widespread and deeply-ingrained hostility to war among workers, young people and the broader population.

During the final leaders' debate broadcast by Stuff on October 20, both Luxon and Hipkins attempted to distance themselves from Washington and the Trump administration.

Asked whether the war against Iran was "a mistake," both leaders said it was, with Luxon calling its objectives "very confused." In fact, the current government supported the attack on Iran and echoed the US and Israeli lies that it was aimed at stopping Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

The moderator then posed the question: "What's the first thing that happens if China were to invade Taiwan?"

Luxon did not answer directly but said such an attack would be "catastrophic for the world" and urged "dialogue" between the US and China. The Labour leader agreed that a war would be "catastrophic" and urged China—but not the US—"to seek diplomatic resolution to any conflict in the Taiwan Strait."

He added that "we should also be very clear that we are an independent nation. We don't align with either side in any conflict between the US and China, and that has been New Zealand's long-standing position."

Hipkins' statement is a lie. New Zealand is not neutral or non-aligned, nor does Labour support such a position. NZ is an imperialist power, which, in league with Australia, dominates much of the impoverished southwest Pacific region. Since World War II the NZ and Australian ruling classes have pursued their own predatory interests in a close alliance with US imperialism. With the eruption of a third world war, Wellington is scrambling to secure its seat at the table for the violent redivision of the world.

Neither Luxon nor Hipkins explained why tensions over Taiwan have escalated to the point where war between nuclear-armed powers is publicly discussed. They did not dispute the question's implication that China's belligerence is to blame.

This framing turns reality upside down. It is Washington that has systematically militarised the Indo-Pacific region and encircled China, including by supplying weapons to Taiwan and strengthening alliances with the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

It is the US, not China, which has launched a series of criminal wars, driven by the long-term decline of American capitalism, including the onslaught against Iran. The wars in the Middle East and against Russia, along with the seizure of Venezuela's resources, are all aimed at isolating and weakening China, the main economic rival of US imperialism.

Labour governments have played a key role in strengthening New Zealand's alliance with Washington. Labour sent troops to take part in the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the war in Iraq in 2003. The last

Labour government sent NZ soldiers to Britain to train Ukrainian conscripts to fight against Russia.

Labour and National have also worked to seamlessly integrate the New Zealand military with Australia's armed forces, under conditions where Australia is being transformed into a vast base for US operations against China.

During the last Labour-Greens government, in August 2023, Defence Minister Andrew Little openly declared that the country needed "a combat capable, ready force" in case of a US-led war against China. He said: "If for example conflict does break out in the South China Sea, where \$20 billion of our exports flows through every year, we have a stake in that, and we may be called on to play a role should conflict break out. We need to be equipped for that and prepared for it."

The sham of Labour's so-called "independent" foreign policy is further exposed by Hipkins' insistence that NZ must remain in the Five Eyes. The intelligence-sharing network, led by the US, is playing a key role in drawing up war plans against China.

The Labour leader has also ruled out closing the FBI office in Wellington, which was opened by FBI director Kash Patel last year for the explicitly stated purpose of "countering the CCP [Chinese Communist Party]."

The election will change nothing. If Labour leads the next government the militarisation of New Zealand as part of the anti-China alliance will continue and accelerate.

Labour supported National's 2025 Defence Capability Plan, which included an extra \$12 billion for the military over four years and outlined plans to nearly double military spending from just over 1 percent to 2 percent of GDP. The diversion of billions of dollars into war is being paid for with deeper austerity measures, which will gut public healthcare, education and welfare programs.

These facts underscore the political fraud being perpetrated by New Zealand's pseudo-left organisations, Socialist Aotearoa and the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), as well as Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa. These middle-class groups are presenting a Labour-led coalition with the Greens and Te Pahi Māori as a more peaceful alternative, based on Labour's thoroughly hypocritical criticisms of the Iran war and Israel's genocide in Gaza—which Labour supported when it led the government in 2023. They are seeking to deceive workers and to channel anti-war sentiment behind pro-imperialist parties.

Against all these tendencies, the Socialist Equality Group has intervened in the election—standing Tom

Petterson as its candidate in Hutt South—to explain to workers that a genuine anti-war movement can only be built in opposition to all capitalist parties, including Labour, its parliamentary allies, the union bureaucracy and the pseudo-lefts.

The SEG's demands include an end to all military spending, withdrawal from the Five Eyes and all imperialist alliances, and the withdrawal of NZ troops from every overseas deployment. None of this will be achieved through appeals to capitalist governments, which have proven in every country that they are impervious to mass protests against genocide and war.

The only force capable of stopping the escalating world war is the working class, united across borders on the basis of a socialist program. The movement of workers and youth against austerity and the far-right—which is spreading in France, Spain and other countries across Europe and elsewhere—must be transformed into a conscious and internationally unified fight to abolish the capitalist system itself.

This, in turn, requires the building of socialist and internationalist leadership—the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution—including its New Zealand section.

We call on workers, young people and readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* to attend the Socialist Equality Group's election meeting this Sunday, November 1, at 1:30 p.m. in the Dowse Art Museum, 45 Laings Road, Lower Hutt, to discuss these urgent questions.

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