How can a party like Vooruit call itself left-wing with Conner Rousseau as chairman?

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How can a party like Vooruit call itself left-wing with Conner Rousseau as chairman?

Conner Rousseau is the son of Christel Geerts, the new chairman of the socialist mutual health insurance fund Solidaris, which oversees seven health insurance funds, representing 3.2 million members. Vooruit has sold its soul, just like the former party newspaper De Morgen did with the socialist newspapers Volksgazet and Vooruit. After the takeover in 1989, De Morgen positioned itself as a left-liberal quality newspaper for the depillarized generation. What does the combination "Left & Liberal" mean for Conner Rousseau? Worker & Banker?



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Conner Rousseau was put forward by former NATO head Willy Claes. How can you be 'Left' and also Secretary-General of NATO?

□□ The main points of criticism and Vooruit's responses

The question of whether a party like Vooruit can still call itself left-wing with Conner Rousseau at the helm is legitimate and widely debated. The answer is that the party and its chairman certainly do so, but this claim is increasingly being challenged by both political opponents and members of their own base. Paul Magnette's criticism is justified.

□□ Vooruit's defense

Despite this criticism, Conner Rousseau consistently positions the party as left-wing and socialist.

Pragmatic governance: The most commonly used argument is that governing means taking responsibility. According to Rousseau, participating in government, however difficult, is the best way to defend left-wing values and limit social damage.

Modern course: The party emphasizes that with the name change to Vooruit, it has embarked on a process of modernization and professionalization. It presents itself as a party advocating for a "new socialism" and a "new equality," without denying its social democratic roots.

International relations: Belgium's NATO membership is a given for the party. Supporting this military alliance is not seen by the party leadership as incompatible with left-wing politics. In return for its support for defense spending, Vooruit tries to defend social achievements within the government.

The left-wing identity

> Critics, such as the French-speaking sister party PS, openly question whether Vooruit is still a socialist party. This is due to the party's choice to participate in a center-right government led by the N-VA. According to opponents, this makes the party co-responsible for austerity measures that are contrary to left-wing principles.

The role of Christel Geerts

> The appointment of Conner Rousseau's mother as chairman of the socialist mutual health insurance fund Solidaris is seen by opponents as a sign of cronyism. They claim that the socialist pillar is being used to benefit the family and the party.

The influence of Willy Claes

The fact that former Prime Minister Willy Claes put Conner Rousseau forward is striking for two reasons. Firstly, because of Claes' own controversial past (the Agusta bribery affair), and secondly because he was Secretary-General of NATO from 1994 to 1995. For left-wing activists, that organization is a symbol of militarism and imperialism, and they therefore see a candidate put forward by a NATO top official as

a break with the anti-militarist tradition of the left-wing movement.

De Morgen is now published by DPG Media (formerly De Persgroep), one of the most important media groups in the Benelux and owned by the Van Thillo family, one of the richest in the country. The family acquired a 50% stake in Publisher J. Hoste in 1978, which was then the owner of Het Laatste Nieuws. Now it is entirely in the family's hands. Afterwards, together with the Rossel group, they acquired financial newspapers such as De Tijd and L'Echo. De Persgroep originally controlled Medialaan together with the Roularta Media Group (Knack – Trends – KW etc.). Both had 50% of the shares in Medialaan; today DPG Media holds 100% of the shares.

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