

Reform/Tory party alliance mooted as far-right replacement for Starmer's faltering government

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This year's Conservative Party conference met with a question mark hanging over its future.

After a collapse since Boris Johnson's removal as leader in 2022, Britain's "natural party of government" has been reduced to 119 MPs (out of 650) and sits at 17 percent and falling in the polls. It has been eclipsed by Nigel Farage's Reform UK, well in the lead at 31 percent and with one recent poll predicting a large parliamentary majority for Farage on a much larger vote share if an election was held today.

With support for the governing Labour Party abysmally low, and dropping, the fate of the Tory Party is a strategic question for the British ruling class.

When the Labour government falls—and any number of crises could bring this about sooner than expected—they need a parliamentary majority ready to pick up and safeguard their agenda of austerity, militarism and attacks on democratic rights. Moreover, that government must be staffed by ministers with the necessary experience, organisational mechanisms and deep connections with business and banking circles necessary to carry this out.

The *Daily Telegraph*'s Gavin Mortimer summed up their concern, using the situation in France to write about Britain. Explaining that the French "right are terrified by the prospect that a united left might take control of the country," referring above all to Jean-Luc Mélenchon's La France Insoumise (Unsubmissive France), he urged, "Only a union of the Right can save France".

The comparison with Britain, where a new Corbynite (Your) party is being founded and the Green Party is growing after a turn to the left, while the right is split between the Tories and Reform, is evident. In both

instances, the electoral threat from a "united left" refers not primarily to its semi-reformist policies—as fiercely as these are opposed by the ruling class—but to its perceived weakness in the face of popular pressure from the working class, which such meagre palliatives cannot satisfy.

Mortimer concludes with the admonition, "There are differences to be ironed out between the various right-wing parties in France, notably economic ones with Le Pen leaning to the left in this regard. But these can be discussed at a later date. It is five minutes to midnight and the future of France is at stake."

These were the central issues that shaped the Tory Party conference, where discussions of an alliance with Reform were coupled with criticisms of its "populist" attitude to spending, on the one hand, and a wholesale adoption of its Trumpian attacks on migrants, the "woke" left and the rule of law, on the other.

Shadow Foreign Minister Andrew Rosindale was most explicit, telling the right-wing *GB News*, "We need right-of-centre unity to defeat the left... If that means the Conservatives and Reform working together, we should do it. I don't see Reform as our enemies. It's a split on the right, and we need to come together."

Although publicly disavowed by Tory leaders, the fact that such comments can be made is proof of urgent discussions behind the scenes.

Tory members, at least, are largely convinced. According to a YouGov poll published during the conference, nearly three-quarters would support a coalition government with Reform (whichever was the larger party), nearly two-thirds an electoral pact and nearly half a full merger.

Robert Jenrick, widely tipped as the next Tory leader,

is seen as the man to make this happen. He has taken up Farage's diary, spending his days posing with far-right thugs threatening asylum seekers, or showing up at court to lend his support to Islamophobes burning the Quran.

His conference speech was a raging attack on "activist judges" who spend "their whole careers fighting to keep illegal migrants in this country". A Tory government would abolish the Immigration Tribunal and bring back government appointment of judges, by the Lord Chancellor, who would "be instructed to never permit activists of any political hue to don the wig".

There would also be an end to "two-tier justice"—a far-right myth which claims the political right is more fiercely policed than the left—with the Lord Chancellor placed in charge of sentencing guidelines.

Jenrick concluded with the words, "Let's take our country back", underscored by his full-throated defence of comments made this March about Handsworth in Birmingham: "appalling... as close as I've come to a slum in this country... in the hour and a half I was filming news there I didn't see another white face... That's not the kind of country I want to live in."

Tory leader Kemi Badenoch is almost certain to be replaced before the next election by a party whose membership could not agree with Jenrick more. She nevertheless defended Jenrick's comments and delivered a frothingly right-wing conference speech of her own.

Its main announcement was of Tory plans to "leave the ECHR [European Convention on Human Rights] and repeal the Human Rights Act." Badenoch quoted a report commissioned from her shadow attorney general to explain the reasons why:

"When it comes to control of our sovereign borders, preventing our military veterans from being pursued indefinitely, ensuring prison sentences are applied rigorously for serious crimes, stopping disruptive protests, or placing blanket restrictions on foreign nationals in terms of social housing and benefits, the only way such positions are feasible would be to leave the ECHR."

The Tories would also "remove 150,000 illegal immigrants a year" under its "BORDERS plan," to be carried out by a new Gestapo-like Removals Force—funded to the tune of £1.6 billion and aided by

the scrapping of legal aid and judicial review in immigration cases.

What separated her party from Reform was that the Tories had a "plan to deliver"; not, in the words of shadow home secretary Chris Philp, "slogans dreamt up in a pub and written on the back of a fag packet."

It was left to shadow chancellor Mel Stride to draw the other distinction, accusing Reform—"the party of more spending and more debt—of "marching to the left" economically and declaring the Tories "the only party that will stand up for fiscal responsibility." They would make £47 billion in cuts, including £23 billion to welfare, with the axe also falling on civil service jobs and international aid.

A Reform UK spokesman responded, "Nigel Farage committed to slashing the welfare bill during his party conference speech in September. Reform has already laid out plans to stop benefits for anyone who isn't a British citizen."

This is the programme around which the ruling class expects an even more right-wing replacement for Starmer's government to coalesce. Ideally for them, it will couple the more ministerially experienced and financially disciplined heads of the Tory Party with the right-wing street activism of Reform and its periphery.

Next to these opponents, the weakness of Your Party and the Greens is laid bare. Parliamentary campaigns for mild reforms will not and cannot mobilise the necessary counteroffensive of the working class. What is required is a programme of uncompromising class struggle, waged industrially and politically, against the super-rich and all their parties; and the building of a revolutionary socialist party which can take power from them and rule in workers' interests.



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