

Australian Greens instigate right-wing witch-hunt against own Senator

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Over the past week, federal Greens Senator Lidia Thorpe has been the target of a right-wing witch-hunt over the revelation that she briefly dated a man named Dean Martin in early 2021 while she was a member of parliament.

Martin has never been convicted of a serious crime. He was, for a number of years, a prominent member of the Rebels Motorcycle Club serving for a time as its president. But Thorpe has stated, without anyone contradicting her, that Martin had ended his involvement with the club years before he met the Greens Senator in the context of activism related to Aboriginal issues.

Thorpe has similarly not been accused of breaking any laws or even of contravening parliamentary regulations. Those attacking her have noted that she was on a Senate law enforcement committee when she was in a relationship with Martin, but no one has alleged that she disclosed confidential information to him or in any way compromised the activities of the committee.

In other words, the furore is a politically-motivated beat up, based on intrusions into Thorpe's private, personal life which had no bearing on her activities as a political figure. The attack on the Greens Senator has all of the typical characteristics of such takedown operations: prurience, nasty insinuation and punishment without any form of due process, or in this case, even a concrete allegation of wrongdoing.

The most significant aspect of the scandal, however, is that it was set in motion by sections of the Greens, Thorpe's own party, and has been facilitated by its parliamentary leadership.

According to media reports, members of Thorpe's staff became aware of her relationship with Martin while it was underway, and demanded that she inform the office of Greens leader Adam Bandt. When she declined to do so, the unidentified staff members contacted Bandt's office themselves, but it appears that he was not directly

informed.

Then one or more of the staffers went to the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service, an independent body that investigates serious incidents in parliament, and disclosed the relationship with Martin. This ensured that the issue of the relationship went beyond the Greens' internal channels. Last week, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) reported on the complaint, making the matter public.

Within hours, Bandt had issued a statement, condemning Thorpe as "irresponsible" and compelling her resignation as Greens deputy leader in the Senate. He specifically singled out her failure to disclose the relationship to the party leadership as the primary issue. But his office had been notified, long before the ABC report, by the staffers who were at loggerheads with Thorpe.

Even more striking was the fact that Bandt told the media that he had immediately contacted the Australian Federal Police, after the media report, to discuss Thorpe's relationship. Bandt said he had made the contact to "see if they have any concerns with respect to disclosure of information" but "at the moment no one is suggesting that that happened."

That may be the case now. But it is clear if the Australian Federal Police, or any of the country's other highly politicised intelligence and policing agencies, launched an investigation into Thorpe, they would have the full cooperation of the Greens leadership.

The revelations have been fodder to the far-right, the corporate media and the Labor government, all of which have previously attacked Thorpe, who is identified with opposition to police violence and the oppression of Aboriginal people.

Liberal Party leader Peter Dutton declared his intention to refer Thorpe to parliament's privileges committee. She preempted that by referring herself. Senior Labor

government ministers have condemned Thorpe and the Green's "irresponsibility," while the Murdoch media has run one sensationalised article after another on the issue.

All of this was the predictable outcome of the actions of elements within the Greens and of Bandt. The affair has further entrenched a precedent where political figures can be viciously attacked, based on innuendo and irrelevant gossip about their personal lives. Such scandals are invariably used to shift official politics further to the right and to divert attention from the pressing issues facing working people, including the bipartisan onslaught on social conditions and Australia's central role in the US-led drive to war against Russia and China.

These sort of scandals, moreover, are always a means by which unstated political agendas are fought out. There can be little doubt that the internally-launched attack on Thorpe, ostensibly over her relationship to Martin, was connected to factional divisions within the Greens.

Thorpe, who has been described as a "firebrand," has previously advanced positions at odds with Bandt and the Greens leadership.

Bandt and the Greens have "welcomed" the Labor government's policy of creating an Aboriginal "Voice" to parliament. The body could only be created by a successful referendum. It would function as an advisory entity, making representations to parliament and the government on indigenous issues.

As the WWSWS has explained, the "Voice" is a reactionary fraud. It will do nothing to alleviate the horrific social crisis confronting broad sections of the Aboriginal population. Instead, its purpose, as with all identity politics, is to elevate a privileged layer of upper middle-class Aboriginals, who will be further integrated into the capitalist state that oppresses working class Aboriginal people. And it is intended to drive a wedge between Aboriginals, the majority of whom make up the most oppressed section of the working class, and other sections of workers.

Thorpe has repeatedly criticised the Voice, describing it as a "waste of money" that could have been used to improve conditions in Aboriginal communities. Her opposition to the proposal is rooted in the same reactionary identity politics as those supporting the Voice. Thorpe has not criticised the policy from the standpoint that it divides the working class. Instead she has warned that it could undermine "Aboriginal sovereignty," and has called for a "treaty" between Aboriginal people and the government.

In other words, there are no principled differences

between Thorpe and other Greens leaders. They are all steeped in middle-class politics and hostile to the fight for a unified socialist movement of the entire working class.

Thorpe has recently stated that she will not campaign against the Voice and has said that she does "not want to be a thorn in the side" of the Albanese Labor government.

Her previous statements, however, no doubt cut across the attempts by Bandt and the Greens leadership to deepen their collaboration with the right-wing Labor government, even as it imposes major austerity measures, cuts taxes for the ultra-wealthy, deepens Australia's frontline role in war preparations and rejects any measures on climate change that would impinge on the fortunes of the major coal and energy corporations.

Calls for a coalition with Labor were at the centre of the Greens' campaign for the May federal election. Time and again, Bandt and other senior MPs insisted that the Greens were a "responsible party," ready to take a more prominent role in the corridors of power.

They harked back to their role in propping up the minority Gillard Labor government, from 2010-2013. That administration carried out sweeping attacks on the working class, deepening the pro-market degradation of healthcare, education and disability services and kicking hundreds of thousands of single parents off their benefits. It aligned Australia with the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia," in preparation for war with China and joined in the persecution of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange for exposing US-led war crimes.

Thorpe has never differentiated herself from this record, or from the Greens' continuous overtures to Labor, and at times even the Liberal-Nationals. There is little doubt, though, that she has been a "thorn in the side" of Bandt's attempts to transform the Greens into a fully-fledged party of capitalist government.

The affair has again underscored the thoroughly right-wing character of the Greens.



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