



Deloitte.

The Cambridge Union Society
9A Bridge Street
Cambridge, CB2 1UB

Email : pressofficer@cus.org

PRESS RELEASE – 11.02.15

Emily Brothers

On the 11th February, the Cambridge Union Society welcomed Labour politician Emily Brothers to speak. Emily is the Labour MP candidate for Sutton and Cheam and believed to be the first openly gay, transgender and blind Labour MP candidate running for Westminster. Emily is also a former President of the National Federation of the Blind and has campaigned for various social causes.

Emily spoke about how she received widespread support after she “came out” about her gender history; Emily said that she was just being herself, which she felt goes to the heart of true, authentic leadership. She admitted, however, that there is a lot of negativity in terms of judging people from different backgrounds, citing the hostile and bigoted reception of her personal story in America over the previous few days.

Similarly, Emily referred to the controversy in which Sun columnist Rod Liddle asked how she knew she was transgender if she was blind; she asked how Liddle knows he is a man when the lights are turned out. Judging by his lack of response, Emily quipped that he must be “afraid of the dark”.

Emily discussed how many complaints were submitted to the standards agency IPSO but that she declined to personally complain. She emphasised that she knew many transgender people and their families were upset by Liddle’s comments, despite interpreting it as a “cheap joke” herself, which motivated her desire to speak out about the negative experiences of transgender people in the media.

Emily spoke about her concern that IPSO and other regulating bodies should have more consistent policies to combat editorial misdemeanours; she spoke about how the press needed to take responsibility for “stampedes in the dark” conducted under a “right to know” within the free press. She cited the case of Lucy Meadows, a transgender woman who committed suicide after particularly vindictive press coverage focused on her gender reassignment became national, as evidence that more needed to be done to hold the press accountable.

On a political note, Emily dismissed the Conservatives’ policies as more of the same, of which “Britain cannot afford more”, and claimed that the Liberal Democrats could not be trusted based on their past broken promises. Labour, on the other hand, would focus on delivering lasting social and economic reform for Britain. She invited students to “change Britain for good” as her speech concluded.

In the student Q&A that followed, Emily was asked whether Labour would consider entering into a coalition if they failed to win a majority government. She replied that they would most likely consider entering a coalition agreement, but that they were primarily “working for a majority”.

Another asked what more could be done legislatively to de-stigmatize transgendered people; Emily cited that Labour intend to strengthen legislature against the harassment and bullying of transgender and non-binary people, and said that more could be done on a primary care level to educate doctors about the needs of transgender people.

One student brought up Germaine Greer, who spoke at the Union a few weeks ago, as she asked Emily’s thoughts on a platform being offered to trans-misogynistic speakers and columnists. Emily emphasised that she supported freedom of the press and commentators, but stressed that “we have standards in Britain that need to be observed”, highlighting how she aims to eliminate the hostile portrayal of transgender people in the media and more widely.

By Sarah Sheard

Deputy Head of Press, Lent 2015