

Open Borders Unite Workers!

A Workers Party Pamphlet

by Mike Kay,
Phil Ferguson
and Rebecca Broad

Layout/Design:

Joel Cosgrove

Special Thanks:

Mike, Bex, Dennis, Phil, Daphna

Publisher:

Workers Party

wpnz@clear.net.nz

www.workersparty.org.nz

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Open Borders: Frequently Asked Questions

by Mike Kay

The Workers Party is proud to be a part of the struggle for Open Borders - meaning that we oppose all immigration controls, and aid the fight for equal rights for migrants. In the article below we answer some of the most common objections to our position.

Won't Open Borders lead to the country becoming "full up"?

Can a country of 268,000 square kilometres become full up in the same way that a train carriage becomes full up? No. Even if New Zealand's population doubles we'll all still "find a seat". We are currently ranked 200th out of 239 countries for population density.¹

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_population_density

If millions of people moved to, say, Hamilton, or Timaru, tomorrow, there would be an absolute shortage of housing and jobs. Such an overwhelming population inflow is inconceivable. But many right wingers object to quite small movements of people. They say housing and services cannot expand to accommodate new migrants.

Well, that depends. New migrants are also workers who provide more services and build more housing.

Provision for workers, such as state housing and public health is generally forced on capitalism by working-class action. The welfare state was demanded, fought for and won by the working class movement in the first half of the 20th Century. It is when the organised labour movement retreats that provision gets cut.

In fact the underlying message of the anti-immigrant lobby is not so much absolute numbers but that “foreign”, different looking, or “culturally different” people are by their very nature a “problem”.

Aren't migrants a drain on the economy?

Migrants are often highly skilled, contribute to economic growth and pay more in taxes than they use in services.

But there is a problem with seeing migrants purely in terms of “economic benefit”. It implies immigration has one impact, and only one, across a single entity, “the economy”. It implies that “we”, Kiwis, are all in it together; we have one set of interests, against the interests of “the immigrants”.

New Zealand is not one homogeneous whole; it is divided by class. Our concern is not with the bosses that run the businesses that benefit from exploiting migrant labour.

Our concern is entirely with the workers: how can both New Zealand-born and immigrant workers unite to benefit from the mass migration which is a by-product of capitalist globalisation?

Doesn't immigration drives down wages?

Sometimes it may do. Increased inward migration may, through union weakness, have been allowed to have a negative impact on the wage levels of the low paid. But only a very slight impact.

The bosses would have tried to drive down wages for “entry level” workers whether or not these jobs had been filled by “native” or migrant workers. Whether or not wages are cut depends on us. An adequate minimum wage would solve the problem.

Migrant workers need unions to protect them. Unions need migrant workers to increase their strength. Unity is the best guarantee we have that wages and conditions will be levelled up, not driven down.

Open borders is a utopian dream. Shouldn't we try to make the current immigration controls more humane?

We support campaigns big and small to improve the rights of migrants in the here and now. But it is the very idea of humane, “fair” or “reasonable” immigration controls that is utopian. In the past, under the White New Zealand policy, the state practiced a straightforwardly racist immigration policy.

Today, thanks to the partial success of progressive movements and also the changing needs of the capitalism, the situation today is somewhat different. Now a points-based system is designed to select Permanent Residents on criteria such as skills and (in the case of the “investor” category) wealth. Even so, the racial bias is evident in the figures for applicants' approvals: in terms of country of origin, the largest single number in 2009/10 came from the UK.²

If you're going to have immigration controls, to enforce them you're inevitably going to have to have detainment and deportation of migrants, and all the human misery that entails.

2. <http://www.immigration.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/4441CE54-1F96-4C87-B9E3-524BEE486050/0/R1ResidenceDecisionsbyFY14jun2010.pdf>

Couldn't we just shut the door on migration?

Short of some massive war, or ecological meltdown and collective ruination, or the coming to power of fascism in New Zealand, the increased movement of people to and from the NZ is a fact. Modern information and transport systems are not going to disappear.

Large numbers of Kiwis chose to live and work overseas. Closed borders, however, would obstruct New Zealanders and once immigration controls start to tighten in one part of the First World, they tighten across the whole First World. If NZ doesn't let in other people, we can hardly expect other people to let us in. Even in the case of Australia, Kiwis now have to produce passports whereas previously it was not a requirement.

The knitting together of the global economy is, in many ways, positive. The problem is that this is capitalist globalisation, carried out by bosses, in their own interests. When their global system fails they want workers to pay the price.

Won't Open Borders mean asylum seekers and immigrants coming here to bludge off our public services?

Such stories are designed to appeal to the mean and selfish streak in us all and to push away the impulse towards sympathy and solidarity for people. They generate anxiety and hatred by playing on two fears:

- If immigrants take resources, there won't be adequate facilities for everyone else;
- Hard-stretched Kiwis will have to pay extra taxes so that migrants can get e.g. health care treatment.

Such stories strike a chord at times like these when there is a lot of poverty and lack of financial security. In such conditions scapegoating and division can grow.

The numbers of migrants are relatively small and cannot explain the basic cause of the health service problems, or the lack of affordable housing. That is the fault of government and the capitalist system that rations housing on the basis of

ability to pay and increasingly regulates health provision according to the law of the market. Agitation against immigrants on these questions lets the people who really are to blame off the hook.

We should demand the bosses (who profit enormously from migrant labour) pay for the expansion of services.

Will we be able to achieve this, as we have in the past? Again, that depends on what we, unionists, campaigners and activists, do.

Aren't immigration controls necessary to prevent terrorism?

Time and again, politicians have tried to use the threat of terrorism to whip up moral panic, from the persecution of Ahmed Zouï to the October 2007 so-called "anti-terror" raids. The fact is that currently there is no terrorist threat in New Zealand, but that hasn't stopped politicians trying to invent one to serve their own ends.

The best way to prevent terrorism is by:

- Combating racism, so that minority ethnic youth are not alienated from society.
- Fighting against imperialist aggression, occupation and exploitation of poor countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. This is the major grievance resulting in the growth of terror organisations, in the absence of progressive anti-imperialist alternatives.

Immigration controls have a habit of punishing the innocent and by-passing the guilty.

The other important point is that resistance is not terrorism! Controls on migration have been used against legitimate national liberation movements such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. In 2003, for instance Alba

Sa'adat of the PFLP was arrested by Israeli troops at the Allenby Bridge border crossing, and prevented from addressing the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, where she was a scheduled speaker.

But New Zealand's got a pretty good record of accepting refugees, eh?

Actually, that's a myth. New Zealand accepts a derisory United Nation quota of just 750 refugees per year.³

What about the Tampa boat refugees?

That was a Public Relations coup for Helen Clark. In August 2001, the Howard Government of Australia refused permission for the Norwegian freighter MV Tampa, carrying 438 rescued Afghans from a distressed fishing vessel in international waters, to enter Australian waters.

Around 150 of the refugees were diverted to New Zealand, but this number came off the total UN quota, so we didn't end up taking any extra refugees as a result. For Labour's liberal supporters, however, this was proof of how much more humane New Zealand's attitude to refugees was. This, despite the fact that New Zealand takes just 1.74 refugees per 1,000 people compared Australia's 3.19 refugees per 1,000 people.⁴

But not all refugees are genuine refugees, some are economic migrants...

Economic migrants are still fleeing from very real oppression - grinding poverty, with little chance of escape. In many countries, unionists are jailed or killed. What do you think motivated most of the ancestors of Pakeha to come to New Zealand? - A desire to escape the wretched, class-ridden conditions of the "Old World". They took advantage of open borders. Because the arrival of Europeans

3. <http://www.immigration.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/25DEFBD1-CEC4-4C03-BE8E-C3FCA0DED1A4/0/REFUGEEANDMIGRANTSTREAMSPUBLISHEDNov06.pdf>

4. http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/imm_ref_percap-immigration-refugees-per-capita

meant the arrival of capitalism in New Zealand, colonisation was a disaster for Maori. But there's no reason for history to repeat itself. As the song *Solidarity Forever* states: "We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old" – a classless society of abundance with equality for both migrant and "native born".

But shouldn't we only accept migrants on compassionate grounds?

Even when sincerely advocated, emphasising exceptions to immigration controls on "compassionate grounds" leads to a competitive and divisive rat race. Each case has to show it is deserving of more "compassion" than the previous one. There is a humiliating scramble, with everyone under threat seeking to prove they are more ill, or abused, or vulnerable than others in the queue. We say, oppose all immigration controls – *Solidarity* not pity!

What about migrants who commit crimes? Shouldn't we kick them out?

It is not uncommon for migrants who have been convicted of a crime to be sentenced to a jail term, and then deported at the end of it. It is a very dangerous position to support this practice which amounts to double punishment. For New Zealand born prisoners, once they serve their "debt to society", they are free; but migrant prisoners are punished a second time. And if such people may still be a risk to society, what is right about dumping them elsewhere and making them someone else's problem?

Anti-migrant politicians will from time to time make a fuss about "foreigners" in our prisons, but you don't hear them going on about the increasing number of New Zealanders in foreign prisons.⁵ You don't hear them calling for the repatriation of all "our" murderers, drug dealers and paedophiles.

And if deportation is to be used as a form of punishment, exactly what crime are the many innocent people deported every year guilty of? Wanting a better life for themselves and their family?

5. http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10481059

Won't Open Borders lead to New Zealand is losing its own culture?

As the world's economies and people are brought closer together, different national cultures merge, synthesise and change. This process has been going on for decades and it is speeding up. It is unstoppable; any attempt to stop it is utopian.

Nations are real and such a thing as national culture does exist. But the New Zealand "national culture" is the result of the successive waves of migration to our islands, starting with the arrival of the Tangata Whenua, followed by Pakeha, Polynesian, Asian migration and more. Why should "Kiwi culture" be defended against further outside influences, now, in the 21st century?

And what about our artistic, literary and musical heritage? Isn't a good thing we can now listen to rap music and Beethoven, read Indian novels and watch US films, see foreign players in New Zealand sports teams? Why would anyone expect us to listen and read without also being influenced and somewhat changed by the experience of these "outsiders"?

Not all foreign culture is good, and not all "Kiwi" bad. And vice versa. Culture should be assessed critically. If there is something oppressive or reactionary in a national culture (such as domestic violence or "gay bashing") it should be challenged head-on.

History needs to be assessed critically, from a class viewpoint. There is a Kiwi working class tradition of internationalism and solidarity which includes the fight for votes for women, and the anti-imperialist resistance to conscription in World War I. That is a very different to the history to that of, say, the "Rogernomics" and "Ruthenasia" governments, or NZ participation in the war in Afghanistan.

We have much more in common with migrant workers than we do with our "own" bosses.

There are poor, vulnerable and politically uneducated people in New Zealand who are not racists but are still uneasy about fast changes in society.

Activists and unionists who understand the arguments need to explain to those people the choices they face. Either we unite with migrants, or we allow migrant workers to be used to undermine wages and conditions, to the benefit of our bosses and to the detriment of all workers.

Racism is a major reason that some people oppose migrants. The question of “culture” morphs into another — the issue of skin colour. With a sleight of hand, Kiwi “culture” becomes “white culture”.

We have to confront these issues and make the arguments.

Unite workers, brown, white and Asian, all religions and none, migrant and New Zealand-born, “legal” and “illegal” to fight for jobs, housing and services for all! Open borders! Fight for asylum and immigration rights!

The state is so powerful, is there anything we can really do to challenge immigration controls?

The fight for Open Borders will be a long, hard battle. We must support every campaign against deportation and every attack on migrant rights, but we do so in a way that raises our distinctive politics – for Open Borders. Thus we go beyond activism and challenge the ruling political ideas of capitalism.

Also, the growth of the “strong state” is becoming a global phenomenon (increased surveillance, attacks on civil liberties, etc.) This often entails bringing larger and larger numbers of public sector employees into the coercive arm of the state. Teachers, health workers, WINZ officials and so on should refuse to cooperate with immigration cops. And their unions should back their stand.

Open borders goes to the heart of what we stand for as communists, internationalists and democrats. It is about people being able to determine their own lives without being subject to the brutal priorities of capitalism. It is about people from different cultures being able to mix in a free and equal basis. An “unpopular” idea like Open Borders can become very popular very quickly in a revolutionary situation; and by raising Open Borders in our daily agitation we speed that day.⁶

6. Part of the text of this article was adapted from Solidarity 3/171, <http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2010/04/15/immigration-countering-myths-and-lies>

The Racist History of NZ Immigration Controls

by Phil Ferguson

Passports, border controls and immigration laws are a relatively new political development. They arrived with the emergence of the modern, capitalist nation state, most particularly in the late 1800s and early 1900s, “depriv(ing) people of the freedom to move across certain spaces and render them dependent on states and the state system for the authorization to do so. . .”¹ They have several major functions as far as modern capitalism is concerned.

Firstly, they help define who is and is not a member of the particular nation-state, imposing divisions upon humanity that would not otherwise exist. Secondly, they allow the ruling classes of the world to divide the oppressed and exploited of the world along arbitrary ‘national’ lines, pitting them against each other and making it harder for them to unite against their oppressors and exploiters. Thirdly, borders, passports and immigration controls allow the capitalists of

1. John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: surveillance, citizenship and the state*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p4. Torpey is writing most specifically about the passport but it, in turn, is closely connected to immigration and border controls. Torpey also mentions the role of capitalism, p8, p19.

each country to control the movement of labour and wages – bringing in and exploiting workers from other countries whenever they need to and throwing them out when they can't make a lot of money exploiting them.

In the case of the New Zealand capitalism all three elements can be seen.

The first precondition for the development of the capitalist system of oppression and exploitation in this country was the dispossession of Maori. This was necessary for the development of capitalist farming and also meant that many Maori no longer had any way of surviving other than selling their ability to work, their labour-power, to (mainly pakeha) capitalists. However capitalist farming and the exploitation of Maori workers were not sufficient for developing a modern and ever-expanding capitalist economy. Many more workers would be needed.

Whereas in Europe capitalism developed out of the dissolution and overthrow of feudalism and dispossessed became the new industrial working class, with the employers having little control over who constituted the working class, New Zealand developed differently. Modern capitalism came with British colonial rule and colonisation and the employers here could actually decide which type of individuals, which type of 'human material', would make up the working class – this was done by the control of immigration. The emerging new ruling class, made up of big landowners and urban capitalists, were very clear who they wanted coming into New Zealand and who they wanted to keep out. Thus the government instructed its immigration agents in Britain to place priority on the recruitment of wage-labourers (including female domestic servants) of good character:

The selection of Emigrants must be strictly confined to persons of the working classes, who have established a character for industry, sobriety, and general good conduct, and who are going out with the intention of settling in the Colony, and working there for wages. Reduced tradesmen and others, not belonging to the working class, or those who, though of the labouring class, have been in the habitual

receipt of parochial aid, are decidedly ineligible.

Only after this was ascertained were applicants to be given the official application form. Locally agents were instructed to “carefully examine” forms and applicants, and check for mental and bodily defects. The instructions repeated that the local agents were to ensure applicants were “persons of good character, and of sober and industrious habits.” There was to be a special report in the case of single women whose migration would not be accompanied by married relatives.² The following month Featherston, the Agent-General for new Zealand, issued instructions in relation to assisted passages:

Passages are granted to Agricultural Labourers, Navvies, Shepherds, Country Mechanics, and Female Domestic Servants. They must be sober, industrious, of good moral character, of sound mind, in good health, and must be going to the Colony with the intention to work for wages.³

In 1885, the Immigration Office in Wellington issued regulations for nominated immigration, by which people could nominate family members and friends to come to New Zealand for £10 (migrants over 12 years old), £5 for those between one and 12 years of age, and free for infants under one year. The regulations stated: “As a rule, nominations will only be accepted for agricultural labourers and single women suitable for domestic service.” However “farmers and agriculturists possessed of small capital” would be provided passage at the same rates if “desirous of taking up land in New Zealand”.⁴

The chief ideologist of organised colonisation, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, had closely studied colonisation efforts elsewhere – the Americas and Australia in particular. He knew that capitalism couldn’t develop without ensuring a ready

2. I.E. Featherston, Agent-General for New Zealand, Instructions to Local Agents for the Selection of Emigrants to New Zealand, London, January 1872. National Archives, Wellington, IM file. For single women, see also Instructions to Matrons on Emigrant Ships, IM33.

3. I.E. Featherston, Agent-General for New Zealand, Assisted Passages, London, February 1872. National Archives, Wellington, IM File.

4. J. Ballance, Minister of Lands and Immigration, Immigration Office, Wellington, 28th September, 1885, Regulations for Immigration to New Zealand. Nominated Immigration. National Archive File IM, 1e1, 1887/136.

supply of labour. However, Wakefield was also a liberal and wanted to avoid what he saw as the rigid social structure of Britain, the blatantly harsh forms of exploitation in British industry and the resulting danger of social explosions – there and here.

The idea was, therefore, that a degree of upward mobility would be created through establishing a set price for land which would mean that a wage-labourer who worked hard and saved money would, after a few years, be able to buy some land. What they paid the state for the land would then help subsidise the bringing out of a new layer of wage-labourers. There would thus be upward mobility and social harmony, along with a continuous supply of workers. While Wakefield's specific concept of systematic colonisation was undermined by the buying up of land by a small emerging class of big landowners, the connection between controlled migration, upward mobility and a liberal democracy remained central to New Zealand politics.

The specific nature of New Zealand capitalism as a liberal democracy and the early notions about who were suitable as immigrants and who weren't – no riff-raff from Britain! – shaped the growing state control of immigration through law in the late 1800s. In this period, following the abolition of the provinces and the development of road, rail and telegraph communications and other infrastructure, all factors which united New Zealand, a single nation-state with its own nationalist ideology emerged. This ideology and this state attempted to socially select for certain attributes among the population and label these as 'national characteristics'. People not possessing these 'national characteristics' would be excluded, thereby ensuring a (supposedly) homogenous set-up in which the exploitation of workers by capitalists would proceed in a harmonious manner.

At the time the chief victims of these immigration controls were the Chinese, along with people from Britain who suffered some physical or mental handicap or were regarded as the non-respectable working class. The Chinese, in particular, were seen in the emerging nationalist ideology to offend against every aspect of what the ideal New Zealander, especially the ideal citizen, should be. We could summarise the outlook of New Zealand nationalism to the ideal New Zealand citizen and the Chinese as follows:

New Zealand and New Zealanders

A modern, progressive country, moving forward into a bold future a vigorous and resourceful population

A land of high living standards

A country free of old world evils, educated, healthy and moral population, well-housed and fed

A ruggedly egalitarian and democratic society, with a confident citizenry able to participate in civic life

Men strong and masculine and free of self-abuse and other vice

Women moral and feminine

China and Chinese

A country of arrested development, with a degenerating people an effete and unresourceful people

A land of mass poverty

A land full of such evils as inequality, with over-crowding, disease, slums, illiteracy, and immorality

A thoroughly unequal and despotic society, with a slavish people totally unsuited to democratic citizenship

Men weak and effeminate, onanists and homosexuals

Chinese women largely barred, but Chinese men seen as corrupting white women and turning them into prostitutes and drug addicts

The first set of qualities tended more to be identified with healthy British or other white European stock. Overall, then, the Chinese were viewed as the group most likely to undermine the progress, morality and democracy of the new society and as the least capable of self-improvement. The supposedly degenerate, and further degenerating, character of Chinese society and people was contrasted not only to European citizens of New Zealand but also to Maori, as the latter were seen as having a number of admirable characteristics, including the manliness of Maori men and the capacity for improvement. This made Maori more suited than the Chinese for citizenship in a progressive, vigorous, and moral new democracy.

As a target, the Chinese united eugenicists, feminists, liberals, conservatives, and purity campaigners. These categories overlapped significantly, including in terms of personnel. Many feminists campaigned for moral purity and were involved in eugenics, for instance. But what was crucial was the large degree to which there were shared fears and a shared ideological outlook. Social control was a vital link and required a range of measures and approaches, some of which were shared by more and others by less of the middle and upper class people who dominated these movements and supplied their ideas. Purity, fitness, whiteness, improvement, fear of degeneration and unrest, ideas of 'correct' behaviour for women and men, all of which were crucial for social control and thus social stability, were key elements of the emerging nationalism.⁵ Thus, racist exclusion of Asians from New Zealand – and indeed all white Pacific Rim societies – “arose directly out of virtues of democracy, civic equality, and solidarity.”⁶ The Chinese became “the anvil on which the new young societies were slowly hammering out their national identity.”⁷ The New Zealand case also clearly shows “(t)he

5. The link between racial purity/homogeneity and nationalism has been made most recently in Denoon, Mein Smith and Wyndham, pp210-11.

6. Avner Offer, *The First World War: an agrarian interpretation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989, p170.

7. Charles Archibald Price, *The great white walls are built: restrictive immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836-1888*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1974, p260.

sense in which colonial nationalism, a civic sense of ideal citizenship, was both ‘inclusionist’ in its populism and yet ‘exclusionist’ – especially in relation to indigenous peoples, but also to migrants from Asia. . .”⁸

Between 1881 and 1920 a series of harsher and harsher laws were passed to keep the Chinese out of New Zealand. These laws constituted the ‘White New Zealand’ policy. They included making Chinese coming into New Zealand pay a massive poll tax – it was increased from £10 in 1881 to £100 in 1896 – the numbers of Chinese allowed per tonne of shipping on which they arrived became smaller and smaller and, in 1899, an English-language test was imposed on everyone not from Ireland or Britain. In 1920, new legislation meant that people not born in Britain or Ireland had to apply for an entry permit, with the permit system controlled by the Minister of Immigration who simply rejected Chinese applications.

Hostility to the Chinese united conservatives, liberals – and the left. After WW1, for instance, the Labour Party joined with the Farmers Union (controlled by big farmers), the Returned Soldiers Association, the National Defence League (a proto-fascistic organisation founded by the leader of “Massey’s Cossacks”)⁹ and the Liberal Party to demand that the already-tight immigration controls be even further tightened.

The immigration restrictions directed at the Chinese had a negative effect on the working class in New Zealand. In economic downturns workers tended to demand a halt to immigration, thereby dividing themselves off from their fellow workers of the world, instead of fighting the employers who were cutting wages and conditions and attacking their rights. Moreover, demagogic MPs would soon start diverting working class calls for a halt to *all* immigration into calls for a halt to “Asiatic”, especially Chinese, immigration. Powerless and much-discriminated against Chinese, who bore no responsibility for the economic downturns inherent in capitalism, became the object of New Zealand

8. “Introduction”, in John Eddy and Deryck Schreuder (eds), *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism: Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa first assert their nationalities, 1880-1914*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1988, p3.

9. This was the name given to reactionaries who were deputised to attack and injure workers during the 1913 waterfront dispute.

workers' frustrations. The hostility to the Chinese, which was a logical result of immigration restriction, meant that racist gangs could attack Chinese shops and people. In one case, a racist, Lionel Terry, decided to see if it was possible to murder a Chinese person with impunity.¹⁰

The poll tax wasn't abolished until 1944, when New Zealand was allied with China in WW2 and the continuance of the tax looked bad when the Allies were supposedly fighting fascism and its racial obsessions. New Zealand was the last country with an anti-Chinese poll tax by that stage.

World War II and the fight against fascism made racism a lot less respectable. This and the need for far more workers due to the massive post-war economic boom meant that the New Zealand ruling class could not fill the labour shortage with European labour alone. Employers and the governments, Labour and National, which represent and manage their interests therefore turned to the Pacific. Tens of thousands of Pacific Islanders were encouraged to come and live and work in New Zealand in the 1960s and early 1970s.

When the postwar boom came to an end in 1973/74 and a protracted period of economic problems set in, they became the first scapegoats. In 1974 the Labour government had been conducting an immigration policy review to shift immigration controls away from being blatantly based on 'race' to being based more on 'merit' – which, in essence, meant the skills needed in the capitalist economy of the time. However, this new 'non-racial' approach had clear limitations. It continued the idea that some people were to be included and everyone else was to be excluded. What this meant, especially in the context of a major economic downturn, was made clear when Labour began the infamous 'dawn raids' against Pacific Island 'overstayers'. Immigration police would carry out raids in the early hours of the morning and Pacific workers could be chucked out of the country at will. Opposition forced the racist Labour government to back off, but the raids were renewed by National after it came into power in 1975. In fact, people with brown skins, including Maori, began to get picked up on the street and accused of being 'overstayers'.

10. Terry wasn't hung for the crime but sent to an asylum. Whether or not he was mad, Terry's views were a logical development from the views of upper and middle class mainstream opinion in relation to the Chinese.

The desire of the bosses and their governing parties and state apparatus to engage in mass deportation of Pacific workers ran into problems, however. One was that many Pacific Islanders held New Zealand citizenship – for instance, people from the Tokelauas, the Cooks and Niue. The situation with Samoans was also complicated by the fact that New Zealand's ruling class had organised the invasion and takeover of Samoa in 1914 and it was a New Zealand colony until 1962 and the exact citizenship rights in New Zealand of many Samoans was unclear.

The other problem that the raids ran into was political opposition, from Pacific workers and community organisations and the left. Protests took place across the country against the raids and deportations. Cases were also taken to court. One case ended up going before the Privy Council in London, with the Privy Council ruling in 1982 that Samoans born between 1924 and 1948, and their children, were entitled to be New Zealand citizens. This called into question the seven-eight years of raids and deportations. The National Party government, with the full support of Labour – Labour leader David Lange even insisted on accompanying National prime minister Rob Muldoon to Samoa to put them in their place – rushed through new legislation to strip 80,000 Samoans of potential citizenship rights.

The way in which immigration controls work to divide workers and pit them against each other instead of against their exploiters was seen during this period, as it had been seen during the height of anti-Chinese campaigning. The scapegoating of Samoans and others, such as solo mothers, was a prominent theme of demagogic National Party leader Muldoon. He used racism and attacks on beneficiaries in a populist way to win support from economically hard-pressed sections of the middle class, such as small businessmen, and also backward sections of the working class.

The leadership of the trade unions was not prepared to stand up to the use of racism as a divide-and-rule weapon and so workers' resistance to attacks by employers and the government were undermined. The lack of a fightback also ensured that demoralised and frustrated sections of workers joined their own

exploiters and oppressors in blaming 'overstayers' and people on welfare benefits for the recession and their worsening economic position. The system escaped blame.

Over the period from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, more people left New Zealand than were entering it every year except two. The net loss in 1979 was 40,000 – the biggest in the country's history.¹¹ Moreover, most of those who left were young to middle-aged workers whose labour-power was important to the New Zealand economy. Somehow they had to be replaced.

In 1984 a new Labour government came to power and launched the biggest attack on workers' living conditions and rights since the Depression of the 1930s. The neo-liberal reforms of this period tended to remove 'non-market' forms of discrimination, while intensifying the rate of exploitation of the working class. Part of the reforms was therefore a review of immigration policy. As the government website on immigration policy records:

The Immigration Act 1987 emphasised skills needed in the domestic economy, the contribution which could be made by business migrants bringing capital, the humanitarian recognition of reuniting families, and a commitment to accept 800 refugees a year.

In 1991 the National government introduced a points system using criteria of age, skills, education and capital; criteria which again were blind to ethnicity.¹²

In other words, the needs of the New Zealand capitalist economy of the twenty-first century are different from those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – and even the 1960s and 1970s. We now, supposedly, have 'non-racial' immigration controls.

Reviews and/or new amendments to immigration legislation have occurred most years since 1990. In the 1990s these were mainly about streamlining procedures and tightening the points system to ensure the capitalist economy got the kind

11. <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/history-of-immigration/16>.

12. Ibid.

of skills it was after from immigrants. In 1997, there was also a cut in refugee quota, from a measly 800 a year to an even more measly 750. In 1999, a new amendment empowered the state to remove people without entry permits more easily.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century changes ensured employers more freedom in selecting skilled workers from abroad. In 2005, an amendment made it harder to gain citizenship. Migrants had to be resident for five years instead of three and was extended to spouses of New Zealand citizens. From January 1, 2006 children born in New Zealand no longer had automatic citizenship – they now had to have New Zealand citizenship or permanent residency rights in New Zealand, Niue, the Cooks and the Tokelaus. Changes made under National (1995) and Labour (2002) also raised the level of English required to enter New Zealand, in some cases (for instance, the business categories) immigrants were required to have a standard of English on par with students entering university.

Despite the formally ‘non-racial’ nature of immigration controls today, several basic points remain.

Firstly, the people most likely to have the work and language skills sought by the New Zealand capitalist economy are white people from other First World countries and some middle class people from the Third World. The message to the masses of exploited and oppressed people from the Third World is still: Not Welcome Here.

Secondly, in increasingly globalised and multi-ethnic societies such as New Zealand, workers can less than ever afford to allow ourselves to be divided along ethnic or national (or any other) lines - we need workers’ unity in order to fight and win anything substantial. Opposing immigration controls is crucial to the fight for workers’ power and liberation.



Case Study: How to fight deportations

by Rebecca Broad

Iranian asylum seeker Ali Panah won refugee status in February 2009, after a protracted and public struggle, which began in mid 2007. Panah was part of a larger group of Iranian immigrants who came to New Zealand as either refugees or asylum seekers, who were denied residency, and locked up inside Mt Eden remand centre indefinitely. Members of Workers Party Auckland branch were actively involved in the campaign for their support and defence. The following is an adaptation of an article published in the NDU express and the Spark in October 2007.

Oppose national chauvinism: campaign for release of the Iranian detainees.

Ali Riza Panah and four others came forward publicly following the successful campaign for the release of Iranian immigrant Thomas Yadegary. The men were indefinitely detained in prison for refusing to sign documentation designed to divest the government of any responsibility for their welfare once deported. It is unsafe for men in this situation to return to Iran because they became Christian and faced state sanctioned persecution within that Islamic nation.

Within the previous two years the government deported two people in similar circumstances to Iran, of which one was disappeared and the other executed. Most of the detainees have family and New Zealand born children here. Fardien Nouriyian was imprisoned for at least 15 months, Ali Riza Panah for 18 months, and Amir Mohebbe for three and a half years. Ali Panah undertook a hunger strike whilst in state custody.

A public campaign giving solidarity and support to the Iranian detainees, and calling for their immediate and unconditional release was undertaken by Global Peace and Justice Auckland, International Hope and Peace, Workers Party, anarchists and other activists and community groupings. It was a real opportunity to forge links with one of the most oppressed sections of the working class—migrant workers. The campaign attracted significant media coverage, which escalated after 5 protesters locked themselves onto prison property and were arrested.

Panah won bail into the custody of his church in September 2007 after 53 days of hunger strike. Since then Panah has made three appeals to the Refugee Status Appeals Authority, the third being successful.

Workers Party members called for workers organisations and individuals to get behind this campaign, and give support to these men who were isolated from their families and prevented from leading a normal life. Union members should join in rejecting nationalist arguments used to rationalise class-based and racist immigration controls, support full rights for migrant workers, and the incorporation of immigrants into the organised workforce.

This is one way to begin forging a true internationalist outlook. Immigrants bring to our organizations here the experiences of their culture and struggles. Iran is one country that has particularly rich history of struggle and resistance. For instance when the Iranian people overthrew the US clientele regime of the Shah in 1979, Shora, or workers councils developed and for some time held dual power with the Islamist clerics. Among other reasons, the Shora were eventually crushed because the politics that dominated these organisations was essentially economistic and failed to broach the contention of state power.

Current immigration policy discriminates against working class immigrants and is tailored to suit economic interests here, by making exemptions for millionaires and people who have money to invest in business. This is backed up by an ideology of national chauvinism. This is a property of capitalist society that ultimately leads to supporting interests counter to our own as workers. For instance someone investing \$5M in a particular enterprise does nothing to improve the situation for working people in this country. The immigration minister at the time of the campaign, David Cunliffe, made the initial response to assert that immigrants should never be allowed to take the jobs of kiwi workers. However, it is not actually overseas workers that are undercutting our jobs or wages. It is the system of capitalism which drives companies off shore to exploit more cheap labour power that creates job losses here. Nationalism of this kind weakens the potential collective strength of the labour movement in New Zealand by fostering divisions based on racial and other lines. National chauvinism obscures the fact that our identity as workers, either New Zealand born, Samoan born or Iranian born transcends the relevance of national identity, ethnic group, sexual orientation or whatever else, in terms of resisting exploitation that occurs at the point of production. Internationally workers here have no common interest with the New Zealand governments plunder and exploits in the Pacific nations, Afghanistan or the Mid—East, because we are living in the same country. Our common interest lies with the workers movements happening there.

We think that some of the things we did in the Iranian detainees campaign can be useful in other struggles against deportations:

Engage in protest even if numbers are small and the issue is not popular: Over a period of months we consistently attended the weekly demonstrations outside Mt Eden prison. Even though the demonstrations were initially very small and eventually grew only to a modest size, this consistent protest activity was necessary because of both the injustice and the high political priority that socialists must place on defending migrants. The issue wasn't popular with all the groups and citizens of the left. In our view it is sectarian to only place emphasis on types of broad front work that are more favorable for party recruiting but less important politically.

Enter and maintain dialogue with other forces involved:

We maintained a regular dialogue on the issue with the key organising groups which were Global Peace and Justice Auckland and International Hope and Peace. International Hope and Peace was a very small group, mainly of Iranian people, which formed around this campaign. We made a conscious effort to begin the dialogue with them by inviting them to one of our branch meetings for an intensive discussion. They had close contact with the families of some of the remand prisoners. This approach deepened our understanding of the struggle and helped practically with our campaigning.

Mass leaflet large public meetings: During this campaign Workers Party members gave out thousands of leaflets which specifically advertised the demonstrations. The advertising for the demonstration formed the main content of the leaflet and we also included an insert box outlining our political position on open borders. There was a strong combination of mass work with promoting the socialist policy of open borders.

Physically confront police and/or guards during demonstrations: Along with four other activists who identify with anarchism, two Workers Party members were arrested by the police and trespassed from Mt. Eden prison (much later the charges were dropped). Deportation situations are serious enough to warrant activists entering situations where they may be – or even definitely will be - arrested.

Submit an article to a union newspaper/newsletter: We submitted an article to the newspaper of one of the major private sector unions. If an article is written from a socialist perspective it may be expected that it will appear as an edited version when printed. However, it is worthwhile because it helps to communicate that the issue is not only an issue of moral fairness but also a working class 'political issue'.

Interview - Dennis Maga/Migrante Aotearoa

Mike Kay spoke to Dennis Maga of the migrant workers' group Migrante Aotearoa

MK: What is Migrante Aotearoa?

DM: We are a community union mainly focusing on education, organising and mobilisation of our members. We provide Filipinos with basic orientation, and we explain that we have to organise ourselves, because we believe that it takes a migrant to help a migrant.

A real turning point for Migrante Aotearoa was the 2009 EPMU/ Telecom dispute, in which the employer tried to force “dependent contractor” status on line engineers. Filipino migrant workers played a key role in that struggle. What was Migrante’s approach?

At first we asked the question, should we form a Filipino group within the Union, because the EPMU did not seem to be concerned with the issues of migrants. But when the Telecom dispute erupted, the EPMU learned that they could not protect migrant workers without taking up the issue of their immigration status.

The focus of Migrante is broader than that of a trade union. We also campaign about the issues back home. The Philippine government has to pay for neglecting their responsibility to their migrants.

We welcome non-Filipino migrants as associate members, but what we aim to do is to help them to establish their own organisations. Ultimately, we want to form an alliance between different migrant organisations.

The Workers Party's Open Borders policy has been developed for the situation we face in an imperialist country. What is the perspective on migration that Migrante has developed from the situation of coming from a Third World country?

Currently the capitalists and the imperialists are the ones institutionalising the migration. For example, within the General Agreement on Trades in Services, they are allowing the free movement of certain people.

Our analysis of South Korea is that even although there is immigration policy in place, the employers allow illegal immigrants to stay, and campaign for free movement of labour in order to depress wages.

What we are opposing right now is forced labour migration. Instead of moving your labour from your country of origin there should be a way to create jobs back home in order to maintain these people. The whole trend of globalisation and imperialism is to make sure there is enough supply of workers, especially for rich and developed nations, in order to meet the needs of these big capitalist countries for skilled and migrant labour.

What exactly do you mean by forced migration?

The governments in the countries of origin are currently imposing this. They are overhauling the educational system so that they provide courses – and whole schools – whose direction is to educate people to become migrants, e.g., nursing. In the Philippines it is appalling that the direction of the schools is to encourage people to work abroad. Even though we have many nurses in the Philippines, the condition of the state health services in our country is really disastrous, to the point that we don't have any nurses in rural areas, but we are I think in the top 10 of suppliers of nurses in the world. The government is not improving the pay

and conditions of the nurses in the Philippines. They are also travelling the world telling foreign governments that we have vast resources of highly skilled labour, and they are cheap and docile, so why don't you utilise them? The government is selling our workers for a pittance because the Philippine economy is being kept afloat by means of remittances from abroad. Right now, 20% of our population lives abroad. The high unemployment that drives this will continue, as long as government policy is not for national industrialisation and agrarian reform (which would produce jobs for our compatriots), then the trend will continue.

What responsibility does the host country bear for this situation?

If you look at the Immigration NZ website now, they sell New Zealand as a haven for migrants. They also have agents in the Philippines directing them to the website. But they don't give any information about unemployment in New Zealand, if it's easy to find a job and so on. In our analysis, Australia and New Zealand will increasingly be the destination of migrants in the next five years, because their economies are still doing relatively well compared to other countries.

How would you rate the efforts of NZ Unions in addressing the concerns of migrants?

Starting last year, it was a learning curve for unions. In 2007 Unions were more about providing information to migrants. That was not benefiting migrants to the point of advocating for their rights and welfare regarding immigration status. Last year, the issue of what happens to migrants in the case of redundancy became the topic of debate. Migrant worker are workers, they are part of the working class, and should be treated equally regardless of immigration status. Otherwise it defeats the purpose of having a trade union.

September 2010

Website: www.migrante-aotearoa.org.nz

Why you should join the Workers Party

1. We are revolutionary socialists

We all live in a capitalist society, which means that the working-class majority experience exploitation and poverty in order to guarantee profits and luxury for the ruling-class minority. The capitalists have many weapons at their disposal – not just the army, police, courts and prisons, but a system of ideas, developed over centuries, that shape people’s beliefs about what is normal, natural, and possible. These prevailing ideas tell us that we can do no more than tinker with the current system. However, the current economic crisis shows more clearly than ever that society must be radically reorganised if it is to serve the interests of the working-class majority. To challenge the entrenched power of the ruling class, workers cannot rely on parliament or parties like Labour, which support the existing system. We need to build a movement which can develop alternative, anti-capitalist ideas to create a revolution.

2. We support workers’ resistance

The fundamental basis of our politics is class struggle. For us, socialism – a society in which the means of producing wealth are owned collectively and run democratically for the benefit of everyone – can only come about when we, the people who produce the wealth, liberate ourselves from capitalist exploitation. The Workers Party does everything it can to support all workers’ struggles – from the smallest work stoppage to a full-on factory occupation – as these are the basic forms of resistance to capitalist rule. As workers start running their workplaces and industries on their own, they will start to ask, “Why can’t we run the whole country – and more?” We take inspiration from historical examples of workers’ control such as the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution, and study their successes and failures.

3. We support trade union activism

Because we believe that only the working class can create socialism, we are active in the basic organisations of the working class, the trade unions. Currently,

unions are generally dominated by middle-class bureaucrats who see themselves as peacemakers between workers and bosses. We work towards transforming unions into strong, democratic, fighting organisations, controlled by their members. Such unions will mobilise workers for struggle in the workplace and society through strikes, workplace occupations and other forms of militant action. In an economic crisis they are more important than ever. We join in the struggle to extend the union movement to the majority of workers who are not yet organised, especially the campaigns by Unite Union to involve youth and workers who have insecure conditions. We stand with workers in struggle for better rights and conditions, and initiate discussion on revolutionary ideas through strike bulletins and electronic media.

4. We support student-worker solidarity

On campus and in schools, Workers Party members are actively trying to rebuild the radical student movement. We oppose fees, demand living grants for students, and fight for free speech. We encourage students to link their struggles with those of the working class. Workers ultimately pay most of the bill for education, even in a semi-private university system such as we have. Workers will be

won to the idea of free education from kindergarten to university if they see students willing to support their struggles.

5. We have an internationalist perspective

Workers all over the world have far more in common with one another than with the bosses of “their own” country. To fight effectively, workers in every country must support the struggles of workers in every other country. This is what we mean by internationalism. We are for open borders as the best way to unite the workers of the world. We have been involved in successful campaigns to prevent the deportation of refugees and we urge the union movement to be migrant-worker friendly. We oppose the reactionary nationalism of campaigns like “Buy NZ-made”, and instead advocate protecting jobs through militant unionism.

6. We oppose imperialism

The fight against imperialism is a vital part of the fight against capitalism. Imperialism is the system whereby rich countries dominate poor ones. New Zealand is a junior partner in the world imperialist system. The Workers Party opposes any involvement in imperialist wars

such as those being fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, even if the involvement is under the banner of so-called “peace-keeping”. We demand an immediate end to the interference in the affairs of Pacific Island nations by New Zealand and its ally Australia. We want an end to all involvement in imperialist military alliances and the dismantling of their spy bases. We try to identify the most politically progressive anti-imperialist groups to offer them our active support – for instance, our solidarity campaign for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

7. We fight oppression

We are serious about actively fighting oppression based on nation, race, gender or sexuality – here and now, not just “after the revolution”. But we believe class is central to all such oppression, and therefore those struggles are linked to the broader class struggle. We support militant direct action by Maori for real equality; conversely, we see the Treaty process as a bureaucratic means to undercut such resistance and nurture a Maori middle class which will benefit very few.

8. We stand for freedom

We believe that socialism means the maximum possible freedom for the many not the few. We directly challenge infringements on basic human rights such as the undemocratic use of trespass orders by universities and employers against activists and trade unionists. We have consistently opposed the so-called “terror raids” on left-wing and Maori activists dating from October 2007. We also practise what we preach in our own party, where members have the right to disagree and debate their differences, provided they are involved in a basic level of party activity.

9. We hold capitalism responsible for the environmental crisis

The capitalist drive for unlimited profit threatens to destroy the whole basis of life on Earth. In contrast to the capitalist parties (including the Green Party) who demand that workers reduce their living standards for the sake of the planet, we say that it is the capitalist system that must be challenged, since most environmental damage is a result of production, not consumption. We look to examples of working-class actions like the “green bans” initiated by New South Wales building labourers in the 1970s for inspiration on how workers can change the priorities of society.

10. We are building a revolutionary party

We believe that the working class and oppressed can only achieve liberation as a conscious project, based on ideas which are debated, tested against reality, and constantly reviewed and improved. The working class can only learn from history – including previous workers' struggles, victorious or defeated – through a conscious political movement which preserves these lessons. To create a mass socialist movement, workers who have already drawn revolutionary conclusions must organise together in a political organisation. This kind of party is still some way off in New Zealand. But we believe that Workers Party activists and our political ideas will be central to that movement of the future. Help us build it now! Our members and supporters in the trade unions, the student movement, and many other struggles organise together, on the basis of common ideas, as part of a concerted fight for a classless society without oppression or exploitation. If you agree with our basic ideas, join us. If you don't, work with us, debate with us, and continue the discussion!



You can now actively support the Palestinian Resistance by buying one of our shirts, with all proceeds going to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a group actively involved politically and militarily resisting Imperialism and Zionism in the occupied territories.

<http://wpnz-pflp-solidarity.blogspot.com/>

www.workersparty.org.nz

The Workers Party website is where you'll find interesting commentary on a daily basis, and in-depth articles posted several times a week.

Local Workers Party Contacts:

Auckland

Mike
021 0246-9817
PO Box 10 282 Dominion Road

Wellington

Joel
022 384-1917
joel.cosgrove@gmail.com

Christchurch

Byron
021 815-145
byronclark@gmail.com
PO Box 513

Hamilton

Jared
029 494-9863
jared@unite.org.nz

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