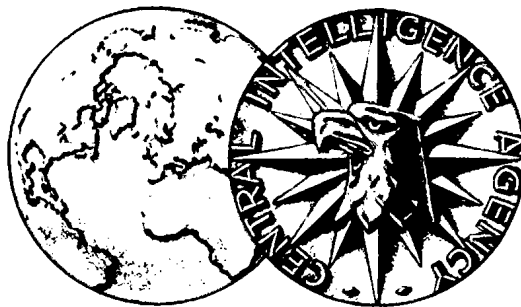


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# COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN NEW ZEALAND



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## COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN NEW ZEALAND

### SUMMARY

The New Zealand Communist Party (NZCP) is small in numbers (less than 1,000) and has little over-all influence. Its only strength stems from control of key positions in the trade unions where its influence exceeds its numbers because of careful planning and cooperation with left-wing labor leaders. However, Communist capabilities in the labor movement have been reduced since the war, as much of the militant leadership has been gradually replaced by moderates. This trend continues.

Direct Communist influence within the New Zealand Government is believed to be insignificant. Communists have not been able to win parliamentary representation and they have failed in repeated attempts to affiliate with the Labor Party. Prime Minister Fraser has recently launched a campaign against Communism. He has ordered Communists to be barred from all sensitive positions in the Department of External Affairs, in the armed forces, and in scientific defense research. This program has been vigorously

conducted and has received wide popular approval.

NZCP relations with Australian Communists are believed to be especially close; contact with the Communist Party in the UK is also maintained. A probable channel of communication with the USSR exists in the Soviet Legation at Wellington.

The NZCP employs typical Communist techniques for spreading propaganda including use of press and exploitation of front organizations and minority groups—particularly the Slavs. These propaganda techniques, however, have not produced much success.

The New Zealand Security Intelligence Bureau maintains close surveillance on Communist activities and is considered capable of maintaining internal security. It is believed that the current anti-Communist trend, as evidenced by the strong convictions and policies of government leaders, and the increasing strength of moderate trade unionists will continue to restrict Communist influence in New Zealand.

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Note: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force have concurred in this report. It is based on information available to CIA as of 2 June 1949.

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## COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN NEW ZEALAND\*

### 1. Size, Strength, and Distribution of Communist Party.

The Communist Party of New Zealand (NZCP) is numerically small, having probably less than 1,000 members. In the 1946 federal election, NZ Communists received only 0.12 percent of the total vote (1,138 votes of a total 943,732). During the war, Party recruitment was aided by the popularity of Soviet military achievements, but postwar dissatisfaction with Soviet foreign policy and resentment against a succession of semi-political strikes in both New Zealand and Australia have sapped Communist strength. Party members are concentrated in urban areas, particularly the ports of Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. Politically the Party's influence is inconsequential, but control of important labor union posts in the Waterside Workers' Union, New Zealand Federation of Labor, and the trade union councils has given Communists greater influence than the Party membership indicates. Since 1948, however, Communist cells in labor unions have been on the defensive, and both Communists and militant fellow-travelers have been dislodged from a number of important positions. The recent replacement of Alexander Drennan, National Party Chairman, by Alexander Galbraith who was leader of the Party prior to 1946 when it enjoyed greater success, may represent an attempt to revitalize the Communist program in New Zealand.

### 2. Legal Status.

The NZCP is a legal organization. The Opposition has asked for legislation outlawing Communist organizations and activities, but the Labor Government maintains that Communists should be tolerated so long as they do not "take overt action to overthrow the fundamental basis of democracy." The government has failed to take action against

Alexander Drennan, recently deposed Chairman of the NZCP, who declared that if the capitalist powers attacked the USSR all workers should be on the Soviet side. However, the government has strengthened its security position by passing the Control of Aliens Bill by which it can deport aliens who are considered undesirable and which requires aliens to report changes of occupation and address.

### 3. International Contacts.

The first contact with Moscow was probably made in 1921 when a Communist agent, George Marks, arrived in New Zealand. Since then, the NZCP has maintained contact with Communist parties in Australia and the UK, and has been represented at international congresses by its national committee members. Prime Minister Fraser believes that Comintern instructions issued fifteen years ago continue to guide NZCP policy. Current Soviet guidance appears to come from the Moscow radio and press service propaganda.

Overt contact between leading Communists of Australia and New Zealand is maintained by trade union officials—primarily in the seamen's and longshoremen's unions. There has been close cooperation among Communist-dominated trade unions of both countries and with Harry Bridges' Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union for the purpose of organizing waterside workers of the Southwest Pacific. Assistance in the form of propaganda and instruction in party tactics has reportedly been received from the UK Communist Party.

A probable channel of contact with the USSR exists in the Soviet Legation at Wellington. A new Soviet Minister, Aleksandr M. Aleksandrov, has recently been appointed to the post vacant since August 1947, but has not yet arrived to take up his duties. Although no contacts have been reported between Soviet Legation members and NZ Communists, there

\* This report has been prepared through the collaborative efforts of the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Central Intelligence Agency. See ORE 9-49 for Communist Influence in Australia, published 11 April 1949.

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are indications that members of the Legation are on friendly terms with officers of the All-Slav Union, a local Slav cultural organization. However, New Zealanders have shown a notable lack of interest in Russian cultural exhibits.

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Marine Cooks and Stewards Association of the US CIO is responsible for organizing a communications network which includes the following individuals in New Zealand: Alexander Drennan, former Chairman of the NZCP National Committee, and Clarrie Kelly, member of the Waterfront Section of the NZCP, who is reported to be in contact with the Communist Party Waterfront Section in New York. These individuals allegedly serve as intermediaries for forwarding Communist propaganda to and from New Zealand.

#### 4. Participation in Government.

Direct Communist influence within the New Zealand Government is not believed to be significant. The Communists have no parliamentary representation and have not succeeded in influencing the Labor Party (in power since 1935) politically. Although the New Zealand Government has refused to enact special legislation against Communists or to remove Communists from government positions not concerned with security, the government is combating Communist infiltration on both the labor and political fronts. In the past two years, after much equivocation on the Communist issue, Labor politicians, particularly Prime Minister Fraser and Robert Semple, the Minister of Works, have become vigorous campaigners against Communism. At the last Labor Party conference, Angus McLagan, the Minister of Labor, announced that the government would no longer make concessions to extremist labor elements. He has since taken a strong stand in dealing with Communist tactics in the trade unions.

The government's policy is to bar Communists and members of front organizations from sensitive departments concerned with external affairs, scientific and industrial research, and the armed services. Although legislation passed in 1936 permits Communists (except

Party officials) to remain in the government, security authorities are screening government employees and a number of workers have been transferred to non-sensitive departments.

There are no known Communists in the Labor Party. The Party constitution requires every convention delegate and every official to pledge that he is a member of no other party. The Labor Party leadership is strongly anti-Communist and has rejected repeated Communist requests for affiliation.

#### 5. Influence in the Labor Movement.

A number of important union posts are held by Communists and fellow-travelers whose influence is also an important factor in the trade union councils where all unions are represented. Communists or Communist sympathizers in key union posts as of September 1948 were strongest in the Waterside Workers Union whose national vice-president is Alexander Drennan, former NZCP chairman. The national president and secretary as well as officials in several of the Waterside locals are Communist sympathizers. Communists have infiltrated the Carpenters and Joiners Union (whose national secretary is a Communist) although current efforts are being made to eliminate their influence. The Tramways Union and to a lesser extent the Railway Shop Union and the Coal Miners Union have also been infiltrated by Communists.

During the past two years, however, Communist strength in the labor movement has been materially reduced and this trend continues. Moderate trade unionists have been aroused by Communist activities abroad and by the wave of politically inspired strikes in both Australia and New Zealand. In April 1948, for example, the annual conference of the New Zealand Federation of Labor replaced its militant leadership with moderates. At the Federation's annual conference held in May 1949 moderate officers were elected by a wider margin than in 1948 and the Federation also voted to withdraw from the WFTU. In Auckland, New Zealand's largest city and center of Communist strength, Communist and militant leaders were swept out of office in a drastic shakeup during 1948. Alexander Drennan, then NZCP National Committee Chairman, was not re-elected president of the

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Auckland Trades Union Council. His two principal officers, along with the whole Communist and militant slate of candidates, were also defeated. In addition, Drennan lost to a moderate the vice-presidency of the powerful Auckland Waterside Workers' Union (although he is still national vice-president). Moderates won a sweeping victory on 21 April 1949 when Drennan was again defeated for presidency of the Auckland Trades Council. He was also defeated in the election of a delegate to the National Council of the NZ Federation of Labor.

#### 6. Control and Influence in Propaganda Media.

Chief Communist propaganda media are the Communist press and front organizations. The principal publications are the *People's Voice*, official Communist weekly newspaper with an estimated circulation of 8,000, and the *New Zealand Labor Review*, a Communist monthly publicizing Marxist theory. The conservative press occasionally publishes reports of Communist activities, but the *New Zealand Standard* and the *Southern Cross*, which are Labor Party newspapers, almost completely ignore Communist statements and demonstrations.

The Communist Party has been assisted by several front organizations, notably the Young People's Clubs (affiliated with the World Federation of Democratic Youth); the Victoria University College Socialist Club; the Trade Union Bureau and the Trade Union Forum; Unity Centers in the large cities for discussions and social activities, the Society for Closer Relations with the USSR (now declining through lack of public interest) and several Slav organizations. The Slav cultural organizations—particularly the Croatian Cultural and Benevolent Society, the All-Slav Union, and the Marshal Tito Club—have been strongly influenced by Communists in the past and have helped raise money and disseminate propaganda in the Slavic community.

Dissident minority groups are not a serious problem in New Zealand, where the 1,862,000 population is remarkably homogeneous. The Communist Party has had little success in exploiting such indigenous minorities as the

aboriginal Maoris and the Cook Islanders. The most important minority of European origin is the Slav group. There are about 900 Yugoslav citizens and the nationality group (including naturalized British subjects) totals about 5,000. Among these Slavs Communist propaganda on the cultural level has had some effect owing to ties with the homeland and the reluctance of New Zealanders to absorb non-British immigrants. The Tito-Cominform schism, however, has split the Yugoslav communities and, according to press reports, most New Zealand Yugoslavs favor Tito in the dispute between Yugoslavia and the Cominform. Polish, Czech, and Yugoslav cultural organizations, however, probably will continue to offer some possibilities for Communist recruitment.

#### 7. Government Security Facilities.

The New Zealand Government appears to possess adequate facilities for safeguarding its security. The Security Intelligence Bureau, which is under supervision of the NZ Police Commissioner, is responsible for the investigation of subversive activities, as well as counter-intelligence, port security, sabotage, etc. The Bureau is reported to work with the three service departments and with the Central Security Office in London. The Security Bureau investigates the activities of the local pro-Communist groups and is believed to be keenly aware of the danger of Communist propagandists. There is close cooperation between the armed forces and the police on security matters. For example, a security check on recruits for the NZ Army is made by the police. There is no indication of Communist penetration of the armed forces at the present time. However, the British have urged establishment of a counter-intelligence corps in the armed forces of New Zealand and a Joint Intelligence Committee responsible to the Chiefs of Staff and to the Secretary of External Affairs is now being organized.

#### 8. Conclusions

The New Zealand Communist Party has little over-all influence. Moderate trade unionists are gradually assuming the leadership of the labor movement thus weakening the only source of Communist strength.

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Typical Communist propaganda techniques have not been successful.

Direct Communist influence within the New Zealand Labor Government including the armed forces is believed to be insignificant. The government is actively combating Communism on both the labor and political fronts and is further improving its security facilities

under British supervision. The strong anti-Communist convictions and policies of government leaders and the increasing influence of moderate trade unionists combined with effective work by the New Zealand police will restrict Communist activities although the NZCP will continue to exert some influence in the trade union movement.

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