

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 144. Question Time: The War On Drugs, a Tory Green Party, and Long Covid

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Welcome to The Rest is Politics Question Time with me, Rory Stewart.

And me, Alistair Campbell.

And Alistair, where do we see you today?

France.

Oh, lovely.

Yeah.

Lovely, lovely.

And is the sun shining?

The sun is shining.

I've just been out on my bike and my legs are really hurting.

And I wonder, I just wondered, Rory, whether we shouldn't try to get through the whole question time without mentioning the former Prime Minister, former member for...

Uxbridge.

Uxbridge.

How much?

Should we try that?

If we could feed just his little plug for leading, John Major also very much recommended that the correct way to approach the former member for Uxbridge and the former member for Henley is perhaps not to mention him at all.

Yeah.

He was very, very good about that.

There's a lot of love for John Major at the moment, I sense, and his two-parter, first part was in your feeds on Monday, second part next week.

And if you remember, you'll have our both by now.

So now talking of leading, Rory, we've got a lot of questions this week about our previous interview with Kate Rayworth.

Let me just bang out a few.

Nick Simpson, I thought your leading interview with Kate Rayworth, was brilliant.

Thank you.

Is there an argument, says Nick, that capitalism is approaching collapse?

Paul Scholes, I suspect that is not the footballer.

There are scientists protesting with just stop oil.

They're reporting off the scale, surface, ocean temperature and Antarctic ice anomalies.

Yet mainstream media seems to be mute.

Henley Carroll listens to the leading episode with Kate Rayworth on Thursday before going into my A-level politics exam the next morning.

Quite amazing.

The essay question was, nature must be preserved regardless of the cost to humans discuss.

Did you have prior knowledge?

That's the main reason most people listen to our podcast because you and I are actually

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setting the exams.

We said in the interview with John Major that there was one of their questions this week. This year, in the politics paper, was to what extent did John Major lose in 1997 and Tony Blair won?

We now have both on the record, so students can just listen and use that as part of their source.

What do you think about this?

Is capitalism approaching collapse?

What do you think of that?

Well, I came across a very interesting review by Branko Milanovic, and I know you keep telling me off using the word distinguished, but anyway, the guy is a big deal in the world of economics. He has written a review of Kate Rower's book on something called BraveNewEurope.com, which we'll share with people.

In it, he particularly gets into the question of what happens on growth.

He says, it becomes apparent that Rower's book is a book of miracles, as well as why in such a world of miracles, the real miracle, which is Chinese growth that has pulled out of abject poverty some 700 million people, goes all but unmentioned.

The reason is that poverty was eliminated by dirty growth that has polluted Chinese cities in the countryside and yet made the lives of millions incomparably better.

So he's putting there in a pretty raw, tough way that growth, dirty growth in China has lifted 700 million people out of poverty.

And it's very, very difficult to work out how you're going to be able to help the poorest people in the world without growth.

Yeah.

I guess that's what we were thinking.

But I think the thing that troubled me about the whole interview was that one of the questions said this, when somebody said, when will you and I wake up and smell the coffee and understand that this is the only way to go?

And I sort of want to think that, but I'm struggling to work out how, and you're right that if China had not grown in the way that it did, would we still have, I guess the Americans had argued that would be a good thing if the Chinese were still reduced to poverty.

But anyway, I think it's good that we were challenged.

It's also good that people seem to have really felt.

And she's put her finger on something very important, hasn't she?

Because her challenge to you and I is to keep saying, okay, you're probably right.

I mean, she sort of concedes our point that we're probably right, that the consequences of trying to do what she says are going to be unbelievably painful, that cutting the GDP of a country like Britain by 75% would basically mean cutting half our government services and more.

But her challenge to us would be what is the alternative?

And if she keeps insisting, we live on a planet with finite resources, infinite growth just doesn't make sense.

Now, it reminds me a bit, I was sort of thinking about this, that it's a little bit like when

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Buddha or Jesus pose a very radical vision of extreme poverty to people.

And people respond, well, that doesn't really work in the real world.

It's a very, very, very difficult working out what you do with an idealism that seems incredibly rigorous and truthful, but whose consequences are so completely at odds with the way that our world works.

Yeah.

Now, very much in the real world, LW, and this is LW is going to get our weekly award for perseverance because this is the 10th week in a row that she has asked us to give us our thoughts on the current situation in NHS dentistry.

Oh, my goodness.

Yeah.

Now, I did have a little, because he had asked us so often, I thought we should sort of give him an answer.

And Rishi Sunak keeps saying and has said many times in Parliament that we have more than NHS dentists and it turns out this is not true.

And the British Dental Association had a conference last week where they were very, very critical of the fact that he, that he keeps saying it.

I had a look at the Health Service NHS website and the official government says the NHS will provide any clinically necessary treatment needed to keep your mouth, teeth and gums healthy and free of pain.

It then goes to say, goes on to say, your dentist must make clear which treatments can be provided on the NHS and which can only be provided on a private basis, which seems to me to contradict the first sentence, which says that the NHS will provide any clinically necessary treatment.

And I think we have really in dentistry now, don't we?

We just have it.

I mean, I had a filling fall out the other day and I went to the same dentist I've been using for years and a few years ago, actually, well, he does do NHS work, but a few years ago I used to get my dentistry for free and now I don't.

And I'm not quite sure what's changed other than that it's just sort of evolved.

And so anyway, I paid £195, just have a filling put back in.

There's an interesting Guardian article on this, on the NHS dentist deserts.

So North Lincolnshire, one for every 3,199 people, East Riding of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, etc.

And very striking figures on the number of children accessing dentists.

Pre-pandemic, the level was well over 50%, then dropped quite steeply.

Now, people are still trying to work out, I guess, how much of this is to do with the pandemic fallout.

But the figures that the Guardian was showing in the article that I read, which is August last year, had them falling from about half to about a third of children accessing dentists, which is a big, big problem in terms of people's well, because obviously your teeth connect to a lot of your life.

Well, and also half sounds really low.

I do remember it in my school days, having kind of, you know, the part of the dental service

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was run through the school.

So I mean, everybody sort of felt they had access.

I also spotted a store on BBC Cornwall, a mobile dental clinic has been offering NHS dentist appointments to people in Cornwall, and it's a charity called Dentate, and it quoted a woman called Mandy Francis, who said that she had not had an NHS dental appointment for seven years, said, I'm very excited at getting treatment.

It's been such a long wait.

I've tried everywhere in Cornwall to get an NHS dentist, and it's been impossible.

I was offered an appointment in Devon, but that's too far.

And I did see that some of the rural communities and the Hebrides and so forth were pretty low on dentists.

So I guess the bottom line, and thank you for raising LW, but it seems to me that we have drifted to a place where an awful lot of people are not getting good dental treatment.

And now I think that stores are much stronger.

And I think a combination of different things, isn't it?

It's a combination of government funding.

It's a combination of workload, and it's also connected to those things, but not always directly connected to those things.

Many, many NHS dentists saying they want to reduce their NHS work or leave it all together. Huge numbers struggling to fill vacancies.

And I think we had another question, didn't we, from people talking about doctors going overseas.

And this is a complicated thing, because on the one hand, obviously, many doctors are writing into us very, very strongly critical of even the Australian or US healthcare systems with reason.

But many British doctors are actually going to Australia and the US to practice as doctors, of course, you can earn much more money.

Yeah, and I've seen some of the adverts at the Australian Health Service are putting out to try to attract our doctors, and they do make it look very, very attractive, not just financially, but in lots of other ways.

And I do think the fact that they're respected by the government, and the government do talk up doctors, I feel that our government has been very quick to talk down public servants.

And I think that's having a big impact on morale, which is another factor which makes people leave.

Now, Rory, I went to an event the other day.

I'm going to raise it.

Oh, yes.

Is this a football event?

No, it's not a football event, though.

I'm sure you share my joy at Scotland beating Norway.

And that there's something complicated happened in the last few minutes of the game.

Somebody sent in a question about this.

So, well spotted, somebody sent a question asking you whether you thought the Norwegian

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coach made a mistake in taking off Harland with five minutes to go.

And that's a big mistake.

Because the result showed, yeah, obviously.

Well, I'm sure that had much to do with the final defeat.

Anyway, class in the UK.

So I was at this event, and I got a question about it, Damian Lowe.

He says, I loved your 93 Club talk.

I'll explain what the 93 Club is in a moment.

What are the three things Rory would try to do to address inequality and class division in the UK?

Christopher Chesney.

I'm doing listening to Joe Biden, who says when the middle class, that's the working class in America, does well, everyone does well.

He goes on to say, we haven't talked about class in Britain for ages.

Does Joe Biden's comment hold water, and where is the UK right now through a class distinction lens?

So my 93% Club Rory is the, I think I've mentioned it before, it was set up by a young woman called Sophie Pender, who was at Bristol University.

The time she was there, 40% of the students, almost 40% of the students were privately educated.

She came from a council house and quite a difficult background, and she found it very, very difficult.

And in the end, and she also realized that they did have these networks.

And so she founded this thing called the 93% Club, because of course the 93% are the majority who do not go to private schools.

And I went to this wonderful event, and there's a guy, a former broadcaster called Matt Barbet there.

He said, we're not going to mention the former prime minister, but he did say that the reason why people go to schools, such as the one that you and the person we're not mentioning, went to along with Reese Morgan, quasi-quartain and others.

He had this phrase, he said, privilege is bought and entitlement is taught.

My pushback, I guess, would be twofold.

I don't think British society is really divided between the 93% and the 7%.

I don't think you, for example, are in a worse situation than me, because you didn't go to a private school.

I think the real distinction in British society is between the 60% who own houses and the 40% who don't.

That's the starkest, most extreme wealth inequality you can imagine.

And it's that, that all the political parties are trying to work their way around.

Do we put property taxes on?

Because if you're serious about inequality, it's not about incomes.

It's about assets.

It's about wealth.

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And fundamentally, that's the thing that's going to kill younger people, their inability to get on the housing ladder, the fact that all the people are holding onto houses.

And I think it suits people who are gently on the liberal progressive left to imagine they're part of the 97% and they're being abused by the 3%.

93% and 7%.

93% and 7%.

But in fact, I think the truth is that about 60% of the British population are far better off than 40%.

And if I push it further, 90% of the British population are so much better off than the worst 10%, which very few of the political parties focus on, because sadly the poorest 10% very rarely vote.

So I think if you were really serious about social justice, beginning with the sort of people that you and I have dealt with who are in prison, who have been expelled from school, with mental health issues, with learning difficulties, who literally have no future at all, is actually something that I'd really like young people to focus on rather than getting wound up about the 7%.

I thought that was a very, very elegant piece of what aboutary.

I think your former master, John Cloughton, who's been in touch with us about his excellent letter to the Times, I hadn't realized that he was the same guy who had been sending in questions as had his son.

And he was the guy who pointed out that the...

He's a bit of a lefty as far as such things exist in eating teachers.

Was he?

He's more and more in sympathy with you, yeah, I think he's more on your side of it.

But I say anyway, I do think as a piece of sort of distractive, distractive what aboutary, that was quite effective.

However, I don't think it really answered the main point.

I do still think that if you look at our media, you look at our military, you look at our judiciary, there is something structurally wrong in our society that so many people from those schools get to the top positions.

And I think it's at the barriers, the point that the people at this meeting, the 93% club were making is that they feel there are barriers there, which I think the people who go to those top schools in our culture, in our society, feel there are no barriers.

And I fear we have to mention Johnson in this context.

Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, that's that.

Well, I fear there are people who have risen recently to very, very senior positions in our national life who would not have got anywhere near them if they had not had the privilege bought entitlement taught.

And I suppose that also does raise a very interesting question, which is, is it just about privilege and entitlement?

Or is it actually that these schools are doing a pretty good job in educating people, giving them confidence, giving them skills, giving them knowledge, in other words, and if that's true, one of the things that's striking about private schools is that they run on

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a much more old fashioned discipline basis than most public education.

It's a very different philosophy of education.

And I think that's actually another thing that's very challenging with the Naira education system.

Was Eton very strict?

Very, very strict.

And the hours are very long.

I mean, because it's a boarding school.

In fact, I can't remember, but I would often be continuing to do things until 10 at night having started at 8 in the morning.

So by the end of the term, you are completely shattered.

You're totally exhausted.

And that's obviously privilege.

But it's privilege, which is translating into the child, probably getting twice as long as school day.

And in addition, very, very high expectations on discipline, results, control, order.

There is one of the interesting things is that parents often say that they want a much more sort of, as it were, nurturing 1960s style education.

But when they're paying for education, they're often buying a much more old fashioned style of education.

I see the person that we're not mentioning did an interview with the school magazine and it was done by somebody by the name of Peter Reese Mogg.

I wonder if he's at all related to the person who just got knighthood.

Just got knighthood.

Very common names.

It's been an extraordinary thing, which is lovely stuff from your favorite man, the academic called the Red Hussurianist, his Twitter name.

He's done a beautiful piece on just pulling out how almost every single person who defended the person that we're not mentioning has been given a knighthood or offered a peerage by him.

Well, Alastair, I think time for a quick break.

Now, listen, you mentioned the whole kind of inequality thing, and I do agree with you on that.

But Andrea Vero, this is a question to me, but I think it's raised by your question.

As an avid listener to the Spiegel podcast, 8 Milliarden, which I am, what did you think of the episode Poor Britannia?

Now, Poor Britannia was on a couple of weeks ago, and it was very, very interesting.

They did a whole episode on Britain, including a visit to Burnley, I have to say.

And it was about poverty in Britain, and it was also about the inequality in Britain.

They played this advert that I've never seen and never heard, but it was for sort of posh basements in London, 25 million pound style houses that are being built for the kind of the oligarch class.

But it was very, very, it was very strange to hear Britain being debated on a German

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podcast in a way that almost like you and I might occasionally talk about countries in the developing world.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Well, the other people who do this a lot is the New York Times, and sometimes fairly, sometimes very unfairly.

I remember five, six years ago, an article written on my constituency where somebody had, a New York Times journalist had gone up and found sheep farmers in Alston and had basically portrayed it as though this was the middle of the 19th century.

And I knew a lot of the people she was interviewing, a lot of them are quite successful farmers doing quite well, quite confident people being made to look on the front cover of the New York Times as though they were just sort of living in decensate horror.

Are these the people that you used to describe as tying up their trousers with string or a...

That's the one.

You've got it, Alistair.

You've got it.

There's actually a very interesting book, which I, if I can plug a book, Ben Juda, This Is Europe.

Oh, yeah.

Interesting.

Now, he does focus on people in real trouble in Europe, across Europe, and particularly on poverty, particularly on first generation immigrants, particularly on racism and displacement in Europe.

I mean, it's an extraordinary series of interviews.

He did it also a book called This Is London, where he, you know, interviews people, I think, in Romanian, in underpasses and Hyde Park.

But there is a story, definitely in Britain, definitely in Britain, of extreme and total unacceptable horror amongst, I don't know, whether it's 5% of our population, 10% of our population.

And the same is true, I think, in the Bonne Lyaux of Paris.

I don't know enough about Germany, but it's certainly true for a loss of first generation immigrants across Southern Europe.

The Spiegel team gave the figures for food banks and dog food banks and all the sort of different numbers of people that are using charity to get by.

And they were shocked.

They were shocked by just how many people in Britain seem to rely on them.

And of course, the worst of all in the developed world to remind people is the United States, where the poverty statistics are beyond imagining.

I mean, infant mortality rates, life expectancy for the poor in the United States is just unbelievably shocking.

Now, Alastair, here is a question.

War on drugs.

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Adrian Gonzalez, for you, Alastair.

What are your thoughts on the war on drugs and legalization?

It seems to me that the dynamics around drugs define a loss of what happens in Latin America. Yeah, I wonder whether that question flowed from the fact that we talked briefly about Latin America last week.

I think I've mentioned you before, the book by Johan Harry on the drugs trade chasing the Scream.

Actually, it was partly his analysis of Latin America and the complete failure of the American war on drugs and their belief that if they just use the help the Latin American governments to kind of smash the drugs trade and smash the dealers that somehow they would break it and stop the supply into America, well, that just hasn't worked.

I think we have to accept that the war on drugs has failed.

Now, whether that leads to wholesale legalization, marketization, I just don't know.

I'd be quite queasy about that, but that the war on drugs has not succeeded.

I don't think there can be much argument about that.

There's a good review of Johan Harry's book by Deca Akinhead who interviewed us the end of last year.

It begins with an interesting first line.

She says, when I heard that Johan Harry had written the book about the war on drugs, two immediate concerns sprang to mind.

The first was whether anyone would trust the word he wrote.

This is because he did the most extraordinary malicious editing of Wikipedia pages of any journalist that he disliked.

He's an interesting character.

He's written a fascinating book, but my goodness, as a journalist, it's been extraordinary what he was doing.

That's true.

I remember at the time thinking that I think it was quite brave of him to just go and do the book.

What is so interesting about his book is that it literally looks at the drugstray from every possible angle you can imagine, from the dealers, from the prisons, from the kids, from the governments, from the police.

Okay, you can say that, well, because he's had this reputation for plagiarism, did he do all the work or what have you, but I read it with an open mind and it really did open my mind to a different way of thinking about our failure.

It does seem to be an amazingly interesting book, doesn't it?

And people who've read it have just sort of loved the pace of it and the way in which it's worked.

Okay, Ross McClain, the Outer Hebrides is one of the most stunning locations to record a podcast.

When are you coming to the Isle of Lewis or Harris?

There we are.

I think if we were to do one in the Hebrides, it would have to be Tyree, otherwise I would

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have family complaints.

And also, what would the rubbers be like?

There is a Tyree music festival, we could think about that.

When's that on?

I presume in the summer.

In the summer, yeah.

We should just remind people that we are going to be going to Edinburgh.

I know it's not the Hebrides, but I think we should put that in the category marked.

We'll think about it, Rory, yeah?

Here's one that I want to just raise.

Carole Bruce, Long Covid.

Lack of research funding for Long Covid has broad implications if many are unable to work because of an illness that has been denied and psychologised.

What can I do as per Alice's new book, has been our cry for a very long time, but remains unheeded?

I mean, this is, I like I imagine you and many, many people listening to this podcast.

I've got a very close friend who has Long Covid and it has completely destroyed his life.

I mean, he said that for the last three years, he's barely had a happy day.

He wakes up in the most terrible state.

And what I guess she's getting at there by saying that it's been denied and psychologised is struggling with the fact that so many doctors still seem quite reluctant to acknowledge that there's any connection between Covid and what people are experiencing, or at least speaking on behalf of my friend, I think he feels that it's a very difficult and humiliating position to be in.

I may be showing my ignorance here.

The other issue on Covid we had lots of questions about related to the clinically vulnerable and their inability to be considered in their view seriously by the Covid enquiry, because they've been trying to get into the first module.

I don't know if that's the same thing or not.

And I probably will get shouted at for not knowing.

But I think what I think this, both those questions, however, reveal to me is that there are consequences of Covid.

You keep making this point.

I hope the Covid enquiry doesn't just sort of conclude that Boris Johnson was a useless Prime Minister because we already know that.

But I think there are these deeper structural questions relating not just to the nature of government and the constructs of government, but also to the consequence of an illness that we still don't fully understand.

And I think both of these questions relate to that.

Here's one that I think is absolutely central to Alistair.

It's from Cassia Zajak.

If you were advising Labour on campaigning for the next election, what policy do you

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think they should go big on that can be communicated by a three-word slogan and that might convince

the unconvinced to vote for them?

Well, I hope they don't imagine that all they need is a few snazzy three-word slogans, because I think and hope that the country is just about had enough of the three-word slogans.

I think they should maybe take Stop the Boats and turn it into Stop the Bullshit.

I think that would be a nice negative.

Quite like you hated my slogan for them, but I loved Enough is Enough.

Well, listen, the concept is good.

And I'll tell you the thing is, I do think the driving feeling in the country at the moment is we've got to get rid of these bastards.

They've got to go.

And so I think that the three-word slogan is in the area of get the country moving, get Britain moving again, get going.

We're stuck. We've got to get going.

Now, that probably relates to the economy.

I'd like to see more on the agenda about education.

I think education, George Osborne made the point that education, both from the government and from the opposition, we don't really seem to be hearing much about it.

And he pointed out that's weird, isn't it?

That that was completely central to what you were doing in the 90s and whether you like it or not, very central to the brand of the Conservatives, Michael Gove, in early 2010.

And it seems faded from both parties.

Yeah.

Casa SB.

I live in France.

Do British governments ever look abroad to see what policies are working or not working?

Or do they always do bespoke ones starting from scratch?

I'm thinking of the amazing school meal payment system here based on income and fixed-rate housing loans set at a third of your income.

So, and you mentioned Michael Gove there.

Now, I would argue, and Fiona, who knows a lot more about education than I do, she would argue that Gove was terrible for his impact on education.

But to be fair to him, he did at least go around the world looking at education systems.

And in answer to Casa's question, I don't think we need to do nearly enough of looking at other countries and their policies.

Well, and the time to do it, of course, is when in opposition.

It's very difficult when you're actually the minister to do this.

I would sneak out when I was prison minister to try to get and look at other countries' prison systems, but it was a few days at a time.

Did you go to Norway because they've got an amazing prison system?

No, I spent a long time talking to the head of the Swedish prison service, who was a really, really impressive man, who I learned an unbelievable amount from because he had drug rates, which

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were like a tenth of ours, much lower reoffending, had a very strong sort of emphasis on relationships and treating prisons with dignity, but combined with actually some quite well-designed measures to provide security in the prison.

So I learned a lot from the Swedes.

And in the other reverse, I went to the US.

I saw Cook County Jail.

I went to Rikers Island.

I went to the tombs in Manhattan.

And there I was seeing things which you'd never see in a British prison.

I saw a young black man walking towards me with ankle shackles on in the tombs in Manhattan.

I mean, it was a sort of, I don't need to say this on the show, but the American prison system can be completely horrifying, just related.

Maybe just as we move towards the end, a new Green Party, Barry Grogan, is there a path for the Green Party to grow by focusing more on home county Nimbies that would lean Tory as opposed to their traditional left-wing base?

And this partly comes just, as you know, in the local elections.

The Green Party made some pretty dramatic gains, took control of councils in East Hertfordshire, the largest party in Lewisham and East Sussex.

And there's a general story.

I mean, Germany's Greens, I suppose, is the most dramatic example.

But there's a general story, despite all of populism, about the development from the new left into the green movement across the world.

Anyway, Greens for you.

I'd say that the Greens in Germany are struggling a bit because, as often happens to minority parties when they become part of government, but they, you know, you're right that the Greens in Germany have sort of, they have been trailblazers.

It's really interesting question that, because in a sense, it's advocating to them that they do what the Liberal Democrats have always done, and the SNP have done as well, which is essentially depending on the area where you're campaigning, be a slightly different party.

And I can see an opportunity for them there, because I'll tell you, one of the things that's worrying me from the Labour perspective is the number of people who say to me that, you know, they're thinking of voting green because they want Labour to be more radical and to be more bold and to call out the Tories on this, that and the other.

Now, I understand why Labour sometimes aren't doing that, but I think it does open doors for the Greens in a way that they're not necessarily exploiting.

I think that's what, I don't know, Barry Grogan is a green supporter himself, but then they're not necessarily exploiting that in the way that it sounds to me like he would, he would like.

Now, Rory, I've got, I've got to tell you, let me close with this.

Okay.

I'm bracketing these under a little special section that I've been plotting away called

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Tory Rory.

Tory Rory.

Tory Rory.

Tory Rory.

Tory Rory.

Tory Rory.

Tory Rory.

This doesn't sound like a very pleasant way to end.

No, it's a very, it's because it's interesting, because I think people, I've been spotting it, right?

So, Jamie Peters, why does Rory desperately defend SULAC when SUNAC enabled and shilled for the person that we're not talking about for three years, just as SUNAC is enabling supporting and shilling for Braverman now?

And Sarah, Rory has described SUNAC's policies as moderate several times.

I'd like him to here explain that a bit more, because other than the EU law bonfire, I don't see his policies as moderate myself.

Thank you, she adds politely.

Well, we can come back to this again and again, because it never gets old.

I think the normal way that Alistair puts it is that he is much better than his predecessors, but you would say that's a low bar.

I would say that I was so horrified by what the man we're not mentioning has been doing to the Conservative Party, that the fact that we've got a Prime Minister who is diligent, does his work, who cabinet ministers respect, who got the Windsor framework through, who didn't proceed with the mad bonfire.

But I do agree with you there are challenges around Rishi SUNAC, and I would agree with the question is, I'm not a member of the Conservative Party.

I left because I disliked the former member from Uxbridge so much, whereas Rishi SUNAC joined his government.

I'm a remainder, he's a Brexiteer, et cetera, et cetera.

Now, here's a happy news to end on.

Germany just gave all 18-year-olds 200 euros to spend on the arts, and that's a point made by Tony Pasta, our friend and your fellow Burnley Van and the producer of our show.

And don't you think that would be a wonderful thing for one of these parties to put in their manifesto for the next election?

Yeah, yeah.

I mean, they'll have to say where the money's coming from, but I do think that people underestimate the...

Well, I think governments around the world underestimate the power of the arts, and I do think as well that giving people, as they reach that age, a bit of fun and a bit of hope and a bit of culture, I think is a very, very good thing to do.

We also had another question about whether there were any good policy ideas.

It relates to the point about whether we study, whether people study foreign policy enough, and by which I mean policies of foreign governments as opposed to their foreign policy.

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Generally, the other thing that I think is not used enough and is our ambassadors. I think they should be informing governments, and if it has a political angle, I think they should be doing so in a way that they should also be telling the opposition.

It's a brilliant idea.

I think it's a brilliant idea because it would also be a very, very good thing for an ambassador because it's a deeply respectful thing to another country to say, actually, we want to learn about the things you're doing and take them back to our own country.

I think that's a great idea.

The reason I keep mentioning Norway is partly because Scotland beat them in the football, which was pretty amazing, but also a friend of mine who works on The Times has just been out there doing some work on some of the policies that the Norwegian government has been doing in relation to post-COVID.

Because I had some connections in Norway, I was able to introduce her to a few people. I should tell you, Rory, randomly out of the blue, I got a lovely message from the Prime Minister of Norway, who I worked with a bit in opposition, saying that he listens to our podcast every weekend and he thinks we will make the world better informed.

That's beautiful.

Well, on that, I think we're going to end and let you get out for another cycle ride in the French countryside.

I'm not having another one.

All right.

Bye-bye.

All the best.

Bye.