

The Greens' Adam Bandt promotes a ruling coalition with Labor

By Patrick Kelly
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A “red-green” coalition government of the Labor Party and Greens has been enthusiastically promoted in the course of the federal election campaign by Adam Bandt, the sole Greens representative in the House of Representatives.

Bandt has rushed to reassure layers within the ruling elite that are deeply concerned about the prospect of a hung parliament after the July 2 election, by pledging the Greens’ commitment to a “stable” and “responsible” parliament.

On May 9, the day after Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced the election, Bandt made multiple media appearances to promote a Labor-Greens coalition. On the Australian ABC television “Q&A” program, Bandt declared that Turnbull’s Liberal Party had “reprehensible” policies. At the same time, he endorsed the former minority Labor government of Julia Gillard, which governed between 2010 and 2013 with the Greens’ crucial support.

“I would like to see Greens [again] working with Labor,” Bandt said. “I think the big question will be whether Labor wants to do it. We’re up for it, and I think you’d want an agreement that delivers a stable and effective and progressive parliament.”

The terms “stable” and “effective” parliament are nothing but code words for the formation of government able and willing to implement the agenda of the ruling class of militarism and austerity.

To emphasise this point, Bandt lauded Gillard’s term in office as “one of the most productive periods in Australian history.” His promotion of the Gillard government’s record underscores the fraud of the Greens’ claims to be a “progressive” party. Between 2010 and 2013, with the Greens’ backing, the Labor Party implemented sweeping right-wing measures against the working class and most vulnerable members

of society.

Against refugees, to take just one example, Gillard went far beyond the former Howard Liberal-National government’s “offshore processing” regime, working to dump asylum seekers in East Timor and Malaysia, and then detaining refugees indefinitely on Nauru and Manus Island, all in blatant violation of international law.

The Greens likewise backed the single most important measure of the Gillard government—its endorsement of US imperialism’s “pivot” to the Asia-Pacific. When Barack Obama visited Canberra in 2011 and announced his provocative plan to maintain Washington’s regional hegemony by militarily encircling and diplomatically isolating China, Bandt applauded and rushed to be the first parliamentarian to shake the president’s hand after the speech.

Five years later, the US is preparing for outright war against China. The Labor opposition has positioned itself as the most pro-US and militarist party, condemning the Turnbull government for failing to deploy Australian military assets into Chinese-claimed territories in the South China Sea. The Greens’ promotion of a possible coalition government with Labor in these circumstances underlines the party’s complicity in the preparations for war.

Bandt has repeatedly invoked the German “red-green” ruling coalition between 1998 and 2005 as a model to emulate. He promotes the supposed environmental achievements of the SPD-Green government—while saying nothing about that government’s right-wing economic and foreign policy agendas.

The seven-year “red-green” government in Germany presided over a sharp rise in poverty and low-wage and precarious employment through the “Hartz IV” laws,

which were justified on the basis of maintaining the economy's "international competitiveness." The measures included eliminating welfare payments for those unemployed longer than 12 months, and compelling job seekers to accept any position offered on any terms. This created the largest low-wage sector in Western Europe.

The SPD-Green government's most notorious initiative was its participation in NATO's bombardment of Yugoslavia in 1999. Germany's first overseas combat operation since the defeat of Nazism was ideologically promoted as a "humanitarian operation" by the Greens' leader and foreign minister Joska Fischer.

Fischer's personal evolution, from "street fighting radical" to spokesman for imperialist war, finds echoes in Bandt's career.

The Greens' MP entered politics via the middle class pseudo-left. In the mid-1990s he was a student at Murdoch University in Western Australia and a member of the Left Alliance faction within the National Union of Students. At the time, Bandt described the group as involving "different tendencies in the organisation, as the name suggests, ranging from communists to radical feminists to anarchists to social democrats." Bandt himself posted messages to an email list with the signature "towards an anti-capitalist, anti-social democratic, internationalist movement." His personal web page featured a large hammer and sickle image, and links to the writings of Marx and Engels. A 1995 web post described the Greens as a "bourgeois" party.

Fifteen years later, after working as an industrial lawyer in the interim, Bandt stood for the Greens and won the lower house seat of Melbourne.

Within the Greens, Bandt serves as one of several fake left figures, together with the ex-Stalinist New South Wales Senator Lee Rhiannon and the Greens' candidate for Grayndler in this election, the ex-state capitalist Jim Casey. The Greens' leadership of Richard Di Natale has held open the possibility of forming a coalition with either Labor or the Liberal-National Coalition, but Bandt is clearly oriented to Labor.

Bandt promotes the fraud that there are significant policy differences between the Liberal and Labor parties, and that the latter remains a "left" organisation.

In an essay published this year *How a book Progressive in Australia: Labor or Green?* Bandt declared that "there is something significant about Labor that doesn't apply to the Liberals—many in Labor consider it a party of the left and there are strong connections to unions and community groups."

Bandt's reference to Labor's connections to the trade unions points to one issue concerning the Melbourne MP as the Greens weigh up the merits of a possible coalition with Labor against one with the Coalition. His election campaigns since 2010 have been bankrolled by sections of the trade union bureaucracy, most notably the Electrical Trades Union, which has given Bandt \$300,000 for the 2016 campaign alone. He has also enjoyed the backing of the unions covering construction, firefighters and tertiary education.

The union bureaucrats understand that Labor governments utilise their services more directly as an industrial police agency in driving down wages and tearing up working conditions. The union bureaucracy's concern to defend its own influence and material privileges via the Labor Party is a factor behind Bandt's reluctance to go along with a Greens' coalition with the Liberals.

Regardless of these sordid tactical calculations, Bandt and all his parliamentary colleagues are preparing to support, either directly or indirectly, whatever government is formed after the July 2 poll. This will prove to be a government committed to implementing anti-working class measures at home, while preparing for imperialist war abroad. The only genuine alternative to this agenda is the socialist and internationalist program advanced by the Socialist Equality Party.

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

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To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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