

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

And me, Alistair Gamble.

Very good.

And Alistair, you have a very, very splendid shirt on.

I have my, what you call my, penrith vet shirts on, but you have something which looks more like sort of Saturday Night Live.

It's a car driving across my chest.

Goes very good.

I'm not really into cars.

Fiona has this sort of desire, I think, for me to be a man that I'm not.

Oh.

So she regularly will go out and buy me shirts like this.

Well, it's interesting because you definitely have a desire for me to be a man that I'm not.

So I think you're obviously passing it on.

Rory, Rory, I have no desire over you whatsoever.

You do have a perpetual desire for me to be a football loving, beer drinking dude.

Can you remember the name of the Bulgarian international footballer?

No, sadly not.

Go on.

What's his name again?

Kostyadinov.

So let's get a couple of quick, easy ones out the way to start with, okay?

I'm going to reward some perseverance.

Michael Reese, question attempt number 18, and I've checked, he has asked this question 18 times.

So stop whinging all you people who say have asked this question eight times, nine times, 10 times.

Michael Reese's question is quite simple, Rory.

Will we go to Cardiff to do a show in 2024?

Wales is the only nation in the UK that we've not hosted a show yet.

But we'll definitely go to Wales and Cardiff sounds like a good spot, right?

Yeah.

Cardiff, I think we've got to be, you know, but I, by the way, Michael, have been to Wales at least three times in the last few months and is another very quick, snappy one we can do, Rory.

Chi on our MP, few people are going in touch to say on a recent podcast, you couldn't think of any MPs with a scientific background.

So I thought I'd send you a link to the BBC's Life Scientific episode that covered mine.

So there you go.

We'll put that in the newsletter.

I'd like to pay tribute to Chi, so Chi did a lot with me in the early days on mobile coverage and broadband, and absolutely, she is a person with a serious scientific background in Parliament.

As of course, as I've pointed out, is Therese Coffey, who's got a doctorate in strange bits of biochemistry.

And whose name keeps appearing in stories about the pending reshuffle.

Ah.

Hey, Ho.

Now, let's have a couple here on education.

Even though the first one from Kate Grant is only the eighth time that she's asked it.

Kate from Buxton, over 20% of secondary age young people have been persistently absent from school this year, and the suspension rate is 49% higher in 2022 than in 2017.

Is the education system in England fundamentally broken?

If so, how can it be fixed?

Kath, given the growing rates of absences in our schools, is our education system fit for purpose anymore?

And should educators, rather than politicians, not be at the forefront of a complete overall, why aren't Labour being bolder in their education policy, as currently, it seems to be more of the same?

What do you think accounts for the growing absences from school?

What's going on there?

I think a lot of it's COVID.

I think it's children who got used to not going to school and then found it hard to go back.

But actually, if I can plug an excellent piece, which partly answers both questions from somebody I think you probably met her actually, or somebody called Fiona Miller, who's a writer and a journalist specialising in education and parenting issues.

Yeah, that's right.

Fiona Miller, yes.

You've heard of Fiona Miller?

Yes, I've heard of her.

Yes.

I know her very, very well.

She's the mother of my three children.

Anyway, we shall put in the newsletter, a piece she wrote in The Guardian, which just tried to answer this question.

And I think the final point is partly because of some of the things that Michael Gove in his wisdom undid that the Labour government put in place.

A lot of the support that's there for teachers has gone.

And a lot of the outside school support has gone.

I saw your friend, Julian Keegan, recently said that teachers should sort of, you know, if kids aren't turning up, this school should go and find them and all of them back in.

But of course, the schools are pretty overwhelmed as it is.

So I think there's a whole load of things that were taken away, they've not been replaced and that the schools are operating at full pelt.

And they're just not able to keep up with some of these kids who are not there.

Gosh, I was also reading actually the US Department of Education struggling with the same thing.

They've got about 16% absenteeism and they're people with non-native English, much more likely to be absent, people with disabilities, much more likely to be absent.

I mean, it is such a problem Shashana taught in very difficult schools, both in Harlem and in Boston.

And there they did literally go to people's homes to try to find children and bring them in.

And as you say, it's incredibly time consuming.

I mean, it's sort of half broke the teachers trying to stay on top of that.

And I do think the point of labor, and we talked in the main podcast about the government being behind on the NHS, I do think good education, I really like Bridget Phillips and I think it should be a terrific secretary of state.

But I think within the public debate, partly I think because the current education secretary Jiden Keegan is I think pretty low profile and doesn't say much about education, is just vanished from the debate.

It's not at the centre of our debate about what sort of future we want as a country.

And of course, we're going in the next couple of weeks, we're going to get A-levels, we're going to get GCSE results and we're going to get them to a point where you've had kids who've had the whole COVID experience is bad enough.

And then now you've had the teacher strikes, some of the marking issues have not been resolved. You're going to have all sorts of kids not getting downgraded because of some of the changes that have been made in the marking systems.

And I just think these are things that because they're not, if I may revisit one of my central themes, because so many of our leading journalists and editors use private schools, I don't think they focus on education nearly as much as they should.

And I think that that is another reason why the politicians don't focus on it as much as they should either.

So here's a couple of questions, Sam Calvert Smith, a while ago, you pledged to do a good news only episode.

I realize it's almost impossible at the moment, but wondered if between you, you could find any good news that we asked to come on some good news for us.

Well, look, one person's the definition of news that was one of the greatest definition of news ever.

News is something that somebody somewhere doesn't want to see printed, right?

So I would argue that it's good news that Donald Trump has been indicted again, right?

But it's bad news for Donald Trump.

But, you know, we talked the other day about there's a serious point to this, because we talked recently about the Canadian legislation, where they're changing the arrangements with Metta and Google, and what have you.

And when we were looking into that, I came across this piece on the conversation, which has some figures.

I think it for the UK was 46% of people who now deliberately avoid the news.

And that's massive.

But it's unbelievable.

And it's fatal for politics because politics is central news.

And obviously, democracy depends on informed citizens and holding people accountable.

And once almost half your population is actively refusing to visit these, how on earth are you supposed to hold politicians accountable?

Yeah.

So here's a good bit of news for you.

Scientists have found a naturally occurring strain of bacteria, which can stop transmission malaria.

That is good news.

That's quite exciting.

So they went and looked at a 2014 experiment, went back and looked at it again.

And they think that this may be a real breakthrough.

And of course, malaria still kills 600,000 people every year.

So there we are.

There's something a little bit of good news for you.

Generally, if you go on the BBC, BBC's got uplifting news, but most of it tends to be about teddy bears stuck on the top of mountains or rescuing dolphins and dogs.

And listen, I try to defend the BBC.

The BBC's online top 10 stories is becoming absurd and ridiculous at times.

The BBC is a serious news organization.

Can they please focus on serious news?

Thank you very much over and out.

Right, Dan Taylor, I'm enjoying reading Rory's book about the Scottish borders walks with his dad.

I love the reference to his dad saying, Archimedes, every time tea is poured.

Why is this Rory?

Ah, and he follows up for Alistair.

If you've been brought up by Rory's father, can you imagine how your worldview might differ?

And do you think he would have gravitated to being a Tory?

OK, let me try Archimedes and then we'll throw this thing.

So my father was completely, I think he would have enjoyed meeting him.

He was born in 1922.

He fought in the war.

He became an intelligence officer.

He was trained to land in small submarines off the coast of Borneo during confrontation with Sukarno.

He was a passionate Scott.

He was very close to his brother.

There were just two little boys.

Their father was in India.

My grandfather was in India.

And these two little boys grew up in Kirimura and Angus and then went off to war together and his brother, who was just a year old and was killed fighting with a black watch in Sicily.

And my father never really, I think, developed close male friends again after that.

Oh, is that is that why you joined the black watch, by the way?

Yes, yeah, my father, my uncle, my grandfather, my great-grandfather.

Yeah, my father was so proud of being Scottish and kind of

petulantly and childishly anti-English at almost every opportunity he was given. Would he want Australia to beat England in the World Women's World Cup semi-final tomorrow?

Well, I think he'd be quite amused by that sort of thing.

But his sort of Scottishness was much more about he loved trying to improve his Gaelic.

He loved playing with his Chanta.

He was very interested in Scottish music, Scottish place names he was very interested in.

I mean, he'd wear tartan truses in Vietnam to give a sort of sense of how what a sort of campaigning Scotty was.

Anyway, the Archimedes point is that he was terrified about the fact that when you pour a teapot, he worried that the lids are going to fall off the teapot.

And Archimedes was some sort of way of him talking about the leverage problems.

He actually basically felt the entire family were really messy and that all we were ever going to do was pour tea all over the place.

And as a result, his mother-in-law was so terrified by him that every time he came to visit her, she'd just pour tea everywhere.

Right.

The bit for me, if I had been brought up by your father, can I imagine that my worldview might differ?

Yes.

Do I think I would therefore have gravitated to be a Tory?

Definitely not.

Absolutely not.

It would have made me even more Labour.

I must tell you, Roy, I wasn't going to tell you this until I saw you face to face, but I am carrying with me because you have a significant birthday coming up.

Oh, yes.

A book written by the man in the Foreign Service who followed your dad in Hanoi, but unlike your dad, he travelled with a really, really high quality camera and took some amazing photographs and has published a rather beautiful book about his time in Hanoi there just after your dad left.

So there you go.

So I've got a copy of that book for you, which I shall be presenting to you from my friend, John Ramsden, on your significant birthday.

There you are.

Freddie Dewitt.

What is your view on Dominic Cummings' start-up party, brackets C sub-stack brackets?

Where is he right or wrong?

On the problems with the status quo party and white hall setups, focus on media rather than voters, systems thinking approach to politics and government, lack of, I imagine, and the key problems and policy areas for the UK.

Now, I haven't read Dominic Cummings' piece on sub-stack, but if he's saying that there should be a new start-up party or that if there is one, it should focus on the problems with the status quo party, white hall setups, focus on media, not voters, systems thinking approach, et cetera.

And I know these are things that he's banged on about for some time.

And I think, although I come at it from a very, very different political perspective to his, I do think there is something fundamentally wrong with our politics.

And I think it's partly what gave us Brexit.

I think it's partly what's given us this accession of, I think, pretty useless prime ministers, and it's partly what's making people frustrated that the Labour Party is not sort of coming in with that sense of real change and radical change that the country's crying out for.

Yeah.

So Cummings, I'm coming some really interesting character.

I think he's a, he has actually done a lot of harm.

I think him endorsing and getting behind Boris Johnson was terrible because I think Boris Johnson was a terrible, terrible prime minister and Dominic Cummings enabled him and should bear responsibility for that.

And it's no good him then saying, now that he's left are the guys like a shopping trolley careering around.

He should have known that in advance and he shouldn't have enabled that.

But of course, what he is good at is at the negative critique bit.

I don't think he's actually very good at a positively running the country, but his critique, which he put in his sub-stack, I think you'd agree with a lot of, he says that Rishi Sunak is diligent, but is mostly dealing with second order issues.

And this then is his criticism.

He says, there's no grip of power.

He says the cabinet office is a dumpster fire.

There's no governing plan for the NHS crime, the war, productivity, growth, R&D or anything else, no message, no serious polling communications or political machine, no political strategy worth spit, a humiliating, awful level of argument on every major issue, reduced to defending idiot MPs and political disintegration.

So as with a lot of these people, I think he's got a clear-eyed analysis of what's wrong, but I don't think that means that I want Dominic Cummings in running the country again.

Here we are, a question on Ecuador from Louise Barrett.

Interested to hear more on your thoughts of what's gone on in Ecuador.

Hadn't realized how fractious it was there.

Any insight is welcome.

So very quickly on that one, for listeners, Ecuador has had a horrible, horrifying explosion of drug violence.

In fact, one of the things that's been happening across Central Latin America has been an explosion from old centers in Colombia and Mexico, partly to do with the disintegration of Venezuela, of criminal drug gangs right the way across the continent.

And this has resulted in Ecuador in these moments of political violence and the leading anti-corruption campaign or in the presidential election being killed and now another major local politician being assassinated in the lead up to the election.

And now, even as we're speaking, a third, somebody called Pedro Briones, who was an organizer for Citizen Revolution, that's literally just been announced.

So I mean, it does sort of bring home as well that there are parts of the world. Look, we've had political assassinations, Joe Cox, David Amos, but I think for people to be out on the campaign stump as they are now and clearly the senses that the first guy who was murdered, Fernando Villavicencio, he has been very, very vocal speaking out against corruption, against drug gangs and so forth. And, you know, the suspicion is that they're the ones who wiped him out. So it's a classic kind of, you know, mafia style silencing operation.

And a reminder how quickly things can change in the modern world, because Ecuador, you would have said a decade ago, was a pretty stable, peaceful place. And it's just in the last five years that it's basically become like Columbia in the 90s.

And there are whole bits of the country now controlled by these criminal drug gangs. So it's a real reminder of how fragile countries and politics can be, that the kind of assumptions that you would have had five, six years ago can be turned on their heads so rapidly, the way these international criminal gangs can just destroy a state.

And I don't, I can't claim to be an ace beyond this, but you may know more than I do. But is it not the case that Ecuador doesn't have its own drug trade as such, but it's sandwiched between Colombia and Peru, and therefore is essential to their kind of routes, the trafficking routes?

Next question. Tony Blair Institute of Force for Good. Ralphie, is the Blair Institute for Global Change of Force for Good, Hugo Arman, having read the news about Tony Blair and his Saudi connections, wouldn't it be wise for Keir Starmer to keep as much distance as possible from this heavily tainted predecessor? That's a slightly unfair question to you, because obviously Tony Blair is somebody you admire immensely.

Somebody, somebody you admire immensely as well, Rory.

I'd also like Tony Blair very much.

But there's been some very interesting reporting, which I think it'd be fair for us to report on, which has been getting into the funding and the way in which it's funded by Larry Ellison and some of the different ways in which the money is generated. There was a really interesting detailed article written by Tom McTague. Tom McTague is a really interesting, long-form

journalist who did some really good reporting on Northern Ireland, did a very interesting profile of Boris Johnson, was a correspondent with the Atlantic and has spent the last few weeks getting into real detail on the funding of the Tony Blair Institute. So I think it's worth reading.

I mean, it's a very interesting account. I don't think I came out of it feeling that Tony Blair was guilty of great wrongdoing, but it is an interesting example of some of the perils of how you fund yourself and what happens when you have to try to raise tens of millions of dollars a year, often in his case, for good causes. I mean, he's using this money to do a lot of support for governance work and delivery work in developing countries around the world, but an interesting, long-form piece.

Well, I've not read it. I was vaguely aware of the stories because I was getting phone calls from journalists asking if I wanted to say anything about them and I didn't. But as you've raised on the podcast, I will.

No, I think that Tony left office in 2007 and I think he struggled for a while to establish exactly how he was going to kind of operate.

I think he has now found his feet and he runs this organization, which I think is a force for good. I think it's a force for good in the way that it contributes to public policy debate. I think it's a force for good, as you say, in some of the work that it does in some of the poorest parts of the world.

I mean, Tony's Institute is operating in dozens of countries now and doing it in a way that I think is, you know, some of the work he's done in Africa has won a lot of praise from some of the organizations who said that even some of the big charities were pulling out at some of the poorest places in the world. And I think what happened in the early years is that he stopped being a politician in a way. He stopped explaining who he was and what he did, which is part of what a modern politician has to do. And I think he's doing that more now. And I think it is giving people a better sense of what he does. Now, I don't know what connections he has with Mohammed bin Salman. I don't know what connections he has with Saudis in terms of any financing. I just don't know. But I do know that he raises a lot of money in part to fund these projects and also in part to hire the people that work for him. And he's now hiring several hundred people, including people, I keep saying to people in Iran, Kyrstarman, never mind Kyr, have your relationship with them. Hire some of these people because he's got some of the smartest people currently working in policy work going.

Clare McCord, would love to hear your thoughts on the PSNI, Police Service Northern Ireland data breach, particularly as I feel the serious since this may not be quite understood in the rest of the UK. Yeah. In an age of constant breaches and leaks of people data. So take it back then to end of February. John Caldwell, he's a detective chief inspector, is coaching some kids. He's leaning into the back of his car to put his footballs away. And he is then shot from behind by two gunmen and ends up in hospital. And it's a reminder of the risk. And off the back of this, there's now been a data leak

where the names and the stations of, I think, almost every police officer in the police service in Northern Ireland and the roles, crucially. So for example, you've got people who's, you know, role liaison with the security service, for example, you know, there's some pretty serious stuff there. And the PSNI chief constable Simon Bern, who's a very fine man, he has been open about the fact he says they're now confident that dissident Republicans do have opposition of this stuff. So I mean, it's really, really alarming and really quite scary for all the people this.

And a reminder for all of us, I mean, it's incredibly, unfortunately easy for this to happen. And we are so dependent, obviously, on data and IT. And it's complicated. I mean, I'm running a big charity at the moment where we're dealing with data in 14 different countries. And every time you upgrade or move to a new system, there are going to be other forms of cyber challenges and backdoors. And staying on top of this stuff is vital, particularly, though, for governments and particularly for something as sensitive as the police service in Northern Ireland. So I can't really understand how this happened. But I think it's a reminder for anyone listening that this stuff can happen so easily and does.

And also, I don't think most people, when we're, you know, and I'm as bad, I'm as guilty as anybody, but when we're sort of, you know, just working on our computer and you're sitting there and it says accept this, decline that, agree to this, not agree to that. I don't think we really think through what we're doing with that stuff. But this is clearly some sort of cyber attack. But the document had the names of around 10,000 officers and staff. They had their surname, first initial rank or grade, where they were based and the unit they work in and the responsibilities that they had. So that's a lot of information. And as you said earlier, John Caldwell, you know, they obviously had the intelligence, they knew that that's what he did in his spare time. He coached kids football. Now, that's the sort of thing that you can probably find out anyway. But if you are wanting to target police officers, then having the information that they now have is pretty alarming.

And terrifying, obviously, if you are a police officer online, I mean, if you every time you go coaching football and are leaning into the back of your car to put the footballs away, you think two people are going to come up and shoot you from behind, your life becomes impossible. So here's a question for you. Jonah Woodward, what are your thoughts on the recent UFO congressional hearing in the US?

I didn't know there was one. Did you know there was one?

I did, actually, I've been following it. I mean, it's the sort of thing that gets people very excited on social media.

This is probably going to make every conspiracy theorist in the world think that I just don't like conspiracy theories and I go over the top. But every time I see anything to do with UFOs and congressional inquiries, am I wrong just to sort of turn off?

You're absolutely right. There's been some wonderful graphs of almost all the UFOs spotted in the world have been spotted from the United States or Britain, because clearly aliens are English speaking people. But then there's a town called, which I think maybe I've talked about before, there's a town called Bonnie Bridge, which is in the central belt in Scotland. Anyway, it's right next to Falkirk. So it's called the Falkirk Triangle. My friends Luke and Will went down there because they were really excited because they had 300 UFO spottings in a year and they were really, really excited to go down there and see a UFO. And then a bit disappointed to discover that I think out of the 300 sightings, 298 have been made by the same man.

So you have close friends who believe all this stuff.

No, I don't I don't know whether Will and Luke really believed it. I think it may be their idea of a sense of humour going down.

I have to say Falkirk played a very, very important part of my life because it was there in 1986 at the Falkirk Labour Club that I was drunk for the last time in my life. Oh, very good. Very good.

That's probably one of the many, many reasons to love the Labour Party.

But why was that the last time in your life? You behaved so badly that that was a turning point for you. That was when I about three hours later, I was arrested and then I was locked up and then I was taken to hospital and then I was advised that, you know, this drinking at this level wasn't really very good for you. So good old Falkirk, I said. Well done, Falkirk. So let's take a break.

I had one for you. You've been for firing questions that we did liberally provocative.

Matt, Rory spoke very highly of Alex Chalk when he took over as justice secretary. What did he make there for of Alex Chalk's defence of Lee Anderson's comments on migrants? Well, obviously, makes me a little bit uncomfortable.

I think Alex Chalk, Cheltenham MP, he's very bright. He was a stalwart on Brexit. He really worked hard to try to get a decent compromise Brexit deal together with me. He pushed for customs union. I'm very proud he's justice secretary. I'm obviously disappointed by that. I think it's worth though bearing in mind as somebody who's been through the mill on this. And as you have too, that one of the problems is that you end up defending your party right or wrong and it's very difficult for outsiders to quite appreciate the pressure that you're always under in a government to defend your colleagues. And I think, you know, I would try to find a way of sort of defending a little bit half heartedly and not getting out there. But it's a tribal game, isn't it? It's a very tribal game. Let's say it had been you. You're the minister being sent out by Downing Street spin doctors to defend everything the government says and does. Surely you are civilized, reasonable, rational, well educated man. Cannot possibly defend the comments of Lee Anderson. They're all over the papers this morning, which he told these poor, bedraggled people getting on the bibby stock home to fuck off back to France if they don't like it.

Well, Alice, I mean, thank you for the compliments towards what a civilized man I am. Obviously, I wouldn't use that kind of language. But there is a serious issue

here, which is the issue around whether or not France is a safe country. Okay, you wouldn't use that language. So he was wrong to say that. Definitely not the language that I would use. No, you're talking about yourself. I'm asking you about Mr. Anderson. Would you please, for the benefit of our listeners, condemn what Mr. Anderson said? So I think you've done it beautifully. You've explained exactly what the issue is, right? And exactly what the problem facing Alex Chalk is, which is you're buggered if you do and you buggered if you don't. If you go out there and say, he's a racist pig, you've just laid into the vice chairman of your own party and you turn out. And so it's nice. It's tough. And I think when Labour's in government, they'll find themselves stuck in the same situation. Well, hopefully Keir Starmer won't appoint a Lee Anderson person. You know, really upset me if you'll say Lee Anderson is like Dennis Skinner. Dennis Skinner was a giant compared to Lee Anderson. Well, Lee Anderson is very weird, isn't he? Because he was a big Labour counsellor. Yes, he was. He ran the constituency office of Gloria del Piero. He's quite a moderate Labour MP. It's kind of really weird that he's now flipped to being not just a Conservative, but a kind of far-right Conservatives. Converse, Rory. They're often the worst. Now, listen, we also, it's not just ministers who have to kind of watch what they say, particularly now in the world of artificial intelligence. Steve the chemist, I think quotes, amazing close quotes, is the most banal, overused... What an amazing question. It's an amazing question. It's the most banal and overused word in the English language. So to stop me reporting on the rest is politics 2023, weekly usage of it. AC 51, Rory Stewart 127. What single word do you, wordsmiths, both to test currently and why? Okay, my big complaint, which I get to a lot when we're doing international development stuff, so working particularly in countries in Africa, is the way that jargon replaces any description of what's actually going on in a country. So I went through the South Sudan Development Report and there's no mention of anything real, no mention of any of the names of the warring groups or issues over oxen or guns or anything like that. Instead, the word governance appears 150 times. Sustainability applies. But you can't lie to the word governance. Sustainability 175 times. And so I actually have developed a real sort of allergy to words like governance, not because I, obviously, I like governance, but I think they are amazing how we use those words to say nothing and create plans for countries which don't allow you to really grip the local particular real issues on the ground, but just cloak it in words like governance, sustainability, which nobody can disagree with without specifying what they mean. I mean, sustainability can mean about five different things. Mine is in a similar place. It's stakeholder. Stakeholder. Can't stand that word. Yeah, stakeholder engagement. And then there are certain phrases, getting round the table. Yeah, so Pretty Patel, when she was my boss, was always using the phrase rolling the pitch. I can have a quite work out what she meant, but she would come into every meeting and she'd say, we're going to have to roll the pitch here. Oh, well, I know what she meant by that.

What do you mean by that?

She means get the ground ready to do what she wants to do.

Very good.

So for example, it's a cricketing thing where you roll the pitch.

Thank you.

Well, listen, talking of sport, Ruth Lampard, no relation to Frank.

Do you know who Frank Lampard is, Rory?

Yeah, he's a footballer already.

He was. He was. He's now a SAC manager.

Great question this though.

Should there be a referee with VAR in place, with power to pause, to fact check statements made by ministers and MPs in parliament

and on any news media outlet?

Clarity, transparency, better politics, better decisions.

The penalty, microphone to the other side for three minutes.

That's a great idea.

Very good.

Isn't it?

It's fun.

I like the microphone to the other side for three minutes.

So final question for me, sign of the times, privatization, good or bad?

What are the best examples?

What are the worst?

So here's, obviously, we're in a world which is very, very skeptical of privatization.

And we've talked a lot about problems with water privatization.

And I went through with David Gork, my colleague in the Ministry of Justice.

We had to renationalize the privatized probation industry.

It was a catastrophic attempt to privatize probation.

But there are times when I could see the points of privatization.

And perhaps the most striking example for me every day in the House of Commons was the House of Commons coffee shop.

So in the import color's house, and I'm really sorry for the people working in the coffee shop who are going to be listening to this and going to hate me,

but you would queue for about 12 minutes to get a really bad cup of coffee.

And it was costing when I looked at the accounts, the House of Commons, an unbelievable amount to run it.

The salaries were quite high.

And I could totally believe that if Costa or Cafe Nero or Starbucks came in,

they would produce a cup of coffee much more quickly, it would be a much better cup of coffee.

And they'd probably pay the House of Commons for the privilege rather than ask losing money on it.

I'm not sure that was the kind of privatization that the questioner had in mind.

Why is that not a good example of why privatization can work?

Oh, I see where it could work.

Yeah.

Let's go through the ones, the big ones thus far.

Which ones do you think have worked the least well?

I'm going water.

So I think the definition of bad privatization is where there's a natural monopoly, so you can't really get competition and the obvious ones on that are rail, where you just have the rail tracks laid down and water where the costs of creating new water pipes doesn't work.

I think it can work.

I think it did work with BT.

I think the days when you waited famously in nine days to get your telephone installed and was crazy.

I think the British automobile industry being run by the government was mad and led to crazy subsidies and crazy forms of politicians getting jobs, running all these things.

I mean, one of the weird things is that British Leyland and British coal and British gas all became sine cures for retired politicians who were pushed in there by liberal conservatives putting their cronies in.

So I think there were things that made sense to privatize, but I think it's all about competition firstly and strong regulation.

I mean, there's never strong enough regulation to actually make sure these people are doing what they've undertaken to do.

Right.

And my final question, I can't decide between the one about a modern political musical from Kate Leslie

or the one from James Pickering about what do we think about King Charles getting a 45% pay rise during a cost of living crisis.

So what do you think of the King getting a 45% pay rise?

And how did I connect that? That was absolutely astonishing.

Well, OK, so what that really is, is that in 2012, I think it was, the government decided that instead of the Royal Family being paid

with votes in Parliament from taxation money, instead, what they were going to do is say that the Royal Family could take money from its traditional Crown Estates

and get back to the days when, you know, it wasn't a constitutional monarchy, but monarchs ruled the whole country.

There's obviously huge land holdings that the monarchs had.

And so the agreement was that the government would, I think, split the income from the Crown Estates with the monarchy.

The idea of that was to de-plot sites.

It means that you didn't have to have an argument in Parliament about exactly how much they were getting every year.

But what's happened is that the value of the Crown Estates has gone up.

That means the government is getting more revenue from them, but it also means the Royal Family is getting more revenue from them.

And it's been a particularly good year for the Crown Estates because there's been a lot of construction, I think, on some of the offshore sites that they own.

I thought you were going to say that, this is what I'm going to say, is that, you know, he's had a massive promotion.

He's gone from being, you know, a mere Prince of Wales to being the King.

So he's bound to get a pay rise.

Also, Rory, I have to tell you, did you know, I mean, you know the guy a lot better than I do, but did you know that he actually identifies as a Burnley fan?

He does not. He's a Burnley fan.

He does. And I can send you, and we should put in the newsletter, I can send you the picture of him holding a Burnley shirt.

And it's because the Prince's Trust has done an awful lot of stuff up in what's known as the Weaver's Triangle in Burnley.

So he does identify as a Burnley fan.

Well, so here's the actual way that this all works.

So there's something called the sovereign grant, and it is 15% of the income account net surplus of the Crown Estate for the financial year that began two years previously.

That was a quick word by the Buckingham Palace Press Office. How did they get that just straight away?

Pretty, pretty quick. And it goes up and down.

So, you know, some years it drops, some years it goes up.

And at the moment, it's higher because they got a concession to take 25% for a limited period for renovation and repairs to Buckingham Palace.

But it is still much, much, much cheaper than presidents around the world.

So almost every time people try to measure this, work out how much a head of state costs, generally the British monarchy is considered a bit of a bargain.

Although, of course, it does, I understand, sometimes frustrates some of our listeners.

I am obviously largely a conservative because I am a huge admirer of the King and a great believer in the British monarchy.

But part of that is an emotional, romantic nostalgia.

Yeah, we know that. Well, I do like the fact that he identifies as a Burnley fan.

And also, I'm sure you have some friends, and I have some friends who send you messages literally about every single episode.

Do you have friends like that?

Yeah.

One of the ones that does that to me is Maliki Mackay, who is the manager of Ross County.

And amid his message this week was a picture of himself with the King at the Port of Nigg.

Very good.

You know where the Port of Nigg is? It's one of Scotland's most important energy industry facilities.

And there was the King up there meeting the people, including the manager of Ross County.

Just to finish on this, one of the things that is amazing is how incredible I found it in Cumbria that when David Cameron would come to visit,

almost nobody would come out in the streets to meet him.

And I'm afraid probably the same would be true of Keir Starmer.

But when the King, or then the Prince of Wales turned up in Wigton, which was a town of about 5,000 people,

there must have been 7,000 people in the streets in driving Cumbria in rain for an hour and a half, standing there waiting.

And he really took the time to go around talking to a very, very large number of those people.

And he's doing sort of, I mean, I don't know whether he's still there.

But those days in Cumbria, he would do, I think, 11 meetings in a day, wouldn't stop for lunch.

He probably would meet, I don't know, thousands of people, have a conversation with them.

And I don't know how he found the energy to do that.

And I think he genuinely enjoys it.

He really likes meeting people.

But it was a reminder of the fact that politicians don't have that level of enthusiasm or support in the way that I felt that he did at least in Cumbria.

You know, maybe one of the functions of the royal family is to have that.

Because I mentioned the Arnold Schwarzenegger documentary series that I watched.

Fair enough, when he was out and about, he did get that sort of turnout in different places that he went to.

And I guess Trump does.

We mentioned Zimbabwe in the main podcast.

Honestly, looking at the size of some of the rallies, absolutely unbelievable.

You know, 200,000 people turning out.

I think it depends.

I think it's part of the British sort of, oh, God, here they come, sort of mood that attaches itself to politicians.

Roy, next time we go to Scotland together, though, we're going to, you know, we've got several thousand coming to see us.

Yep, absolutely.

And the Albert Hall.

Albert Hall, end of this year, looking forward to that very much.

Exactly.

Unlike, unlike Yoav Nohari, who we're just going to plug as we come to the end, because we've got a second interview with him.

He has managed to do what we have not done, which has sell out the O2.

We haven't tried.

Oh, there we are.

And also we did sell out.

We sold it out for Anthony Joshua.

We talked to Anthony Joshua on the rest of his policies leading.

And lo and behold, even though he wasn't even fighting the guy who was meant to be fighting, O2 packed out.

And anyone interested in finding out why a young Israeli historian, scientist and philosopher can pack out the entire O2 arena?

Listen to our leading podcast out this week.

Second podcast interview on the life of the universe and everything with Yoav Nohari.

All right, Roy, that's it for this week.

Speak to you very, very soon.

Speak soon.

Bye-bye.

Thank you.