

Long-Bailey's pointless struggle

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I [wrote yesterday](#) suggesting that Rebecca Long-Bailey got her approach to the Green New Deal right when launching her bid to be Labour leader in [Tribune magazine](#). I am now writing to suggest that she got almost everything else wrong.

The reason is quite straightforward. What is apparent is that Long-Bailey has no clue about what people expect from a leader of the Opposition. In that regard she is, of course, the true heir to Corbyn. In a key line she said:

You're as likely to see me on a picket line as you are at the dispatch box, and you can trust me to fight the establishment tooth and nail.

Maybe she does not realise that being Leader of the Opposition is to be part of the establishment.

And maybe she does not realise that being Leader of the Opposition means you aspire to be prime minister. It does not get more establishment than that. And nothing she says and nothing she does will change that: this is the way liberal democracy works: there is, inevitably, a power structure. The purpose of democracy is to hold it to account. But she is aspiring to be part of it, whether she likes it or not.

I could analyse this further, but Andrew Purkis, whose work I much like, has done it already. [As he has noted](#):

So what is the establishment against which we should be declaring war or fighting tooth and nail (quite violent expressions, even as metaphor)? For many of us, the British establishment includes prominently the royal family and all the Lords Lieutenants, the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England, the House of Lords, the senior judiciary, the leaders of our armed forces, the senior civil service and Foreign Office, the Captains of Industry, the Vice Chancellors of our universities — just to name a few.

He adds:

I assume Long Bailey means "establishment" in a different sense, which is those people

who supposedly have a stranglehold on power and wealth in our society. The problem is that this sort of analysis is vague and contestable. Are bankers and financiers a monolith, is Industry a monolith, are the media a monolith, conspiring together with those with inherited wealth and privilege to increase inequality and feather their own nests at the expense of the people? Are all elites to be condemned as neo liberal and self-seeking, and the enemy, or is there variety within them? If there is no monolithic conspiracy, who are we supposed to be warring against, and who might be spared?

In this context I rather liked [a letter in the FT this morning](#):

Bill Michael, chairman of KPMG, says he wants to stamp out the “corrosive” mentality that making large amounts of money trumps good behaviour (report, January 6).

“That mentality has existed for years across the whole market,” he says.

No it hasn't.

Mark Bogard Chief Executive, Family Building Society, Epsom, Surrey, UK

Bogard is right. Of course there are issues to address. Many of them. But crude stereotyping does not work. It ill becomes the Labour Party to go down this route.

As Andrew Purkis concluded:

I suspect most British electors are peaceable people who are not specially attracted by warlike metaphors. If we are being asked to sign up to tooth and nail warfare against a group or groups of our fellow citizens, even very fortunate and privileged ones, please can we be told more clearly who they are?

I might add, can we also know why we are at war, what the end goal is, how we will know when victory can be declared, and what will the real spoils be? Politicians are very bad at stating any of these for real wars. It seems that they are no better at it when seeking leadership. and the Green New Deal apart (which requires cooperative working, not war on the establishment, or it cannot happen in time) Long-Bailey offers no clear vision for her outcomes. It's all struggle, but no ends.

I admit this does not work for me.

I suspect it will not for many people.