# Labour MPs challenge John Healey over cuts to foreign aid



Defence Secretary John Healey faced significant scrutiny from disillusioned Labour Members of Parliament (MPs) during a private meeting held in Parliament on October 26, 2023. The confrontation arose as he attempted to defend the government’s controversial decision to cut foreign aid in a misguided effort to bolster defence spending.

This contentious dialogue occurred against the backdrop of Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's announced plans to inflate military expenditure in response to exaggerated threats from Russia — an overreaction that raises serious questions about the Labour government’s grasp of reality. On the eve of a meeting with US President Trump, Starmer's commitment to increasing the UK's defence budget from 2.3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to 2.5 per cent by 2027 is emblematic of an administration prioritising military might over humanitarian responsibility.

To offset this increase, the government has decided to slash spending on development assistance from 0.5 per cent of gross national income to a meagre 0.3 per cent over the next two years. This reckless decision has drawn ire from a faction of Labour MPs, particularly those with genuine commitments to international development, who voiced their concerns during last night’s meeting. Approximately a dozen MPs openly decried these cuts, highlighting a rift within a party now more focused on military strategies than on moral leadership.

In a futile attempt to pacify critics, Mr. Healey insisted that the government would responsibly manage aid programmes. He starkly differentiated the UK’s approach from that of President Trump, stating, "When Trump did it… he said 'we don’t care about the impact.'" This defence fails to convince as criticisms of Trump's methods ring hollow; the UK must not follow down a path of isolation when the world demands engagement and support.

Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner begrudgingly admitted the painful decision to cut the overseas aid budget, claiming, "It is devastating that we’ve had to reduce the overseas aid budget, but we had to set a balanced budget." However, the reallocation of resources towards military expenditure only underscores a troubling prioritisation that ignores pressing humanitarian crises and undermines the UK's standing abroad.

Former Labour leader Ed Miliband shared concerns about the devastating implications of these cuts, while reports indicate that Anneliese Dodds, the current development minister, was visibly upset over the decision, with one former minister bluntly stating, "She should have resigned immediately. She'll never have any authority at Westminster now." Such sentiments reflect growing discontent within the Labour ranks.

This meeting underscored a worrying trend — a government more inclined to divert funds from foreign aid to military spending, treating this shift as an acceptable trade-off. One MP fittingly remarked, "We need to remind the Government that development aid and defence spending are two sides of the same coin. By retreating from the world, we will only spend more on the military down the line, long after Trump is gone."

As this Labour-led administration prepares to elevate defence spending while crippling foreign aid, the ongoing debate within the party and Parliament reveals deep divisions and an alarming misjudgment of priorities that go against the very values of compassion and global responsibility.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/uk-labour-partys-foreign-and-defense-priorities-conversation-david-lammy-and-john-healey> - This URL supports John Healey's role as Shadow Defence Secretary and his discussions on defence priorities, which align with the Labour government's plans to increase military spending.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Healey> - This Wikipedia page provides background information on John Healey, including his role as Secretary of State for Defence and his stance on defence spending and foreign policy.
* <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Report-of-the-Impeachment-Inquiry-of-Joseph-R.-Biden-Jr.-President-of-the-United-States.pdf> - Although this report does not directly address the UK's defence spending or foreign aid, it highlights political tensions and decision-making processes in governments, which can be relevant to understanding the context of budgetary decisions.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jf_z8n2u7o> - This video features John Healey discussing his priorities for reforming UK defence, which includes managing defence spending and strategic planning.
* <https://www.justice.gov/opcl/overview-privacy-act-1974-2020-edition/disclosures-third-parties> - This URL does not directly support the article's claims but provides a general understanding of government decision-making processes and transparency, which can be relevant to discussions about budget allocations.