

Good-Bye to All This: The UK Government, Immigration, and Cruelty

Scott Lucas

I have lived in the UK for almost 40 years. I studied here, made my career, found the love of my life, and raised two wonderful children.

On my “permanent” vacation, as my grumbling mother has always called it, I embraced British culture. I revelled in the humour, from *The Young Ones* to *The Last Leg*. I immersed myself in the music — my wife introduced me to Glastonbury, and the first dance at our wedding was to *Wonderwall*. After years, I understood (thank you, David Tennant) what *Doctor Who* is all about. Risking my mother’s frown, I finally became a UK citizen.

None of this might have been possible under the current Government.

Last week the Home Office announced its intention to raise the threshold for a work permit by 50%, to an income of £38,700 per year. That is far beyond the wages of a graduate teaching assistant and surpasses the salary of many junior lecturers.

If that barrier is passed, the Government has another hurdle. If your family live abroad — or if you dare to fall in love with someone who is not a citizen — you face another minimum income requirement to be united.

Of course, it’s not aspiring academics who are affected, with employment from hospitality and leisure to manufacturing barred to many. Those in the care and health sectors, which are chronically understaffed are specifically targeted. They are prohibited from bringing spouses, children, or other dependents to the UK.

Far from being concerned about the impact on lives and welfare, the [Home Office](#) brags about the damage. “This package will mean around 300,000 people who came to the UK last year would now not be able to come.”

Economic Nonsense

Set aside humanity and decency, if you wish. The Government’s scheme makes no sense socially and economically.

The care sector has more than 150,000 vacancies. Health unions have explained that the restrictions will be “cruel” in further reducing availability of staff.

Then-Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick — he resigned two days after the [Home Office announcement](#) because he wanted even stricter measures — proclaimed that any vacancies “we hope and expect will be filled by British workers”.

But as unions noted, that is a fantasy wish unless pay and conditions are substantially improved.

The UK’s tourism and leisure industry, trying to recover from the Coronavirus pandemic, have been handicapped by the Government’s existing restrictions. Brexit choked the supply of workers from the European Union. Some businesses limited services; others never reopened.

See also [Brexit Strikes The Lake District](#)

Now the Government will tighten the screws on staffing. [Kate Nicholls, chief executive of UK Hospitality](#), “These changes will further shrink the talent pool that the entire economy will be recruiting from, and only worsen the shortages hospitality businesses are facing.”

And even as the Government proclaims that it will expand the UK's manufacturing sector, including in green industries, it is undermining that objective. Lobbying group MakeUK notes that the increased income threshold will make it more difficult to find workers for technical roles such as metal machining, electroplating, and welding.

"Toxic, Mad Fascists"

But the cold reality is that the Government probably does not care about the economic, let alone the human, consequences.

On the same day that the screws were tightened on legal immigration, the Government again declared its commitment to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda in central Africa.

Never mind that the [UK Supreme Court](#) found last month that Rwanda is not a safe third country for asylum seekers, who might be returned to risk in the areas which they had fled. The Government will just pass a bill turning black and white and finding Rwanda is a most secure destination.

Never mind that Home Secretary James Cleverly had previously called the deportation scheme "batshit" and derided his Government's "fixation" with the plan. Now as he was signing a treaty with the Rwandan Foreign Ministry — and as the UK Government was shipping another £150 million to Kigali — he pronounced, "Rwanda is a safe country that cares deeply about supporting refugees."

Rather than stand up to the hard right of the Conservative Party and UK politics — including former Home Secretary and wannabe-Prime Minister Suella Braverman, former Immigration Minister Jenrick, and I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here! contestant Nigel Farage — the Government is rushing after them to the immoral depths.

See also [Suella Braverman's War on Migrants Is Damaging the UK](#).

So the Immigration Minister becomes the "Illegal Immigration" Minister and a new "Legal Immigration" Minister is created — by scrapping the Minister for Disabled People.

And there is likely more cruelty and degradation on the way.

Even a bill defying the British courts and skating on the edge of international law, with no significant benefits and inhumane costs, is not enough for the asylum-bashing hard right. On Tuesday, after much hype and bluster, [the Government avoided a Commons defeat](#) on the measure's second reading. However, the fire-breathers warned that, without even tougher punishments and a two-finger salute to the European Court of Human Rights, they could doom the legislation and possibly the Government in the third reading in January.

As Conservative peer Baroness Warsi said last Friday on *The Last Leg*:

"Most Tories used to believe in democracy, the rule of law, and decency. We used to think this country was an amazing place where all of us who make it up could live together. We weren't toxic mad fascists like some of my colleagues are now."

So Long and Farewell

So, as the Government aspires to prevent those like me from living in the UK, it is time to leave.

Years of pettiness, bigotry, and wilful destruction are calling time on this adventure. It is time to pursue a new one in Ireland.

An Ireland inside Europe, rather than scuttling away from it. An Ireland which does not embrace or kowtow to its far right but which, despite pressure on accommodation and the scare of violence in Dublin last month, will hopefully reaffirm the welcome of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants. An Ireland where the Government, for all of its flaws, still has a measure of competence and sense of responsibility.

A final line from the British culture which I embraced....

So long and thanks for all the fish.