

Murdoch tabloid appeals to voters to “save” Labor candidate in Australian elections

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The Murdoch-owned *Daily Telegraph* issued an extraordinary front-page appeal today for voters to reelect leading Labor Party politician Anthony Albanese in Sydney’s inner-west electorate of Grayndler. Featuring a large front-page picture of Albanese with the caption “Save Our Albo,” the editorial warned that the former deputy prime minister may lose his seat to Greens candidate, Jim Casey, in the upcoming federal elections.

The Sydney-based tabloid framed its editorial as a red-baiting attack on Casey, secretary of the fire fighters union in New South Wales, who has claimed to be a socialist. It declared that “One of NSW’s most accomplished politicians faces being kicked out of federal Parliament by a Green’s extremist who champions the ‘overthrow of capitalism.’” The *Telegraph* also prominently featured past comments by Casey on Twitter referencing “class war” and “militant action,” under the heading, “The Loony Greenie Taking on Our Albo.”

The editorial echoed anti-socialist denunciations of Casey by Albanese himself, who has repeatedly drawn attention to the Greens candidate’s former membership in the pseudo-left International Socialist Organisation. At his campaign launch in January, Albanese declared, “I’ve never seen him at any event or anything else, but then again, I haven’t been to international socialist demonstrations against global capitalism in the last few years so maybe that’s why I’ve missed him.”

The intervention of the *Daily Telegraph*—which specialises in promoting anti-refugee xenophobia, demonising welfare recipients, and fanning other forms of reaction—expresses mounting fears within ruling circles that the federal election on July 2 could witness a mass repudiation of both Labor and the Liberal-National coalition, and further destabilise the

increasingly crisis-ridden two-party system, which has been in place, in its current form, since the end of World War II.

Polling has indicated that the Coalition government of Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull is heading towards potential defeat, in the first ousting of a one-term government since 1931. At the same time, the Labor Party is unlikely to secure enough seats to form a majority government. In recent days, commentary in the financial press has warned of the prospect of a “hung parliament,” with no party capable of forming a majority government. This, they have warned, would mark a continuation of the parliamentary turmoil that has produced no less than five prime ministers in the past five years.

The Greens have responded by declaring their willingness to form a coalition government with Labor. Greens leader, Richard Di Natale and Adam Bandt, the federal member for Melbourne, have both issued appeals to Labor, declaring that a unity government would ensure a “stable and effective parliament.”

The corporate elite, however, is fearful that a minority government would be unable to implement the sweeping cuts it is demanding to education, healthcare, and every area of social spending. Beneath its editorial on Albanese, the *Daily Telegraph* featured pledges from Turnbull and Labor Leader Bill Shorten that they “solemnly promise not to enter a deal, alliance...or power sharing agreement with the Greens...if there is a hung parliament.”

Underlying the concerns over further political instability is the recognition that millions of ordinary people are deeply hostile to the existing political establishment and increasingly receptive to an alternative.

Labor is particularly fearful that the Greens will be

the initial beneficiaries of mounting opposition in the inner-city electorates of Sydney and Melbourne to the persecution of refugees, the bipartisan assault on healthcare and education, and Australian participation in US-led wars. Referencing unnamed Labor Party “insiders,” the *Telegraph* noted that Labor had diverted campaign resources to Grayndler and the seat of Sydney, currently held by Deputy Labor Leader Tanya Plibersek, in a bid to stave off Greens challengers.

Seeking to placate the mass hostility to Labor, Albanese and other Labor candidates in marginal seats have sought to distance themselves from the ALP’s support for the brutal repression of asylum seekers, including the consignment of refugees to virtual concentration camps on Nauru and Manus Island in the Pacific.

Albanese told the *Telegraph* that greater “humanity” should be shown towards refugees, and said that he would “work harder” to relocate asylum-seekers to countries such as Canada. Nevertheless, he repeated the denunciations of “people smugglers” that have served as the primary pretext for the brutal measures being implemented against refugees. The hypocrisy of Albanese’s comments is further underscored by the fact that he was a prominent minister in the Gillard Labor government, which reopened the detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island.

Albanese’s political posturing is in line with Labor’s phony populist election campaign, which has featured demagogic denunciations of “Malcolm’s millionaires” and promises of limited social reforms, alongside pledges to the corporate elite that a future Labor government would “balance the budget,” i.e., implement major austerity cuts.

In an address to the National Press Club yesterday, Labor’s shadow treasurer Chris Bowen acknowledged that the forecasts for economic growth, upon which Labor’s election promises are premised, grossly understated the depth of the economic crisis confronting Australian capitalism. He said that a Labor government would bring down a mini-budget within three months of the election, in a clear signal to the corporate elite that Labor’s promises are purely for show, and will be abandoned immediately after the campaign.

Under conditions of mass alienation from the entire political establishment, the coming together of

Albanese, a decades-long leader of the Labor “left,” and Rupert Murdoch’s *Daily Telegraph*, in a common campaign against “socialism,” has a broader significance.

With the collapse of the mining boom, the claims that Australia was able to escape the global financial crisis of 2008–09 have been utterly discredited. Millions of workers are facing the consequences, in the form of widespread job-cutting and stepped-up attacks on wages and conditions, which come on top of three decades of widening social inequality. At the same time, popular opposition to the bipartisan support for the country’s involvement in US led-military interventions, and mounting concerns over the destruction of basic democratic rights under the rubric of the “war on terror,” find no expression in the official political establishment.

In the United States, similar processes have seen Bernie Sanders win mass support in the Democratic primaries for the presidential elections, on the basis of his false claims to be a “democratic socialist.” Likewise, in the UK they have seen Jeremy Corbyn, who describes himself as a socialist, win the leadership of the British Labour Party. The *Daily Telegraph*’s ferocious red-baiting demonstrates, in its own way, that socialism is also in the air in Australia.

Young people and workers looking for a genuine socialist alternative to war, austerity and the turn to authoritarian forms of rule will not find it in the Greens. Their appeals to form a coalition government with Labor make crystal clear that they are a capitalist party, seeking to channel mounting opposition behind the official parliamentary set-up. Instead, all those interested in socialism should throw their support behind the campaign of the Socialist Equality Party, the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, whose candidates are the only ones providing a voice for the opposition of millions of ordinary people to all the parties of big business, and advancing a socialist and revolutionary program that represents the interests of the working class.



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