

An exchange with the Greens

Richard Phillips
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The WSWS received the following letter on the article “SEP candidate exposes hypocrisy of Labor and the Greens at election forum” from Malikeh Michels, the Greens candidate for Bankstown in the March 26 New South Wales state election. Her letter is followed by a reply from Richard Phillips, the Socialist Equality Party’s candidate in Bankstown.

Hello,

If you would be so kind as to publish my response to your inaccurate [sic] article “SEP candidate exposes hypocrisy of Labor and the Greens at Election Forum.”

I would like to highlight the inaccuracies of your article and ‘edited’ version of comments I made in the candidates forum. I said Christina [sic] Keneally had stopped the donations culture ‘HOWEVER’ the Greens and Lee Rhiannon have been lobbying against this culture for years with the ‘Democracy for Sale’ project.

The statement about the Greens and wars in Iraq [sic] and Afghanistan are also inaccurate. Would you like to present Greens policy where we support the war? This would not be possible. If you wish people to take your politics seriously I suggest you present the truth rather than [sic] convoluted versions of it.

And yes I do most of my shopping in Bankstown as well as taking my children to local parks, the Cinema and the local national reserves for fishing and picnics etc. I am actually ‘in touch’ with the local electorate, and not espousing utopian political [sic] mantras with obscure and alienating language like your candidate did.

And I do support a Socialist agenda as partially exists in Australia today, where the affluent heavily taxed and distributed through a fair social security system [sic].

Regards,
Malikeh Michels

State candidate for The Greens Bankstown Electorate

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Dear Ms Michels,

Contrary to your assertions, our coverage of the recent Bankstown candidates’ meeting was entirely accurate. The points you raise represent yet another effort to conceal the fact that the Greens have no fundamental differences with Labor and the Liberals and that this was politically exposed at the Bankstown state election candidates’ forum. Your letter does serve, however, to highlight the unbridgeable class divide that exists between the Socialist Equality Party and Greens.

Your defence of “Democracy for Sale” as some kind of stance in defence of parliamentary democracy is absurd. Your opposition to corporate donations is completely self-serving. The Greens want state funding for electoral parties—but only for themselves and the three major capitalist parties, Labor, Liberal and National. The Greens have collaborated with these parties for decades to make it increasingly difficult for any other party to stand, to have their name on the ballot or to access funds. Your party has supported prohibitive fees for registering candidates and insisted on ever higher party membership numbers as a condition of official party registration. Moreover, the Greens have supported the introduction of every anti-democratic measure opening parties up to official surveillance and victimisation.

As for your claim that the Greens are “antiwar”, the historical record proves otherwise. Calls by the Greens for the withdrawal of Australian troops from Afghanistan have nothing to do with opposition to the criminal character of this imperialist war. They are driven by entirely nationalist motivations—what will bring the best returns for Australian imperialism.

The Greens prefer Australian troops to be enforcing

Canberra's neo-colonial agenda in the South Pacific. That is why they championed calls for Australian troops to intervene in East Timor in 1999 and why they fully endorse the ongoing military occupation of the Solomon Islands. Neither intervention was "humanitarian". Both have been aimed at shoring up Australian financial and strategic interests against encroachment by its rivals in the region, particularly China.

At the same time, the Greens remain public champions of Washington's fraudulent "war on terror"—the pretext used to justify the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Greens leader Bob Brown's only criticism has been that the US "bungled its war strategy" by invading Iraq, instead of stepping up the war in Afghanistan. "The bellicose president [Bush] withheld troops, military assets and attention from Afghanistan while Australia, under John Howard withdrew completely until 2005," Brown told parliament last October.

Brown has never called for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan, nor has he denounced the Obama administration's bloody military surge, or its military attacks and drone assassinations in Pakistan.

In November 2005, Greens senators backed an amendment to the Howard government's anti-terror laws, giving police and security agencies unprecedented powers to arrest and charge anyone with terrorism. The amendment, which the Greens claimed was "insubstantial", has been written into every anti-terror law introduced in Australia since 2002 and used to frame-up individuals on terrorism charges. Instead of being required to provide evidence of a time, date, place, target, method or equipment for a specific alleged terrorist act, police and intelligence officers can now arrest individuals on the grounds of an "alleged" terrorist plot, even a hypothetical one.

Your letter's concluding sentence is a damning self-exposure of social complacency, and of the Greens' indifference towards the intractable economic and social problems facing millions of ordinary working people. These seem to have entirely escaped your attention.

Your support for what you term a "partially existing socialist agenda" in Australia, with its affluent layers "heavily taxed" and its "fair" welfare system sounds like

a cruel joke. Official tax rates for the wealthy are at record lows and falling, while it is virtually impossible to survive on the current starvation-level unemployment and disability benefits or the aged pension.

As soon as she was installed as Labor prime minister, Gillard publicly committed to completing the restructuring agenda initiated by the Hawke-Keating Labor governments from 1983-1996, which resulted in the greatest redistribution of wealth from the working class to the rich in history. The Greens have since signed on, through their federal parliamentary alliance with the minority Gillard government.

What this will mean for the working class has already been demonstrated by the Labor-Greens government in Tasmania, which recently decided to axe 10 percent of the state's public sector workforce. Federally, the Greens have already endorsed Labor's so-called "flood recovery" package, which benefits the mining corporations and is funded by \$3.5 billion in social spending cuts and a levy on wage earners—just a small indication of what is to come.

Finally, I would like to point out that if the Socialist Equality Party's socialist and internationalist perspective was simply a "utopian political mantra" expressed in "obscure and alienating language", I doubt you would have bothered to write. The fact of the matter is that many people are beginning to see through the fake "left" rhetoric of the Greens and to recognise its role as an enabler of the wholesale assault being carried out against the social position of the working class. And that is precisely what occurred at the candidates' forum in Bankstown.

Sincerely,

Richard Phillips

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