

Anti-immigrant “March for Australia” rallies were organised by neo-Nazis

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An investigation by the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH), partly based on research by the anti-fascist White Rose collective, has revealed that the neo-Nazi National Socialist Network (NSN) had a far more central role in the planning and organisation of anti-immigrant marches last month than was previously known.

That is of significance for several reasons. The “March for Australia” protests, though dwarfed in size by dozens of pro-Palestinian rallies over the past two years, were the largest far-right mobilisation in the country in years, if not decades.

Speakers included not only right-wing social media celebrities but also politicians in the federal parliament, such as Bob Katter and representatives of Pauline Hanson’s One Nation.

The rallies took up and exploited anti-immigrant agitation by the federal Labor government and the Liberal-National Coalition, both of which have blamed “foreigners” for a social crisis caused by their own pro-business policies.

And in turn, the rallies received a favourable echo from the political establishment. Leading Coalition politician, Jacinta Price, responded with comments demonising Indian immigrants. Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who has venomously attacked demonstrators opposing the Gaza genocide, declared there were “good people” among the far-right protesters.

The NSN is an avowedly Nazi organisation that glorifies Adolf Hitler. Its leader, Thomas Sewell, attempted to recruit Brenton Tarrant, who would later carry out the Christchurch massacre in New Zealand, killing 51 Muslims and wounding 89 more. The NSN continues to venerate Tarrant.

The NSN’s prominent involvement in the “March for Australia” was obvious at the events themselves. In Sydney and Melbourne, its black-clad members led the demonstrations and NSN leaders spoke in both cities. In Melbourne, the NSN, including Sewell, besieged and violently attacked the Indigenous Camp Sovereignty gathering place at the end of the demonstration.

The NSN’s role in initiating and organising the protests, however, was publicly concealed. The rallies were presented

as expressions of a “grassroots” movement, with the official organisers largely consisting of social media personalities, some of whom use pseudonyms.

As per the *Herald* investigation, however: “Footage analysed by this masthead as well as research group The White Rose Society shows neo-Nazi leadership played a key role at every major march held in capital cities on August 31, including Sydney, Hobart, Perth and Brisbane.

“The man who handed federal MP Bob Katter a rune-covered megaphone during the Townsville march can be revealed as the head of the NSN’s north Queensland chapter, for example.”

That central involvement was not accidental. The *Herald* notes that “(A) March for Australia planning chat for Melbourne leaked to this masthead is stacked with known NSN members. Some have bragged of turning a crowd with just a handful of men.”

When they became aware of the *Herald* investigation as it was underway, NSN leaders publicly outed themselves as the central force behind the marches. After being approached by the SMH for comment, NSN leader “Joel Davis confirmed the group’s involvement on a far-right podcast. He detailed how neo-Nazis had sought out influencers who were calling themselves ‘nationalists’, pushing pretty strong messaging on race”, to put the plan for an unbranded rally in motion.”

White Rose researcher Kaz Ross noted in comments to the *Herald* that, even in the context of the rise of far-right forces internationally, the key involvement of an explicitly Nazi group in a broader anti-immigration mobilisation is striking.

That is a measure of the reactionary forces that the Australian political establishment is unleashing. As Ross and other anti-fascist researchers have noted, the majority of those in attendance at the “March for Australia” were not Nazis and many likely would not have attended had they known of the NSN’s central role.

But the unifying element of the crowds, predominantly older “white” men, was a hostility to immigrants and refugees. The far-right speakers all demonised immigrants

for every aspect of the social crisis, from housing unaffordability to the degradation of social services. In their speeches, the NSN leaders said little different except for a more explicitly racist emphasis on the need for a “white Australia.”

Throughout the global inflation crisis, the federal Labor government has inflicted an enormous increase in the cost-of-living on ordinary people.

In addition to rejecting even miserly measures to address the crisis and continuing tax breaks and other policies that benefit the ultra-wealthy, Labor, working with big business and the corporatised trade unions, has enforced real wage cuts, such that the average purchasing power of a worker has declined by 9 percent since 2019.

In producing this social misery on behalf of the capitalist class and then scapegoating immigrants and refugees, Labor has created fertile ground for far-right forces to make a pitch.

The explicitly fascist elements, such as the NSN, feed off this as well as a far-right ecosystem that is fostered by layers of the corporate elite and that reaches into parliament, in the form of right-wing figures such as Katter, Hanson and sections of the Coalition.

That was on display over the weekend at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Brisbane. The event was addressed by senior members of the Coalition, such as Price, Bridget McKenzie and Matt Canavan and was attended by Australia’s wealthiest individual Gina Rinehart.

The Coalition speakers lionised Charlie Kirk, assassinated earlier this month in America. Kirk was presented as a hero and an exemplar of free speech. In reality, he was a fascist agitator, who opposed Civil Rights legislation, participated in the Trump-led attempt to overthrow American democracy on January 6, 2021 and peddled anti-semitic conspiracy theories about Jews controlling the media and other key institutions.

The “respectable” dignitaries at CPAC, politicians and captains of industry among them, listened appreciatively to rhetoric that would not have been out of place at the “March for Australia.”

For instance, right-wing X streamer Chris de Bruyne cited the remarks of another Internet personality Connor Tomlinson. “If more Indians were the solution to Australia’s problems, then India itself would not have any problems,” Tomlinson declared. “You can recover from an economic catastrophe, you can recover from an energy catastrophe—you cannot recover from a demographic revolution.”

The claims that the “white” population is being displaced is the central theme of far-right and fascist agitation,

including from the NSN. Known as the “Great Replacement Theory,” it posits a conspiracy to “replace” people of European ancestry through mass migration, generally orchestrated by a Jewish cabal. This antisemitic theory was central to the ideology of the fascist terrorist Tarrant.

Other speakers demanded an “Australia First” policy, echoing the language of fascistic US President Donald Trump. Price, who is pushing a Trumpian line in the crisis-ridden and fracturing Liberal Party, branded even limited measures to address climate change as “communism” and insisted they had to be fought.

While there is no mass far-right movement in Australia, the “March for Australia” and the increasing promotion of anti-immigrant rhetoric by the entire political establishment is a warning of attempts by the ruling elite to cultivate such a fascistic tendency. As is the case internationally, the capitalist class is turning to far-right and authoritarian forces, to impose its inherently unpopular program of war abroad and an assault on social and living conditions.

As the Socialist Equality Party raised in a comment following the “March for Australia,” the rise of far-right forces cannot be combatted without a political struggle against the Labor government, whose anti-immigrant demagoguery and social attacks form the breeding ground and the basis of such tendencies.

Such a struggle must be based on a complete defence of immigrants and refugees, including their right to immediate citizenship, as part of the fight for the unity of the international working class. It must be based on the independent mobilisation of the working class, in opposition to the corporatised and nationalist union bureaucracies, and directed against a capitalist system that is once again vomiting up the barbarism of the 1930s.



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