

Has no one looked at the Green party's policies?

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We still don't know who won the federal election. But we do know one thing: the Greens have emerged as a force in Australian politics.

Nearly 1.5 million Australians voted for the Greens in the Senate. The Greens' share of the vote in the House of Representatives was higher than the Australian Democrats' at their peak in 1990, and for the first time a Green was elected to the House in a general election. The Greens received a 3.7 per cent swing nationally (compared with a 1.9 per cent swing to the Coalition). As they skite on their website, the Greens are likely to hold the Senate balance of power from July next year until at least 2017. The Greens, it would seem, have arrived.

But which Greens?

Bob Brown would like us to think it's the nice, safe, cuddly Greens. He prefaced his first post-election remarks to a dazed Australian public with the portentous news that a baby whale had been born in Tasmania's Derwent River. Since the election, senior Greens have worked hard to disguise their hubris and portray the image of a serious, responsible party that intends to wield its increased power in the national interest.

It's a safe bet, though, that few of the idealistic or disenchanting Australians who entrusted their votes to the Greens spent much time looking at the party's campaign policies. Australia's complaisant mainstream media have not helped. While tut-tutting about the lack of substance during the campaign, they have refrained from exposing the Greens or their policies to serious scrutiny.

When you do stop to read the fine print, a very different picture emerges. It becomes clear pretty quickly that, while garbing themselves in the gentle cloak of environmental conservation to woo naïve inner-city sophisticates, the Greens have a far more ambitious and radical agenda. Sure, they want to bring in feelgood policies such as a carbon tax and ruinous reductions to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, ending the export of woodchips from native forests, and stopping live meat exports.

But that's just the tip of the iceberg. The full Greens agenda amounts to a massive bid to re-engineer and regulate virtually every aspect of Australian economic, political, social and private life. It's a blatant power-grab by a narrow, zealous elite — a self-appointed fun police who want to ban junk food ads from children's TV and lions from circuses.

This was all fairly harmless while the Greens were just another irrelevant minor party. It was easy to dismiss this sort of flakiness, and even laugh at it. But that's all changed. Suddenly the Greens have real political influence and are trying to claim a popular mandate. It's time to take their policies seriously. If many of them were ever implemented, the damage to the nation would be incalculable.

Take national security, the paramount responsibility of any government. The Greens' foreign and defence policies expose the reality that, for all the environmental camouflage, they are really the latest incarnation of the Australian Loopy Left, with all its worst hardline, self-loathing anti-democratic tendencies. Green Senator-elect Lee Rhiannon used to be a member of the Trotskyist Socialist Party, has publicly condemned Julia Gillard for visiting Israel and has been forced to deny that she is a Stalinist.

Another giveaway is the Greens' commitment to reinvigorating 'peace studies' — a stalking horse for the anti-American Left in the Eighties. According to a 2010 Lowy Poll, nearly 90 per cent of Australians regard the ANZUS Treaty as very important or fairly important for Australia's security. Yet the Greens, if we take them at their word, would terminate our most

important alliance — at a time of growing regional strategic uncertainty — ‘unless Australia’s membership can be revised in a manner which is consistent with Australia’s international and human rights obligations’. Presumably the judgment would fall to Amnesty International or the Human Rights Council (which has numbered human rights champions such as China, Cuba and Saudi Arabia among its recent members).

But if they can’t renegotiate ANZUS, the Greens have other plans to wreck the alliance, including an immediate withdrawal from Afghanistan. Already the major parties, in their current weakness, have rewarded the Greens with the promise of a parliamentary debate on Afghanistan. The Labor Left is deeply unhappy with the government’s commitment to what used to be the ‘good war’. The vast majority of new Green votes came from Labor, and a discredited and divided minority Labor government would be even more vulnerable to pressure from the Left as the death toll rises and public support wanes. The fact that Australians have been killed by terrorists trained in and supported from Afghanistan apparently makes little difference to the Greens — who also seek to weaken Australia’s domestic counter- terrorism legislation.

Not content with demolishing ANZUS and making Australians more vulnerable to terrorism, the Greens would reduce our ability to defend ourselves by cutting defence spending, pulling out of missile defence, and supporting the right of ADF personnel to conscientiously object to particular military actions (military service à la carte). After all, who needs a capable defence force when ‘climate change represents the greatest threat to world peace and security’?

The Greens’ ambitions to redesign the international system make Kevin Rudd look like a measured realist. They would push to ‘phase out’ the veto powers of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, require the UN General Assembly to approve economic sanctions (effectively denying the international community one of its few non-military options to stop Iran obtaining nuclear weapons), and establish an international environmental court and a UN Environment Council modelled on the Security Council (BP must be trembling in its boots). They would abolish the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO unless they are radically ‘reformed’ — chiefly by making them more beholden to unelected NGOs. They would encourage the UN Human Rights Council to investigate human rights abuses in Australia and, having weakened our defences, would provoke trouble with our largest neighbour by supporting West Papuan secessionists.

Since the election, Green representatives have been keen to downplay many of the party’s more extreme positions, hinting that not all policies are priorities and that they will be tempered by reality now the Greens suddenly find themselves in a position of influence.

So what are we to believe: what the Greens promised before the election, or what they are saying now?

If the Greens intend to use their newly-gained power to implement their full policy agenda, then that’s a pretty frightening prospect for all Australians.

The alternative is that the Greens are a ruthless, cynical and power-hungry clique for whom pre-election policy principles and commitments are merely a means of differentiating themselves from Labor, attracting gullible voters and getting away with as much as possible by wringing concessions from the governing party — as evidenced by this week’s list of concessions by an increasingly desperate Julia Gillard. The double standard is breathtaking, especially from a party which seeks to prosper from the major parties’ broken promises and unfulfilled expectations. An equally cynical media have been all too happy to go along. So, by entering an expedient preference deal, has the ALP, whose leaders seem blind to the long-term threat the Greens pose to their party.

Fortunately, most Australians aren’t mugs. They may have given the Greens the benefit of the doubt this time. But it’s hard to imagine they will fall for the same brazen bait and switch twice.

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