Vote for the Socialist Equality Group in the New Zealand election!

Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand)
4 November 2026

The Socialist Equality Group calls on workers and young people across the Hutt South electorate to vote for our candidate, Tom Petterson, in Saturday's election.

This is the first time that a member of the Trotskyist movement has contested a New Zealand election. As we have emphasised in public meetings, statements and discussions with workers, Petterson is not standing to promote false hopes of progressive change and socialism through parliament.

The SEG's campaign aims to build a new party to lead the working class: the New Zealand section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). Its aim is to unite the working class, in every country, to overthrow capitalism and to reorganise society on the basis of socialism.

Outside of Hutt South, the SEG is not calling for a vote for any candidate or party. We warn that none of the urgent issues facing the working class will be resolved in this election, in which there is no real democratic choice.

Whether the National Party clings to power with its far-right coalition partners ACT and NZ First, or is replaced by Labour and its allies, the next government's agenda has already been decided behind the backs of the working class. It will be a government of, by and for the financial and corporate elite. It will accelerate the assault on workers' wages, jobs and public services to benefit the super-rich and funnel more money to the military in preparation for joining imperialist wars.

Workers and young people internationally are moving to the left. This was reflected in yesterday's US midterm elections, which resulted in a massive repudiation of the Republicans and Trump. The Democratic Party, however, is a party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus, and moving to the right: While initially benefiting from opposition to Trump, it will seek to contain and suppress any movement against war and the oligarchy's interests, which both parties represent.

Similar processes are underway in New Zealand. There is mass opposition to the Gaza genocide, the war against Iran, and the assault on living standards. Like the Democrats in the US, however, the New Zealand Labour Party offers no alternative to the right-wing government. Large numbers of workers and young people recognise that Labour and National are two parties of big business, jointly responsible for soaring social inequality and poverty.

Both major parties are polling below 30 percent and will need at least two smaller parties to form a government. This represents a crisis for the bourgeoisie, which has relied on National and Labour for most of the last century to impose its dictates. The next government will be a highly unstable coalition, led by an already discredited party that will implement a right-wing program and come into collision with the working class.

Election coverage has focused on minor tactical differences, endless discussion of possible coalitions and speculation about whether a government can be formed before Christmas. The official campaign has proceeded almost as though New Zealand were sealed off from the world.

Only the SEG's campaign has told workers the truth about the immense danger that humanity faces from the eruption of world war. The imperialist powers, led by the US, are responding to the historic crisis of capitalism by seeking to violently redivide the world, seize markets and resources, and reduce much of the planet to colonial slavery.

The NZ election has unfolded amid genocidal threats by US President Trump to "annihilate" Iran and NATO's relentless escalation of the war with Russia over Ukraine, to the point where nuclear war is being discussed. Millions of workers and youth are protesting across Europe against austerity, militarism and conscription. All the established parties and the corporate media, as well as the pseudo-left organisations, have downplayed or completely buried these issues.

Briefly, during one televised debate, Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Labour leader Chris Hipkins were asked what would happen in a US-China war over Taiwan. Luxon dodged the question, saying that such a war would be "catastrophic," while Hipkins brazenly lied, saying that New Zealand does not "align" with either side.

New Zealand, a minor imperialist power in the Pacific, is a close US ally and is integrated into the militarisation of the region for war against China. The last Labour-Greens government sent troops to Britain to train Ukrainian conscripts. Hipkins insists New Zealand must remain in the US-led Five Eyes intelligence alliance, which is integral to the Pentagon's war planning.

Both parties support the doubling of military spending to more than 2 percent of gross domestic product and the significant boosting of recruitment.

War abroad will be paid for with an intensified war against the working class at home. While spending more on the military, both major parties plan to reduce overall government spending, which means deeper austerity in public healthcare, education, welfare and other social programs and infrastructure.

Workers already face a profound social crisis. About one in five children lives in poverty, 10 percent of the population relies on food banks, and 2 percent of people are severely housing deprived. Yesterday's unemployment figures showed an increase from 5.6 to

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5.7 percent. One in four youth aged 15 to 19 are unemployed; the government response is to push thousands of unemployed teenagers off welfare benefits—a move backed by Labour.

The cost of living is soaring. According to Labour, annual costs for a family with two children are $6,302 higher than in 2023. Yet it offers no solution. Labour's supposed remedies—including three free doctor visits annually and capped public transport fares—would save workers at most a few hundred dollars, which inflation would cancel out.

The current government's austerity measures are built on the policies of the 2017–2023 Labour government. Labour lost the 2023 election in a crushing defeat after it starved public hospitals and schools, and ended public health measures to stop the spread of COVID-19. Homelessness and the number of children living in material hardship increased under Labour.

Jacinda Ardern's Labour government, abetted by the union bureaucracy, suppressed wages for nurses, teachers and other workers. Real wages have plummeted by 6.4 percent from 2021 to 2026 under the Labour and National governments.

Labour's regressive policies opened the door for the far-right coalition to come to power. Labour and the Greens formed a coalition with the right-wing nationalist NZ First, making NZ First's Winston Peters deputy prime minister and foreign minister. That government adopted draconian anti-immigrant restrictions to scapegoat foreigners for unemployment and decaying public services.

The Socialist Equality Group's election campaign has been directed against Labour and all its allies, including the Greens, Te P?ti M?ori, the right-wing Opportunity Party (which could join a coalition government with either National or Labour), as well as the union bureaucracy and the pseudo-left International Socialist Organisation (ISO) and Socialist Aotearoa (SA).

The pseudo-lefts' claim that the Greens and Te P?ti M?ori will push Labour to implement progressive policies is a fraud. These parties must be judged not on their election rhetoric but on their records. Both have been part of capitalist governments that attacked workers' social rights and living standards.

During the Ardern government, the Greens supported all Labour's budgets that starved public healthcare and boosted the military. Te P?ti M?ori, which represents bourgeois and upper middle class M?ori, was part of the 2008-2017 National Party-led government that increased GST, cut thousands of jobs and privatised state-owned assets.

The ISO and SA are not socialists. Like their counterparts internationally—including the Democratic Socialists of America, the Victorian Socialists, Die Linke in Germany and Révolution permanente in France—they seek to prevent the development of a socialist movement against the capitalist political establishment. They represent sections of the upper-middle class, in and around the unions and parliamentary parties, which have no interest in abolishing capitalism, and which support New Zealand's role as an imperialist power.

The SEG's election statement advanced a number of demands, including an immediate 20 percent wage increase for all workers, an end to all military spending and alliances, and the expropriation of the banks and major corporations, placing them under the democratic control of the working class.

We warned that workers will achieve nothing by appealing to capitalist governments or parties. Workers must mobilise independently on a socialist and internationalist program to abolish capitalism itself, which is plunging the world into war and dictatorship.

There is no question that workers will fight; the bipartisan agenda of war and austerity is already driving them into struggle. Thousands of public sector workers, university and polytechnic workers, firefighters and others have taken strike action in recent weeks. The class struggle will intensify after the election, as in Europe and around the world, because workers can no longer live under the conditions demanded by capitalism.

To launch a real fight against austerity and war, however, workers need new organisations that they control. The SEG calls on them to build rank-and-file committees in every workplace, in opposition to the union apparatus that strangles and betrays workers. The unions have imposed one sellout deal after another, cutting real wages for tens of thousands of teachers, healthcare workers and others over the past year.

Building the International Workers' Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, initiated by the ICFI, will enable workers to unite across borders and overcome national divisions stoked by unions and capitalist parties to weaken the working class. Only such international unity can defeat multinational corporations that exploit workers in multiple countries.

Rank-and-file committees must also take action to stop the production and shipment of weapons for the Gaza genocide, the Ukraine war, the war against Iran and the military buildup against China. The NZ union bureaucracy has shown its real position on war by refusing to organise dockworkers in NZ to join the international dockworkers' strike of October 30 against war. In fact, the Public Service Association, NZ's largest union, has made statements supporting military spending to prepare for war against China.

Most importantly, there can be no struggle for socialism without revolutionary and internationalist leadership, to establish the political independence of the working class from all capitalist parties and organisations.

The SEG is not building a party based on short-term electoral goals or phony promises to "reform" capitalism through parliament. The system has no reforms to offer: The alternatives that confront the working class are socialism or barbarism.

The SEG is fighting to build a section of the ICFI, the only party that advances the program of world socialist revolution. This is the same program that guided the Russian Revolution and that was defended by Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International, in an uncompromising struggle against Stalinism, social democracy and every other nationalist, anti-Marxist tendency that adapted to imperialism.

We call on workers who live in Hutt South to vote for the SEG's Tom Petterson. But this is only a starting point. The urgent task facing workers and young people is to become politically active by joining and fighting to build this party as the new leadership of the working class. Contact us, donate to our election fund, and get involved in this critical struggle.

Authorised by Tom Petterson, sep.wellington@gmail.com

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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