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Just days before the last election, Anthony Albanese attacked the Coalition for delivering “tax cuts for the top end of town”. It was not an isolated comment or turn of phrase, it was one he used repeatedly in the lead-up to the 2019 election. Albanese now says “the language used was terrible”, wanting Australians to forget his class war rhetoric and politics of envy. He now says he supports the government’s legislated tax cuts, but no one should believe him.

The real Anthony Albanese is a hard-left party apparatchik who has spent his career arguing for higher taxes, bigger government and attacking what he has called for more than three decades “the top end of town”. No one should be fooled by the small-target strategy of Albanese and Labor. It is a ruse; a tactic to sneak into government only after which Labor will reveal its real plans to attack aspirational Australians. He has never believed in the Coalition’s tax cuts that will abolish a whole tax bracket and see 95 per cent of taxpayers pay a marginal tax rate of no more than 30c in the dollar.

Tax cuts that enable hard-working Australians to keep more of what they earn, like a teacher or a nurse, on \$60,000 a year, who will now be \$6480 better off by the

end of this year as a result of our tax plan compared with 2017-18.

What Albanese really believes in is tax increases, including on retirees, having called the current system “not sustainable” and saying ahead of the last election Labor “deserves more credit for being prepared to take difficult decisions”. Where is that courage now? He also believes in higher taxes on housing, on more than 50,000 teachers and 40,000 nurses who are some of the more than one million aspirational Australia-

lians with an investment property that helps their family get ahead.

Albanese has argued that Labor had a “strong mandate” for its housing tax, superannuation tax, higher-income taxes and tax on family businesses. In fact, when he was specifically asked about Chris Bowen’s notorious comment, “if you don’t like Labor’s policies don’t vote for us”, he didn’t disown it, he endorsed it.

This is because he really believes in higher taxes. He strongly backed the carbon tax, saying he was “determined to get it done” even though a “new tax is never something that is welcome”. He strongly backed the mining tax, demanding mining companies “should pay it”. As infrastructure minister he raised the prospect of

a congestion tax, which he compared with a carbon tax. And most revealing of all, he has been a passionate advocate for death duties, saying at a Labor conference in the early 1990s, “I am pleased to move this resolution ... calling upon the government to consider the imposition of an inheritance tax”. He then sought to justify it by saying “it isn’t a left-wing, terribly socialist, radical proposal”.

Albanese has been reported as saying in 2003 “Australia’s one of the few countries in the OECD without a wealth tax. As a society we need to get our priorities back in balance”. No wonder his own colleague, Andrew Leigh, has written: “The Albanese supporters were known as ‘Bolsheviks’.”

No wonder, too, Albanese feels at home in the company of Jeremy Corbyn, the radical, failed Labour leader whose Trotskyite agenda was emphatically rejected by the British electorate. But it’s not just on tax where he has form as a big government advocate; he also has a history of opposing key economic reforms. Troy Bramston, columnist for The Australian and Labor historian, has written that Albanese in the 1980s and ‘90s opposed key aspects of the Hawke-Keating agenda including deregulation of financial markets, privatisation of government assets and tariff cuts – reforms that boosted the Australian economy’s competitiveness.

Even today, as Albanese seeks to bury his own political history, Australians have received a glimpse of his true economic instincts. In search of a headline, he promised to splash \$6bn of taxpayers’ money to pay people to get the job, even though they’ve already had the job. And he wanted JobKeeper at more than \$2bn a

month to keep going indefinitely, saying that bringing it to an end would have a “devastating impact” as it was “the only support that was keeping the economic roof from crashing down”.

In fact, the opposite is true. Since the end of JobKeeper, and even factoring in the Delta out-

break, the unemployment rate has fallen significantly and more than 100,000 additional people are in work. Such hyperbole from the alternate prime minister exposes his lack of experience in any Treasury portfolio. The Australian economy has shown remarkable resilience in the face of the biggest economic shock since the Great Depression, outperforming all major advanced economies in the world through the pandemic.

Unemployment is around its lowest level in 13 years at 4.6 per cent, compared with 5.7 per cent when Labor left office. We are on the cusp of a historic opportunity to create one million jobs and drive unemployment sustainably into the low-4s for only the second time in the past 50 years.

We have good momentum, but the recovery is not yet locked in. We cannot put Australia’s hard-earned gains at risk by handing over the reins of the economy to the most left-wing Labor leader in decades. A person with a history of attacking aspiration through higher taxes and bigger government. A person who says “I like fighting Tories” rather than uniting Australians. A person who has no plans to grow the economy.

With Albanese, what you see is not what you will get. This leopard has never changed his spots.

Josh Frydenberg is Australia’s Treasurer.