

British nationalist Nigel Farage addresses co-thinkers in Australia

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Nigel Farage, the 54-year-old former leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and advocate of Britain's exit from the European Union (EU), has concluded a speaking tour in Australia and New Zealand. Between September 1 and 7, he addressed smaller than anticipated audiences in Perth, Adelaide, Auckland, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

Farage, a former stockbroker and career politician, who has enriched himself while sitting in a highly paid European parliament seat for 27 years, absurdly billed himself as the spokesman for a “global political revolution” in which “the people will bring down the establishment.”

In reality, Farage is a spokesman for a right-wing faction of the British political establishment. UKIP represents a section of the ruling class that opposes the EU because it is economically and politically dominated by Germany. Since UKIP was formed in 1993 by renegades from the Conservative (Tory) Party, it has sought to gain support for a break with the EU by stoking anti-immigrant chauvinism and extreme nationalism.

In the Brexit referendum in 2016, the UKIP campaign centred on blaming the EU for too many “foreigners” entering Britain. UKIP falsely accused immigrants of being responsible for the immense social crisis that has been inflicted on the working class after decades of job destruction, wage slashing and austerity budget-cutting under successive Conservative and Labour governments.

Far from being shunned as a “rebel” against the “establishment,” Farage was sponsored in Australia by corporate interests and welcomed by some of the most prominent powerbrokers within the Liberal Party.

Farage's tour was promoted by Damien Costas, the multi-millionaire publisher of soft-porn magazine

Penthouse. Costas also arranged the December 2017 visit to Australia by rightwing demagogue Milo Yiannopoulos, and paid a group of local nationalists—Mark Latham, Ross Cameron and Andrew Bolt—to appear alongside Yiannopoulos.

At his engagements, Farage drank wine on stage and boasted of his role in the “Yes” vote in the UK to leave the EU and his support for the campaign that led to Donald Trump being elected president of the United States. He railed against immigration, “political correctness” and, with no apparent sense of irony, denounced politicians whom, he claimed, were “riding the gravy train.” His generally well-heeled and older audience applauded his tribute to Margaret Thatcher—one of the most hated figures in Britain due to her ruthless assault against the living standards and democratic rights of the working class—as the last “great” political leader.

On September 7, Farage was invited to address the “*Spectator* Anglo-Australian Forum” alongside former Liberal prime ministers Tony Abbott and John Howard. Rupert Murdoch's Fox cable network broadcast their speeches at the forum, while billionaire Anthony Pratt, Australia's richest individual, contributed to paying the hire cost for an up-market venue overlooking Sydney Harbour.

The red carpet was rolled out for Farage, and Yiannopoulos before him, because their rantings help contribute, however tangentially, to the effort by a section of the Australian establishment to refashion the governing Liberal Party into an extreme right-wing nationalist movement.

Ten years after the 2008 economic breakdown, the ruling elite internationally is responding to clear signs that it faces an eruption of mass struggles by the working class and youth against the staggering extent

of social inequality and the bleak future facing the next generation. The size, powers and operations of police forces and intelligence agencies are being expanded and democratic rights stripped away. Left-wing voices are being censored on the internet in a desperate attempt to stem the international upsurge of interest in a socialist solution to the failure of the capitalist profit system and the danger of war, which arise from the descent into trade conflicts and great power geo-strategic competition.

At the same time, the political and media establishment is doing all it can to promote the most retrograde, racist and nationalist tendencies, and use them to divide, disorientate and, when necessary, suppress growing social discontent and opposition to militarism.

Farage's speaking tour began just one week after this process in Australia entered a new stage. The most right-wing faction of the Liberal Party, led by Abbott, successfully engineered a coup against Malcolm Turnbull, the sitting prime minister, on August 24.

The candidate of the right, Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton failed to win the leadership. The supposed "compromise" leader, former treasurer and now Prime Minister Scott Morrison, has nevertheless moved quickly to propel government policy even further into anti-immigrant xenophobia, appeals to "Christian" values and unconditional backing for the US-led economic and military confrontation with China.

The aim of the shift under Morrison and the Abbott-Dutton faction is to win back to the Liberal and National Party Coalition a sizeable proportion of its former base. These layers have drifted over the past two decades—out of alienation, despair and hostility to the parliamentary establishment—towards a variety of right-wing, anti-immigrant parties, such as Pauline Hanson's One Nation.

Aspiring to emulate the Trump campaign, the Liberal right-wing hopes to mobilise this base to win back government at the forthcoming election, and then proceed with their agenda of sweeping tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, deeper attacks on working-class living standards and democratic rights, and stepped-up preparations for war.

As in the case of Farage in Britain, the ability of the right-wing in Australia to even contemplate gaining a hearing among sections of workers on the basis of its

demagogic lies, is due to the complete abandonment of the working class by its traditional organisations.

Especially from 1983 on, the Australian Labor Party and the trade unions have spearheaded the restructuring of the economy, and the destruction of workers' conditions, in the interests of the banks and corporations. For decades, they have fuelled nationalist accusations that immigrants and guest workers are to blame for unemployment, soaring housing costs and the infrastructure crisis across the country. Labor fully supports the US-Australia alliance, Washington's drive to shatter China as a competitor, and massive spending to boost Australia's military forces, at the direct expense of social services.

The extreme right is seeking to fill the political vacuum, drawing on the assistance of their international co-thinkers. Farage's visit is just the most recent example.

Former Trump advisor and "alt-right" theoretician Steve Bannon, whose xenophobic claims that the "Christian" West is at war with China have been promoted in the Australian media, is likely also preparing a speaking tour. As well, Yiannopoulos has announced he will again address meetings in Australia in late November, this time accompanied by prominent US Fox News talk show host, Ann Coulter.

Reports indicate that the two reactionaries will invite Senator Fraser Anning, from the right-wing Katter Australia, to join them. Anning last month used his maiden speech in the Australian parliament to issue a fascistic rant against Muslims and immigrants, and to call for a return to the racist White Australia policy, under which non-Europeans were denied entry to the country for much of the 20th century.

Hoping to encourage another, even more prominent, visit, Prime Minister Scott Morrison has extended his personal invitation to Donald Trump to travel to Australia at the earliest opportunity.



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