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Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell Speaks at the Cambridge Union

On December 2nd 2016, the Cambridge Union Society welcomed a leading figure of the British Left and Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, co-hosted with the Cambridge Universities Labour Club.

Mr McDonnell opened his remarks framing it as a conversation. He quite graciously opened the floor after only a few minutes. He made the argument that the current paradigm, neo-liberalism has failed, and that the current political environment is ripe for a change. He noted that not only is neo-liberalism economically unsustainable, but he noted that "200,000 children now use foodbanks...under this theory, this government cannot even feed its own people". He spoke about his constituency, Hazleton, where people are "literally living in sheds rented out to them...rent a shed." He reiterated, to emphasize, "we have a government who cannot feed or house its own people". He also noted that "1.2 million people do not get the social care that they need". "On all metrics...our current theory has failed".

"I am outraged by that", he said. He noted that people come to him from all over the country as he travels – "what I find most offensive is the fact that this Government seems to be targeting the disabled in particular". He argued that the current work requirements pose an extreme mental burden, and has pushed many into suicide. "I can no longer cope" he said, "I cannot cope with not being able to help my constituents". "This government cannot house, feed or care for its people, and targets the disabled in particular", he reiterated. He encouraged the audience to watch *I, Daniel Blake*, because it was a good representation of what the neo-liberal state does to people.

John McDonnell went on to say that he did not believe that Jeremy Corbyn would be on the ballot in 2015 "don't come to me for racing tips" he joked. They won, he argued, "because people feel the same outrage that I feel" about neoliberalism. "There is a debate", going on in society "that is the most refreshing in a generation, but it is not represented in the main stream media" he said. Although, he joked "you can't believe everything you read in the Daily Mail". The Labour Party in McDonnell's will be at the forefront of these conversations: "we will not just be a political party, but a social movement". "We will try to radically transform society, to make it fairer, more equal and more environmentally sustainable". Part of the debate, he mentioned "is how to rehabilitate the language of socialism, despite the media, despite fear of change...we need to demonstrate that socialism is in their interest." He closed by reminding the room "that your generation will play a huge part in our transformation...away from a system I have experienced for most of my life."

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For footage of the event go to <https://www.youtube.com/user/cambridgeunionsoc>
Friday, 2 December, 2016