

# Robert Lowe's challenge is real: Do we want a politics ...

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A commentator here drew my attention last night to a new policy paper from the Restore Britain group that has been launched by former Reform MP [Robert Lowe](#), who now sits as an independent MP for Great Yarmouth in the House of Commons, and who, this weekend, [launched his own political party](#).

That party is called [Restore Britain](#), and sits further to the right than any other likely to attract media attention in the UK at present.

Entitled Mass Deportations: Legitimacy, Legality, and Logistics, this paper claims that the UK could remove every undocumented migrant now living in the country within a few years through sweeping legal change, administrative expansion, and a deliberately hostile environment designed to force voluntary departures.

The paper is not simply about immigration, though. It is also about power, law, and the nature of the state.

It proposes that mass deportation could be achieved by:

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Repealing or rewriting all of the UK's major human-rights legislation.

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Withdrawing from international human-rights agreements that were set up to protect us from fascism and the power of a state intent on contravening human rights.

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Dismantling the current asylum system.

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Dramatically increasing detention and removal capacity, including by the use of sites holding 15,000 or more people at a time.

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Creating conditions so harsh that large numbers would leave voluntarily.

In other words, it recognises something very important: large-scale deportation cannot be carried out under the present legal order or within existing human rights frameworks. The law would have to be changed first.

That insight is fundamental. This document reveals that calls for mass deportation are not merely administrative tweaks. They are proposals to remake the whole constitutional settlement of the UK. Restore Britain wants to restore nothing. This country has never been remotely like the country Lowe imagines. Instead, he plans a hostile state unlike anything ever seen here before. In that case, the paper requires attention for several reasons.

Firstly, it shows that immigration is being used as a proxy debate about sovereignty and rights, with the intention of creating a state with unprecedented powers in the UK, overturning every principle of law known since Magna Carta, at least.

Its authors argue that courts, international treaties, and human rights law prevent deportations and therefore must be overridden. Implicit in that is a claim that democracy requires many fewer legal protections and fewer checks on executive power. Those who are immigrants to the UK, legal or otherwise, would be in deep peril as a result (and let's not pretend that the distinction matters to those who produced this report), but to suggest that they alone are in that state would be absurd: history tells us that such powers will also be used to quell any form of freedom, and any right to object to state power.

Secondly, it reveals the desire to mobilise economic resources on a massive scale behind political rhetoric. Mass deportation on the scale proposed would require:

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Enormous state spending on detention, policing, transport, and legal process.

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Major labour-market disruption in sectors dependent on migrant labour.

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Diplomatic conflict with countries asked to receive returnees.

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A huge and deeply oppressive administrative apparatus.

In short, it would be one of the largest state economic programmes in modern British history, put together with the deliberate intention of pursuing hate whilst imposing threats, fear, intimidation, incarceration and violent relocation on many hundreds of thousands, and potentially millions of people.

The supposed numbers involved are staggering. The suggestion is that up to 2 million people might be forced from the UK within three years. About 75% half of those would supposedly leave voluntarily due to the hostile environment the policy would create. That environment would undoubtedly target all migrants, regardless of their legal status. It would be totally foolish to think otherwise. The remainder, the report suggests, would be forcibly removed. Official estimates do not suggest that anything like that number of people are illegally resident in the UK.

Thirdly, the paper reveals a deeper moral choice.

The proposal depends on making life so difficult for millions of people that they would leave the UK. That is a policy based on exclusion rather than care, and fear rather than solidarity. All of this is driven by a politics of hate that would fundamentally change the nature of life in this country, to the detriment of everyone. Toxicity is pernicious and corrupts everyone, including (perhaps most especially) those promoting it.

### **Why this matters**

We are often told that the state is powerless. That includes the claim that it is powerless to house people, powerless to fund social security, and powerless to invest in care.

This paper implies something quite differently. The implication is that the state is immensely powerful. The suggestion is that it is capable of tracking, detaining, transporting, and expelling millions. The contradiction is obvious, but it exposes something deeper.

The choice revealed is whether the state wants to do things that are good, to which the answer from the current political establishment is that, apparently, and for reasons that are not clear, it does not, or something straightforwardly evil, which is what this paper proposes, of which it is apparently thought to be capable.

The question is not, then, about whether the state has power. The question is about how that power is used, and to what ends.

The reality is that mass deportation proposals expose a political choice:

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Do we build a politics of care, investment, and social security for everyone, using the power of the state to advance wellbeing in the process?

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Or do we build a politics of hate, surveillance, exclusion, and punishment?

These are not incidental questions: they go to the core of the political debate we need when conventional political thinking has led us to the point where proposals of the sort Robert Lowe is promoting are being made, with no obvious counter-narrative from mainstream political parties being made available.

## **The argument ahead**

This document does, therefore, deserve attention not because its claims are in any way credible, but because it shows how economic insecurity and political fear are being channelled into proposals that would fundamentally change the UK's legal order.

The challenge it presents is real. The questions being posed are:

- \* 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 achieve this goal?
- \* What outcomes can we expect if we succeed?

Robert Lowe has a vision for the UK. It is toxic, dangerous, profoundly destructive and massively harmful not just to the millions he proposes to terrorise, but those who will remain if he ever had the chance to do this. But let me be clear: he is only setting out a direction of travel of the sort that Marco Rubio clearly suggested the US administration thinks Europe should follow [\*\*in his speech to the Munich Security Conference at the weekend.\*\*](#)

**In that case, let me state what should be obvious: what is being proposed, vile as it is, is not peripheral, irrelevant, or to be ignored.**

**This is what we must face.**

**This is the political reality of the moment.**

**This is what we must counter.**

**This is why the counter-narratives on which I am working are so vital, and**

**why they cannot be ignored by our politicians if they claim to have any compassion, care or desire for a democratic future that respects the human rights of everyone, whoever they might be**

**And let me be clear: what this paper shows is that immigration debates are never just about migration. They are about:**

- \* Power**
- \* Control**
- \* Democracy**
- \* Human rights**
- \* The rule of law**
- \* Inequality**
- \* Ethics**
- \* Society, and how we view it**
- \* Economics**
- \* Political economy**

**and most of all:**

- \* People, in all their glorious variety.**

**They are, then, about what kind of society we choose to be, who we want to be within it, and so, how we see ourselves. And anyone who pretends this is not the moment when we have to decide what that society might be is lying to you. That is precisely what we have to do now. If we do not, we may be too late.**

**So what do you want? A politics of care? Or a politics of hate?**

**That is our choice. We cannot duck it.**