

New Zealand's Daily Blog demands anti-immigrant measures against "Australians fleeing climate change"

By John Braddock and Tom Peters
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The *Daily Blog*, a prominent mouthpiece for New Zealand's pseudo-left milieu and trade union bureaucracy, has responded to the catastrophic bushfires in nearby Australia with a reactionary tirade demanding extreme national-isolationist measures in New Zealand, enforced by a stronger military and attacks on democratic rights.

The January 3 statement by editor Martyn Bradbury, "What the Australian megafire means to us in NZ and why Fortress Aotearoa is simply a matter of time," declared that NZ [Aotearoa] is about to be "swamped" by "Australians fleeing climate change" and must take drastic steps to avoid becoming an "Australian territory."

There is nothing remotely left wing or progressive about the statement, which reflects the right-wing politics of the blog's upper middle class supporters. It has the same aim as the hysterical anti-immigrant propaganda of governments around the world, including the Trump administration's "America First" doctrine: to poison the political atmosphere and divide the working class on the basis of race and nationality, in order to derail rising opposition to social inequality, poverty and war.

The *Daily Blog* supports Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's Labour Party-led government, which includes the anti-Asian NZ First Party, Labour's main coalition partner. Bradbury recently praised NZ First cabinet minister Shane Jones as a "political genius" for his inflammatory comments demonising Indian immigrants.

Bradbury's statement echoes the Christchurch terrorist's fascist "manifesto." Brenton Tarrant, who faces charges of killing 51 people in attacks on two mosques in March 2019, denounced non-white immigrants as "invaders" seeking to "replace" the local population and culture. Bradbury depicts Australians essentially as barbarians who will undermine New Zealand's "culture" if allowed to enter in significant numbers.

All the establishment parties are complicit in whipping up the xenophobic political climate that fuelled the

Christchurch atrocity. The Ardern government has slashed migrant numbers while making it harder to gain permanent residency. The trade unions constantly agitate for the government to go further and block "foreign workers" from entering the country.

Anti-Australianism has long been exploited by the unions to defend their collaboration with their "own" NZ employers by holding "hard-nosed" Australian banks and companies responsible for attacks on the working class.

The *Daily Blog*'s bushfire statement contained not one word of sympathy for thousands of ordinary Australians facing dire circumstances, including overwhelmed volunteer firefighters. Raging infernos have destroyed hundreds of thousands of acres of bush, hundreds of homes and even entire towns, threatening livelihoods and claiming two dozen lives.

Nor was there any political criticism of Australia's ruling elite, personified by Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who on January 2 was confronted by angry residents as he visited the fire-ravaged town of Cobargo. New Zealand's government similarly escaped Bradbury's ire. Ardern has sent just 180 firefighters across the Tasman to assist, followed by a contingent of the armed forces.

The omissions reflect the *Daily Blog*'s hostility towards the working class. Bradbury demagogically described Morrison as "a right wing fundamentalist Christian climate denying coal loving dick head." But he similarly tarred the entire Australian population, ranting: "Australia treats us with contempt... How do you think they will treat us if they flee here on mass? [sic] Forget China and America having too much influence over us, it will be Australians fleeing climate change who will be the real problem."

The *Daily Blog* is funded by the Unite union, the Rail and Maritime Transport Union and the Dairy Workers Union. Its regular contributors include Mike Treen, leader of Unite and a former leader of the Pabloite Socialist Action League; pro-Labour Party commentator Chris Trotter; ex-Greens MP

Keith Locke and activist John Minto. Minto and Treen are former members of the Maori nationalist Mana Party, which has campaigned for restricting jobs to New Zealanders first and scapegoated Chinese people for the housing crisis and drugs trade. Unite and Mana have close connections with New Zealand's pseudo-left groups, the International Socialist Organisation and Socialist Aotearoa.

All these individuals and organisations bear political responsibility for the chauvinist filth that the *Daily Blog* has been spewing out for years, especially its anti-Chinese xenophobia. The blog ludicrously depicts China as New Zealand's economic "overlord" and portrays Chinese immigrants as a subversive threat. Despite occasional anti-American outbursts, it supports the Labour-NZ First government's push to further integrate New Zealand into US war plans against China.

The Australian bushfires have now become the occasion for Bradbury to extend the blog's chauvinism further. Instead of placing the blame for the climate crisis where it belongs, with the anarchic private profit system and rapacious global corporations, Bradbury rails against ordinary people who exhibit "the worst of human nature."

Rejecting any socialist solution, Bradbury declares it is impossible to "plan for a pretend world of co-operation that will never exist." He describes "Fortress Aotearoa" as "the only way forward" in a world "where the worst angels of our nature are unleashed."

To implement this agenda, the *Daily Blog* calls for a "large scale increase in Army, Navy and Airforce." Although Bradbury does not spell it out, a vastly expanded military would be used to guard the border and turn back migrants and suppress the inevitable opposition from working people in NZ. A quarter of New Zealanders are first generation immigrants, and about 600,000 New Zealanders live in Australia.

Bradbury advocates major attacks on democratic rights, including extending the current three-year parliamentary term to five years, to make it more difficult to remove unpopular governments. He proposes restricting voting to citizens only (currently recent immigrants are allowed to vote) and for parliament to be reconfigured to give a larger say to the Maori business elite.

Various euphemisms, including Bradbury's description of anti-immigrant policies as "sustainable immigration," and his calls to increase New Zealand's extremely low refugee intake and increase social spending, cannot disguise the authoritarian and militarist character of his program.

The blog's demands dovetail with the agenda of the Labour Party-NZ First-Greens government, which has pledged to spend \$20 billion by 2030 to upgrade New Zealand's military, including expanding the army from

4,500 to 6,000 soldiers. The government is also militarising the police, recruiting an extra 1,800 front-line officers.

As a minor imperialist power, New Zealand's ruling class aims to cement its domination over several impoverished Pacific island nations, while strengthening its long-standing military and intelligence alliance with Washington as the latter threatens war against China, Russia and Iran.

The government and its backers, including the *Daily Blog*, also fear that soaring social inequality produced by its pro-business policies will unleash a mass working-class movement, similar to that in Chile, France and other countries, which the union bureaucracy will be unable to stop. The state is therefore preparing to violently suppress opposition—as it did during the great strike of 1913, the riots of the Great Depression, two World Wars, and the 1951 waterfront strike.

The middle class milieu that Bradbury speaks for has long espoused isolationist views, pretending that New Zealand is a haven of decency and "peace" at the bottom of the South Pacific that can cut itself off from the rest of the world. This is a reactionary utopian fantasy which, as the *Daily Blog* makes clear, can only be imposed with violent repression of the working class.

The climate crisis is a global issue which has no national solution. The Australian and New Zealand ruling elites, like those of every country, have no serious policies to address it because to do so would cut across the interests of the multi-billion dollar corporations, including New Zealand's dairy exporters.

The only way to seriously address climate change, and put an end to social inequality and imperialist war, is through the abolition of the capitalist system and its division of the world into rival nation states. The world economy must be organised on a rational, scientific basis, in accordance with human need. This requires an international struggle for socialism, uniting workers who are, objectively, more globally connected than ever before, and share the same basic interests regardless of where they live. Such a movement can only be built in opposition to the right-wing politics of the Labour Party, the trade unions and all their nationalist allies, including the *Daily Blog*.

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