

Québec Solidaire courts and flatters Aussant even as he rejoins Parti Québécois

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The pseudo-left Québec Solidaire (QS) recently revealed that it had been in intense discussions with former investment banker and Parti Québécois (PQ) legislator Jean-Martin Aussant about assuming a leading role in QS almost until the very day he rejoined the PQ.

Aussant quit the PQ frontbench in 2011, saying it was not pursuing Quebec independence vigorously enough. Soon after he founded and briefly led Option Nationale.

Amir Khadir, one of the three QS legislators in the Quebec National Assembly, said: “We were interested in Jean-Martin Aussant. It was reciprocal and until the last minute, he weighed all the options ... We needed him so we could expand our reach.”

Even after Aussant announced he was rejoining the big business PQ and hoped to be its candidate in a predominantly working-class east-end Montreal riding, QS praised him effusively.

“Jean-Martin,” said Khadir, “made the choice that seemed the most appropriate. I do not share this opinion, but I hope he succeeds! ... He is a person of great quality, an eloquent and convincing *indépendantiste*.” Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, a second QS legislator and the party’s official “male spokesperson,” said he still has “respect and affection” for Aussant.

Nadeau-Dubois, who came to political prominence as CLASSE’s principal spokesperson during the 2012 Quebec student strike, has forged close ties to Aussant. Immediately on joining QS last year, Nadeau-Dubois said he would work to fuse it with Option Nationale, which Aussant led until he “retired” from politics after losing his National Assembly seat in 2012. In 2016, Aussant and Nadeau-Dubois led a nationalist “popular consultation” across Quebec, “*Il faut qu’on se parle*” (We Need to Talk.)

Nadeau-Dubois described Aussant’s rejection of Quebec Solidaire’s overtures in favour of the PQ as a return to his “natural political family.”

Quebec Solidaire’s courtship of Aussant and continuing fondness for him even after he jilted it at the altar shows yet again that the pseudo-left QS is an integral part of the “sovereignist” or pro-Quebec independence “family.” Led by the PQ, it represents the faction of the Quebec ruling class that sees the creation of a third imperialist state in North America as means of forging closer ties to Washington and Wall Street and better pursuing the offensive against the working class.

QS plays an important role in the “sovereignist family,” providing a “left” cover for the PQ and *indépendantiste* nationalism—which has been widely discredited in the working class because of the PQ’s long association with austerity and promotion of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim chauvinism.

Quebec Solidaire’s attempted recruitment of Aussant was entirely in line with its merger late last year with Option Nationale. The latter had long attacked QS for placing too much emphasis on “social questions” and had only ever reproached the PQ for not doing more to promote independence.

At the December congress at which QS voted to merge with ON and in part to satisfy its marriage partner, QS moved still further right. This included: diluting its vague promises of social reform in favor of a stronger emphasis on Quebec independence; declaring itself a “fiscally responsible” party, as part of its efforts to convince the Quebec elite that it is ready for a role in government; and signaling its readiness to ally with Parti Québécois, before or after next October’s election, in the name of ending “hard right” rule and advancing the struggle for Quebec sovereignty.

QS would have preferred that Aussant join its ranks. But their well-wishes and praise of him as a fellow “progressive” show that the QS leadership regards his return to the PQ, and likely re-emergence as a major figure in it, favorably. It provides QS with a further

“friend” in the PQ leadership and another potential avenue for bringing about “convergence” with this big business party.

Defying the wishes of the party leadership, the delegates at the May 2017 QS congress rejected a proposed electoral pact with the PQ for the October 1, 2018 election. This was entirely for tactical reasons. The delegates feared too open an alliance with the Parti Québécois would harm the organization’s efforts to present itself as a “left” party and hinder their common efforts to revive support for the reactionary program of Quebec independence.

While rejecting an electoral alliance with the PQ, the May 2017 QS Congress voted in favour of initiating merger discussions with the ON, itself a nationalist split-off from the PQ.

As the WSWs has repeatedly explained, Quebec Solidaire’s courtship and marriage with ON, which was pursued under the banner of “uniting” the pro-sovereignist forces, is an unmistakable overture and bridge toward the PQ.

Aussant’s return to the PQ was no doubt motivated by personal ambition. Reportedly he was unhappy that one of the three current QS legislators would not step aside to allow him to seek election in a QS “safe seat.” But fear that the PQ is at risk of suffering its worst ever result in the coming election likely also played an important role in his decision.

Aussant was a political disciple of former PQ leader Jacques Parizeau. A *haute-bourgeois* who led the PQ’s “hardline” pro-independence faction until his death, Parizeau resigned as Quebec premier in 1995 after denouncing “money and the ethnic vote” for the defeat of the pro-sovereignist forces in that year’s Quebec referendum.

For his part, Jean-François Lisée, the PQ’s current beleaguered leader enthusiastically welcomed Aussant’s decision to stand for the PQ in October’s election, saying: “It is certain that the arrival of Mr. Aussant consolidates and gives credibility to our message.”

As with several social democratic parties and parties associated with social democracy, such as PASOK in Greece, the SPD in Germany and the Socialist Party in France, support for the PQ is in free fall. It is currently mired in third place in the opinion polls with about 20 percent support, far behind the right-wing populist Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), which leads largely by default.

The evolution of the parties that QS considers its

“models”—Syriza in Greece or La France Insoumise (LFI) of Jean-Luc Mélenchon—clearly exposes the true anti-worker character of QS. It seeks to channel the opposition of workers to austerity and war behind the Parti Québécois and the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy, while dividing Quebec workers from the struggles of workers in the rest of Canada and internationally.

Syriza, which was elected by appealing to the deep anger of the Greek masses at the social devastation imposed by the Greek bourgeoisie and global capital, immediately upon its election joined forces with a right-wing, nationalist, anti-immigrant party. Greece’s Syriza-led government went on to impose austerity measures even worse than its predecessors, while scapegoating refugees.

Mélenchon, a former Socialist Party minister, also used anti-austerity and anti-war rhetoric in the 2017 French presidential elections; then refused to mobilize workers and young people against the illegitimate second-round choice between the neo-liberal banker Emmanuel Macron and the neo-fascist Marine Le Pen. Recently, LFI has endorsed Macron’s plans to spend hundreds of billions of Euros augmenting the firepower of the French military. (See: A tool of imperialism: Unsubmissive France calls for strengthening the army). Québec Solidaire, meanwhile, has remained all but completely silent on the Canadian government’s 10-year 70 percent hike in military spending and Ottawa’s role in Washington’s major military-strategic offensives around the world.

The warm relations that QS has developed with Aussant, as well as its political affinity to, and ties with, Syriza and LFI underscore that this party of privileged sections of the upper-middle class stands ready to impose the dictates of the financial elite against working people—whether in a QS government or a government coalition with the PQ.

The author recommends :

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