



Rebecca Long-Bailey's union speech is a rallying cry for the working class

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Rebecca Long-Bailey, pictured in March 2020, when she was then Shadow Secretary of State for Business

MP Rebecca Long Bailey recently spoke at the conference for the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union and delivered a fierce rebuke to what the Labour Party has become under [Keir Starmer](#)

Referring to the murkiness of Peter Mandelson's appointment, and the way in which the party has [forgotten working class people](#) Long-Bailey insisted the party must remember and [revive its trade union values](#)

Her calls coincide with millionaire Nigel Farage telling unions to ["ditch Labour"](#) and affiliate with his party which only truly seeks to benefit its vested interests "the super-rich."

These are the highlights from her address!

Long-Bailey's wish is "more compassion, more courage, more unity"

During her conference speech, Long-Bailey discussed the struggle which ordinary people are living in, and how vulnerable our communities are to divisive parties like Farage's racist Reform UK.

She said:

We're in really unstable and worrying political times, and we're gathering in a moment that demands so much from all of us.

More compassion, more courage and more unity because in difficult economic times – when families are struggling to get by, when wages are stagnant, rents are soaring and people are anxious about their futures – it’s our communities who feel the strain most sharply.

And in those moments of hardship the far right tries to seep into the cracks of society, whispering division, sowing hatred, pushing the poisonous idea that one group of people’s misfortune is somehow caused by another group’s existence. And we’ve been here before and we understand that racism and division don’t come from strength – they come from fear and manipulation.

The far-right feeds on despair, they feed on insecurity and on the deliberate neglect of working-class communities by those who hold power and wealth. And they’re trying to pit neighbour against neighbour, worker against worker, British-born against migrant, white against Black – while the real culprits of inequality, those who are extracting wealth from our labour and our public services, go unchallenged.

Public’s faith in Labour shaken

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Long-Bailey then delivered a sharp criticism of what Star said Labour has become under his woeful leadership.

The Labour MP said:

And you know, the very bulwark against it, the party that was created to challenge wealth and power and to hand it to our community needs – well, it’s lost its way. And I was at the local election count in Salford not so long ago.

Salford’s group, we were lucky that we were only one-third of seats up. But those one-third of seats were completely wiped out. I think we kept about two Labour seats out of all of them.

And I watched good people lose that should never have lost. Councillors who spent years fighting for their communities. Men and women who answered calls late at night from frightened residents, who battled for food banks, youth services, warm spaces and housing support, whilst Westminster barely even noticed that places like ours existed. People who worked themselves into exhaustion because they actually believed that public service still meant something.

And it wasn’t them who failed our communities. It wasn’t our local councillors who made pensioners freeze in the winter by cutting the winter fuel allowance. It wasn’t our local councillors who kept the cruel two-child cap and suspended MPs like me for voting to scrap it while children were going hungry. And it wasn’t our local councillors who talked about cutting support for disabled people who were already struggling to survive.

And whilst the party might have thankfully u-turned on all of these stupid and devastating policy decisions that no Labour government should have ever made, the damage was already done. And it was compounded by scandals in Westminster, people accepting free stuff left, right and centre, all the murky business about Peter Mandelson, and people's faith in the Labour Party and what we actually stood for was shaken.

The post from Long-Bailey's Instagram saying: "Loved speaking with delegates at BFAWU conference this

Labour in Westminster abandoned them first

Long-Bailey pointed to how the party has forgotten its political tradition of fighting for the working class.

She said:

Our communities aren't just some piece on the Westminster chessboard to be moved about by rich and powerful people. We know that it's the woman working every hour she can and still lying awake at night wondering how she's going to pay the bills. It's the pensioners who spent 40 or 50 years working their hearts out and now sit wrapped in blankets because eating has become a luxury.

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It's the lad in a warehouse breaking his back while billionaires are making more money than they are ever going to see in a lifetime. And it's our community battered by cuts, poverty and neglect and are still somehow finding the strength to look after one another when they know politics has failed them.

Our communities are proud communities, they're generous communities, working class communities with dignity and resilience running through their veins and they were crying out for a Labour government at the top to fight for them. From what I saw all those weeks ago, it was pain, it was anger and it was the same question asked time and time again: what does Labour actually stand for? And that's why people turned away. Not because they abandoned Labour values, but because they felt that Labour in Westminster abandoned them first.

Without Labour, what comes next could be very dark

Stating that Labour is more scared of upsetting billionaires and newspaper editors than actually looking after our working-class communities, Long-Bailey says Labour has lost its soul.

In contrast, she argued that the party's soul came from a working class movement that demanded dignity and justice in a system that was rigged against them to confront [wealth and power, not sit comfortably beside it](#).

Like many across the country, she believes Labour has abandoned much of that tradition, creating a political vacuum that parties such as Reform and the Green Party have moved to fill. Nevertheless, she remains convinced that the party can still recover and reconnect with its roots.

She said:

But despite everything theyâ??re still searching for hope. Theyâ??re still desperate for the national party to stand for the very things that all of us do in this union and those values donâ??t come from dividing working people against each other because the real divide in this country isnâ??t between ordinary people â?? itâ??s between those who struggle to survive and those who profit from that struggle, and Labour should have the courage to say that again because Britain needs a movement with fire in its heart once more.

Itâ??s got to have a movement that will rebuild council housing, rebuild industry, rebuild broken community â?? a movement that will redistribute wealth and power instead of allowing it to pool endlessly at the top. It is a movement that will stand shoulder to shoulder with our communities and say we will fight for you.

And what happened in the local election, it wasnâ??t just a bad night for Labour, it was existential. It was a siren call. If the Labour Party does not regain its soul and represent the very people it was created to serve, simply, it will cease to exist. And what comes next could be very, very dark. Hundreds of years of struggle and fight could be gone overnight. And thatâ??s how pivotal this moment in history is.

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Long-Bailey reaffirmed her earlier comments that the prime minister must go. She called for a timetable for transition and a new leader who will rebuild the Labour Party to properly represent working class communities who â??deserve dignity, security, hope and a future worth believing inâ?*

Burnham: Not perfect but â??better than where we areâ??

She then touched on Andy Burnhamâ??s leadership bid, stating that he isnâ??t as left wing as she would like, but that she reckons heâ??s better than Starmer.

Heâ??s done a really good job as Greater Manchester mayor. He seems to be quite popular on the doors in our community and, while heâ??s not as left as I would like him to be, heâ??s definitely better than where we are at the moment. And I think if he worked with every group in the party, and brought the left in on the ideas that weâ??ve been championing for so long, I think it could be hugely positive.

Immigration is not to blame for everything

Speaking about the bad actors seeking to scapegoat marginalised groups, the Salford MP criticised Labour for poor communication.

She said the party hasnâ??t been clearly explaining that the issues facing communities arenâ??t â??due to immigrationâ?*

Itâ??s been caused by an economic model thatâ??s been controlled by very powerful people who donâ??t have the interest about working past communities at heart for over 40 years.

Whatâ??s needed for change is a prime minister with â??real trade union, working class values at their very heartâ??. A Labour leader who sounds and speaks like us, and with both feet in the â??real worldâ??.

â?weâ??ve got to have somebody that sees outside of Westminster and actually understands what real people and real families are going through.

Featured image via [Christopher Furlong/ Getty Image](#)

By [Maddison Wheeldon](#)

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