

Deputy Prime Minister candidate speaks out against EPAs

Jon Cruddas, Labour party deputy leadership candidate, today called for a new approach to the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) in a speech to the Foreign Press Association.

11 June 2007

In a call for the government to establish a defined set of foreign policy principles and criteria to determine how the UK acts in the world in order to restore trust in our foreign policy, Jon Cruddas said:

"There is a responsibility too to help strengthen our international institutions - the UN, the WTO, the IMF are all remote, largely undemocratic and unaccountable institutions.

"As we should seek to try and a force for good in the world when we look at potential trouble spots, we should also seek to express our economic values of social justice at the international stage as well. We [Labour] have rightly laid to rest the old Tory argument that social justice is opposite to our economic interests.

"We should also lay to rest the idea that acting in Britain's interests internationally means slavishly pressing for neoliberal economic policies in WTO talks. The impression has been allowed to grow - because of our role in placing conditions for aid and trade deals, and because our efforts to prematurely open the markets of the world's poorest countries to unfair trade - that we have a Britain first policy when it comes to economic talks.

"We should work towards setting that perception to one side by working with developing world countries to hammer out a better approach than those proposed through the Economic Partnership Agreements currently being negotiated."

A full copy of the speech can be found on [Jon Cruddas' website](#)

Other views

Of the other contenders for the deputy leadership, candidate Hilary Benn has present responsibility for the present approach to Economic Partnership Agreements as Secretary of State for International Development.

Alan Johnson was responsible whilst Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for a year from May 2005, when Make Poverty History called on the UK Government to stand by its promises on trade and poverty by stopping the proposed EPAs going ahead and to develop alternative deals that will help bring about trade justice.

Backbench MP Jon Cruddas is presently the bookies' third favourite in the deputy contest behind government ministers Benn and Johnson respectively.

Trade justice campaigners are calling on Labour party deputy leadership candidates to:

- acknowledge publicly that EPAs are presently a danger to social justice and will undermine efforts to make poverty history, and
- ensure that, if they become deputy leader of the Labour party, they will use their influence to pressure key decision makers within the UK and EU to remove the threat EPAs are to the rights of working people and the ability of poor countries to address poverty.