

Starmer government facing collapse over Mandelson/Epstein scandal

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UK Labour government Prime Minister Keir Starmer will deliver a statement to the House of Commons Monday to “correct the record” regarding the vetting of Peter Mandelson prior to his appointment as UK ambassador to the US.

Before handing Mandelson the job in December 2024, though he is still attempting to deny this, Starmer was fully aware of his intimate connections with the billionaire child sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. Mandelson continued his relationship with the paedophile even after he was convicted and served jail time.

On Thursday, an investigation by the *Guardian* revealed that “A formal decision to deny him clearance was made by [UK Security Vetting (UKSV)] on 28 January 2025... According to sources, UKSV informed the Foreign Office that the risk factors involving Mandelson meant that his clearance should be denied.”

Starmer claimed on Friday that he was not informed until as late as Tuesday evening this week that Mandelson failed vetting. Even if a man who has served at the highest levels of the state and was formerly the UK’s Director of Public Prosecutions were to be believed, it would reveal a level of incompetence beyond comprehension.

The millions of workers who see Starmer as a liar and swindler produced by the same putrid British bourgeoisie which propelled Mandelson to the highest echelons are 100 percent correct.

That is why his personal approval ratings had already collapsed. In January, his net favourability rating of -57 was the joint-lowest recorded by YouGov of any prime minister other than Liz Truss, with Truss in power for just 44 days.

It was no secret in ruling circles that Mandelson failed his high-level security clearance (“developed vetting”) for one of the most important posts in the British state.

The *Independent* reported—fully seven months before the *Guardian*—in the article, “Concerns Mandelson did not pass MI6 vetting for US ambassador role – but Starmer appointed him anyway,” that it was told by sources “that MI6 failed to clear the Labour peer largely because of concerns over his

business links to China. However, there were also worries that his past links to the disgraced financier and convicted paedophile Jeffrey Epstein ‘would compromise him’.”

Starmer therefore knew. Yet much of the media coverage, particularly the pro-Labour *Guardian*, has still focused on what Starmer knew and when. This is because there is a fear that his downfall will bring to a head a far broader political crisis of rule for the British bourgeoisie, possibly claiming the Labour government as its victim.

This weekend, leading Cabinet ministers have rallied around Starmer, including David Lammy, the justice secretary and deputy prime minister, and technology secretary Liz Kendall, both firm Blairites. Lammy was Foreign Secretary at the time when Mandelson’s appointment was signed off by Starmer, declaring him “the right man for the job” of UK Ambassador to the US and “a man of considerable expertise... the right man for this moment.”

Among the figures being touted as Starmer’s replacement should he fall, whether now or after May’s local elections—expected to be disastrous for Labour—is Health Secretary Wes Streeting. Another Blairite, Streeting is equally compromised, having already been forced to delete a batch of photos of himself with Mandelson, including one in which Streeting fawns over the “legend Lord Mandelson.”

Sections of the media, including the *Financial Times*, have warned in recent months that whatever Starmer’s decline in political fortunes, he still represents the “stability” sought by the bourgeoisie after a period of crisis-ridden Tory rule—which saw the Conservative Party burn through a staggering four prime ministers and five chancellors in the space of just eight years.

Whether Starmer remains for a few more weeks or months or goes more quickly, such desperate attempts at damage limitation are ultimately doomed to fail.

For the working class, however, the central issue is not which right-wing Labourite replaces Starmer but the necessity to intervene as an independent actor in this escalating crisis.

All the political mechanisms of rule established over more than a century are falling apart at the seams—above all the Labour Party.

Under conditions of entrenched and growing social inequality and mounting class conflict, political minnows such as Lammy, Kendall and Streeting—who all agreed with Mandelson, as a leading architect of New Labour, that he was “intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich”—are incapable of reversing a perilous situation for the ruling class.

Labour is today hated by millions of workers and youth. Indeed, it is only due to the betrayal carried out by the nominally left Jeremy Corbyn, who led the party for more than four-and-a-half years from September 2015, that the Blairites have survived at all, and Starmer handed leadership of the party.

Starmer went on to win a landslide in the 2024 general election under Britain’s undemocratic first-past-the-post electoral system, despite having won just 33.7 percent of the vote—the lowest share for any single-party majority government in post-1945 UK history.

Starmer was eased into power due to the betrayal of the trade union bureaucracy, who quelled a mass strike movement as they backed a Blairite whose hostility to the working class was made clear by his ban on shadow cabinet ministers supporting workers’ picket lines and his support for genocide in Gaza.

Thanks to the continued refusal of Corbyn and the “left” to wage political war on the Blairites, almost two years of Starmer’s government of austerity and militarism has mainly benefitted the most right-wing forces—including the far-right Reform UK.

Reform has headed the polls for the last year and remains around 10 points clear of Labour. Starmer’s party is currently polling in fourth place. Were an election to be held tomorrow, Reform would likely rule as a minority government or in a coalition with the Tory Party on an anti-immigration, pro-business programme of savage austerity and militarism.

Following Corbyn’s betrayal and the debacle of his Your Party vehicle, and the prostration before Starmer of Labour’s parliamentary left-wing of a few dozen MPs, the Green Party has seen a surge in support in recent months—and now polls in second place behind Reform. But whatever vaguely leftist rhetoric is spouted by new leader Zack Polanski, the pro-capitalist Greens also represent no alternative to Starmer’s collapsing party.

If Reform, and the most vicious anti-working-class representatives of the super-rich they represent, are to be stopped in their tracks, then there is no time to waste: the working class must adopt the programme of socialist

internationalism.

As the WSWS noted on Mandelson’s arrest:

Mandelson’s career epitomised the transformation of the Labour Party into a naked instrument of finance capital and architect of illegal wars of imperialist plunder, most infamously against Iraq in 2003. Having now resigned five times from various positions in his career, including being forced from office twice in the Blair years due to earlier scandals, he was welcomed back to the summit of political power by Starmer. Not only did Mandelson epitomise the New Labour agenda of serving every requirement of the banks and corporations, but his close relations with Epstein were seen at the time as an asset that would facilitate efforts to woo the Trump administration.

For the working class, the central issue is not holding Mandelson or [Andrew] Mountbatten-Windsor to account through parliamentary debates, humble addresses, or official inquiries—including the public inquiry into Mandelson’s appointment as US ambassador advocated by Your Party leader Jeremy Corbyn.

The fundamental task is the building of a new, independent political party of the working class and making a decisive political break with the entire parliamentary set-up and all its rotten parties. It is the capitalist system they all defend that enabled the financial oligarchy—and figures such as Mandelson and Mountbatten-Windsor—to thrive.



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