

# Raab and McDonald in racism row backstage after leaders' debate



General election 2019 Raab and McDonald in racism row backstage after leaders' debate

Sky News exchange shows pair arguing over Islamophobia and antisemitism in their parties

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Raab and McDonald in spat over parties' racism after leaders' debate – video

Just as the audience in Sheffield for the BBC's Question Time were on the attack, so were the politicians sent out to speak to the media once the show ended. Appearing on Sky News, the foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, and the shadow transport secretary, Andy McDonald, argued furiously over the records of their respective parties on racism.

After McDonald accused the Conservatives of kicking Islamophobia into the long grass, Raab responded: "Two parties in this country's history have been investigated by the equalities and human rights commission, Labour under Corbyn and the BNP."

*Sky News (@SkyNews)*

*The cameras are still rolling @DominicRaab & @AndyMcDonaldMP*

*□ ...*

*The Foreign Secretary and shadow Transport Secretary break out in a heated argument live on air □ #GE2019*

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*November 22, 2019*

The clash, in which the pair appeared to square up to one another, was aired live on TV following fierce questioning of the four main party leaders by 150 members of the public at Sheffield's Octagon centre.

They quizzed Jeremy Corbyn on antisemitism and Brexit, Nicola Sturgeon on Scotland's deficit and deals with Labour, Jo Swinson on her voting record in the coalition and revoking article 50, and Boris Johnson on lying, racism and austerity.

The evening started well for the Labour leader, when hundreds gathered outside the venue singing 2017-style chants of "Oh Jeremy Corbyn". He gave an impromptu stump speech to the crowds gathered in the rain, thanking them for supporting his bid to build "a decent, fair society in Britain that cares for all, not just the few".

"Thank you Sheffield for being here tonight," he added. "Thank you for the lovely city you are."

Though there were grumbles from other parties that the audience was biased towards the leader of the opposition, they were not as "lovely" as he might have hoped.

"I thought the audience were very robust and well informed," said Corbyn ally and the shadow cabinet member Jon Trickett. "I knew that they would be because people are very interested in it. It's Sheffield, the north of England, we watch everything that moves. It was tough, but I think it's fair to be tough. [The party leaders] want to be prime minister."

Corbyn announced that he would remain neutral in a second Brexit referendum. A spokesperson for the Labour leader pointed to David Cameron's decision to remain neutral while he tried to negotiate a new arrangement with Europe. "His role as prime minister is to be an honest broker," he said.

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“How can you be neutral in a referendum and claim to be a leader?” said Raab, speaking to journalists in the venue’s media room. “All those citizens at home and all of those businesses who are wondering how they will navigate the uncertainty of Brexit, and Jeremy Corbyn says he’s neutral. That is not leadership on the biggest issue of the day.”

Asked about the laughter from the audience at Johnson’s insistence that telling the truth was important as prime minister, Raab said: “All of these audiences, they are all choreographed and they do sound a little bit partisan, but it doesn’t really matter. What really matters is the viewers at home.”

A spokesperson for Swinson said the Liberal Democrat leader was asked very difficult questions, but that – away from the noise on Twitter – he thought a lot of people watching at home would have seen a politician “stand tall and stand her ground and give honest, open answers”.

The SNP seemed to think the evening was a success. “[Sturgeon] does have more experience with winning elections than any of the other leaders and I think that shone through rather tonight,” said MP Stewart Hosie. He said it was a shame that the leaders did not have the opportunity to cross-examine each other, “but on the whole the format worked rather well”.



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## **Raab and McDonald in spat over parties' racism after leaders' debate – video**

The foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, clashed with the shadow transport secretary, Andy McDonald, who urged him to push for an independent inquiry into Islamophobia within the Conservative party and said they should listen to Sayeeda Warsi, who has been vocal about anti-Muslim sentiment in the party. Raab hit back, reminding McDonald about accusations of antisemitism within Labour. The brief but heated conversation took place after Raab and McDonald were interviewed following the BBC Question Time leaders' debate

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