

Labour is revolting

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Labour ministers are revolting.

So, too, are Labour backbenchers.

Ministers who have fought for so long to get into office will not accept the instruction that their job is to deliver cuts and not change. Of course, they are sending less-than-compliant messages to Rachel Reeves, and there is nothing Starmer can do to help her. If enough are doing this, there is nothing he can do to discipline them. Right now, his authority is at a very low ebb with them: a reshuffle is a long way off, and they know it.

His problem with backbenchers is even bigger. Take Rachel Maskell, MP for York Central since 2015. Her days as a shadow minister are over. She has not made it as the real thing. You can be sure she knows she never will get ministerial office now. So, she is leading the rebellion against the removal of the winter fuel allowance payment from most pensioners.

Why is she doing that?

One, because of her in-principle objection.

Two, because there are almost five years to go to an election, she has nothing to lose by doing so.

Three, if she doesn't take this issue on now, then Labour austerity will guarantee she will lose her seat anyway.

Four, Starmer has already made himself look stupid by suspending some of his MPs, and he can't keep doing it, so the risk of sanction is tiny.

So, five, she has nothing to lose.

And, again, Starmer is completely on the back foot with absolutely nowhere he can go

in the face of justified criticism for adopting a policy that pleases no one.

This, though, for him is just the beginning. He's already making a habit of this.

His Gaza policy has also appealed to no one.

His 300 or more backbenchers, plus most of his ministers, must be choking every time they try to defend the continuing utterly unnecessary two-child cap.

And if Reeves really does deliver an austerity budget, outright rebellion is going to be very hard to contain.

A very big, very shallow majority that leaves most Labour MPs realising that they probably have only one go at this and that Reeves and Starmer are already determined to lose them their seats at the next election presents Starmer with a nightmare that his policy of triangulation simply cannot manage.

Starmer has no room for fence-sitting. It's already clear he must govern as Labour, or he and Reeves, and Labour itself will have their days numbered unless, that is, Labour dispenses with them both, and don't rule that out.

Starmer has to be a visionary with considerable charisma and a bold deftness of touch to hold together the situation he has created. It is already clear that he is possessed of none of those characteristics and that his MPs, and maybe his ministers, know it.

Starmer already looks like a lame-duck prime minister, buffeted by storms, some of which are of his own creation. Things can only get worse for him.