

Australian Greens appeal for big business coalition government with Labor

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Greens leader Adam Bandt this week appealed for Labor to accept a formal alliance with the minor party in the event that the next federal election, which must be held by May, results in a minority government.

Under conditions where polling is increasingly disastrous for Labor, and analysts are predicting a hung parliament, Bandt's statements were the clearest yet on the Greens' aspirations to prop-up a Labor government that would continue to advance the interests of the corporations and the ultra-wealthy, along with militarism and war.

Bandt made the comments on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's "Afternoon Briefing" program on Tuesday. They were not throwaway lines, but an outline of the Greens' commitment to ensuring the "stability" of the parliamentary set-up and to collaborating "constructively" with a big business Labor government.

In making his pitch, Bandt pointed to the de facto partnership between his party and the current Labor government on the last day of parliament for the year, November 28. The Greens joined with Labor, facilitating the passage of 31 bills, including 27 for which the Greens directly voted.

What Bandt said about the actual content of the legislative blitz was exceptionally vague and misleading. Contrary to his claims of "progressive" concessions, the Greens aided a flurry of measures boosting the fortunes of the financial elite and providing for repression of the population.

By helping the legislative barrage through their support for a "guillotine" motion suspending most debate, the Greens created the conditions for Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition to join hands in passing sweeping anti-immigrant legislation providing for mass deportations.

The two major parties also passed a ban on children under the age of 16 from accessing social media, which is directed against growing political opposition from this youth demographic and is aimed at increasing government control over online discussion across the board.

The Greens did not vote for those measures. But they knew that they would pass with bipartisan Labor and

Coalition support after the Greens had created the conditions for the legislation to be put to the parliament.

The measures that the Greens did directly support were reactionary as well. The party dropped all of its demands for concessions on housing legislation, including for rent freezes and an end to tax concessions for property developers. It waived through two housing bills, both aimed at ensuring the continuation of the speculative property bubble, one through direct funding to developers who construct private apartments for rent.

The Greens backed Labor's "Future Made in Australia" program, which similarly consists of vast subsidies to major corporations and businesses, on the vague premise that this will revive manufacturing.

The concessions touted by Bandt were incredibly meagre. On the housing front, there was a pledge by Labor to modernise electricity supplies for 50,000 social and public housing properties across the country. State administrations across the country, most of them Labor, are in the process of destroying much of what remains of public housing.

Labor committed that the "Future Made in Australia" program would not fund coal and fossil fuel projects, but it had already signalled that would be the case.

Bandt bemoaned the scuttling of a near-agreement between the Greens and the government on environmental legislation. Greens representatives and Labor Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek had almost finalised the deal to create a national environmental regulatory authority, before Prime Minister Anthony Albanese intervened to terminate the talks. Albanese's veto was a clear signal that even the most nominal impediments to coal and gas projects would not be tolerated by Labor.

Bandt made that obvious point. He also noted that under the current Albanese government, Australia's carbon emissions have increased, as Labor has approved the construction of new fossil fuel developments. But even still, Bandt declared that "we have pushed as hard as we can in this parliament and got some really good outcomes for people."

Aside from the increasing environmental degradation, contrary to the ostensible *raison d'être* of the Greens, the Labor government has overseen the biggest reversal in working-class living standards in decades, with a nine percent decline in average purchasing power over the past three years, one of the sharpest declines in an advanced economy.

On foreign policy, Labor has focussed on completing Australia's transformation into a frontline state for a US-led war against China. That has included pressing ahead with the AUKUS pact for Australia to acquire offensive nuclear-powered submarines, equipping every branch of the military with missiles and other strike capabilities, and vastly expanding US basing arrangements.

Bandt did not mention any of these issues. Nor did he say a word about Labor's continuing political, diplomatic and material support for Israel's mass murder of the Palestinians, which the Greens have previously denounced as a genocide.

Instead, Bandt declared the Greens focus was on keeping Coalition leader "Peter Dutton out," i.e., ensuring a Labor victory at the next election. The Greens would then "push the next government to act on things like health and housing and climate and environment," Bandt stated vaguely.

He indicated his preference for a formal agreement, under which the Greens would prop-up a minority Labor government. Having outlined no concrete demands or conditions, Bandt already signalled the Greens would hold Labor to nothing, stating: "Where there is goodwill and everyone is prepared to say, 'We're not going to get everything we want,' you can compromise."

The argument that a Green/Labor coalition would be a "lesser evil" to a Coalition government is promoted by the Greens and pseudo-lefts, whose counterparts advance similar positions internationally. To argue such a position means denying what has actually happened in the course of this Labor government—that the vast majority of the anti-democratic, anti-working class legislation passed has been by a *de facto* coalition between Labor and the Liberal/Nationals. Whatever differences exist are entirely tactical because on the substantive questions of war, austerity, the attack on immigrants and on democratic rights as a whole they, the two major parties, are as one.

Bandt held up the *de facto* coalition between the Greens and the minority Labor government of Prime Minister Julia Gillard, between 2010 and 2013, as a model to be emulated. That formal alliance, Bandt boasted, had resulted in an increase in dental care for children.

The Greens leader left out several other "highlights." Propped-up by the Greens, Labor persecuted refugees, threw 100,000 single parents off their benefits and joined the US

witch hunt of journalist Julian Assange. The Greens-backed government participated in the US surge in Afghanistan, resulting in documented Australian war crimes, and aligned the country with the US "pivot to Asia," a vast military build-up directed against China.

After then US President Barack Obama announced the "pivot to Asia" from the floor of the Australian parliament in 2011, Greens leader Bob Brown and Bandt were first in line to shake his hand.

Bandt's harking back to the Gillard government shows that the Greens occasional and highly-conditional criticisms of militarism and war are a cynical sham. A Labor-Greens coalition would continue Australia's build-up against China, as well as its backing for the mass slaughter of Palestinians. That is indicated not only by the record, but by the fact that Bandt did not even mention those issues in his pitch for a formal agreement.

The Greens appeal to Labor flows from the party's entire character, as a pro-capitalist outfit committed to the defence of the existing political order and the interests of Australian imperialism that it represents. Bandt pointed to the fracturing of the political establishment, noting that in recent years roughly a third of the electorate has voted for Labor, a third for the Coalition and a third for other parties. That meant a "responsibility" for all parliamentary parties to "work together," he said.

Workers and young people opposed to the genocide, war and massive social inequality should draw the necessary conclusions. The Greens are no alternative, but a line of defence for parliament and the ruling elite. They are bitter opponents of the socialist and revolutionary perspective required to halt the descent into barbarism produced by a bankrupt and outmoded capitalist social order.



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