

Britain's ruling elite set out to create a fascist movement

Robert Stevens
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A concerted campaign has been launched, openly backed by the Conservative Party, Reform UK, the police and the courts, to create a mass fascist force in Britain, capable of being used not only against immigrants and asylum seekers but the entire working class under conditions in which class conflict is escalating.

It is proceeding under the supportive political umbrella provided by the Starmer Labour government's escalating assault on asylum seekers and refugees.

A new stage in this campaign was signalled last week, when the High Court ruled in favour of Conservative Party-run Epping Forest District Council, granting a temporary injunction to stop asylum-seekers from being housed in the Bell Hotel.

This was a legal victory for the right-wing mob organised and led by neo-Nazi groups and with the full participation of leading Tories and Reform UK politicians, which have kept the 138 asylum seekers in the hotel in Epping, Essex under siege for weeks.

It had the intended effect of encouraging and legitimising the spread of similar protests in towns and cities already being held throughout the UK and which reached record numbers this weekend.

The High Court accepted the arguments of the council's local planning department that the hotel's owners, Somani Hotels Limited, "did not advise or notify the local planning authority" over a new use for the hotel to house male asylum seekers since April this year.

Last month, the hotel was targeted for right-wing, racist protests following the arrest of a 41-year-old refugee from Ethiopia accused of sexually propositioning a schoolgirl. He has denied the charges and will attend a two-day trial from August 26.

Neil Hudson, Conservative MP for Epping Forest and Alex Burghart, Conservative MP for Brentwood and Ongar called for the hotel housing asylum seekers to be closed.

Despite evidence presented by the owners of the hotel that asylum seekers had been accommodated there without any issues for several years, judge Mr Justice Eyre cited several

arrests made of asylum seekers to rule that he was "satisfied that the fear of crime being committed by those accommodated in the Bell is a relevant factor to be considered in the balance of convenience operating in favour of the grant of interim relief."

The court ruling has dire implications for the more than 32,000 asylum seekers being accommodated in hotels nationwide—due to the absence of any alternatives—under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. The Bell Hotel, which is appealing the decision, has only until September 12 to comply and other councils, including Labour-run authorities, have already indicated they will take the same action.

Eyre's decision, and the campaigns surrounding it, are the direct product of Labour's maligning of asylum hotels. Its official policy, alongside a pledge to "stop the boats", is to end accommodation of this kind by the end of this Parliament (in 2029). Home Secretary Yvette Cooper's effort to have Epping Council's case dismissed was launched on the basis that the government was working to close hotels housing asylum seekers "as swiftly as possible", as part of an "orderly" programme.

Events at the Bell Hotel have been used as a launchpad for a national campaign of far-right mobilisations against asylum seekers, demanding forced mass deportations. They are being led by neo-Nazi groups, the Homeland Party and Britain First, along with individuals with a long history of membership of various Hitler-worshipping outfits such as Eddy Butler, one of the founders of neo-Nazi terror gang, Combat 18.

The Epping Says No! Facebook group is administrated by Homeland Party members. Tory Party Justice Secretary and prospective party leader Robert Jenrick attended an August 17 rally outside the Bell, prompting the neo-Nazi Butler to post a photo of himself standing directly behind Jenrick with the text: "At the Bell Hotel riding shotgun for Robert Jenrick."

But Jenrick is only one in a crowded field endorsing the message of the fascist groups.

Following the High Court ruling, Reform UK leader Nigel

Farage said that all 12 councils controlled by his party would do “everything in their power to follow Epping’s lead”.

Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch wrote to the 26 leaders of councils the party controls saying: “We back you to take similar action...”

At a nearby public house with some of those besieging the Bell Hotel, Badenoch called on them to help inform party policy on immigration. She suggested detention camps along the lines of “Nightingale pop-up hospitals”—built in the early months of the COVID pandemic—be used to hold asylum seekers.

On Saturday, the main demand of the fascists was given the full front-page treatment by the *Times* which unveiled Farage’s new policy for the “mass deportation” of “hundreds of thousands” of asylum seekers. In an accompanying interview, Farage said a Reform UK government would organise five deportation flights a day. To enable this, reported the *Times*, there would be “the arrest of asylum seekers on arrival, automatic detention and forced deportation, with no right of appeal, to countries such as Afghanistan and Eritrea.” His plan “would take Britain out of the European Convention on Human Rights and derogate from the UN Convention Against Torture and other international agreements.”

The same fascists organising demos outside asylum seeker accommodation have now begun an adjacent “Raise the Colours” campaign, illegally putting up thousands of England Saint George’s cross flags and Union Jacks on lampposts. Pedestrian crossings have been defaced with flag images and even roundabouts on roads. These have targeted areas with a large Muslim population, with no action taken against the perpetrators and several councils declaring support for the flags campaign.

On August 21, Jenrick posted a photo on X of himself putting up a union flag on a lamppost with the words, “While Britain-hating councils take down our own flags, we raise them up. We must be one country, under the Union Flag.”

In Leon Trotsky’s seminal work, *Where is Britain Going?* (1925), he predicted that if a fascist movement was to eventually get off the ground in Britain, it would not be primarily through the efforts of the scum which comprises far-right groups, but as a result of the “development of fascist tendencies on the right-wing of the Conservatives.” Farage joined the Conservatives as far back as 1978—leaving it in 1992 to set up Reform UK’s predecessors (UK Independence Party, and Brexit Party).

As was prefigured by the emergence of Oswald Mosley’s New Party as a split from Labour in 1930, which became the British Union of Fascists in 1932, fascistic tendencies will also arise from today’s Labour Party.

Every shift further right by the major parties is justified by claims that this is what is required to win back a constituency now backing Farage, who is leading both parties and has a 10-point lead over Labour.

This confirms that combating the rise of the far-right is not possible simply by staging counter-protests, as advocated by Stand Up to Racism, and its pseudo-left advocates such as the Socialist Workers Party. It means breaking with and mounting a political struggle against the Labour government, its local representatives, and backers in the trade union bureaucracy—whose betrayals have allowed the fascists channel social discontent against migrants and whose own racist, anti-migrant policies create the fertile ground for asylum seekers—to be scapegoated for every social ill produced by capitalism.

Farage and the Nazis depend on the noxious political climate in which Labour and Tories both demand an end of “mass immigration” and back the closure of “asylum hotels”.

Stand Up to Racism, and the related group Unite Against Fascism, are campaign groups led by various trade union bureaucrats, Labour “lefts” and members of pseudo-left groups. They promote placing demands on “MPs and trade union leaders” for “action against the far right and racism” and oppose criticisms that would supposedly alienate the bureaucracy and cut across their continued token support.

As the WSWs noted, “Precluded by such an alliance is any fight to unify all workers, British and immigrant, in a struggle against the capitalist profit system, which is the root cause of nationalism and xenophobia.”

To defeat the threat of fascism, the working class must adopt a socialist programme, including the defence of immigrants and asylum seekers. Only on the basis of exposing and opposing the right-wing, warmongering, pro-austerity policies of all the main parties can a movement of the working class defend migrants as part of a broader struggle for the rights of workers everywhere to good jobs, housing, wages and social services.



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