

Workers Answer to State Terror: Free the Political Prisoners!

State uses Terrorism Suppression Act

On Monday 15 October the NZ state sent 200 armed police to apply the Terrorism Suppression Act (2002) against a handful of Maori nationalists, including the well known Tuhoë activist, Tame Iti, as well as a small number of anarchist and environmental activists. 17 individuals in total were arrested using warrants issued under the TSA, bail has been denied to most prisoners who are being kept in jail indefinitely while the prosecution gathers the evidence to bring charges under the TSA.

What links those arrested is their direct action against the state. The acts of shooting the flag, chaining oneself to railway tracks, physically confronting police lines to try to stop weapons and free trade conferences all have one thing in common. They are acts of civil disobedience that break the law to challenge the ruling class and its state forces. It is no coincidence that the police began their surveillance called 'Operation 8' around the time Tame Iti blasted the union jack with a shotgun. But who was behind the decision to launch this operation, why has it led to arrests now, and what are its implications? A good review and summary of events so far is

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0710/S00341.htm#1>

The police say that they have acted on their own authority in the interests of 'public safety' and that the accused have all been involved in 'military style training camps' in the Ureweras. The Government and its supporters are claiming that the police will have had good cause to use the TSA rather than other well tried legislation, and that it is up to the police to proceed on the evidence. Labourite Chris Trotter fuels this alarmist hysteria by speculating about plans for 'armed struggle'.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/4248869a1861.html>

A well known Labour left blogger 'Bomber Bradbury' claims he has inside information that the charges can be substantiated by the police. However, the Minister of Maori Affairs, Parekura Horomia, admitted that he did not think that Tame Iti was a 'terrorist'.



The civil rights and reformist left broadly sees these arrests as a crude attempt to test the TSA in court and intimidate the rights of peaceful protestors. They see this as the result of NZ following the US in introducing anti-terror legislation after 9/11/2001 at the expense of civil liberties.

Those who have been arrested are obviously not armed terrorists even under the current definition of the TSA. Paul Buchanan a 'security expert' who is ex-US intelligence, points out that none of those arrested has done any more than direct action against property and have not harmed 'innocents'. Former hard nosed top cop Ross Meurant has gone on TV to claim that the police have fallen foul of a racist subculture that has inflated possible minor weapons offences into terrorist threats.

Yet the arrests have been made and under TSA warrants. If it was a mistake why has the Labour Government given the go ahead?

A number of reasons have been put forward. The arrests are seen by some as an attempt by the Labour Government to win favour with the US in its campaign for a Free Trade Agreement with the US. They coincided with the reporting back to Parliament of the TS Amendment Bill that will insert much tougher measures into the TSA. [see Box *Police State*].

This may be linked to pressure from the National Opposition that has accused Labour of being 'soft' on terror. The

Timeline for NZ's War of Terror

9-11 2001 and War on Terror launched.

2001 TA Bill introduced, NZ's 'patriot Act'. Labour gov't proves its subservience to US imperialism by sending SAS to Afghanistan.

Bali Bombing raises fear of Islamic terrorism in South Pacific.

Australia's Howard takes hard line on terror and migrants. He accuses refugees of killing throwing the children overboard for the dramatic TV footage. He sends them to Nauru or to concentration camps in the Australian desert. NZ Anti-war movement spirited by never reaches critical mass in labor movement. The strategy of building a pressure group to get Labour to break with the war on terror fails.

2003 March: Iraqi invasion. NZ abstains and waits for UN fig leaf. Sends in engineers to reconstruct. Anti-war movement falters and fades.

2004 March: Issue of ownership of Foreshore and Seabed arises. NZ denies Foreshore and Seabed rights to guarantee joint ventures with MNCs. Government faces massive hiko, the formation of the Maori Party and loss of Maori seats.

2005: Tuhoë land rights claims sees Tame Iti charged with discharging a firearm. Iti gets off, Crown Appeals and loses. NZ has its own mini Zapatista uprising. US is losing war in Iraq and threatens to invade Iran. Venezuela, China, Russia and Iran form anti-US bloc. US ups the ante on Islamic terror with new anti-terror laws.

Labour joins with Howard to participate in policing the Solomons and East Timor for 'regime change'.

2006: US tells NZ to amend the TSA to toughen it up. Police begin Operation 8 to pin terrorism charges on Tuhoë activists and supporters. US imperialism under attack and economy slackens. National in the Select Committee demands NZ toughen up on terrorism and designates terrorists in NZ. Labour condemns Fiji coup and imposes economic and political sanctions. Labour sends in police and legal officers to charge those arrested for sedition by the Royalist regime in Tonga.

2007: Labour's popularity plummets and gap opens to about 10% points. Key level pegs with Clark as preferred PM. Tame Iti travels to Fiji to congratulate Bainimarama. Police and SIS consult Clark and Key on 'Operation 8' and the Labour Government seizes on the reporting back of the TSAB to parliament to launch a wave of arrests of political activists. Bainimarama goes to South Pacific Forum, is welcomed by the SPF heads and Clark is forced to meet him. Tame Iti retires for a good nights sleep.

The rest is history. 17 arrested in public fanfare with prepared Police press releases and TV 3 in attendance. Majority are denied bail and remanded while police find evidence of 'terrorist acts' to take to the Attorney-General to get approval to charge the 17 accused.

Government was badly embarrassed by the Ahmed Zaoui case and has introduced a new Immigration Bill to toughen up on the rights of political refugees. [see 'Immigration Bill' *Class Struggle* 74] The PM has not designated one terrorist group in NZ while Australian PM Howard has designated over 80! Facing these mounting pressures it may well have been a gamble Labour took to arrest its declining support as the National Opposition is now 10% points ahead in the polls and the PM is neck and neck with

the Leader of the Opposition in the popularity stakes.

Many on the radical left see the Government's complicity in the arrests as evidence of NZ's continuing colonial subordination to the US 'empire'. [see box *War on Terror*] They say the arrests under the TSA are more evidence of an attempt by the NZ bourgeoisie to clampdown on any rise in radical opposition to the 'neo-liberal' policies of US imperialism.

[see 'NZ Sold' *Class Struggle* 74].

This view recognises that the NZ economy is highly dependent on the US dominated global economy and that the US is able to impose its interests on NZ. For example:

- Maori nationalists are angry about the Labour Government's sellout of the ownership and control of the Foreshore and Seabed to the multinationals. The Maori Party sees the Tuhoë Nation's claims for return of stolen land and sovereignty as a just cause, but they don't endorse armed struggle.
- The Green Party and other left nationalists campaign for a return to economic nationalism against growing foreign control (CAFTA and Campaign NZ NOT FOR SALE).
- The 'socialist' left that supports the anti-imperialist bloc of Hugo Chavez against US and EU imperialism, look forward to a new 'internationalism' in which populist regimes like that of Chavez in Venezuela and Morales in Bolivia join forces to defeat imperialism.

In other words, these groups have a common anti-imperialist agenda, but none of these groups have a program to 'overthrow' the state other than by a majority vote.

The 'socialist' left is correct about NZ being a weak, dependent country in a global economy dominated by the US. But how do we explain the extremity of this attack on the reformist and radical left? How to explain the bizarre picture of armed police raiding deserted hunting camps in the bush, pulling middle aged protestors out of bed, ninjas jumping on school buses and storming the grungy flats of a few stropky anarchists and environmentalists? As Rawiri Taonui puts it: "Guerrillas in our Midst? No!" <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/4245703a1861.html>

NZ part of US global imperialist crisis

NZ is a 'semi-colony' of the US and its economy is dominated by US imperialism. The key sectors of the NZ economy are now owned by Australian and UK corporations as well as US direct investment. NZ is thus a 'semi-colony' of Australia and the UK, but both are dominated by the US in the world economy and are politically subordinated as 'poodle' and 'deputy sheriff' of the US. This subordination can only increase as the US attempts to pass on the costs of its crisis onto its weaker rivals and to workers.

In the current crisis facing the US dominated world economy, the US is looking to make the emergent manufacturing and mineral rich export semi-colonies like China and Russia pay for the crisis. These countries however are now part of a rival international economic block to the US and will not be easily pushed around.

Other semi-colonies such as those in Latin America that are experiencing commodity export booms (Venezuelan oil) and have alternative markets can use 'joint venture' deals to gain a small degree of temporary independence from imperialism.

NZ, by contrast, is a semi-colony dependent on exporting agricultural commodities with no economic power to resist imperialist domination. But this does not mean that NZ Governments always follow the dictates of the Washington, London or Canberra. As long as the imperialists can extract its super-profits from the NZ economy, there is no strong pressure to dictate policy to the NZ state.

US earnings from the NZ are high. NZ's economic position has declined relative to Australian imperialism. This is understandable when you account for the extraction of Australian super-profits from NZ. There is no immediate obvious threat of instability to endanger foreign investments.

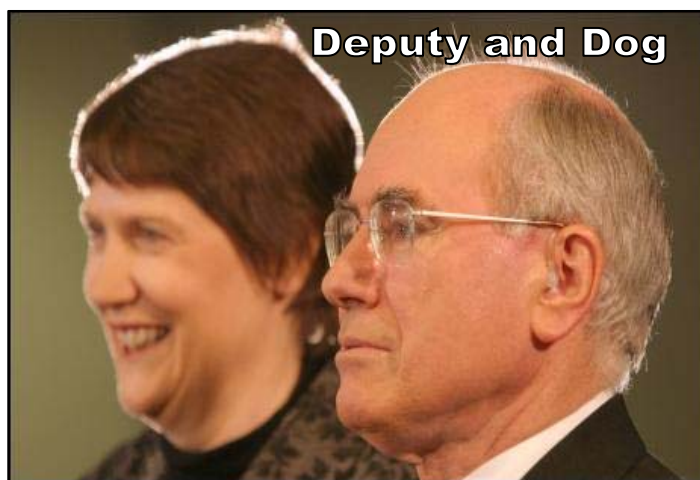
<http://www.converge.org.nz/watchdog/95/13austr.htm>

NZ has experienced stronger growth in the 2000s than in the previous 20 years. Income gaps are widening and real wages on average have not risen above the mid 1980s. Yet

there is no observable militant mobilisation of organised labour.

- **Union membership** is climbing slowly from a very low point. The few strikes that take place are settled within the labour law of the ERA and usually for wage increases less than the rate of inflation. NZ workers are among the most exploited by long hours and low pay of all the so-called developed OECD countries.
- In direct response to the launching of the US 'war on terror' in 2001, the **NZ anti-war movement** has failed to get off the streets into the workplaces and break away from the Labour Government.
- The **'anti-globalisation' movement** subordinates its street actions to demanding that the Government rejects a FTA with the US.
- The **Maori nationalists** that launched the renewal of land rights protest in the 1970s have largely joined the middle class like Rebecca Evans, gone into business like Donna Awatere, or gone into parliament like Hone Harawira. The outrage that met the Governments theft of the Foreshore and Seabed was in part motivated by Maori leaders wanting to set up iwi corporations within the global capitalist economy. That's why we said at the time, "for workers occupations of the foreshore and seabed!"

<http://www.geocities.com/communistworker/cs54.html>



The radical residue of such pacifist, moderate and lawful campaigns, is a small hard core of committed working class Maori and youth militants. But in no way do they represent any realistic threat to the security of imperialist investments, let alone the class rule of the bourgeoisie.

Stuffup or bosses' crisis?

If the US, UK and Australian imperialism are ripping off NZ workers on a grand scale and taking billions of dollars offshore every year and the working class is not putting up a strong resistance, why does the Labour Government need to launch an apparently unnecessary and extreme attack on such an enfeebled class? There are two explanations for this apparent 'over-reaction'. The first is the 'stuff-up' or fiasco theory, the second is the bosses' crisis facing US imperialism.

The **stuff-up theory** says that the police and the SIS have bungled and over-reacted and Labour has gone along to arrest its failing popularity. How likely is this? PM Clark, unlike Bush, is not stupid. She is not run by the US, the SIS or the police. The use of the TSA is a calculated win/win situation for Labour. It can claim independence from the police if they fall on their face in the bush, but claim the credit if the police can make some charges under the TSA stick.

Whatever the outcome, Labour can build racist red neck support out of this attack whether or not the charges stick. It can

try to intimidate the far left by locking them up in jail for years awaiting trial. It can use the attack to get the Amendment Bill with its tougher measures passed. So the 'stuff-up' is not an adequate explanation in itself. It begs the question of why the NZ state has mounted this attack on democratic rights and why it has been sprung now.

The only explanation that accounts for the apparent 'over-reaction' of the state is the crisis facing US imperialism which is being transmitted via the global economy to the NZ semi-colonial state.

Some important history lessons

Since the start of the 20th century we have been living in an epoch of imperialist crises, wars and revolutions. The capitalists' attacks on workers during this epoch were not bloody minded acts motivated by greed for yet more profits. They were forced on capitalists to try to overcome their crises of falling profits and to restore their profitability. State terror was invoked to suppress resistance during every crisis and war.

The Labour Party was formed during the First World War to divert militant union struggles from a Bolshevik-type revolution into parliament. The first Labour Government used reactionary legislation against 'terror' or 'sedition' in the 1930s. During the Second World War it used strike breaking regulations and after the war it enacted more anti-strike legislation. In the huge 1951 Lockout the Labour Party remained 'neutral' while the National Party smashed the union movement.

When falling profits brought the post-war boom to an end in the 1970s the global capitalist economy entered a long wave of stagnation. National Governments under Muldoon tried to isolate NZ from the growing global crisis.

They failed and when Labour was elected Government in 1984 it became the spearhead of 'neo-liberal' reforms in NZ. The effects of the 'neo-liberal' reforms and the restoration of capitalism in the former [Stalinist] Degenerated Workers States gave the world economy a triple bypass and kicked off a period of upturn in the 1990s and 2000s.

Today, however, US imperialism faces growing threats to its 'dollar hegemony'.

[see 'Are we Heading for World Depression?' Class Struggle 74]. <http://www.geocities.com/communistworker/>

To restore falling profits, US imperialism must cut its costs at all costs. This includes waging wars for oil and invading and re-colonising nations to plunder raw material resources to ensure supply such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

Because the imperialists always try to solve their crises by making their imperialist rivals and the working classes of the weakest nations pay with the livelihoods and their lives, a new round of attacks on the NZ working class will bring about a growing militancy which the bosses will once more try to suppress by mobilising the state forces.

Fight US Re-colonisation!

Read the Business Round Table of the Maxim Institute for a

'wish list'. Their catch cry of "One law for all" is the law of the bosses, the law of private property. Ironically this is the same law that the Tuhoes are appealing to without much hope to get their confiscated land returned. This is the same law that was invoked by the state to prevent Maori asserting traditional 'ownership' of the Foreshore and Seabed through the courts. However all such indigenous land claims, and continuing state ownership of assets in NZ, are barriers to the further privatisation of assets and the free flow of US finance capital investments and super-profits.

The FTA that the US wants NZ to sign is to free up access to private assets and to secure investments, as well as pass on the costs of pollution. That is why corporate bosses dominated by US Equity fund investors are opposed to the token Carbon Trading Scheme.

US imperialism then, is demanding total freedom of access for investment and profit extraction via a FTA etc. to boost their falling profits at home. They are making NZ workers pay for this by tax cuts for the rich and real cuts in health, education and housing, living and health standards. Low wages, long hours and casualised work drives down the cost of labour power and increases the rate of profit.

But these 'neo-liberal' policies are all very unpopular with the majority of New Zealand workers. The big majority are opposed to privatisations. They have already lost many of the gains won in historical struggles for social welfare, free health and education. Now few can afford to buy homes. Real wages are falling behind inflation.

On top of this the threat of US imperialism to re-colonise NZ to plunder its natural resources on the land and sea and take back all of the hard won past gains will spark off a strong opposition. The current restraints on industrial action – the legal leg irons of the ERA – will be smashed. Inevitably new militant layers of workers will take up the struggle. They will fight back. And they will break the labour law and engage in civil disobedience.

This prospect has forced the right-wing Blairite NZ Labour Party even further to the right in a preventative attack on the democratic rights of workers. Blair and Howard showed the way. Break the historic ties with the unions. Impose new

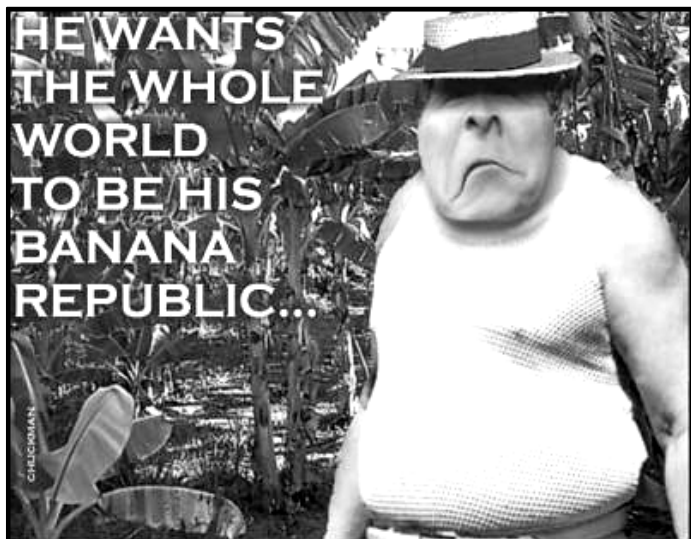
anti-worker laws. Cut and privatise social services. Bring in anti-terror legislation to give police powers to shoot suspects on sight. Lock up refugees and terrorist suspects on the basis of secret spy dossiers. Convict them on secret evidence with no appeal.

It is because NZ is a semi-colony dominated by Australia the UK, which are in turn dominated by the US, that the TSA is being used to make a preventative attack to contain working class resistance to the "re-colonisation" of NZ. Arrest the most militant leaders of the workers movement, disorient and intimidate the rest. Make workers pay and suppress them when they fight back. State terror under the TSA is the policing of the bosses solution to their crisis.

The workers answer to state terror is to organise and unite our ranks to build our own organisations independently of the state to fight and defend our democratic rights won over generations of struggle.

Police State? No; Capitalist State!

The threat of the TSA is a gag on dissent. People will not engage in actions for fear of arrest for causing 'terror', damage to infrastructure or risk loss of life. This can be interpreted by police to be any minor civil disobedience. There is already widespread unease if not fear as well as anger at the attempt to use a law that is arbitrary, without appeal and carries a maximum life sentence! This police action is designed to rouse middle NZ and get the Amendment Bill to the Terrorism Suppression Act passed with even tougher amendments if the government thinks it necessary. National has put in its minority report on the new Bill accusing the Government being soft on terror. As it stands the Amendment Bill will make the existing law worse. In the Bill a new wider definition of 'terrorist act' is introduced. Under the existing law there must be an *intention* to 'induce terror' and be a risk to the economy or to the lives of others. This defence goes under the Bill. Belief that you were supporting groups committed democracy and human rights is no longer a defence. Under the TSA you can be charged with terrorism and never see the secret evidence against you. This will not change. *But under the Bill the right to appeal to the High Court after 3 years is replaced by appeal to the PM!* The PM is already minister in charge of the SIS, has the power to define who is a terrorist, can sack the Minister of Police if s/he disagrees, and will now become the person who reviews 'terrorist' convictions. The P.M. who is the CEO of the government, controls the whole process, from overseeing police operations, to defining who is a terrorist, to reviewing terrorist cases. So we have political definition of 'terrorism', secret evidence, no obligation to prove intent, no appeal to a higher court, and all this under the Pam's arbitrary power with no check – isn't that the state trying to suppress dissent? Is this a definition of a Police State? No it's a capitalist state under a right wing social democratic government. A 'police state' says that the state is acting illegally and can be corrected by democratic checks and balances. A capitalist state is the state of the capitalist class and cannot be reformed. It has to be overthrown!



Free the Political Prisoners!

Like Bush, Blair and Howard, the NZ Prime Minister Helen Clark is now threatening to use the post 9/11 anti-terror legislation to remove the basic democratic rights of working class resistance to US imperialism solving its current crisis at the expense of weaker imperialist powers and workers, by attacking workers rights, livelihoods and lives

The workers answer is not to put our hopes in the Greens or Maori Party to stop the Bill or repeal the Act. The political prisoners cannot be freed by appealing to a semi-colonial state dominated by the US to break from US imperialism. NZ has no economic wealth to allow a populist regime to negotiate some deal between the US and the NZ working class and buy the political freedom of the prisoners.

These prisoners are like those locked up in Guantanamo by Bush, or the concentration camps of Howard, the jails of Asia and Latin America, they are part of the international working class imprisoned by the US-sponsored 'war on terror'. To free all these prisoners, it is necessary to organise the international proletariat to force the imperialists and their local lackeys pay for their own crisis, and to organise the working class to fight for a socialist society.

For a United Front to free the political prisoners, drop the charges and smash the Act and the Amendment Bill!

- Free the Political Prisoners now!
- Drop the Charges under the TSA.
- Abolish the TSA.

- Abolish the SIS and police surveillance. For a United Front with Maori reclaiming land stolen by the colonists. Unconditional support for land rights!
- Return the confiscated land, and land stolen by legal and illegal means!
- For occupations of land claims, including Foreshore and Seabed claims under the control of workers and farmers committees.
- For re-nationalisation of former state assets without compensation and under workers control.
- For the nationalisation of capitalist land, forestry, mines and banks without compensation and under workers and farmers control.

For a united offensive of the international proletariat to free all the prisoners of the 'war on terror'!

- Free the political prisoners of Guantanamo
- Free the prisoners of Howards concentration camps
- Free the prisoners of the Burma Junta
- Free Mumia Abu Jamal

For international proletarian support for the national liberation fighters against imperialist wars and invasions!

- Defend the Palestinian liberation struggle
- Defend the Iraqi liberation struggle
- Imperialists hands off Iran

For a transitional program of demands to fight the imperialists attacks to make workers pay for its crisis!

- For fighting democratic unions to fight for a living wage and shorter working week.
- Formation of workers councils to unite all struggles, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Workers' self-defence committees to defend workers' struggles from state and paramilitary repression.
- No to individual and group adventurist actions that isolate and split the workers' struggles.
- For a Workers' and working Farmers' Government to expropriate capitalist property.

For a revolutionary socialist international that can unite the vanguard of the working class and poor peasantry in one global struggle!

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