

Britain's largest far-right protest capitalises on Starmer's xenophobic, anti-working-class agenda

Chris Marsden
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Saturday's Unite the Kingdom demonstration was the largest far-right mobilisation in British history.

Estimated at between 100,000 and 150,000, participation in London exceeded the numbers usually mobilised by anti-Muslim demagogue Tommy Robinson and extended beyond his usual support base of football hooligans and fascist thugs. This core periphery was boosted by the presence of workers and their families, including from among the most deprived layers, who have swallowed the far-right's message blaming social distress and the collapse of essential services on migration.

This scapegoating has only been made possible because the guttural barks of the fascists have been deliberately and systematically amplified by the mass media and the entire political establishment, with the central role played by Keir Starmer's Labour government.

Since taking office in July 2024, Starmer has pursued a relentless and escalating assault on workers living standards and vital social services, while whipping up militarism and nationalism to justify its role in the NATO war against Russia, support for genocide in Gaza and its insistence that austerity must be stepped up because the welfare state can no longer be afforded.

The more this facilitates the emergence of far-right tendencies including Nigel Farage's Reform UK, now the most popular party in Britain, the more loudly the Labour government beats the nationalist drum.

Saturday's demo came after a summer dominated by right-wing protests outside hotels housing asylum seekers and a fascist orchestrated "Raise the Colours" campaign hanging the Saint George Cross flag of England and Union Jack flag on lamp posts, government buildings and monuments. Labour responded by pledging a clampdown on asylum applications by family members of asylum seekers; boasted of the 45,000 asylum seekers it had deported; promised to replace temporary hotel accommodation with de facto concentration camps in disused warehouses and military facilities; and proclaimed its support for flying the flag.

This is why the main slogans chanted on Saturday were "Keir Starmer is a wanker", directed against the government, and

"Stop the Boats!", while Robinson could also boast of how "Politicians all of a sudden are finding courage and they're parroting the things that we have said for 15 years."

Robinson referred specifically to the embrace of his anti-migrant policies. But he could have added to this Starmer's defence of Israel's genocide in Gaza and mass repression of its opponents. Support for mass murder by the Zionist state and the display of Israeli flags was a major factor in a march characterised by vicious hostility to Muslims.

Support for the anti-asylum and flag protests by Britain's ruling elite has two related purposes. Labour was brought to power charged with carrying out an agenda of war and austerity which a crisis-ridden Conservative government was incapable of effectively continuing. But Starmer has been repeatedly condemned for shying away from some of the worst cuts and for not ramping up military spending quickly enough. Fuelling right-wing opposition serves to both stiffen Labour's resolve and create the basis for a political shift to the far-right if and when this becomes necessary.

The deliberate boosting of the far-right not only mirrors processes taking place in France, Italy and elsewhere in Europe and internationally. It is also being organised internationally. Among the speakers at Saturday's rally were far-right French politician Eric Zemmour, leader of the Danish People's Party Morten Messerschmidt and Petr Bystron of the Alternative for Germany (AfD).

But by far the most significant presence was Elon Musk, who once again gave his support to Robinson, called for the Starmer government to be brought down and urged a violent confrontation with the left.

Musk's presence demonstrates that behind the pretensions of Robinson and his ilk, with its invocations of "people power" and promises to prioritise "British workers" stands a movement financed and representing the interests of the financial oligarchy. Just as he and other super-rich oligarchs supported Trump's fascistic MAGA movement, the world's second richest man is now lending his wealth and the social media he controls to the promotion of Britain's far-right just as he has already done with the AfD in Germany.

Speaking by video link with Robinson, Musk declared that “what I see happening is a destruction of Britain... with massive uncontrolled migration, a failure by the government to protect innocent people, including children who are getting gang raped.” He called for an immediate “change in government” through the “dissolution of parliament”, a “revolutionary government change” that would create a future where “there’s deregulation, a massive reduction in bureaucracy...”

The role of the American far-right was evident everywhere on Saturday. Following the murder of pro-Trump influencer Charlie Kirk, Robinson pledged to make his rally a memorial to the fascist provocateur. Sky News acknowledged the overt Christian nationalism on display, with people carrying wooden crosses, a chant of “Christ is king” from the stage, and a public recital of the Lord’s Prayer.

Musk made clear the central aim of Kirk’s beatification is to whip up a pogromist atmosphere against the left, as a precondition for a massive assault on the working class. Railing against “the violence there is on the left, with our friend Charlie Kirk getting murdered in cold blood this week,” he declared, “The left is the party of murder and celebrating murder.”

Last summer, during a wave of violent anti-immigration riots in Britain, Musk said that “civil war is inevitable”. On Saturday he called for a civil war to be waged, telling the rally, “If this continues, that violence is going to come to you, you will have no choice. You’re in a fundamental situation here, where whether you choose violence or not, violence is coming to you. You either fight back or you die.”

Responsibility for the danger posed to the working class by the growth of the far-right cannot simply be laid at the door of those that openly serve the ruling class like Starmer. Fascist ideologues like Robinson and more “respectable” figures like Farage are only able to exploit social distress and the widespread hatred felt towards the Starmer government because widespread left-wing sentiment in the working class has been systematically suppressed—by those claiming to be on the “left”.

In 2015, Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader of the Labour Party with the backing of millions of workers who wanted him to raise wages, rebuild the National Health Service, social housing and schools, bring an end to Britain’s warmongering, and kick out the Blairite right-wing. Corbyn betrayed these political aspirations and instead gave an adrenaline shot to all shades of right-wing politics.

On Sunday, Corbyn issued a perfunctory tweet declaring, “This government could have taken on the super-rich to tackle inequality. They chose to fan the flames of racism and embolden the far-right instead.” But this excuses his own failure to take on the super-rich and tackle inequality before handing control of the Labour Party to Starmer.

Corbyn added, “It’s time for a real alternative that redistributes wealth, ownership and power,” without mentioning the party he has founded with former Labour MP

Zarah Sultana or explaining how such a redistribution will take place when its opponents enjoy the backing of the oligarchy and the protection of the state. Once again, his role is to disarm the working class by citing a list of pious wishes while the class enemy prepares for class war.

Britain’s pseudo-left groups play an essential auxiliary role, promoting campaigns such as Stand Up To Racism and Unite Against Fascism that in turn promote various trade union bureaucrats and Labour “lefts”—including those who have now been reluctantly forced to split from the party.

Commenting on the gathering of a few thousand people in a counter-protest Saturday, the *Socialist Worker* decried calls to “focus on the far right’s pro-corporate policies” and those who “say their rise is primarily about austerity” as a diversion from focusing on their “opposition to ‘mass’” and ‘illegal’ immigration”.

This provides a political amnesty for the Labour and trade union bureaucracy to which their campaigns are exclusively directed, with *Socialist Worker* noting the presence of “54 trade union branch banners on the demo including 20 from the NEU union as well as banners of seven trade union councils” on a rally with no significant working class presence that was dangerously outnumbered by the far-right. This is not the “wake-up call” the *Socialist Worker* claims. It is a way of lulling workers to sleep.

Their unity with the “lefts” actively prevents the fight to unify the working class itself, British and immigrant, against capitalism and for socialism, which is the only way that the rise of the far-right can be halted.

To take forward this struggle, the Socialist Equality Party urges workers to form rank-and-file committees in every factory, university and workplace to break the deadening grip of the trade union bureaucracy. This will enable workers to begin the organisation of a collective defence of migrants, while planning and taking forward a political and industrial struggle against the Starmer government that would cut the ground from under the fascists and change the political climate, not just in Britain but internationally.



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