

Australian federal election

Grayndler candidate Jim Casey and the fake-left wing of the Greens

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In the opening stages of the Australian federal election, controversy emerged over Jim Casey, the Greens candidate for the seat of Grayndler in Sydney's inner-west. Labor incumbent and former deputy prime minister Anthony Albanese denounced Casey as a "Trotskyist" who wanted to "overthrow capitalism." On May 11, the Murdoch-owned *Daily Telegraph* published a front-page appeal for voters to "save our Albo," and declared that Casey was a "Greens extremist" committed to "class war."

The basis of the "accusations" against Casey was that he is a former member of the now-defunct International Socialist Organisation, which falsely claimed to be socialist. Casey still employs phony leftist rhetoric as a political representative of the Greens and a senior union bureaucrat, and even occasionally describes himself as a "socialist."

Throughout the campaign, however, Casey has been at pains to stress that his politics are "not radical," but are based on "common sense" and "a bit of egalitarianism."

In his most explicit remarks, in an interview with *Buzzfeed* in early June, Casey insisted that he opposed the socialist reorganisation of society. "I don't think anyone wants a revolution. Revolutions are dangerous, difficult, bloody, hard thing," he said. The Greens candidate added that he wanted "systemic social change" that was "done peacefully."

In other words, Casey is promoting the fraud that the interests of working people can be advanced within the framework of the profit system following more than three decades of social regression presided over by Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition alike, in line with deep-going austerity measures by capitalist governments around the world.

His comments, aimed at placating the Murdoch press and reassuring the ruling elite that they have nothing to fear from even the most "left-wing" of Greens representatives, were in line with the election campaign being waged by the Greens nationally.

Since Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced the double dissolution election on May 8, prominent Greens, including the party's leader, Richard Di Natale have called for a Labor-Green coalition government, in which the Greens

would take ministerial positions. Di Natale and the Greens are presenting themselves as the party of "parliamentary stability."

This is under conditions of an unprecedented crisis of the two-party system and mass hostility to Labor, the Coalition and the entire parliamentary establishment. According to polling, it is likely that neither major party will secure sufficient seats to form a majority government in their own right. The corporate press is filled with commentaries bemoaning the prospect of a hung parliament and a Senate without a clear majority. The fear in ruling circles is that such a state of affairs will prevent the imposition of the wholesale assault on social spending and living standards being demanded by finance capital.

Di Natale and Greens have made clear their willingness to step into the breach and impose the dictates of the corporate elite. They have repeatedly invoked the Greens-backed minority Labor government between 2010 and 2013 as a model to be emulated. That government carried out sweeping cuts to education, healthcare and welfare, and aligned Australia with the US military build-up in the Asia-Pacific against China.

In this context, the Greens' pre-selection of an individual with Casey's political history for a seat they have a prospect of winning from a key Labor leader, has a broader significance. It highlights the pernicious role of a layer of Greens leaders, who use their ties to pseudo-left organisations, such as Socialist Alliance and Socialist Alternative, along with the corporatised trade unions and various "community groups," to promote a capitalist party, which is moving rapidly to the right, as a "progressive alternative."

Chief among such representatives is Lee Rhiannon of the NSW Greens, who is standing for re-election to the Senate. Rhiannon was a member of the Socialist Party of Australia, the Stalinist organisation that was formed on the basis of support for the Kremlin's brutal suppression of the 1968 Czechoslovakian uprising. She is a fixture at various protests over cuts to education, the persecution of refugees and other social issues, at which she invariably seeks to channel discontent behind the official parliamentary set-up.

Adam Bandt, one of the party's most prominent figures, who was elected to the House of Representatives in the seat of

Melbourne in 2013, claimed to be a “Marxist” during his student years in the 1990s, before working as an industrial lawyer for a firm with close ties to the unions. Scott Ludlam, Greens senator for Western Australia, likewise has relations with Socialist Alliance and other protest groups. A host of lesser-known state-based figures within the Greens have similar political histories.

The composition of the Greens is a result of its origins. Founded as a national organisation in 1991, the Greens were an amalgam of various state-based environmental groups that developed over the preceding two decades.

Amid the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, a layer of the middle class, which had previously proclaimed some allegiance to socialism, moved rapidly to the right. Members of the Communist Party, and various middle-class radicals, including in the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP, the predecessor of Socialist Alliance) gravitated towards the pro-capitalist and environmentalist nostrums of the Greens, which explicitly rejected the revolutionary role of the working class and the fight for socialism. A clear expression of this realignment was the DSP’s decision in 1990 to establish a new publication entitled *Green Left Weekly*.

The amalgamation of the state-based organisations, spearheaded by Bob Brown and the Tasmanian Greens, was not without frictions. Ongoing tensions between the wing of the party represented by Brown, and subsequent leaders, Christine Milne and Richard Di Natale, on the one hand, and the so-called “left” of the Greens, particularly in NSW, have been widely publicized.

Nevertheless, the Caseys and Rhiannons coexist with the openly pro-capitalist representatives such as finance and defence spokesman Peter Whish-Wilson, an entrepreneur and former Wall Street banker. There is a division of labour. While figures such as Whish-Wilson signal the Greens’ pro-business and militarist program to the ruling elite, Casey, Rhiannon and others seek to broaden the party’s base with populist phrasemongering, largely among affluent layers of the upper middle class.

Figures such as Casey and Rhiannon are consciously seeking to head-off a developing political radicalisation among millions of workers and young people. They have closely followed developments throughout Europe and the United States, which have seen the rise of left-populist individuals and parties benefiting from a collapse of the traditional parties of the ruling elite.

In the United States, Bernie Sanders won mass support in the Democratic primaries for US president on the basis of his claims to be a “democratic socialist.” He is now seeking to direct the millions of young people who supported his campaign behind the candidacy of Hilary Clinton, a war criminal who personifies the status quo. Similarly in Britain, self-proclaimed “socialist” Jeremy Corbyn won the leadership of the British Labor Party in 2015 through an outpouring of

hostility to the political heirs of Tony Blair.

Most significant is the experience of Greece. Support for PASOK, the equivalent of the Labor Party, collapsed as it implemented the austerity dictates of the European ruling elite. In January, 2015, Syriza, the “Coalition of the Radical Left” won national elections by claiming to oppose the social cuts supported by all of the capitalist parties.

Backed by the pseudo-left internationally, Syriza betrayed its election promises, striking a deal with European authorities within a month of gaining office. In July, the government repudiated the results of a referendum in which 62 percent of the population voted against further austerity measures. The government has participated in the brutal Europe-wide persecution of refugees, while gutting pensions, healthcare, education and other essential services. Last year, Rhiannon and Socialist Alliance organised a forum to promote the creation of a Syriza-type party in Australia, which Rhiannon declared would be centred on the Greens.

The Greens are preparing to enforce a social reversal no less severe than that imposed on the Greek working class by Syriza. Whichever parties form government, they will likely be reliant on the Greens—either as coalition partners, or in guaranteeing a majority in the Senate. In the event of a Labor-Green coalition, Casey, Rhiannon and their colleagues will serve as the defenders of, and apologists for, a government that will carry out the deepest spending cuts in the post-World War II period. It will also escalate Australia’s involvement in US-led wars in the Middle East and Washington’s military preparations in the Asia-Pacific for conflict with China.

The Socialist Equality Party alone is warning of the role of the Greens and its pseudo-left wing, as part of its fight to build a revolutionary leadership of the working class, based on a socialist and internationalist program, in preparation for the mass social struggles against the next government and its program of war and austerity.

To contact the SEP and get involved, visit our web site or Facebook page.

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