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The Cambridge Union Society
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Parliamentary Hustings for prospective Cambridge candidates, Friday 6th March

This event followed a ‘Question Time’ format, with candidates questioned by members of the public and students alike.

The candidates involved will be: Daniel Zeichner (Labour), Dr Julian Hubbert MP (Liberal Democrat), Chamali Fernando (Conservative), Patrick O’Flynn (UKIP), and Dr Rupert Read (Green). These candidates will be referred to, subsequently, as DZ, JH, CF, PO, and RR respectively.

Pre-vote:

- Labour: 24.2%
- Greens: 9.8%
- Liberal Democrats: 17%
- UKIP: 5.2%
- Conservative: 17.2%
- Undecided: 26.1%

Opening statements

- **JH:** Entered politics because of my values: ‘I’m a liberal...an internationalist...I care about the environment...and social justice...I also care about Cambridge...I voted against tuition fees...support me to continue the work I’ve done over the last 5 years.’
- **CF:** Been a barrister for last 12 years. ‘We can turn Cambridge blue’. One of key things I would like to see is to ‘push the environment...up the agenda.’ I am a ‘strong, pragmatic, green choice for Cambridge’. I have a ‘vision for Cambridge.’
- **PO:** We are the ‘one party’ that seeks cut foreign aid, to leave the EU, that will end the unfair per capita public spending advantage in Scotland, that will end HS2, and will ‘better fund key public services...without extending public sector deficit.’ And we are the one party that will cut migration through a ‘points system’. We will scrap bedroom tax, inheritance tax.
- **RR:** If you fold a piece of paper 64 times, it would extent beyond the height of the moon. The point: you cannot have infinite straining of global resources. We are currently living as if we have ‘four planets’. Give us a chance and we’ll change the political agenda, to reign in climate emissions. It’s a vote for public transport in and around Cambridge. It’s a vote for a Green New Deal to insulate houses. A Green vote is a ‘vote for your future and for taking social justice seriously.’
- **DZ:** Cambridge is one of a handful of seats which will determine next election. ‘Labour has a vision for this country’. A vision about the kind of country we really want to live in. The way to reduce the deficit isn’t about hitting poor people harder: it’s about raising productivity. Last year, 60% of all wealth created went to the top 10%. Labour will guarantee



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jobs for young people, move towards a living wage, come to rescue of NHS, cut tuition fees, and we will de-carbonise. And, on EU: 'we're part of it, we need to be at the heart of it'.

The cost of living

- CF: key thing is to resolve transport in Cambridge, to allow people to live outside Cambridge, where properties are dramatically cheaper, and still travel in to work in Cambridge. Also importance of new-starter homes.
- DZ: people are stuck on wage freezes in Cambridge. Large numbers work in public services. We need to move to a different kind of economy, boosting minimum wage, introducing a living wage. We need to make sure wages rise, and we need to freeze costs (eg energy costs).
- PO: Believes the University should pay the Living Wage, and about the need to reign in zero-hours contract. Labour brought in unskilled mass immigration to this country, which has contributed to wage depression. We need to control the supply of unskilled labour from abroad.
- JH: Cambridge's problems are in some way a product of its success: we have very low unemployment. We need to take action on zero-hours contract, we need to enforce the national minimum wage, and about getting colleges to pay the living wage. It's also about how much people get to keep: no one on the national minimum wage should be paying any income tax at all. We also need to tackle Cambridge problems: transport, and much more home-building. That will make it a more affordable place.
- RR: In the Green, we say that the living wage should become the minimum wage. In terms of cost of living, we need to have community renewable energy. We also need to resolve Cambridge transport problems: the Green's 'Transport Blueprint for Cambridge', intended to make Cambridge a better place for cycling, walking and buses. The most critical question of all: how we make sure our homes are not prohibitively expensive to run. The 'Green New Deal': we need to insulate every house in Britain and move over to renewable energy.

Cambridge is one of the most expensive student cities in the country. Is there anything we can do?

- PO: Cambridge will always be expensive. My concern is not so much for the student population of 3 years, but for those young permanent residents of Cambridge, who have no hope of getting on the property ladder in the future.
- JH: I've been working on this with Anglia Ruskin student union. Many students in the country are being put off university by the costs. We need to fix the private rented sector, and increasing student grants.
- CF: I would like to think that in a decade we might be able to abolish tuition fees. We are offering a world-class education to people. My goal of abolishing tuition fees is only achievable in a strong economy.
- RR: we need to make free/cheap transport available, and insulate houses. The free market alone is not going to deliver: we require government action. And the free market is letting us down hopelessly in terms of house-building.



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- **DZ:** the free market isn't delivering, and this is the alternative Ed Miliband is offering. We need to regulate. There's no protection for people. Labour will move to three-year tenancies. We need the state to be on people's side. Consistent theme of market failure. Only Labour will intervene to deal with these things, to create a situation where the markets are working for people.

What is your stance on the availability of maintenance loans and grants?

- **CF:** important to increase availability of loans and grants.
- **PO:** Our party has a policy of abolishing tuition fees for the STEM subjects.
- **RR:** We have a policy of abolishing tuition fees, which we will pay for by scrapping Trident. Because we believe that education is a public good, in all subjects, not just STEM.

How do you justify your right to represent this constituency under the current electoral system?

- **DZ:** you have to operate within the system in which you find yourself. I supported the change to AV which unfortunately was defeated. We need devolution outside of Whitehall.
- **CF:** Our first-past-the-post system and our constitution are historic. The system doesn't necessarily favour anyone. In the last 5 years constituencies have changed in size. We need boundary changes. If everyone voted, you would get what you voted for.
- **JH:** First-past-the-post is utterly rubbish. Blair got 36% of the vote and huge majorities. You should not get massive power with a third of the votes. My party got almost a quarter of the vote last time, and only one-eleventh of seats. We need a better voting system, and we need to change the House of Lords. Daniel is right about devolution.
- **PO:** I've always believed in proportional representation. It's possible that Cambridge will be won on 25%-26%. Clearly, first-past-the-post doesn't work anymore. The voting system is strangling politics.
- **RR:** House of Lords reform is a must, and we need proportional representation. Cambridge could be won on an astonishingly proportion of the popular vote.

How can the low proportion of women in politics be addressed?

- **CF:** you have to create role models in politics, and to make women think they can break the ceiling. Barbaric, ungentlemanly behaviour puts women off politics. The Conservative Party is meritocratic, no all-women short lists, but let's make it a level playing field. If I can do it, millions of women in this country can.
- **RR:** Our leader is a woman, our MP is a woman, our member of the House of Lords is a woman. The Green Party is led by women.
- **PO:** Our deputy Chairman is a woman, 3 of our Cambridgeshire candidates are women. In general, in Britain women are at an advantage in the political communication game, but politics hasn't capitalised on this to promote women enough. There's lots of potential for women to increase their representation.



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- **DZ:** Labour introducing all-women shortlists made a huge difference in 1997, and made a huge difference to the culture of the House of the Commons. We made a difference by introducing gender balance to Labour. Structural changes and cultural changes are not mutually exclusive.
- **JH:** We have the highest proportion of peers who are female. We have the highest number of MEPs who are female, but that is because we only have one! It's a great shame we don't have more female MPs. This time, most of our target seat candidates are female. It has been particularly younger women who have argued passionately against all-women shortlists. Since Labour introduced all-women shortlists, there have not had a female MPs elected outside of those seats with all-women shortlists. The behaviour at PMQs is childish, sexist and pathetic.

Membership of the European Union. Should we stay in?

- **RR:** it would be absurd to pull out of the EU. But it does need to be reformed. The Greens want to democratise the EU. You can't have a democratic EU while the corporations are so powerful.
- **DZ:** of course we need to stay in EU.
- **PO:** Britain should be in charge of its own trade deals, and made fundamentally in charge of its own democracy. The biggest flaw of the EU is that it has hollowed out democracy across Europe. The number one collective identity in Britain is not European.
- **CF:** If you don't get a Conservative government, you won't get to answer the question. People of my generation haven't had their chance to have a say on Europe. I want a referendum, and to renegotiate our relationship with Europe. As a barrister, I know there are certain issues which don't work. We should ultimately stay in, but it has to be renegotiated.
- **JH:** I'm a passionate European. How do you go about tackling crime and the environment without European cooperation. It's essential for our economy, our society and our culture. Good for research at universities, good for students who go on Erasmus scholarships. Of course we need changes, just as we do with our own system.
- **DZ:** an 'emphatic' yes. Ed Miliband has had the strength and courage to say that our position is in Europe. We are not going to be diverted from the important things by 'faffing around' for two years on a referendum. Under Cameron, we've lost our influence in the EU: he couldn't even stop Juncker. Becoming President. We don't want to 'sleepwalk' into a referendum and to leaving Europe.

Is blaming immigrants just a distraction from other domestic issues?

- **PO:** Migrant labour has a damaging effect on the unskilled labour market, migrant workers are depressing wages. It's very easy for people with privileged backgrounds not to understand the hollowing out of the labour market. It's not about blaming people who want to become to Britain; it's about putting our national interests first.
- **JH:** We do benefit from migration. 1/7 businesses were set up by migrants. Migrants play a crucial role in keeping our public services going. Yes, there are issues, such as housing



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shortage. But build more houses, don't blame the migrants. The problem with UKIP is that they have moved the conversation over, which has enabled space in the public discourse for racist messages. We shouldn't blame immigrants.

The NHS. In its current state, is the NHS unsustainable?

- **PO:** the NHS needs more money. We want to put an extra 3 billion into the NHS, by cutting back on foreign aid, HS2, EU contributions etc.
- **CF:** Any party can tell you anything going into an election; why are you going to believe? The Conservatives said we were committed to spending more on the NHS, and we delivered. We are pledging a genuinely costed and deliverable pledge in terms of 2bn per annum for the NHS. We will clamp down on health tourism.
- **DZ:** Cameron promised 'no top-down reorganisation' before 2010, and look what happened. My party is deeply connected with the NHS, and we have keep having to fix the Tories breaking the NHS. Labour's done it before, 'well do it again; so much needs to be done.'
- **RR:** the Mansion tax is only a tokenistic gesture. We call for a wealth tax, to give us the money we need to properly fund the NHS. We can't trust the Conservatives after their top-down reorganisation. It was Labour that started the PFIs. Only the Green Party is pledging to keep our NHS public.
- **JH:** Nobody has yet mentioned mental health, which is always the big of the NHS which is ignored. This has to change, because mental health affects so many of us. In terms of funding. The bare minimum the NHS needs is 8bn by 2020. Our task as politicians is to find that money.

Closing statements

- **JH:** Do you think that we share your values? Which of us will stand up for you, for Cambridge, for this country, for this planet? Which of us has a track record? I was the first Cambridge MP to vote against tuition fees. I voted against trying to privatise the NHS. Who will deliver for you and share your values for the next 5 years.
- **CF:** In terms of investment and balancing the books, they are Conservative-led achievements. This government has balanced the books.
- **PO:** I want to give people a real choice in this election, I want to give Labour a run for their money in working-class communities.
- **RR:** The Green Party is polling mid-to-high 20s amongst young people. If you would like to see more than two Green MPs elected, you need to vote for them in Cambridge. Who is going to be thinking and acting in the interest of future generations? 'Get to feel good about how you vote; vote Green.'
- **DZ:** what kind of country do you want to live in. If we have 5 more years of the same, more blame will be heaped on those at the bottom, the gap between rich and poor continuing to rise. We want to channel investment into public services, infrastructure, sustainable energy. Let's crack down on zero-hours contracts. There is a choice.



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