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MICHAEL HOWARD

Michael Howard opens his talk at The Cambridge Union with Brexit: debating the arguments to remain and leave the European Union, recognizing that the vote has already passed, and arguing that the most important thing for the British government to do now is to negotiate the best terms for Britain from the European Union. He also explains his views regarding free trade and access to services, and considers whether the upcoming election might take focus away from the negotiations.

When asked about his predictions regarding the election—assuming the labour party doesn’t win—he says, “I think the Labour party will definitely survive, and will come again, even if they lose quite badly on June the 8th.” He describes how he believes that they still have the capacity to rebound, even if they need a new leader, and even if it will take time.

The next topic centres around anti-Semitism and Howard’s identity as a Jewish politician. Howard denies ever experiencing anti-Semitism, beyond perhaps “one or two comments.” While he states that the recent allegedly anti-Semitic events of the Labour party are very regrettable, he maintains that “we are fortunate in Britain for having less anti-Semitism here than in other countries.”

In terms of Howard’s transition from law into politics, he states that he had always been interested in politics, and was fortunate enough to become President of the Cambridge Union during his time at Cambridge University. He also maintains that there are different ways one could make one’s way into a political career. “I personally think it’s a good thing to do something else first, and not follow the typical route into parliament…but there are those who have followed those routes very successfully,” explains Howard.

When asked about his favourite memory of being at Cambridge, he says that it was being elected President of the Cambridge Union, admitting that “It was one of the few times I got bloody drunk.” In terms of regrets, he describes how he used to play in a Skiffle band in his youth, and wished that he had carried on playing in a band, that he had made time to pursue music in addition to politics.

In the Q&A with the audience, Howard touches upon topics ranging from the difficulty of losing an election, his controversial confrontation with Tony Blair regarding grammar school education, the influence of globalization on the United Kingdom, his opinions on an elected house of lords, and the prospect of an independent Scotland.

He closed his talk graciously, saying that every time he re-visits Cambridge, his hope in the world is restored. “I think you are a terrific generation, much better than my generation, and I have every confidence that you will build a great future for our country.”

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