

Are we going to be a racist state?

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Rupert Lowe's Restore Britain paper on mass deportations is not just about migration, although that is its toxic superficial focus. It is also about power, law, and the kind of state we want to live in.

In this video, I explain why his proposals would require dismantling human rights law, rewriting the UK constitution, and creating a politics of hate that harms everyone and not just the millions of migrants he wants to expel from this country.

My suggestion is that we choose something else: a politics of care, investment, and social security that protects everyone's well-being.

This is about the UK's future. What state do we want? Lowe's dystopian state of hate, or one where everyone can flourish?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0t_qICR-NVQ?si=THwN5XpyUfhHJR2o

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=n9z5x-1a4a962-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

This video is about something that really matters to me. It's about fascism. It's about the risk of fascism in the UK. It's about the risk, in particular, from somebody called Rupert Lowe, who is the MP for Great Yarmouth, who has issued a paper proposing that all, as he calls them, undocumented migrants in the UK be expelled from the country.

But that isn't what he's really talking about. He's talking about literally creating a politics of hate, which would undermine the well-being of every single person in this country, wherever they came from.

This is about the state we choose to live in. Do we want to care or do we want to hate? This is the question of our time, and that's why this matters to me, because we have to make the right choice.

Let's just look at the background of this. Rupert Lowe was elected as a Reform MP in 2024. He was elected for Great Yarmouth, and it wasn't very long before Nigel Farage threw him out of his party. Now, there's nothing unusual about Nigel Farage throwing anybody out of his party; that's what he does, but the fact is that Rupert Lowe is continuing to sit in the House of Commons, and he has created a new political party. It's called Restore Britain, and it has now issued a paper this month called Mass Deportations: Legitimacy, Legality, and Logistics. As zippy titles go, that is going to win no awards, but the point is, that's not, of course, what this is about.

The paper is about his claim that he will be able to remove every single undocumented migrant to the UK within three years if he was to get into power in this country, and that is something profoundly toxic, not just in itself, but also for the impact it will have upon politics in this country, because what he is doing is trying to drag politics even further to the right. Remember, those in his party think that Nigel Farage is a left-winger.

So we are talking about something very deeply dangerous here, not just for those who are going to be targeted by abuse and hostility, by those who believe that Rupert Lowe is right, but also about something much more pernicious, because that is the general changes that they're promoting within the structure of our society.

That last point is really important. My suggestion to you is that, important as this paper is in the context of migrants, immigration, and everything else to do with human rights, it is also about power, law, and the nature of the state. What Rupert Lowe has put forward is basically a blueprint for remaking the UK's constitutional settlement.

This is not some minor tweak.

This is about isolationism.

It is about the concentration of power in the hands of a government.

It is about the removal of human rights.

It is about permitting, prejudice, and it won't end with racism, although clearly that's where it starts. Of course, we will see homophobia next.

We will see prejudice against anyone who is foreign, anybody with a second passport.

We will see prejudice against working-class people because that always follows in these situations.

We will see those who are vulnerable, whether they be neurodivergent, whether they have mental ill-health or anything else; all those people will also be put at risk by a policy of this sort.

This is about those who think they're powerful and right, backed by being white and male and having a supposed Christian ethic, even though what they say is about as far removed from the teachings of somebody from Nazareth as you can get; this is about the imposition of power.

So how would they do this? Let's just talk about the deportation issue for a moment because it's important to note what this document says.

Rupert Lowe says that we could not deliver mass deportations on the scale that he wants, in the timescale he wants, without major change to UK law.

That in itself is an important point. What he's saying is that UK law is at the present protecting our human rights, and we should be celebrating that fact.

But let's note how many people he says he's talking about. His claim is that there are around 2 million undocumented people in the UK. Nobody else says that. Nobody else actually talks about undocumented people either, a term that he has imported from the USA, where this toxic logic, of course, first developed.

Another estimate says that at maximum, there are 700,000 or 800,000 people who have no legal right to live in the UK, but who are nonetheless here.

The government's estimate is lower still.

The fact is, we've only had at most, around 15,000 people arrive in the UK each year for the last few years who have not had their right to stay confirmed and who we can't prove have left. In other words, if we had 100,000 odd people in the UK who do not have the right to be here, it would be quite surprising.

But Rupert Lowe is claiming otherwise. So we learned from that something quite important in the first instance. What he is saying is that this is not a campaign against those who have no legal right to be here. This is a plain, straightforward attack on migrants, full stop, whether they have a legal right granted by the state or not. He is having a racist attack on people who he thinks do not look English, as he would define

it, and I stress the word English very strongly here, by the way, because this is a toxic English logic.

And what he's saying is that he wants to get rid of these people in two ways. One is by forced expulsions, and the second is by creating a toxic environment so that they might decide to leave the UK anyway.

He's hoping that half a million people might leave the UK each year as a result of that toxic environment. He's going to make life so uncomfortable for migrants, whether they be, as I imagine he wants his followers to think, those without white skin, as he would define white to be, or even those who are white but don't come from countries he approves of, like Eastern Europe.

Those people, he wants to force to leave through a toxic environment, but for those who don't want to go, and he thinks there might be 100,000 plus, maybe 200,000 a year in this category, he wants to dismantle the current asylum system, and he says so.

To achieve that, he wants to repeal or rewrite all of the UK's major human rights legislation. And he wants to withdraw us from all international human rights agreements. He wants to dismantle everything that protects your rights.

Your rights to participate in the country.

Your rights to be whoever you think you are.

Your right to vote.

Your right to be gay, if that's what you are, or anything else that identifies you as a person.

In particular, he wants to remove those protections, if you are a woman, on which you have relied to get equal pay, well, something like equal pay, and all the other protections that you need as well.

Instead, what he wants to create is a condition so harsh that large numbers would want to leave this country voluntarily, and it wouldn't surprise me if some people who are decidedly English of origin would want to leave as well, because this is an environment of hate that he wants to create.

Now, I argue that this is something bigger than just migration. I hate every single thing that I've just referred to. I hate his policy. I believe in the universal rights of all human beings, wherever they come from, whatever gender they are, whatever they think themselves to believe, whatever they actually have as an orientation, I don't care. They're human beings, and they matter. The point is, if you're here and it's legal, your job is to be a good citizen without a doubt, but we don't raise questions about where you came from.

That's not what Lowe wants. He wants to change our laws. He sees courts, and treaties and human rights laws as obstacles to be overridden. He wants to remove the implied checks on executive power, which have protected us all from abuse by government, because even though I am a fan of a lot of things that government can do, I am very well aware that government can also be a source of abuse. He wants there to be fewer legal protections, and the point here is significant.

We've seen this in history. We've seen where it went. We saw what happened in Nazi Germany, and yes, it's right to make the direct comparison because Lowe is talking about creating concentration camps to house people before they are expelled from the UK. There's no doubt that is what is on his mind. He actually says these camps will hold up to 15,000 people at a time, and we should be seeing the historical comparison. Of course, the Nazis were about getting rid of their migrants, except they couldn't find anywhere to send them because they were at war, so they exterminated them instead.

We are quite clearly in a situation where people are going to be put at risk. Let's not pretend otherwise; that's exactly what will happen, and people will die as a result of what Rupert Lowe is proposing if it were ever to happen. I'm not saying he will kill them. I'm not saying the UK state will kill them. I would say the toxic environment that he wants to create would kill them, and this is important. It's vital to understand that.

But we also have to understand the sheer scale of what he's talking about. There is this most massive contradiction in it. He's talking about spending £57 billion on this programme. That is an enormous amount of money. Let's be clear.

For that sort of sum of money, we could begin to make serious attempts to clear the housing problem in the UK.

For that sum of money, we could seriously tackle inequality.

For that sum of money, we could transform the NHS and social care.

But he wants to use it to get rid of people, and as a consequence, he would in fact create massive economic disruption in migrant-dependent sectors of the economy, whilst creating diplomatic conflict with countries asked to receive the returnees, and he will create a huge and deeply oppressive administrative apparatus to control us all, whoever you are, whatever you believe.

This is not about creating freedom or restoring something that we've had, which would be his claim. Magna Carta from 1215, if I remember my date correctly, and I think I do, has protected us against the sort of abuse that Rupert Lowe is now proposing to put in place. That is quite extraordinary. And as a consequence, this reveals a clearer, deeper moral choice that is hidden within this paper. What it makes clear is that having a good life does depend upon the decisions we make.

We have to decide about exclusion, or care; fear versus solidarity. The risk is that toxicity so pernicious could corrupt everyone in this country, or we could move in the direction of providing well-being for all.

That is an option, and my point is that if the state is capable, as Rupert Lowe claims, of delivering this policy of exclusion, it is also capable of delivering the state that we need.

We have a choice to make the state powerful. We know that our conventional politicians have not done that. They have stood back. They have let markets take the lead. They have said it is impossible to deliver the things that the people want in this country that would make life much better for everyone. But the point is, when Rupert Lowe is saying he'll use the power of the state to destroy well-being, it's time for politicians to stand up and say, "We want that power used, and we want it to be used to deliver well-being."

So we could have a politics of care.

We could have a politics of investment.

We could deliver social security for everyone.

We could protect ourselves against the risks from climate change.

We could be embracing diversity.

We could reduce inequality.

We could provide opportunities.

We could provide lifelong education and opportunities to manage the transition to AI and everything else.

Or we could have a politics of hate, surveillance, exclusion, and punishment.

That is the point. We do need to make the choice between those extremes, and the current wishy-washy blandness of mainstream politics has to be swept aside in this issue. There's no time now for their prevarication, fence-sitting, and dithering. What we need is a counter-narrative that challenges the vacuum that Rupert Lowe is trying to fill.

We must do this.

We must create ways that provide credible alternatives to what the far right are proposing.

We must show that insecurity and fear should not be channelled into proposals to cause

harm, but to change, to enhance well-being.

We need to answer questions as a result.

What state do we think we are?

What state are we in?

What do we aspire to be?

How can we achieve that?

What will motivate this choice?

What resources can be assembled to deliver this change?

And what outcomes can we expect as a consequence?

Those are the questions that underpin the thinking that I'm trying to do to deliver this process of change towards a politics of care.

This is my chosen direction of travel, and I want to emphasise it's the exact opposite of what Rupert Lowe is talking about, but it's also the exact opposite of what somebody else is talking about.

Marco Rubio, the US Secretary of State, was speaking in Munich last weekend. He talked about the choices that the USA is giving to Europe. He said, we must go in a white, Christian, male-dominated direction. He said we must exclude migrants. He said that what Rupert Lowe is doing is exactly what the USA wants to see happen in Europe.

Let's be clear. This is not a fringe issue, then. This is about whether we become part of an international right-wing programme, or not.

This is about whether we join a fascist alliance or not.

This is about quite literally deciding where we go.

It is about deciding what we think is important, how we want power to be used, how we want control to be exercised, whether we uphold human rights and the rule of law, whether inequality matters, and whether we will tackle it, what the role of ethics is in our decision-making, and how we ensure that we do, quite literally, the right thing, what we think society is and how we live together, and let's be clear about it, what the role of economics is and how political economy explains how resources are misallocated to people like Rupert Lowe, who use their power to abuse?

At the bottom line, this is all about people; politics for people, and how we respect each other.

We have to build a counter-narrative.

We have to say what that is.

We have to talk about politics, and we have to say that our politicians have got to stop talking about the ridiculous things that obsess them, like people holding up placards about whether or not they support genocide in Israel, which is clearly an abuse of human rights in what has been going on. What we need to talk about are those things that are at the core of what it is to be a person in the UK now, and I mean any person in the UK now.

So we have to make a choice, in other words, what do we want? A politics of care or a politics of hate? That is our choice; we cannot duck it. I know where I stand. What do you think? There's a poll down below.

Poll

[poll id="327"]