ANDREW MARR SHOW, 22ND JULY 2018, REBECCA LONG-BAILLEY MP

REBECCA LONG-BAILLEY, MP
Shadow Business Secretary

AM: Rebecca Long-Bailey is the Shadow Business Secretary and she joins us now from Salford.

Rebecca Long-Bailey, good morning and welcome. Can I start by asking you going back over this extraordinary week in politics, we now know that at the beginning of the week we were quite close to a General Election. Theresa May calling a vote of no confidence, having lost a vote in the House of Commons and there were Brexiteer MPs who might have rebelled and we might be sitting here saying, well we’ve got three or four weeks in this election campaign, Rebecca Long-Bailey. That didn’t happen because four Labour MPs voted to save Theresa May’s neck. What’s your message to them?

RLB: Well look, they felt very strongly about the Leave campaign. We know that, we weren’t expecting any other action other than what they did from them and they’re entitled to hold their opinions. But it’s what’s happened in parliament this week that really concerns me. It’s been an absolute shambles from start to finish. Over two weeks ago we had various business organisations, Jaguar, Land Rover, Airbus, Siemens, Unipart, raising concerns about the direction of travel of the negotiations and the lack of certainty for British business going forward. Then we had members of the Cabinet coming out and dismissing the concerns quite flagrantly of business so that my opposite number, Greg Clark, was forced to rebuke those claims and state that the concerns of business should be respected. So we all hoped businesses included, that we’d make some progress. So we saw the publication of the white paper which, you know, was encouraged by business but they still said that there were a lot of gaps and voids to be filled, yet the white paper was turned on its
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head a few days later with amendments in the customs bill undermined commitments on VAT, undermined commitments on the customs union and we're now in the same position that we were before. And Airbus has come out again and stated you know, quite candidly that it is a shambles and why would they not start making contingency arrangements now?

AM: And at the end of all of this, very, very messy story there is going to be an even more important vote in the House of Commons later this year when the Labour Party’s going to be confronted, probably, by some version of Theresa May’s version of Brexit, versus the prospect of no deal. Are there any circumstances in which you’d vote for no deal?

RLB: No deal should not be an option and that’s why we wanted a meaningful vote in parliament and why we called on the government in the event of us voting down such a deal in parliament that they would be required to look at renegotiating the deal, because a no deal would be absolutely catastrophic for industry.

AM: That is the problem that your party is now in, because you will have a proposal from the government in front of the House of Commons and if you vote it down you know that that takes this country towards no deal. So my question is very simple. What in those circumstances do you do?

RLB: Well we still don’t know what the government’s going to do. Now the reason that their backbenchers who were opposed to the government’s position on no deal were pacified because the government agreed, behind closed doors, to negotiate with them and come to some sort of an arrangement as to how parliament would deal with voting down such a deal. Now they haven’t provided any clarity or detail on that yet and we’ll be pushing them very hard. We don’t want to be in a situation where as a
parliament we have to vote against a deal and end up with a no
deal situation because that is completely deplorable.

AM: But might you do that?

RLB: Well, as I said, no deal should not be an option and we have
to work very hard across all parties in parliament to make sure
that that isn’t an option. You’ve stated that the figures that have
been put forward by the IMF today that we’d see a 4% drop in our
GDP but we’ve heard from real life examples already. Jaguar Land
Rover have stated that you know, even just one hour’s delay at
borders could cost £1.25 million an hour to their industry. Over
the whole automotive industry if we had tariffs at borders we’re
looking at £3 billion a year.

AM: I understand all that. My question to you really is to avoid all
of that happening, to save those jobs, to save those businesses do
you not have to contemplate the prospect of supporting the
government on its version of Brexit to stop that happening?

RLB: Well, we’ll assess the deal when it comes back to parliament
and you know we’ve set out quite clear and detailed tests to
determine whether it serves the interests of our economy going
forward. But as I say, we do not want to be in a position where
we have no deal.

AM: A big meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party tomorrow
talking amongst other things about anti-Semitism. The Jewish
Labour Party is talking about taking the party to court over all of
this. You could resolve this as a party by simply accepting the
international definition of anti-Semitism and all the examples,
which everybody else accepts. Why don’t you?

RLB: Well, the anti-Semitism Code that was drafted by our
working group within Labour’s NEC was intended to reaffirm our
commitment to the IHRA definition and to adopt and expand upon the examples. Now we recognised this week that there was some concern about that. We wanted to develop a code that was legally robust and detailed so that we could enforce it quickly in our disciplinary processes. But we haven’t won the faith of the Jewish community and indeed my own parliamentary colleagues have expressed concern. Now the intention was never to omit parts of the IHRA definition. The IHRA definition and examples is a two sided piece of A4. It’s not very detailed, but it’s very clear and straight to the point and what we wanted to do was to build on that. But we recognise the concerns and that’s why this week it was right for the NEC to look at the Code again and look at consulting with the Jewish community to make sure that we get it right, because we have to restore faith in the Jewish community. We’re starting from a very, very dark place due to the actions of a minority in our party and the failure of us to deal with it quickly.

AM: But to deal with it quickly you could take those four examples and say okay, we accept that and you could kill off this row overnight.

RLB: Well the four examples are incorporated within the Code but they’re expanded on and contextualised and that’s where the discussion lies and what we want to do is set them out in a way that adopts the IHRA position and the guidelines that have been set out, but also to be able to expand upon them and that’s why we need to have those discussions with the Jewish community as soon as possible, because we need to put this matter to bed.

AM: You do. You absolutely do. Dame Margaret Hodge was fairly forthright in what she said to your Leader. Do you think she should be disciplined and how, if so?

RLB: Well, I wasn’t there when the so called incident happened, so I can’t comment on what was said, but I mean what we do you
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say within the party is that we treat colleagues with respect. But that's not to say that it's wrong for you know, Margaret. If she did you know state those things to Jeremy, to express her opinion it's right to express your opinion to the Leader of the party.

AM: And that's acceptable?
RLB: Yes.
AM: She lost many members of her own family in the holocaust, she feels very, very strongly about this and a lot of Labour MPs, not just Jewish Labour MPs think it would be outrageous to discipline her for that incident.

RLB: Well I'm not sure where we're up to in terms of what action's being taken. I just know that the matter's being investigated, but as I say, you know within the party we're expected to treat colleagues with respect and not to engage in personal attacks. But as I said it's not wrong for a colleague within the Labour Party to express concerns to another colleague. It just has to be done in the appropriate way.

Ends