

Starmer and Reeves must either deliver now, or the lead...

Published: January 12, 2026, 10:20 pm

According [to the FT](#) yesterday:

Deputy prime minister Angela Rayner, home secretary Yvette Cooper and justice secretary Shabana Mahmood raised concerns about the UK government's looming spending review at a "tense" cabinet session on Tuesday, people with knowledge of the meeting said.

They added:

According to one of the people, a "large minority" of Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's cabinet protested about planned spending reductions in their own departments. Some also raised worries about plans for up to £6bn of welfare cuts expected to be set out next week.

Apparently Ed Miliband and Lucy Powell were amongst others to raise concerns.

There are three reasons for mentioning this. Firstly, there is some serious leaking going on here. It's taken a day or two to get out, but someone is talking, and the likelihood is that there is more than one person involved. There are some people in the Cabinet who are very angry with Starmer.

Second, it is notable that the leading opponents are all women. Starmer has a real problem with women, Rachel Reeves apart. All those listed for removal from posts in a forthcoming Cabinet reshuffle are, apparently, women. Bridget Phillipson apparently tops the list, and she appears to be deeply uncomfortable in her role at Education, but it seems that McSweeney and Starmer have a problem with women that is going to tear Labour apart.

Third, I strongly suspect some of these mentioned are already on leadership manoeuvres. Yvette Cooper seems to be the most likely.

I confess I am no fan of Cooper's. Her economics is as bad as Ed Ball's, to whom she is married. Her stance on many issues appears illiberal. If social democracy flows through

her veins, it is very weakly. And maybe it is Rayner who is, in any event, leading the alternative pack.

But, I get the sense that Starmer and Reeves are no longer safe in their jobs. The Cabinet is realising how badly things are going and that change is needed. Starmer and Reeves can either deliver it, or the coup is on.