

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 157. Question Time: Knocking over Liz Truss, Oxbridge dominance, and life under the Taliban

Welcome to the Restless Politics Question Time with me, Rory Stewart.

And me, Alistair Campbell.

And Alistair, how are you?

Where are you?

I'm all right.

I'm in France.

I had a very nice time in Buxton at the Book Festival.

Oh, yes!

I looked everywhere, or I looked everywhere if you're wearing rain.

It was pouring with rain, rather depressingly, because it meant the cricket didn't finish, because I was kind of hoping to get from Buxton over for a bit of the test match.

But no, I couldn't see anywhere.

Absolutely nowhere.

But they're all looking.

They're all still looking, Rory.

Right.

Question time.

Questions.

Right.

Let me ask the first one, because I think you will be interested in this.

Kelvin Zhang.

Rory, based on your experience in Afghanistan, what do you think about Tobias Ellwood's media campaign to establish diplomatic ties with the Taliban-run Afghan government, where his videos portray Afghanistan as running things rather well?

What are the implications for women's rights and other major points of contention with the Taliban?

I think very few people will have missed this story in the UK.

Tobias Ellwood, who's the chair of the Defense Select Committee, returned from a visit with the Halo Trust, which is a great British mind-clearing charity.

And he was in Afghanistan and came back and posted a video talking about how things in Afghanistan were better than he had feared, and encouraging people to reopen diplomatic relationships with the Taliban government.

He found himself under a barrage of abuse and attack that you cannot believe.

And at the end of the week, I think he retracted his video message, delisted it, and apologised.

Some of it was incredibly unfair, so people like Marc François and other sort of right-wing Brexiteers on the Defense Select Committee turned against him and basically tried to accuse him of being a sort of traitor or not patriotic enough for what he said, which is outrageous.

I mean, Tobias Ellwood was a serving British soldier in the regular army.

His brother was killed in the terrorist attack in Bali.

He's the guy who was involved in tackling a terrorist at the front door of parliament.

So it's particularly horrible to see him being accused of somehow being a traitor.

Especially by something like Marc Bloody François.

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I think Tobias Ellwood is one of the more impressive Tory MPs.

And that's not just because I find he says the right things on things like Brexite.

I think he thinks quite deeply.

I think he looks at stuff from rounded perspectives and I think he's clever.

And also, when we talk to my good friend Jonathan Powell on leading a few weeks ago now, he is always of the view that no matter what the state of play with whatever government or whatever organisation you may have to deal with, you do have to deal with them.

I thought the reaction was over the top.

Yeah.

So on Afghanistan, which is obviously a country where I used to live and where I still have many, many friends and Shoshana was there three weeks ago, I think it's very difficult getting the balance right on how you talk about it.

And I guess this is where Tobias got in trouble.

On the one hand, the Taliban is a chauvinistic patriarchal organisation that is banning women from school, banning women from working in NGOs in the UN and appears to make taking women out of the workplace and education completely central to their policies.

But it's also true that Afghanistan is more peaceful now than it was during the intervention, the US-UK intervention.

So 20 years of extreme violence, it's now much more peaceful.

You can travel from Kabul up to Bamyan in the mountains, stop for picnics by the roadside.

Security is good.

It's questionable whether you should be giving much credit to the Taliban because of that, because the Taliban, of course, for the people mounting the attacks.

So of course, it's more peaceful because they're not blowing people up anymore.

It is more peaceful.

And if you are a woman from Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, and there's a really, really good article which we can share, written by a US journalist called Anand Gopal about this.

In many ways, their lives were horrifying during the 20 years of the intervention.

And what the Taliban has delivered, which is a bit more stability, peace and security, will be for women in conservative villages in the south, feel more important than the loss of rights which they felt were largely a privilege of people living in cities like Kabul.

So it's a complicated story.

And I think the big question, though, is the one that you've posed from Jonathan Powell, which is, does it make sense to keep trying to punish and sanction the Taliban if it has no impact on the Taliban government?

And all it ends up doing is leaving the Afghan people in extreme poverty and destitution, because the idea that you can change the Taliban's behavior by sanctioning them is,

I think, for the birds, that the Taliban are not politicians who want to go shopping in Harids.

They are people who've been living in caves, fighting in extreme ideological fights, and who get energy from being excluded by the world and marginalized.

And particularly not providing development assistance is not hurting the Taliban leadership.

It's hurting ordinary Afghan people.

What about this one?

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How do you oust an absent MP?

This is from somebody called Joe Tyler, who identifies as a mid-Betfordshire constituent.

Why is it so difficult, slash impossible, for us constituents to demand a violation?

There are 30,000 of us, unrepresented at the moment, is hugely frustrating.

Good MPs really do make a difference on local issues, and they do good work on the behalf of their constituents, whatever their party allegiance.

Of course, this is about Nadine Dorries, who very, very, very, very close friend of Boris Johnson, didn't get sent to the House of Lords, has been throwing a sort of very, very high-profile tantrum in the media and on television ever since.

He's making shed loads of money from newspapers and television stations, never goes to Parliament.

Said at the time she was immediately resigning from Parliament for a violation, and it hasn't happened.

So we did pass an, I think I voted for it, an act in 2015 called the Recall of MPs Act.

So it doesn't allow constituents to initiate proceedings, but it is an improvement.

So if an MP is found guilty of a wrongdoing and there's a petition, which at least one in 10 voters in the constituency sign, the successful petition can force the recalled MP to vacate the seat.

And that's happened two out of three times so far.

So the classic examples would be people like Dennis McShane, after a court case, which triggered the 2011 Rotherham by-election, and it's called a, it's called a Recall procedure.

And it was used against Fiona Onazania, who was the Labour MP, who got a custodial sentence for a year.

There was an unsuccessful attempt against Ian Pasey Jr., and then there was a successful attempt against Christopher Davis, who was the Conservative in Breckin and Radnisher.

So one Conservative, one Labour MP have been taken out by these new procedures we brought in 2015.

Presumably it would have been used against Johnson had he not jumped.

Yeah.

I don't know whether it would have pushed the threshold.

I mean, in the cases of Fiona Onazania and the Conservative MP, they had done some pretty bad things.

I mean, Fiona Onazania, I think, got a suspended one-year prison sentence.

So these were sort of criminal offences that allowed their constituents to trigger, but probably not the threshold to get rid of Nadine Doris in mid-bed for sure.

I mean, it is very enjoyable to see Peter Kyle, he's running the by-election campaign in mid-beds without a by-election at the moment, but because she still hasn't resigned.

And there's some talk that she's going to, she's writing a book, and she will, I think the talk is that the book will come out just before the Tory party conference to do maximum damage to Sunak, and then she'll have the by-election.

We could be talking about October, November.

Yeah.

She's vicious, she's vindictive, she's part of this very small, extreme Boris Johnson fan club.

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She seems to hate Rishi Sunak.

And of course, as we will have seen with the three last by-elections, by-elections are things that can really upset the narrative for a sitting government or even for the opposition. So if her by-election had happened at the same time as all the others, it would have been lost in the general narrative about whether to celebrate Selby or if you're from Labour.

Point of view, be worried about Uxbridge.

But by making it something of her own timing, she will be doing it in a completely disloyal way to damage the Conservative party in Rishi Sunak, there's absolutely no way she's doing it for any other reason.

No.

For Labour to take mid-beds is even bigger than Selby.

And of course, the other difference is that it, you know, both the main opposition parties will think they're in with a shout, so it will be very interesting test of whether Labour in the Lib Dems can actually maybe come to some sort of arrangement.

Rob McIver, in the run-up to general elections, the latest polls get more media attention than policies and arguably can influence how people vote.

Should it be illegal to publish a poll once an election has been called?

Well, in some countries, it is illegal to publish polls within a certain time frame.

And look, I sometimes call opinion polls the junk food of political journalism.

They're the easiest way to get talking points, to get coverage, to get stories going.

I find them utterly tedious and I completely agree with the questioner, election campaigns are meant to be the place where the country gets the chance to argue about and debate the differences between the parties on policy and the ideas they have and yes, the personalities as well.

But if every day all you read about is the kind of tactical expression of what's happening in the campaign, I don't think it adds to the sum total knowledge at all.

So I think polling is important, I think serious pollsters, I think, have an important role to play.

But the way that polls get used in the sort of incessant blah factory that the 24-7 news has become, I think we need fewer of them and less talk about them.

Right.

Westminster's drinking culture, Andrew Douglas.

Why is Westminster still built around a drinking culture?

Feels very outdated, six subsidised bars, here of MPs running back drunk when the division bells ring.

I've experienced this just sort of quickly.

There was a Labour MP when I joined, it was the MP for Falkirk called Eric Joyce, who was a sort of eccentric character.

I remember him, I asked him what he was doing with his summer holidays, we were chatting in the members lobby and he said he was volunteering as a bodyguard to man a heavy machine gun on a boat to protect it against Somali pirates.

He was proposing to spend his summer recess manning a heavy machine gun on a boat in the

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Red Sea.

Sounds like you're your kind of guy.

Yeah, well, exactly.

Obviously, we bonded a little bit about that, but then his great denouement, he unfortunately left Parliament 480 because he was in the House of Commons bar, got in a massive sort of physical bust up with various Tories in the bar, who when he had a few drinks, he really didn't like.

As it was described to me by the MPs who were in the bar, the police came running, security for House of Commons grabbed Eric Joyce and Eric Joyce massively drunk had this moment of cunning where he said, it is forbidden to lay hands on a member of Parliament within the precincts of the Palace of Westminster and they let go of him just for a second so he could leap across the room and head-butt another MP at the bar.

I should laugh.

I sometimes think that my two worlds have been journalism and politics and actually I was at a funeral the other day of a wonderful woman called Gloria Sharp, who was secretary at the Daily Mirror, although she was a lot more than that.

So there were lots of my old mirror colleagues who were there and I would say that those two cultures, journalism and politics, I think the drinking culture has gone in the opposite direction to the rest of the country.

It's true there are lots of subsidized bars, but I think when I was a journalist in the Commons, it used to people see people like Eric Joyce literally bouncing off walls the whole time.

I don't think you see that very much anymore.

I could be wrong.

No.

No, I think it's got better.

I was reading Churchill's a sort of letter, I think, or maybe a diary entry from Churchill describing being the House of Commons and watching Asquith, who was then Prime Minister, getting up at the dispatch box late at night.

The votes used to go, obviously, to two, three in the morning.

And Asquith was so drunk that he could barely hold onto the dispatch box and barely get a word out as Prime Minister.

And Churchill says it's only the kind of mafia code of omertà or silence that we have within the House of Commons that prevents us exposing this.

And that's something I was thinking about when I was writing my book.

I mean, the politics on the edge is sort of, which I'm obviously plugging now, is an attempt to really take you behind the scenes and show you what it's like being an MP.

Oh my God, you're not really the publishers blurb.

I can spot publishers blurb a mile off.

The publishers blurb.

I embrace it all.

But one of the things that I'm doing there is to try to get around this code of silence, the sense that what Churchill picked up a hundred years ago is that MPs from all parties

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sort of look after each other and don't reveal very much of what's going on because they think it'll reflect badly on them and that what I'm hoping to do in the book, and I'll make a lot of enemies in doing it, is lift the veil on that and try to explain just how bad and embarrassing and humiliating a lot of what's going on on the back benches is. You know what?

Do you mean that now there is no, that the emerge has gone, that people just see each other as enemies?

No, no, no.

I think there's still a huge amount of, I think people still don't actually understand.

The public basically obviously think politicians, even when I was there, are corrupt and incompetent and this, that and the other.

Which most are not.

Which most are absolutely not.

Many are very, very studious, hardworking, generally often very hardworking constituency MPs.

Nevertheless, and this isn't so much a point about alcohol.

It's a point about the sort of humiliations of the way that the parties work, the way the whips work, the way that campaigning works, the lack of seriousness in our system.

I mean, I think you're right.

It's not as drunk as it used to be, but I do think the level of scrutiny, the level of speeches, all of this is calamitously low and the public doesn't know the half of it.

So should we take a quick break?

This is a really good question.

The end of prime ministers in for a decade, Cameron Gray, do you think Tony Blair will be the last prime minister to serve two full terms or that David Cameron will be the last to serve one five-year full term?

Are we in a cycle of constant early dissolutions of parliament?

I mean, you think about it, so there's Tony goes from 97 to 2007, Gordon stays till 2010.

David Cameron comes in, serves the term leading a coalition government.

It's when we've had one, two, three, four prime ministers and possibly we'll have a fifth within a year.

Well, it's amazing, isn't it?

But it's, I think, a sort of global phenomenon too.

We've seen it.

We were talking about Spain yesterday on the main podcast and there you've seen a pattern of going from somebody sitting 13 years to seven years to six years to five years.

In Britain, of course, it's more and more mad because you have the very short 10 years, short tenure of Boris Johnson, insanely short tenure of Liz Truss.

Insighting with people coming in younger, I mean, it is a sense that we live in a very accelerated culture where people lose attention, lose interest, very rapidly move on very quickly.

So, I mean, it's also striking, we were talking about Israel on the show yesterday, how different our politics has become from what it used to be in Britain and what it was like in Israel very recently in Israel.

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A lot of people would serve as prime minister, but then when they lost their positions prime minister would remain in the parliament and they would serve as defense ministers or foreign ministers and then come back again as prime minister nearly 20 years later.

Like Perez.

We mentioned Shimon Perez in Israel.

He did that.

Absolutely.

And it happened.

Yitzhak Rabin was the prime minister, 74 to 77 and then back 92 to 95.

So he was prime minister in his early 50s and then he was prime minister in his early 70s.

We did have a question this week, Rory, from somebody I haven't got in front of me about whether we thought Tony Blair should come back as prime minister.

Well, I don't know about Tony Blair coming back as prime minister, but I certainly think that the pattern that started with really with John Major and Tony Blair leaving politics so soon after they've been prime minister in a sense is sad.

I mean, in the 19th century, people like Gladstone would be defeated, returned to the back bench, his remainers these part and you had this huge, deep bench of experience.

You didn't get a sense that you've been prime minister and then you disappeared.

The likelihood, I'm afraid, is that if Rishi Sunak loses the next election, it's not really very likely he's going to be around in 20, 30 years time.

No, he'll be off to California and Soella Bravin will come in and take the Tory party so far.

Right.

We can barely see it.

There is one election that happened in recent days, Rory, that goes against the trend that you talked about.

We talked about it seven weeks ago, the general election in Cambodia, yet another win, yet another win for Hun Sen.

Surprising win.

Another astonishing win.

He's been there since 1984 and he has said, following the latest win where he took 120 of the 125 seats.

Very good.

He said that he will at some point be handing over to his son.

Very good.

Very, very progressive.

I remember having a conversation just in 2002 with an Iraqi just after Saddam Hussein had won 99.9% of the votes in one of these elections.

I said, guys, it's pretty impressive, 99.9% in the Iraqi said, perhaps that is an underestimate of his vote or his popularity.

Exactly.

My father-in-law, this is Dan Needleman, American, and I, British, are avid lists as the podcast and often discuss the episodes and topics.

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He regularly questions why the two of you appear to agree on many of the topic stroke issues discussed.

I've explained it's probably indicative of a much narrower gap between left and right in the UK than in the US.

Be great to hear your thoughts on this and some of the bigger issues that the two of you disagree on.

Well, I think Dan's father-in-law is currently living in a political culture in the United States where it is so polarized and so toxic that a Republicans can say literally nothing good about Joe Biden, a Democrat can say nothing good, not just about Trump, but by anybody on the other side.

And I think what we're trying to do, part of what we're trying to do with the podcast is actually, it's not necessarily the things we don't disagree on, but that it's possible to do so without hating each other.

I think when we talk about, like for example, when we talked on the main podcast, Yes, Tereba Israel, you know, we do fundamentally agree about how bad it is, about how dangerous it is.

When we've talked in the past about Boris Johnson's character, we fundamentally agree on that.

But I think there's lots of things that we disagree on.

I think we disagree a lot about education.

We probably disagree on health policy.

We probably have disagreements about devolution.

It's just that the agreements feel narrower, maybe than they do.

I think that the question Dan's right in America, these disagreements feel existential.

Well, it's partly also, isn't it, that the right-wing populists have created such a bizarre movement, if you're talking about Donald Trump, or in fact, the extreme ends of what Boris Johnson was trying to do, or what we were talking about in Israel yesterday, it sort of brings people who are unlikely bedfellows together, because I'm obviously a conservative in the sense that I am suspicious about radical change.

I'm trying to preserve the old constitution.

And then you suddenly find that the right isn't conservative anymore.

The right has become incredibly radical, and that forces the left in an odd way to become more conservative of the small city, because they're having to do things that the left traditionally didn't do, like stand up for the past, stand up for tradition, constitutions, courts, all these kinds of things, stand up for the root of law.

And it's a very, very odd sort of jujitsu move that the populist right has done, because obviously the left wants to focus on being progressive, gently revolutionary, pushing things forward, changing the world.

And then you suddenly find people like Boris Johnson behaving so badly, or Trump behaving so badly, that the left has to become the kind of defender of the status quo.

Although I think that the mistake that the left party, whether in any country, can make is if the right is disappearing way, way, way off to the right, I argue that that leaves the center ground there to be taken.

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And I still to this day maintain that is where most people live their lives.

Now Rory, let's talk about music, because this is from Dr. Sam.

Alastair stated several times that Rory doesn't listen to enough music.

To balance this, I would point out, I once spotted Rory at a Billy Bragg concert in Penrith Leisure Center.

I wondered at the time, what was Rory that Rory doing there at a Red Wedge leaders event?

I did feel increasingly uncomfortable before Rory as the concert progressed with Billy attacking the conservative government to the delight of the crowd.

Does Rory remember enjoying the concert, what motivated him to attend?

As an aside, do you think political music has had much of a role in changing things?

Can you tell people a little bit about Billy Bragg?

Because I guess he was somebody who's to the left of New Labour, right?

I mean, he did, he did protest albums against the Iraq war and stuff, is that right?

Back in the day, Billy Bragg was one of the first musicians and celebrities of any sort really, who came out with a very, very clear distinct political profile.

And I'd say before our time was part of this movement called Red Wedge, which was basically, you know, musicians who were out there very, very strongly supportive of the then Labour Party.

I think it probably started in Neil Kinnick's time, I could be wrong.

He was involved in the Rock Against Racism Carnival, which was back in late 1970s.

So this kind of goes back.

And yeah, I think you're right, would have probably been quite critical of New Labour at times.

And he was pro-Corbin, sort of supported Occupy Wall Street and stuff like that.

But I don't think, by the way, that we should, when celebrities get involved in supporting political parties, I don't think they should sort of feel that they're spokesmen and spokeswomen for the party.

But I think just having them out there, adding to the general noise about politics, I think is a good thing.

Yeah.

I mean, I loved going to the Billy Bragg concert.

I thought he was an extraordinary performer, but you're right.

He spent a lot of the concert attacking the Conservative Party and gently mocking me because he knew I was in the audience.

Good for him.

Well done, Billy.

Good for him.

How many concerts have you been to since Billy Bragg?

I've been to very, very, very few concerts in my life.

I don't know.

I mean, you're an amazing man because you are the sort of amazing man of energy.

When I hear the number of test matches, football matches, rugby league matches, rock concerts you go to and the amount that you manage to seem to get done.

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No, I don't go to many rock concerts.

I'm not a fan of rock concert crowds.

But famously, you did go to one, didn't you, with Boris Johnson, where you got introduced to a great teenage pop star?

Miley Cyrus.

That's true.

By Boris Johnson, who described you as his deputy man.

He did.

He did.

The concert I've seen most this year is Abba Voyage.

Have you seen it more than once?

I think I'm on to four.

Four times.

Okay.

Now, here we are.

Dominance of Oxbridge.

Amar.

Alistair always highlights the dominance of Eaton in recent Tory cabinets and indeed how the private, the educated are on the upper echelons of politics and the civil service.

But how come he and Rory never mentioned the dominance of the Oxford and Cambridge educated class of which they are both a part within both Tory Labour governments and advisers.

13 of the last 17 primalists were educated at the same university, Oxford.

Not exactly leavening up.

What do you think about that?

I agree with that.

It's true that I probably dig into Eaton more than you.

I think the question is right though.

I think the real grip of Oxbridge is, and it's not just on politics.

I think it's on the sort of the class system against which as you know, I rail and rage all the time.

And actually class is something which we do disagree on.

When people talk about why we're different and where we disagree, I think it isn't necessarily that we have profoundly different views on NHS reform.

It is partly that you come from a tradition that sees class and not just economic class, social class as being one of the central injustices of British life.

Well, I think it is.

I think you still get, depending on the background you come from, that is still the biggest driver of whether or not you're going to succeed in life and that's just wrong.

Very good.

Question.

Grenna BC.

What on earth is the Mingva strategy?

I never hear this expression in Australia.

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Is it uniquely British?

Was that an Australian accent?

Yeah, it was a brilliant Australian accent.

It was brilliant.

No.

That was the question.

I saw a question was about what was the Mingva strategy and what was the pocketbook strategy?

These are terms that we never hear in Australia.

Pocketbook is, I think it was Harold Wilson who talked about the pocketbook, is basically where you fight an election according to people's pocket, how much money are they going to get or lose out of voting for party A or party B.

The Mingva strategy is a strategy where you're clinging desperately to a lead that you don't want to lose.

We've been back and forth on that.

Obviously, we tend to not really like Mingva strategies, but of course, there will be people in Labour who feel that the result of the by-election, where they won in Selby when it was a simple, would you like to get rid of the Tories and didn't win in Uxbridge where it became an issue around taxation, may argue that a Mingva strategy is safer for Keir Starmer because he can just make the election.

Do you want to get rid of the Tories without having to get into the question of policies?

What happens if you drop the vase on the day before the election?

Yeah, that sounds pretty problematic.

Okay.

Electronic voting in the House of Commons is my last question for you.

Nathaniel Brennan, is it time to introduce electronic voting in the Commons?

I understand tradition, but the sheer amount of time lost by shuffling through lobbies seems utterly ridiculous.

I would have said no if I felt that it meant that people were just going to sit in their office and press a button.

But when you see how few MPs attend so many of our even quite important debates, I think it probably has time.

I think the time has come to not just have electronic voting, but to completely change the way that we do so much of our politics.

It's very odd because it is incredibly time-consuming because there are often a sequence of votes and they can happen very unpredictably.

So I would be chairing the House of Commons defense committee and be interviewing a witness. Suddenly the bell goes, you have to apologize to the witness, race over and vote.

The vote doesn't take place for eight minutes because they've got to lock the doors and it takes about eight minutes to go through.

And then you're on your way heading back to your committee room and the bell goes again for a second vote, turns out there are three or four votes in a row.

So your witness could be sitting there for an hour waiting for you to return by which time the whole sketch of the day has gone wrong.

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So there is that bit.

And of course, as a minister, it was often very strange.

You couldn't be in your department actually focusing on what you were supposed to be doing, flooding or prison's policy or whatever I was supposed to be running because you were worried about votes about to happen in the House of Commons.

And you just, I couldn't get from my office in Deffra.

I made it once from my office in Deffra by knocking over Paula's trust in the lobby.

You knocked over Liz Truss.

Yeah.

So Liz Truss was my boss.

So Liz Truss and I were both in Deffra when the bell went and we attempted to run from this office, which was right down Millbank to get into the House of Commons lobby in eight minutes.

And in the end, she dropped out by the time she got to Central Lobby.

And I think I sort of knocked her sideways and she just thought, this is ridiculous.

Can't quite make it.

I kept sprinting and I made it and I saw the doorman closing the door of the lobby for the vote.

I had my backpack on.

I dived full length through the door with my backpack on, landing right at the feet of the whips with the doorman screaming at me, saying I could have injured him by knocking the door out of the way like that and made it for the vote.

But that was the last time I tried to do that.

Did the lettuce make it for the vote or was the lettuce led behind as well?

No, that sort of came crashing in on my back behind me.

It was, it was, I mean, the whips were impressed by my dedication.

The doorkeepers were enraged by my rudeness and crashing through a closing door.

But even as, even as you describe it, it is, I mean, I think there was a time when people would have said, oh, that's quite quaint.

Okay.

And when I did an event recently with Charles Walker at the House of Lords, it's not just the Commons, this happens, happens in the Lord.

So we were doing this, we were doing this event on mental health.

And I think twice during our event, fairly sizable section of the audience, you know, bell, the bell rings and up they go and off they toddle, I actually remember thinking at the time that a lot of the people who weren't MPs or weren't peers, who 20 years ago would have thought, oh, that's democracy in action.

That's quite quaint.

That's quite interesting.

I think they just found it quite irritating.

Well, this is one of the things that politics on the edge is trying to focus on.

It's trying to explain how these daily weirdnesses are so central to an MP's life.

We often think about MPs and politics in terms of manifestos.

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We don't think enough about the very, very strange ways that the hours and weeks and lives of MPs are spent.

And one of the advantages of voting lobbies, of course, is it's your only chance to talk to colleagues because you're locked in the lobby for minutes at a time queuing to go through.

That was the point of which when Theresa May was prime minister, I could grab her and get her permission to fly to Zimbabwe, be the first British minister in Zimbabwe for 20 years, which was being blocked by the system.

But I got the prime minister next to me in the lobby and got it through.

So any other prime minister's names you'd like to drop in this conversation?

Generally, I was trying to avoid David Cameron while going through the lobbies.

But yeah, it's the chance to grab the colleague.

It's the chance to grab the defense minister and say, oh, I didn't get an answer to that email that I sent you, chance to beg someone to back you on a vote for a select committee, etc. And all that, because the House of Commons doesn't sit late at night, MPs used to get to know each other in the evening, I mean, notoriously in the bar.

But now that's gone, people go home.

There's many fewer chances to actually get to know other MPs in the lobbies.

One of the few moments where you're locked in and able to do that.

Lewis Minyan, how can parties encouraging young people?

As an 18-year-old member of the Labour Party says, Lewis, I'm very pleased that the 25-year-old Kier May, the one the Selby and Einstein by-election, what do the both of you think that the main parties should do to encourage more young people to become engaged in politics?

I think actually the best thing to do is to have your own children and send them into the House of Lords. I think I'll take a seat in the House of Lords and I'll send my three children in there. That seems to me the best thing to do.

As infants, yeah.

Yeah, I think so. I think we should all be able, I think we should all be able to send our children to the House of Lords.

And the second best thing you can do, which I would recommend to all parties, is to buy a copy of But What Can I Do?

That's very good. And I do think within that you'll find lots of ideas for the parties to get more young people motivated and involved. We definitely need it.

All right. Bye-bye. Thank you.

All the best. Bye-bye.