

WASHINGTON – Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) joined Martin Bashir on MSNBC yesterday to discuss the House Republican Budget and their plan to cut \$34 billion from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (otherwise known as food stamps) while giving huge tax cuts to the wealthiest in the nation.

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You can [watch the interview here](#) . □ Below is the transcript:

Martin Bashir: Joining us now is John Larson, Democratic Congressman of Connecticut. Good afternoon, sir.

Rep. Larson: Good afternoon, Martin. Glad to be with you.

Martin Bashir: You took to the House Floor Wednesday to talk about these cuts, invoking FDR where he talked about making choices based on values.

Rep. Larson: Correct.

Martin Bashir: But there are some saying that Christian teaching does not encourage governments to take responsibility for the poor--that instead should be in the hands of the

individual. Do you agree?

Rep. Larson: Well of course not. Of course we all remember that Jesus famously said, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto the Lord what is the Lord's." But whether it's the Sermon on the Mount or whether it's Matthew as you just described, he certainly demonstrated a need for us to care to the least amongst us. The least amongst us, when we're talking about this however, amounts to 400 percent of poverty. And so frankly, this is the middle class as well as the least amongst us that have been impacted here. And what we're talking about is--you're right, Martin--it's about values and choices.

Martin Bashir: But you see sir, I'm a little bit confused, because last month Republicans used the Church to attack the President, saying he was riding roughshod over Christian conscience. But now, when the Church challenges Republicans, well, they simply ignore the Bishops.

Rep. Larson: Right, they say never mind. Yeah, well, double standards here in Washington happen quite frequently, or as my good friend Paul Begala says, it's a false equivalence. You know, that's what I think is getting through to the American public though, Martin, and I commend the Bishops for their statement. And certainly I think America is in tune with this, especially recovering from the worst recession since the Great Depression, and so many amongst us who are hurting and suffering. And to add that extra pain to it--what Roosevelt said is they seem to be frozen in the ice of their own indifference towards what they do to their fellow Americans.

Martin Bashir: Yeah, it's a shocking statement. Paul Ryan was asked about the letter on Fox News this morning and after trying to sidestep the issue, his response was, quote: "Uh, are these not all the Catholic Bishops?" So I guess that means Mr. Ryan will take the Church when it agrees with him, and ignore the Church when it doesn't.

Rep. Larson: Well, I think you're absolutely right, but certainly the Bishops have responded and said yes, this is what all the Bishops feel. And they do speak for the Catholic Church. And let's be clear: I certainly have disagreed with the Bishops on more than one occasion, but not without profound respect for their adherence to canon law, and in this instance, their adherence to the very least amongst us and making sure that they're doing the right thing on behalf of all those we're sworn to serve, and they are as well.

Martin Bashir: On that specific point, the Bishops' letter says the federal hunger program that's being threatened currently helps millions of households, 76 percent of which include a child, a senior, or a disabled person. Now, these are people who can't just be told to go and get a job; these are people who need assistance, aren't they?

Rep. Larson: You're exactly right, Martin. And that's what makes the Bishops' message so compelling and we hope that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle hear this. And we think that this is the kind of message that will resonate not only in the halls of Congress, but from the pulpits in our churches all across this nation. It's not just a matter of Catholicism; I think this is a matter of just humanity in terms of our approach to what we do for our fellow citizens in the very difficult time and therefore I underscore how much the Catholic Bishops should be credited for their statement.

Martin Bashir: Congressman John Larson of Connecticut. Thank you, sir, for joining us.

Rep. Larson: You're welcome, Martin.

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