

British fascists join Johnson's Conservative Party

Thomas Scripps
3 January 2020

The character of Boris Johnson's new government has been made clear by the entry of members of the fascist Britain First into the Conservative Party.

On December 18, the group's leaders sent out an email to their membership stating, "If you haven't joined the Conservative Party yet, we urge you to do so immediately, to make Boris Johnson's leadership more secure.

"Senior Britain First officials and rank-and-file members have been receiving their Conservative membership cards in the post.

"Just as Momentum activists joined the Labour Party to solidify Jeremy Corbyn's grip on that party, Britain First activists and members seem to be doing the same for the Tories and Boris."

Britain First are keen to "secure" Johnson in power, declared spokesperson Ashlea Simon last week, as, "We will support a party that is willing to take a firm stance against radical Islam and it looks like the Tories are willing to do that."

Referring to Johnson's and Home Secretary Priti Patel's authoritarian response to the November London Bridge terror attack, Simon said, "The majority of our followers appreciate Priti Patel's and Boris Johnson's hardline approach."

According to the group, 5,000 of 7,500 members have signed up as Tory members. These numbers are clearly exaggerated, with anti-racism charity Hope Not Hate estimating Britain First's true membership to be around 1,000. But this does not change the significance of an avowed fascist party endorsing the xenophobic and anti-socialist agenda of Johnson's government.

Within days of winning the British general election, Johnson doubled down on his Islamophobic record—which includes referring to fear of Islam as "natural" and calling veiled Muslim women "letterboxes" and "bank robbers"—by cancelling a promised review into rampant Islamophobia in the Tory Party. His government is committed to vicious anti-migrant and law-and-order policies.

Johnson was fully aware that his anti-Muslim comments

would galvanise support among far-right forces already within the Tory party and outside. This was confirmed with the statements of Britain First leader Paul Golding, who said in his statement calling for members to join the Tories' ranks to help "solidify Boris Johnson's control on the leadership, so we can achieve Brexit and hopefully cut immigration and confront radical Islam." He stated, "Boris referred to Muslim women wearing the burqa and niqab as letterboxes, so he is obviously a populist nationalist under the surface, like the type of patriotism as promoted by Britain First."

Besides Britain First, the Tories' putrid political agenda has won the support and membership of far-right figureheads like Katie Hopkins, a former newspaper columnist for *The Sun* and *Daily Mail* who is set to embark on a speaking tour sponsored by the For Britain fascist group, and Tommy Robinson, founder of the English Defence League.

Hopkins revealed her membership of the Tory party in a tweet responding to Tory MP Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, which read, "Your party? Hold on a minute sister. I think you will find it's OUR party now. Britain has Boris and a blue collar army. Nationalism is back. British people first."

In a recent opinion column, Hopkins wrote, "It is not just that Boris won ... It is the affirmation that the heart and soul of this country is still intact. That the British spirit is alive and kicking and that some kind of fight-back for our Judeo-Christian culture is on ... Britain still has the heart of a lion. Thanks to the Great British people, Boris Johnson has a new blue-collar army—the best of us, hard-working, decent people who put family, Queen and country first."

Robinson spoke outside the UK High Court in November—where he is being tried for libelling a Syrian child refugee—to say, "Everyone should back Boris Johnson."

On the day of the general election, Robinson sent out a message to his supporters saying, "OK, I have just joined the Conservative Party. Good work everyone that went out and voted for the Conservatives today. We have just thwarted

our country becoming a socialist dump.”

To date, no official statement has been issued by the Conservative Party about the membership status of Hopkins and Robinson. The *Independent* reported, “A Conservative Party spokesperson said: ‘Paul Golding’s application for membership of the Conservative Party has not been approved.’”

The Tories will have decided that, at this stage, Golding being allowed membership could be problematic given that only last year he served 18 weeks in prison for a series of hate crimes against Muslims. However, their statement did not refer to Golding’s fascist politics as a reason to bar him, stating only, “There is a process in place for local Conservative associations to approve members who apply to join, or to reject those who do not share the party’s values or objects.”

The events parallel the movement of the fascist National Front into Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative Party in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Thatcher notoriously said in 1978 that “people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture,” and later, that some people “do not agree with the objectives of the National Front but they say ‘at least they are talking about some of the problems’.”

The National Front had been increasingly active throughout the 1970s and stood 300 candidates in the 1979 election as part of a planned “breakthrough.” But it was far less prominent in the years that followed as Thatcher stole its political agenda and some of its leading members found a more effective avenue for their ultra-nationalist, xenophobic, anti-socialist views as members of the Tory Party.

Johnson’s is the same breed of class war government, with its declared intention to “finish the Thatcher revolution” through a massive assault on the working class. The Johnson government is an expression of the global rise of the authoritarian far right, sponsored by the ruling class as a necessary bulwark to confront social unrest and growing socialist sentiment.

In the UK, Robinson has been treated with kid gloves throughout his political career. Nigel Farage, the former leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) which opposed Britain’s membership of the European Union (EU), has long been granted immense and unjustified political influence. Both have the support of US President Donald Trump and his fascist former adviser Steve Bannon—who has also played a key role in Johnson’s political career.

Britain First came to national prominence for the first time near the conclusion of the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign, when one of its supporters, Thomas Mair, brutally murdered Labour MP Jo Cox for her pro-EU politics. As he shot and stabbed her, Mair was heard to shout repeatedly,

“Britain First!” Johnson was aligned with the whole spectrum of far-right nationalist organisations in leading the campaign for a Leave vote and has carried them with him into his “Get Brexit Done” regime.

Johnson’s government intends to enforce Minimum Service Agreements for the railways, effectively stripping thousands of workers of the right to strike, and threatening major conflicts with a workforce currently engaged in industrial action over attempts to scrap the conductor role.

Fascist mobs have already made a case for their usefulness to the ruling class in this situation. In July 2018, a group of Robinson supporters assaulted Steve Hedley, Assistant General Secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) in a London pub. Hedley was left bleeding from a gash on his head while his partner Bridget was hit with a chair and had to be admitted to hospital with problems breathing. At least one other person was cut on the head by a broken bottle.

In January 2019, another group of Robinson’s thugs surrounded and attempted to intimidate an RMT picket at Victoria station in Manchester. Racist chants were directed against London’s Labour Party Mayor Sadiq Khan and a picket of south-east Asian heritage was verbally abused as a “sex offender” and a “paedophile.”

Far-right attacks have also taken place against Karl Marx’s grave, the left-wing bookshop Bookmarks, *Guardian* columnist Owen Jones, and stalls of the Revolutionary Communist Group and Socialist Workers’ Party.

These are the elements being mobilised, in alliance with the police and armed forces, to intimidate and crush opposition from the working class to deepening austerity and the drive to trade and military conflict by the ruling elite. The working class must answer these dangerous political developments based on the fight for socialist internationalism and irreconcilable opposition to the capitalist social order at the root of xenophobia, nationalism and fascism.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact