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Welcome to our first Restless Politics emergency pod so-called in quite a while. With me, Alistair Campbell. And with me, Rory Stewart. A bit of a pause there, Rory. Was that drawing something for you? I think it's jet lag, jet lag getting away. Okay, fine. Anyway, we're here. You pressed the emergency pod button, which we haven't done this in some time. No, the listeners did. The listeners pressed it. Very good. Yeah. And emergency pod button is on Dominic Raab.

Shall I give a little quick summary of Dominic Raab? Yeah. So Dominic Raab, who was the Deputy Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary, previously Foreign Secretary, a very, very well-known voice in the Brexit campaign, somebody who joined parliament with me in 2010, somebody I know quite well, been accused a number of times of bullying and he denied it and said that he would like an independent report to be commissioned into whether or not he had actually been bullying civil servants. That's the allegation. And a King's Council, Barrister, called Mr. Tolly, did a report and came back in the report and found that on a number of occasions, he felt Raab had been bullying. And Raab said that if that had been discovered, he would resign. This has come out. He's resigned, although he's written a letter which basically says that he's resigning because he said he'd resigned, but he doesn't really recognize the description of his behavior and he thinks that it is dangerous for ministers to be driven out by allegations of bullying because it stops them being able to challenge civil servants. Over to you. I mean, I think it was inevitable because I really don't go along with the or try not to go along with the whole no smoke without fire thing that is sort of generally attaches itself to people in public life. I can remember, for example, the use of these awful, awful rumors that went round about Leon Britain and I would never indulge them because I saw no evidence whatsoever. And I just thought, well, this is just a kind of sort of smear. Whereas I think the stories with Raab have been so frequent, so common. And of course, you have to remember, you know, I know quite a lot of people at various levels of the civil service and, you know, they don't normally, most civil servants you talk to, they try to be quite nice about their ministers. And I think you just kept hearing it again and again. He's incredibly difficult. He's very unpleasant. He's very intimidating. He's quite a nasty personality. And that's what sort of made me think, well, there probably is a bit of fire with the smoke. And I think this is an important moment, actually, for Rishi Sunak, because if you remember, professionalism, integrity and accountability and all that, I suspect he was hoping that the process would clear Raab, but it hasn't. Raab said he'd resign and he's gone. But I don't think you can have a government delivering properly on its objectives, unless you have got a well motivated public service behind you. And the real damage of this is that there is, I think, a real sort of disjunction at the moment between the government. And I don't think this is political. The Tories would like to say this because the civil service is full of lefties and etc. And it's just not. I don't think anybody should fairly define them like that. But I think that you have to have them properly motivated. And I've said to you before that I was routinely called a bully in the media. But I'm very proud of the fact that not a single civil servant ever came forward. And as it were justified or supported that claim, because I think this is about how you treat people. It's about your basic attitudes to other human beings, whether you think they're there to be belittled and intimidated, or whether you think they're there to try to help you as part of your team. And I'm all in favour of Raab

when the Tories, the King's Council, saying that he was demanding, he was inquisitorial, he wanted high quality work. You should expect that. I agree with that. But then the question is, how do you get people to work like that for you? And I think good ministers will always be able to do that. And so I think Richie Soonak needs to use this for a reset with his relations with the civil service. So let me just get to the details of what's come out so far from the Tolly report. So this is Tolly quoted. He said, Mr Raab was interviewed four times over the space of around two and a half days and engaged seriously and conscientiously in the process. In the conclusions, he said, on a number of occasions at meetings with policy officials, the DPM, who's Raab, acted in a manner which was intimidating in the sense of going further than was necessary or appropriate in delivering critical feedback and also insulting in the sense of making unconstructive, critical comments about the quality of work done, whether or not as a matter of substance, any criticism was justified. And then he gives some examples. By way of example, he complained about the absence of what he referred to as basic information or the basics. So I think we imagined he said something like, you just haven't given me the basic information, you haven't done the basics here. Complained about obstructiveness on the part of officials, whom he perceived to be resistant to his policies and described some of the work as utterly useless and woeful. And then he goes on to say, the DPM did not intend by the conduct described to upset or humiliate, nor did he target anyone for a specific type of treatment. So he's saying that it wasn't that Raab was harassing individuals and particularly not individuals on the basis of their characteristics. He seemed to have been like this in general. It doesn't seem to be personally directed. But he then goes on to say his interruptive style is not itself behavior that could be regarded as intimidating or insulting. However, individuals who'd previously experienced the DPM express an unconstructive criticism of their work might reasonably have interpreted a series of interruptions as a form of implicit criticism. I mean, it's also important to understand in thinking about this that Dominic Raab, who actually I was quite fond of in the House of Commons and I saw quite a lot of, but he's quite an introverted figure. He's somebody who spends a lot of time in the gym. He was an Oxford boxing blue. So he's physically quite big and intimidating. And he has a manner, I think people remember when I was in the leadership debates against him, found just the way that he stands on the podium and speaks, that he's quite aggressive. I think one of my few encounters I've had with him was in a TV studio on the night of, I think it was the 2017 general election. And there were a few people who were in a studio that had been sort of been packed in the same place and all hang around this green room. And there were probably about half a dozen people in there, you know, people that you just know from across the political spectrum. And I have a vivid memory of him sitting down in a chair in the corner and literally just sitting there looking at the other people as opposed to engaging with them. And I think, and I remember the time thinking, was he just a bit sort of, you know, isolated and a bit introverted, as you say, and I think he probably is. But that thing about physicality is very, very important in politics. You know, there we were in Belfast the other day, you see Bill Clinton making a speech and you know, he's tall and he's elegant and he uses his hands and his body well, that's kind of, these are important characteristics. But I think it's every picture I ever see on the television or in the papers of Robert Dominic Raab getting out of a car, for example, he always has this look on his face if he just wants to go and headbutt the nearest person. And again, that could be introversion, it could be just him

having a sort of a shell around himself of which he's not conscious. But I think if you read, I've not had time yet to read the full report, I've skim read it. But you have a sense of somebody who may be unaware of the way that he comes across. But you also get this sense that repeatedly he's

demotivating rather than motivating, undermining rather than building up. And these to me are just very, very poor leadership and team building qualities, which you need in a minister.

Yeah, it's interesting, isn't it? Also, I think of the change that we've seen in British political life. We were in Ireland, as you said earlier this week, and I was thinking about Roy Mason, who was the classic Labour Northern Ireland secretary in the late 1970s, kind of real Unionist bruiser, who people at the time sort of admired for being kind of tough and outspoken and challenging and demanding. And I think we are more conscious now than we were in

the past of the impact that can have on people, how incredibly unpleasant it can be to work in an environment in which you feel that you're being undermined. And of course, what Dominic Rudd did isn't actually illegal, bullying's not against the law. And I think another thing that I often think about is that you can have a pretty unpleasant time with the boss. I think people find this with some of the big sort of Silicon Valley startup culture, without them necessarily saying anything that you can quite catch them out on, but they create a general atmosphere of people feeling generally inadequate, overwhelmed. Now, the question, I guess, is how does one get the balance right on this? Because it's also true that the civil service can be pretty slow moving, can have very firm views on what it wants to do, and it can take very, very strong personalities and leadership to get any change going. Yeah. My experience of the civil service, like every other organisation, there are good and there are average and there are bad, and there are some truly exceptional. Again, back to Northern Ireland, there were some really exceptional civil servants involved throughout that process, truly exceptional people. Others, bit slow, bit difficult, but just not maybe on the same wavelength as those of us who were trying to get things moving. But I think that in general civil, I don't know what your experience was, but in general civil servants, if you're clear with them, if you genuinely listen to them, and I think what sometimes happens with people like Rob, maybe, and I think this goes across other ministers in this government, is that when civil servants are doing their job, which is actually to speak truth to power and is to give proper analysis of ideas that are being put forward, particularly with a government that sort of tends towards populism, that can be taken by the minister as you're criticising the policy. You don't want this to work. Now, I'd be very surprised if there are that many people inside the civil service who think it's a great idea to be shipping migrants off to Rwanda. I doubt there are many civil servants who think it's a great idea to be dragging us out of the European Convention on Human Rights to which, a former conservative government was part of taking us in. But they would get on and do it if they were given clear instructions in a reasonable way and asked to analyse the realities of the policy. Yeah, it's weird. I mean, so you've kindly asked me what my experience was. And I think there

is a difference between your experience when you were right there next to the Prime Minister in number 10 and the experience of being a minister, even a Secretary of State. I did frequently find, and I love the civil servants, and I was the civil servant myself. But if I was going to be more sympathetic towards some of the frustrations that Dominic Raab encountered,

I did find times when people were deliberately blocking me. And it took me a long time to understand why there's often very good reasons why they're doing it. So let me give you a couple of examples. I was asked whether or not we should be spending 75 million on training the Afghan police. And I said, absolutely not. I don't know much about the world, but I do know quite a lot about Afghanistan. And we've spent a lot of money training the Afghan police, and it's a complete waste of money. No, we will not spend that money. And I then found myself in a battle that went on for months where the ambassador would go around behind my back to the National Security Council,

and I'd have to go and speak to the Home Secretary and the Foreign Secretary to win again. Then people would go around, civil servants would go around my back again to the Prime Minister and I'd have to speak to the Prime Minister directly. But is it not possible that there was a minister that was pushing that against you, rather than just civil service? I mean, that could have been civil servants from another department who were doing their ministers bidding.

That's sometimes the case. In this case, what had actually happened, I think, is that the ambassador had made a promise which he probably shouldn't have made to the UN system that the money was going to be delivered before they asked my permission. And in a way, part of the problem in the relationship to human services is getting the honesty to get him confident enough to say, I'm really sorry. I screwed up. I made the promise before I asked you, would you mind letting this one go? And I probably would have been fine. But often, I had another one with Yemen. Difford came in to say to me, I said, we're spending \$200 million in Yemen. How do you know what's happening? We don't have anyone on the ground. And they said,

well, we do Skype calls with Yemenis. So I said, well, I'd love to see one of these Skype calls with Yemenis. And they all went white. And then I said, look, I don't want to bully you, but come back in four weeks' time, show me a Skype call with Yemeni. And in four weeks' time, senior civil servants came back and said, minister, why do you want to see this Skype call with Yemeni? And I said, look, I can explain why I think if we're spending \$200 million on the ground, we need to have some information. But more fundamentally, I think told you to do it, just do it, right? I don't care. Just set up a Skype call.

Roy, did you swear at the civil servant?

I may have done. I may have done. And I think this is another thing.

Apparently, there was no evidence that Dominique Raab swore.

I swore a lot, but I swore nicely.

Well, you see, there we are. So in that case, I think what had happened is a junior civil servant, probably a bit intimidated, had made the mistake of saying they were doing Skype calls with Yemenis, and they weren't, and they just couldn't admit it. So I learned through this.

I mean, the reason I want to be a bit sympathetic is that I was actually called up by my permanent secretary who said, took me aside very nicely and said, Roy, you're going to have to be a bit careful with your language here, particularly with junior civil servants, because I was interrupting. And a lot of that is frustration. You're desperately trying to drive stuff through the system. You tell people to do stuff months past, nothing happens. And often you're right, there is a context. Some of the ministers blocking it, number 10s blocking it.

Somebody says the wrong thing, but you don't see that. What you see is as Dominique Raab says,

it feels like obstructiveness. It feels like people are just not doing what you've asked them to do. There's a reason why civil servants are civil servants and not necessarily people with high profiles is because they don't particularly want a high profile, whereas politicians inevitably do. They know that having a high profile is being part of being a senior leading politician. And so the frustrations I used to see the most with the civil service were actually generally with civil servants that we weren't necessarily seeing. In other words, for example, I can think of lots of occasions when we were preparing for Prime Minister's questions, when Tony, who was always desperate to get facts, he always wanted facts before he kind of decided what the answer was going to be. And sometimes just getting very basic factual information out of the civil servants was harder than we felt that it should have been. Now, I didn't know that was because of concealing. I think it was just a sort of old fashioned outmoded systems that we were trying to change. And then on policy, he did, and I don't think he was the first Prime Minister, he did often complain about the Home Office, for example, as feeling that there was a kind of culture within the Home Office that felt it knew more about crime and criminal justice than politicians who were out on the sharp end of it all the time. But I think the culture that you try to develop is what's the key to this. And I think that the problem with this government, this isn't just Dominic Raab, I think that through the whole austerity period, there's just been a general undermining of public service. And I think that's a terrible mistake. I think you have to motivate people to work for you. And I'll see you. I think there's a couple of other interesting points to make here, Roy. The first is that this is Rishi Sunak, who's meant to be the kind of, you know, the grown up, different to trust, different to Johnson. This is now the third member of a cabinet that he's lost already, Williamson for bullying, Sahawi over his tax situation. And the other thing, I'm going to ask you a little quiz question here, Roy. It's quite an easy one, but I want you to ask me, what do these people have in common? Ken Clark, Chris Grayling, Michael Gove, Liz Truss, David Lidington, David Gork, Robert Buckland, Dominic Raab, Brendan Lewis, and now I'm going to give it away. And now Alex Chalk.

Well, they are all Secretary of State for Justice in the past ten in a decade.

No, it's crazy. And it was true when I was a prison minister, and it's one of the fundamental problems in British government. These reshuffles are completely out of control. You know, junior ministers, the Ministry of Defense, moving every year, prison ministers moving every year. This is a time of you take the justice brief. You and I both know from the work that we do on the prison front, prisons are in a state of crisis, the probation service is in a state of crisis, the court system is in a state of crisis, policing is in a state of crisis, and Dominic Raab, the Justice Secretary, who's done the job twice now, by the way. I think you can count it 11 if you count him twice around. Yet, these things are, I'm not saying they're not being addressed, but they're not getting the political input and drive that they should be because this guy's been focused to all this stuff. All right, wait, let's take a quick break. Welcome back to the Restless Politics Emergency Podcast with me, Rory Stewart.

Very pleased, very pleased with Alex Chalk's promotion. So, he's somebody who I knew very well, very thoughtful, quite quiet, somebody who was horrified by Boris Johnson, very close to the remainside. He worked with me closely with Ken Clark when we were trying to get Theresa May's

deal through. He's somebody who I feel has been very, very unfairly overlooked for eight years,

and I'm really pleased to see that he's come in. So, he's a lawyer. He did the prison's brief well. So, I'm really pleased to see Alex Chalk back in, and I think that's another sign of some thoughtful, serious people that I admire.

Is another Oxbridge private schoolboy in the cabinet?

That's true. Damien Hines, who I think isn't a private schoolboy, is also a very good prison's minister. So, we sometimes talk about, and he, to be fair, was in the cabinet, was Secretary of State for Education when I was in the cabinet, took the demotion down to be the prison's minister, and then has done a very good job at a more junior level.

Oliver Dowden, Deputy Prime Minister, what do you think of that?

I'm less of an Oliver Dowden fan, because he was a very early endorser of Boris Johnson against me. I've always slightly chipily held that against him, whereas Alex Chalk very sweetly supported me for the leadership. No, you cannot judge everything according to their relations with or support for or opposition to you. What's your analysis of Oliver Dowden, political skills? He was David Cameron's Deputy Chief of Staff.

He was very much liked by Cameron. He came out of Downing Street into politics 2015.

He was seen as a liberal Cameroon. I think what was troubling for me is that he moved so quickly to become one of Boris Johnson's cabinet ministers and endorse that whole catastrophe.

Then he resigned as chairman of the Conservative Party, and he tripped the downfall of Johnson, because it was Dowden's resignation. You remember we did a podcast about that, which led to those 52 ministers eventually resigning and bringing down Johnson. He needs some credit for that.

I was a bit troubled also when he was a cultural minister, that he was slightly getting into the cultural world. He's actually a state schoolboy, but desperately wants to sound like a private schoolboy. I find that very strange in anyone. Also, just on Alex Shaw, he's got an absolutely miniscule majority, hasn't he, over the liberal Democrats? In Cheltenham. I think it's in three figures. He was a difficult seat to take against Lib Dems. You'll see also on YouTube an extraordinary scene outside his constituency office during the Brexit debates, where he goes out and addresses a huge crowd. It's a lovely moment. Oh, yeah, I remember that. I remember that. Yeah. We've got some questions. Maybe this is the thing to wrap on. A question from Holman. Does a resignation leave the door open for Rob to return at some point, and would a sacking have closed it? James Lowry, why does a misdemeanor of this nature necessitate resigning from the cabinet, but not from Parliament? Is there a lower ethical bar to be a constituency MP? Well, I think I said a few weeks ago, I think it wouldn't be a bad idea for Kerstarma to have a policy that the principles of the ministerial code should be adopted by Parliament for all MPs. Honesty, accountability, objectivity, selflessness, integrity, all that stuff from the ministerial code, and then some of the details. So, bullying and intimidation, there are lots of complaints within the House of Commons from House of Commons staff about bullying and intimidation by MPs who aren't ministers. And famously, your friend John Burkha got in real trouble for that. I mean, that's what really destroyed John Burkha's career. Yeah, and also opposition MPs as well. Not everybody's a saint. Labour and the Lib Dems are saying that Sunak is weak, that he should have sacked him rather than wait for him to absorb his own report. The bit about natural justice that I didn't like last night was the fact that the people who had made the complaints did not see the report before the government and Rob were able to read it and then comment on it publicly. I thought that was a bit much. As to whether he comes back, I mean, look, look at Soella Braverman. I mean, she was reappointed

to the cabinet a very short time after being sacked by Rishi Sunak, not sacked by Sunak, but appointed by Sunak. So, therefore, I think it probably does leave the door open, but I think it would be a very, very big mistake. Yeah, some people don't come back. I mean, Matt Hancock, for example, didn't come back. And I think he hoped that he, you know, he resigned and he hoped that Boris Johnson would bring it back and that never happened. But it is happening more and more frequently. I mean, you know, Gavin Williamson, Priti Patel, all these people who were fired from previous people's cabinets did eventually come back. It's odd because if you go back to the big scandals, the 60s, people like Profumo, a resignation was very final. People didn't usually come back from resignations. But, you know, David Miliband on the podcast last week talked about the age of impunity. We are really in living in an era where shame is not in massive quantity. I mean, I honestly could not believe that Boris Johnson and Liz Truss went to that dinner at Cahill's Recastle the other night after all the, I thought they'd be too, I really thought they'd be too ashamed to show their faces. I was really looking forward to seeing you and him going head to head, but that never happened. Now, one of the great things we did manage to do when

we were in Belfast together is interview Hillary Clinton. So maybe the thing to end on is to say that on the rest of politics leading, you'll be able to hear our interview with Hillary Clinton, which I thought was really exceptional. I often grumble about politicians being a bit stiff and boring. I thought she was very, very thoughtful. Do you enjoy it as much as me? Oh, yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think she's great. I've always thought she was great. And I think I felt rather sad because I listened to her and I watched her and I also had a very fun night out with her husband in a folk club, which was another story. But I think I thought she was truly stunning. And some of the answers, I really do urge people to listen right from beginning to end because she sort of got better and better and better. And then there was a question you asked about artificial intelligence and tech, to which her answer was stunning. And my favorite bit of the whole of the interview, apart from when she was being pretty vicious about Trump and Johnson and populism, was when I asked her about that picture of her in the Situation Room with Biden and Obama and the security guys and the bin Laden. And I don't think I've ever heard such a, frankly, mesmerizing account of how a single individual decision was being taken in a matter of minutes. It was really, really, really interesting. So I hope people listen. Well, I know I've got a sneaking feeling it will become our most listened to episode for some time.

Coming up Monday, 24th of April. So in three days time, thank you very, very much. And thank you listeners for pressing the emergency podcast button.

We haven't, we haven't set the rule as to what numbers, but it was just a sort of, I just noticed quite a few people saying you must do one on this, you must do one on this, you must do one of this. So here we go. We managed to get together.

Thank you again. Bye bye.

All the best. Bye.