

Residents in working-class Hutt South speak to SEG on NZ elections

Our reporters
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New Zealanders go to the polls on November 7 in an election that will resolve nothing for the working class. Whatever form the government will take it will be committed to integrating the country into US-led wars and will deepen the social crisis at home. The combined support of the two major parties has collapsed to its lowest level since the 1930s, reflecting a profound crisis of rule for the bourgeoisie.

For the first time in history, the Trotskyist movement is standing a candidate in a New Zealand general election. The Socialist Equality Group (SEG) is fielding Tom Petterson in the Hutt South electorate, not to win a seat in parliament but to expose the bankruptcy of every party of the capitalist establishment and to build a socialist and internationalist leadership of the working class. The SEG is fighting to mobilise workers against all capitalist parties—including Labour and its pseudo-left supporters—and against the union bureaucracy, which has strangled workers' struggles and enforced deep cuts to real wages.

The SEG is urging workers and young people to attend its public election meeting this Sunday, November 1, at 1:30 p.m. at the Dowse Art Museum, 45 Laings Road, Lower Hutt, to discuss the socialist alternative to war and austerity. The meeting will address the urgent issues being buried by every other party: the expanding world war and the eruption of class struggles internationally. [Register here.](#)

The following comments are from workers and young people who spoke with the SEG's campaign team about the housing crisis, unemployment, the cost of living and the drive to war.

Filipe, a worker from Brazil who has lived in New Zealand for several years, said neither of the major parties was presenting any ideas to improve society.

"The system is broken, in my view. You can see how people are struggling with homelessness, the spending power they have right now is not much. People are not supported enough to go out there and create something for themselves."

Filipe condemned the current government for not opposing the US war on Iran. Asked what he thought of the National Party and the Labour Party both promising to increase military spending, he said this was "absurd" for a small country like New Zealand.

Comparing politics in New Zealand and Brazil, which recently held an election, he said there was no difference between the social-democratic and the conservative parties. He said the Workers Party (PT) has "been in power for 18 years [of the past 24 years] now and doing the same things that the right used to do in the 90s," not supporting low-income people.

Henry, a 29-year-old student of social work who recently returned from Australia, agreed with the WSWs that the crisis in New Zealand had worsened under both Labour and National governments, and said he had not decided who to vote for.

He said: "I've noticed that in the past 11 years since I've been out of the country the economy has declined extremely and the welfare system, public housing and jobs have also declined. A lot of people are finding it difficult to find work. Even people's ability to put food on the table has declined."

Henry expected to return to Australia to find work, saying it was "very difficult" in New Zealand. "It comes down to word of mouth: you have to know somebody."

He also denounced the promotion of racism to divide workers, which he said was connected to the eruption of war. "It's very sad. If humanity was able to move away from that, then society would improve, lives

would improve, wars would stop.” He added that to eliminate war “we would have to bring down borders, we would have to bring down the actual system of wealth” in order for “everyone to be on an equal footing.”

Kay, a young worker in Moera, Lower Hutt, said the National Party government had “cut a lot of funding that provided jobs” and was now threatening to cut welfare benefits for the unemployed.

She denounced National’s plan to increase fuel taxes, saying “there’ll be no one driving on the roads.” Kay, whose partner is a teacher in a low-income area, said there were children going to school in winter without jackets and decent shoes. “There are hard-working parents out there who are trying their best, but they can’t keep up. Everything is just going up and up. Pay goes up less than everything else.”

Kay said she was considering voting for Labour, but was “concerned” about whether it would keep its promises. “They promise something, but once they’re in there, is it going to happen?” WSWS reporters pointed out that the previous Labour-led government had reneged on all its election pledges, including to build 100,000 “affordable” houses, introduce free education and eliminate child poverty.

Reaston, who is struggling to find work, said he had been unemployed for the majority of his life. “It’s outrageous how little you get on the benefit. The cost of food at the moment, and the cost of housing are going through the roof, it’s outrageous. I don’t understand how people can afford to live and eat. I’m lucky that I still live with my parents, [otherwise] I’d be lost, I’d probably be living on the street.

“It’s really hard to decide who I’m going to vote for,” he said, adding, “our country is a sad country to be living in. I don’t think our government can actually see what everyone has to fight for on a daily basis. People are begging on the streets in order to live.” Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, he said, “is not really there for us. He’s only a businessman, he’s only there for the money.”

Ehanumati, a retiree, commented on the increased levels of inequality she has experienced in New Zealand over the decades. “When we first moved here we had an easy time, children used to be outside... but its more dangerous now, it’s harder to live. Ardern was terrible, she caused a lot of problems. Everything got

worse under Ardern. I don’t like the prospect of doubling military spending. The future generation is going to be hurt and find it very hard.

“Now we find it difficult to get into hospital for appointments. I suffer from blackouts and need home help but they don’t give us home help. At hospital I get put into the corridor. The nurses look after us well, but there’s lots of patients in the corridor, they say there’s no room.”

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