

**Deloitte.**The Cambridge Union Society
9A Bridge Street
Cambridge, CB2 1UBEmail : pressofficer@cus.org**PRESS RELEASE - 14.03.15****Buzz Aldrin**

On Saturday 14 March, the Union hosted American engineer and former astronaut Buzz Aldrin¹ and his son Andrew Aldrin.

First, Buzz Aldrin was asked how he was able to become one of the first two men to walk on the moon. He responded with “right place, right time.” Later, he was asked “did you, or didn’t you, see a UFO.” Aldrin responded that “there was something that we were wondering about” that they had seen through a window, that was “technically an unidentified object,” but was likely a piece of metal that had detached from the rocket as expected.

Next, he was asked what he thought of a mission to Mars in which astronauts would be unable to return. He responded by saying that President Kennedy had wanted to send astronauts to Mars, but the mission was found to be technologically unfeasible. He also spoke of something “unusual” on a moon of Mars called Phobos—a 90-meter-tall “monolith.” Aldrin said he was not convinced it had not occurred naturally, but other individuals were.

Buzz Aldrin’s son, Andrew Aldrin, spoke of the future of space exploration. He argued that space exploration and transportation are transitioning from the government sector into the private sector, and saw a distant future in which all space exploration is handled commercially.

The floor was then opened to questions from the audience. One audience member asked whether or not corporations would be able to take unprofitable risks that governments might be more willing to take. Buzz Aldrin responded that governments are willing to take more risks from time to time, and referenced the history of the space race between the United States and Russia. Andrew Aldrin then spoke of US superiority in terms of private space development due to a large presence of venture capital and technology.

Later, Aldrin was asked how enthusiasm for space could be rekindled. Andrew Aldrin responded by referencing Smithsonian data on public support of space exploration. He said that “what matters is political commitment,” and that such political commitment during the Cold War is what drove successful space programs in the past, but is unlikely to reoccur in today’s government.

Buzz Aldrin spoke of research done at Purdue University that identified a specific time every 26 months when the distance between Earth and Mars would be at a minimum, making it ideal for space travel to Mars. He argued that nuclear energy was expensive, and that “our purpose of going to Mars with people is to build up a settlement, a colony.”

Next, an audience member asked about the extent to which Aldrin thinks the Cold War is over. Buzz Aldrin responded that the Cold War came to an end at least in part because of the American Strategic Defense Initiative missile defense system built by Reagan. Aldrin argued that Russia realized that the US could build such a nuclear missile defense system before they could due to the industrial capacities demonstrated by America’s Apollo missions.

Later, an audience member asked if Aldrin had discussed Neil Armstrong’s famous words upon landing prior to their arrival on the moon. Buzz Aldrin said that he had not, and that Armstrong had not spoken to anyone about them. Furthermore, Aldrin said that if he had been the first one to walk on the moon, he would have consulted famous literary figures for advice on what words to use.

Finally, he was asked about the competitive nature of his time at NASA in the context of the Cold War. Aldrin responded by saying that Russia’s actions caused the US to accelerate his program, and that Sputnik and Russia’s first manned mission in space provided the impetus for a manned mission to the moon.

By Ben Atlas

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¹ Note: “Aldrin” refers to Buzz Aldrin. Andrew Aldrin is specifically identified as such.