

# Mandelson-Epstein scandal undermines Starmer before Trump, the royals and his party

Thomas Scripps, Robert Stevens  
17 September 2025

Revelations of Lord Peter Mandelson's intimate connections with Jeffrey Epstein have created yet another crisis for Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer, putting him in the doghouse with US President Donald Trump, the British royal family and his own MPs.

Starmer was forced to sack Mandelson on September 11, less than a year after appointing him US ambassador last December. This was just five days before US President's Donald Trump's arrival this week for his second state visit to Britain.

Trump would have liked the trip to serve as a distraction from persistent questions over his own relationship with Epstein, which have prompted him to sue the *New York Times* for \$15 billion. But the Mandelson saga meant the scandal has followed him over the Atlantic with renewed force, helped by protesters unfurling an enormous picture of Trump and Epstein together across the lawn on Windsor Castle, and projecting the image on its walls. And it did so under conditions where Mandelson has not made any attempt to deny the veracity of his appearance in Epstein's "birthday book" when Trump insists that his own is a forgery.

An emergency debate was held in parliament hours before the president's arrival over what the government, and particularly Starmer, knew and when about the depth of Mandelson's relationship with Epstein.

All this thanks to a man whose appointment as US ambassador Trump initially resented anyway, given that Mandelson had previously called him a "bully", "reckless and a danger to the world"—words he was forced to eat along with giving praise for the "dynamism and energy" with which Trump had pursued his plans for dictatorship.

Trump's hosts, the British royal family, have their own reasons for ruing the timing of events, given Prince Andrew's close connections with Epstein, the exposure of

which dealt a huge blow to the monarchy. A diplomatic source told the *Daily Mail*: "The Palace has been grumbling about how unhelpful it all is."

As for the Labour Party, MPs totally loyal to Starmer's right-wing agenda are increasingly restive over whether he is the person to lead it, after a series of screw-ups of which the Mandelson appointment is only the latest. It has become a focus for complaints in the party that Starmer is a political liability.

Starmer fully defended Mandelson's appointment as late as last Wednesday afternoon, while Bloomberg was publishing a trove of 100 emails detailing the ambassador's continued closeness to Epstein after the latter's 2008 conviction for procuring for prostitution a girl below age 18.

One included Mandelson urging Epstein to "fight for early release" shortly before he was sentenced to 18 months in prison. The day before he began his sentence, Mandelson wrote, "I think the world of you and I feel hopeless and furious about what has happened." He urged Epstein to be "incredibly resilient," adding, "Your friends stay with you and love you."

These came after the publication of the now notorious "birthday book," marking Epstein's 50th birthday in 2003, by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform.

Photos in the book included Epstein and Mandelson sitting together, with Mandelson in a bathrobe, and a fawning message to Epstein from him which concluded "wherever he is in the world, he remains my best pal! Happy birthday, Jeffrey we love you!!"

It has long been known that Mandelson was a close friend of Epstein. Shortly after the financier's death, photographs appeared of the two shopping together in 2004 on the Caribbean island of St Barts. The trip took

place six months before Epstein was arrested and charged with child sex offences.

In June 2023, as noted by the *Financial Times*, an internal JPMorgan report showed “the extent of Epstein’s ‘particularly close’ friendship with Mandelson even after he was imprisoned.

“In one email from June 2009, sent while Epstein was in jail, he tells a friend that ‘Peter will be staying at 71st over weekend’, a reference to his lavish townhouse in Manhattan. In November 2010 and January 2011, when Mandelson was no longer in government, Epstein said ‘Petie’ was with him in Paris, where he owned a luxury apartment.”

It was not that Starmer made a mistake in making Mandelson US ambassador, given his background. He simply did not care about it and saw no reason why he should.

In early January, just days after making the appointment, the Labour leader brushed off media questions about Mandelson’s friendship with Epstein by answering, “I don’t know any more than you and there’s not really much I can add to what is already out there I’m afraid.”

This was a lie, repeated after he fired Mandelson, when he claimed, “Had I known then what I know now, I’d have never appointed him.”

Multiple news sources are now reporting that Mandelson got the job despite vetting concerns from the security services, even with a full vetting delayed until he was already in the job. In the words of the *Independent*, “the prime minister pushed through his appointment.”

Once he was in position, government officials blocked the standard National Archives release of a memo sent by Mandelson to Tony Blair in which, according to the *Times*, “Lord Mandelson urged Sir Tony Blair to meet Jeffrey Epstein while he [Blair] was prime minister.”

The Labour government’s attitude was summed up by Mandelson himself, telling the *Financial Times* in February that his connections with Epstein were “an FT obsession and frankly you can all fuck off. OK?”

This is a ruling class sunk so deep into its own corruption—tied by a thousand favours to a criminal oligarchy—that it can hardly grasp the popular revulsion to its crimes or conceive of any other way of conducting itself. And their corruption is so rampant that it cannot be kept under wraps; the political sewers are overflowing.

Mandelson, like Trump, is the embodiment of this process. Blair’s right-hand man, Trade Commissioner to the European Union and Business Secretary, he provided

the catchphrase for the Labour government’s subservience to the banks and the major corporations with the statement that he was “intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich.” Apparently, he was similarly laid back about the rich getting filthy, too.

Besides Epstein, Mandelson has got in hot water for accepting a £373,000 interest-free loan from Labour’s millionaire Paymaster General Geoffrey Robinson; allegedly aiding billionaire Srichand Hinduja’s passport application after he donated £1 million to the Millennium Dome project which Mandelson was in charge of; and attending a Caribbean party thrown by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen when he was under a monopoly investigation in which Mandelson had a say.

Mandelson enjoyed the luxury yacht and island retreat of Diego Della Valle, who had benefitted from an EU-wide tax imposed with Mandelson’s input, and the luxury jet of billionaire banker Nathaniel Rothschild on a visit to Oleg Deripaska, whose aluminium business exported heavily to the EU.

All of which was perfect preparation for schmoozing Trump, a mission critical operation for British imperialism—still reeling from the economic and geopolitical consequences of Brexit.

The *Financial Times* noted that Mandelson “is deemed by Starmer to have done an excellent job in Washington, winning access to Trump and his team and helping to oversee a transatlantic trade deal” favourable compared to the tariffs enforced against European Union.

If Starmer and Mandelson could say what they really think about the whole affair, they would answer that Mandelson’s actions are just how business is done among the oligarchy.



To contact the WSWP and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**