



Andrew Mitchell is the Member of Parliament for Sutton Coldfield and the Shadow International Development Secretary.

Wylde Green URC invited Andrew to visit its Traidcraft stall and talk about his role.

Wearing his hat as Shadow Secretary for State and with the interest from his constituency, Andrew believes that he spends a majority of his time working on international development issues.

Andrew showed the group of Traidcraft supporters and Make Poverty History campaigners present at Wylde Green a video he had made in Mali, showing the harm done to cotton farmers through the current system of trade barriers. Its first *official* showing was the following week during the Conservative party Conference in Blackpool. It is clear that he is passionate about his job.

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Since accepting the role in the Shadow Cabinet what have been the most significant moments?
Attending the Edinburgh march for Make Poverty History and the first speech I made in the House of Commons on Africa. With evolving issues I don't think there could be a more fascinating time to be involved.

Faith groups have paid a large role in Make Poverty History campaign. What is your view on the mix of religion and politics?
Many people in politics on all sides of the political divide draw their political views and beliefs and philosophy from their religious convictions. As politicians we listen to the faith groups on these issues with very great care because they have been involved for so long which means they bring a great deal to the debate.

Is faith important to you?
Yes, although I am not a good churchgoer. Church does provide a structure which means that not being a good churchgoer is a bad thing if you are a Christian because you don't get the sustenance and the direction and the grounding which you get if you do go to church.

You were one of the few Conservative MPs who signed the Early Day Motion deploring the actions of the Home Office against one of our members at our Stockton-on-Tees Church, Ednith Gatora, who is an Asylum seeker from Zimbabwe. Why did you decide to sign this one?
EDMs are a form of

parliamentary graffiti and I always try and start every parliament refusing to sign any. What breaks through the barrier are constituency ones where there is a very strong constituency case. If I do sign then it is meant to show that I care about it.

Although the Conservatives have 'signed up' to Make Poverty History, how does your emphasis differ from Labour's?
I think our emphasis on free trade, stopping these subsidies, stopping these tariffs, stopping the European Union from dumping will be different in degree from what Labour are saying. It is important for us to hold the government to account.

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Viewing Traidcraft's stock

Development Debate in Depth

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There is growing concern among development agencies that the government is supporting water privatisation in Africa although this may not always be the best solution. What should be the policy be?

It should not be a one size fits all approach. There are a lot of

people in Africa that can't get clean water. I am interested in making sure they get clean water. I would therefore be needed to be persuaded on a case by case basis that privatisation could help in that and it may well be that it could be a more efficient way of doing that if you were to award a private contract.

Are you in support of the International Finance Facility, a proposal to the international community by Gordon Brown to kick-start development by doubling aid given over the next ten years, but then reducing the amount of aid after that to fund the scheme? Strongly, it is an ingenious idea from a treasury civil servant. It is a way of getting a quantum leap in the amount of aid money for countries now. It doesn't mean they get less money if they get it earlier. And when you get to the end there will be more money.



Images of Mali being premiered at Wylde Green

Interview: Melanie Frew

Photos: John Potter
