

New Zealand cabinet minister echoes fascist gunman's manifesto

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Shane Jones, a cabinet minister in Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's Labour-led government, and a member of the right-wing NZ First Party, has used the government's intensifying attacks on immigrants to echo the extreme-right positions espoused in the Christchurch terrorist's fascist "manifesto."

Brenton Tarrant, who faces charges of killing 51 people in attacks on two mosques in March, posted a manifesto entitled "The Great Replacement," inciting right-wing violence around the globe. NZ's chief censor suppressed the manifesto to prevent any discussion of its similarity with the anti-immigrant xenophobia promoted by politicians in NZ and internationally, and the sympathy of state agencies for fascist groups.

Jones' highly publicised anti-immigrant rants are part of the sharp shift to the right by the ruling elite, including the Labour Party, trade unions and media commentators. As in Europe and the US, nationalist and racist filth is being stirred up to poison the political atmosphere, divide the working class and derail the rising tide of opposition to social inequality, poverty and preparations for war.

Jones' outbursts began after New Zealand's Indian community denounced the Labour-NZ First-Greens government's increasingly brutal immigration restrictions. New rules will block thousands of parents from joining their adult children, with only the wealthiest allowed residency.

Immigration NZ in May directed its officers to no longer waive a requirement that migrant couples must have lived together for 12 months—effectively barring Indians with arranged marriages. Auckland Indian Association president Narendra Bhana said Indians were being "punished" and it was "unbelievable" that Immigration NZ did not understand the cultural issues at stake.

Jones denounced opposition from Indian "activists," saying they could have "no legitimate expectations... to bring your whole village to New Zealand." If migrants didn't like the rules, he told Radio NZ, they should "catch the next flight home." After an anti-racism rally in Auckland demanded Jones' resignation, the minister doubled down, contemptuously dismissing the furor as a "Bollywood over-

reaction."

Jones belliciously told *Stuff* he spoke for "battalions" of "ordinary Kiwis who were highly anxious" about population growth. He said NZ First would "campaign unstintingly" on a headline "population policy" in next year's election.

In the last five years half-a-million people had been added to the population, Jones told Radio NZ on November 6, while "the birth rate is actually lower than the post-war boom." He called for a "conversation" about "the changing nature of New Zealand's societal culture through immigration."

Jones noted, accurately, that both National and Labour governments had run highly restrictive immigration policies. He then bluntly declared: "We are not going to acquiesce or tolerate legions of parents and grandparents coming to New Zealand, queue-jumping and clogging up our social services."

Jones's fixation with "birth rates" and scare-mongering over "legions" of immigrants are entirely in line with the fascist conceptions in Tarrant's screed, which began with the statement: "It's the birthrates. It's the birthrates. It's the birthrates." Tarrant claimed that "European" countries, including New Zealand, are growing weaker because of their lower fertility. He advocated "increasing the native birth-rate" as a means of "reducing the need for the importation of labour." The fascist described immigrants as "invaders," the word US President Trump used to incite violence against refugees.

Jones is likewise seeking to whip up anxiety about immigrants. NZ First leader Winston Peters also has a long record of vilifying Muslim immigrants as representatives of an alien culture that is attempting to "replace" New Zealand's Western "values."

Jones, who is part-Maori, swaps Tarrant's white nationalism with an equally reactionary and racist Maori nationalism. "I am absolutely empowered, with my particular ancestry and lineage," he said, "to raise these issues in the context of a population policy for the future face, size, girth and wealth of New Zealand." He told *Stuff*

that he was “the son of the Treaty of Waitangi” with the “blood that formed this nation running through my veins.”

The emphasis on “blood lines,” ancestry and nativism echoes fascist groups around the world and was the central theme in Tarrant’s manifesto. Changing what needs to be changed, Jones’ assertion of Maori identity and “lineage” is politically no different.

Jones speaks on behalf of Maori nationalists who seek to defend the capitalist profit system, and the position of wealthy tribal businesses within it, by using racist demagoguery to divide impoverished Maori workers from their class brothers and sisters.

Jones personifies the relationship between the Maori political-business elite and the New Zealand establishment. He is currently minister for infrastructure in the Ardern-led Coalition but began his political career in 2005 as a Labour Party MP and served as a minister in the Helen Clark-led Labour government.

Jones unsuccessfully contested for the Labour leadership in 2013. He was promoted by the media as a plain-speaking “man of the people.” In fact, Jones studied at Harvard University and then chaired the Waitangi Fisheries Commission, the powerful body which administers multi-million dollar Maori commercial fishing ventures set up under the Treaty of Waitangi claims process. He quit parliament in 2014, then re-entered via NZ First in 2017. He is likely positioning to contest the party leadership when Peters, who is 75, retires.

Prime Minister Ardern did not condemn Jones’ comments nor challenge his cabinet position. She told the media the three governing parties simply had “different perspectives on immigration issues.” Concerned about possible electoral damage in the immigrant community, Ardern said the policy affecting arranged marriages would be reversed.

Meanwhile Ardern’s government is proceeding to step up its attack on immigrants. Permanent residency approvals dropped to 35,000 last year, down from 51,700 in 2016. Temporary work and student visas have increased, but it is more difficult to earn permanency. Economist Bernard Hickey noted in *Newsroom* that NZ has become the “Dubai of the South Pacific, where we treat migrants as second class or non-citizens, allow them to be exploited, then throw them away when we’re done with them”

In 2017, Ardern campaigned alongside NZ First with joint promises to slash immigration. When Peters decided to form a government with Labour instead of the conservative National Party, Ardern rewarded NZ First with considerable power, making Peters both deputy prime minister and foreign minister, and the party’s Ron Mark was made defence minister.

Jones’ diatribe has been warmly received in sections of

the media. Newshub host Duncan Garner defended Jones, flatly dismissing accusations of racism as “garbage.” Garner rejected any link between the immigration changes, Jones’ comments and the Christchurch massacre.

Emboldened by Jones’ rhetoric, Vision NZ, a party recently founded by the fundamentalist Destiny Church, criticised NZ First for not going far enough, saying it would ban new “mosques, temples and other foreign buildings of worship.” The church has close links with the Maori nationalist Mana Party led by Hone Harawira .

A particularly contemptible role is being played by the *Daily Blog*, which speaks for ex-radicals and trade union bureaucrats who support the government’s nationalism and anti-immigrant chauvinism. Editor Martyn Bradbury praised Jones on Magic Talk radio on November 8 as a “political genius,” declaring: “there is an enormous, legitimate grievance with many in New Zealand at the level of immigration... I think the debate is vital.”

Contributor Chris Trotter, who fraudulently describes himself as a “democratic socialist,” wrote on November 7 that Jones had justifiably recognised the “threat” posed to Maori by “the dramatic expansion in the number of immigrants from China and the Indian sub-continent.” The percentage of “Asian” people in New Zealand had risen from 2 percent to 15 percent and could “overtake that of Maori” if not checked, Trotter asserted.

The *Daily Blog* is funded by the Unite union, the Rail and Maritime Transport Union and the Dairy Workers Union. These unions are entirely complicit in the turn towards far-right and fascist policies by a key section of New Zealand’s ruling elite, along with their counterparts around the world.

The author also recommends:

The Christchurch terror attack and the promotion of fascism by the ruling elite

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