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TITLE: Neoliberalism's left-wing discourse: Tony Abbott's appropriation of socialist rhetoric

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Neoliberalism has historically had a difficult time appealing, at both a rhetorical and policy level, to popular sentiment. The priorities of neoliberalism – austerity, deregulation, privatization – are often in direct conflict with the desires of the population at large, and as a result, neoliberal policies have consistently been met with resistance of varying degrees in both developed and developing countries. The government of Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott is a good example of an attempt to bridge the gap between government policy and public opinion through the rebranding of government rhetoric with more appealing, in this case, socialist, language. The concepts 'direct action', 'class war', and 'autonomy' either have their roots in, or have been popularized by, various movements and thinkers within the socialist tradition, but are now being utilized by the Abbott government to describe and/or justify neoliberal policies. In each case these terms have been used in a policy area considered the most important for the government: environmental, economic, and education policies. This paper will briefly examine the historical definitions of these terms before describing their specific use by the Abbott government, and finally linking it to a wider process of socialist discourse appropriation by neoliberal governments and thinkers.