

Australia: Katter video depicts him killing Labor and Coalition opponents

Richard Phillips**22 June 2016**

Last Wednesday, federal parliamentarian Bob Katter, a right-wing demagogue who postures as anti-establishment, posted an election video featuring him shooting two men dressed in Labor Party and Liberal-National Coalition t-shirts.

The vile advertisement, which is pitched to extreme right-wing and fascistic elements, is an incitement to violence against anyone who opposes Katter's nationalist agenda. It begins with two men, with stockings covering their faces, erecting a sign that reads "Australia for Sale." Katter appears in his trademark cowboy hat and pulls down the sign.

The two men re-erect the sign and Katter returns writing "Not" in large black letters. He is then shown smirking and blowing smoke from the barrel of a revolver. The camera zooms back to show the bodies of the two men lying face up in the dirt (see video).

The ad is a clear indication of the politically reactionary atmosphere being whipped up not just by Katter and his ilk, but by layers of the Coalition, Labor and the unions that promote Australian nationalism, anti-Chinese xenophobia and the vilification of refugees and immigrants. The video has been praised by backward layers who have posted their own fascistic suggestions on Katter's Facebook page as to who should be targeted for attack.

Katter's video was posted on June 15, just after the mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. A few days later, British Labour MP Jo Cox was brutally murdered by Tommy Mair, a former psychiatric patient with extreme right-wing views. Mair reportedly shouted "Britain First" during the attack.

Responding to criticism of the timing of the ad, Katter said his video was "brilliant" and "screamingly funny satire." He absurdly claimed to know nothing about the Florida shootings—"I don't follow the media...

haven't read the newspapers in ages"—and to present himself as the victim. Katter declared that he was being subjected to a "Spanish Inquisition" and refused to take down the advertisement. "We're not bending the knee to the politically correct brigade, now or in the future," he declared.

The media has all but dropped the story. Commentators did not denounce its encouragement of violent attacks and the potential for far-right individuals, galvanised by Katter's election advertisement, to carry them out. It was largely treated as a quirky event to fill a spot in the coverage of an election campaign that has been met with widespread disinterest, alienation and hostility.

One does not have to imagine the response if a youth of Middle Eastern or Muslim background had posted an Internet video of a staged shooting or beheading. Widespread police raids and arrests, accompanied by lurid accounts and condemnations in the media, have already taken place for far less.

Such a video would have been immediately taken down and the individual detained, arrested and charged with planning to commit a terrorist act. He or she would have been demonised in the media and the incident exploited to call for even more repressive anti-terror laws.

Katter's virulent denunciation of anyone who "sells Australia" is part and parcel of a broader right-wing agenda. A former minister in the Queensland National Party state government, Katter became a federal National Party MP in 1993. He broke from the Nationals in 2001, opposing its support for the deregulation of Australian agricultural and other industries. He currently heads the Katter's Australia Party (KAP).

KAP is one of the scores of third-party formations

and so-called independents that have emerged in the past decade calling for protectionism, more repressive immigration controls and greater military spending. They promote a return to various forms of national economic regulation that have long ago been rendered obsolete by the globalisation of production. The KAP also espouses so-called Christian values and homophobia.

In April 2013, Katter called for 100 new and larger navy patrol vessels to monitor refugee boats attempting to enter Australian waters. Each one, he said, should be equipped with six cruise missiles and have intercept capacity. This demand dovetailed with the military build-up in waters to the north of Australia under both Coalition and Labor governments as part of the Obama administration's "pivot" to Asia and preparations for war against China.

In a bid to enhance the Coalition's chances in Katter's seat of Kennedy, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull issued a mild criticism of the video as being "in the worst of taste" and called on him to apologise and take down the ad.

Labor Party leader Bill Shorten and the trade unions, however, have said nothing. The silence is not accidental. In Kennedy, Labor is preferencing the Greens and then Katter, ahead of the Coalition, boosting his chances of retaining the seat.

Katter's policies are drawn from the same foul nationalist traditions as those of Labor and the unions. His opposition to foreign imports, the sale of land to foreign investors and support for even more restrictive immigration controls are endorsed in one form or another by all the unions.

Indeed, the Electrical Trades Union (ETU), the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), the Queensland Council of Trade Unions and others, maintain close relations with Katter. In early 2011, Katter met with senior ETU and CFMEU officials in Victoria and was allowed to address meetings of building workers. The unions provided funds and backed Katter's party in recent federal and Queensland state elections.

ETU Victorian secretary Dean Mighell, widely promoted as "left-wing," hailed Katter. He told members that "Bob Katter has got a great view on representation rights for working people. And given the opportunity, people should lend him an ear... we need

people like Bob Katter helping us out." In 2013, Mighell, after resigning as ETU state secretary, became an "industrial relations consultant" for the KAP.

In June 2013, Solidarity, a pseudo-left state-capitalist group defended the union bureaucracy's manoeuvres with Katter. It described him as a "conviction politician" and said the "starting point" of the ETU and CFMEU's relationship with Katter was "not racism or homophobia, but opposition to neo-liberalism."

Two points need to be made. Firstly, so-called neo-liberalism, or the integration of Australia into global economic processes, was initiated by the Hawke and Keating Labor governments between 1983 and 1996, with the backing of the unions. It had a devastating impact on the living standards of workers and small businesses creating the disaffection and alienation on which demagogues like Katter prey.

Secondly, the protectionism promoted by Katter and his union allies has nothing to do with defending the interests of the working class. Rather it is aimed at tying workers to weaker, less competitive sections of business and is accompanied by demands for further sacrifice from their workforces.

More fundamentally, the whipping up of nationalism and protectionism is aimed at driving a wedge between Australian workers and their real ally—the working class around the world. The only progressive alternative to all of the capitalist parties including those of the extreme right is the fight to unify the international working class in the struggle for workers' governments which place the banks and basic industries under social ownership and the democratic control of the working class.

The authors also recommend:

Katter's Australian Party: A nationalist political trap
[26 July 2013]

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