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And me, Alistair Campbell.

The first question, I think, to get us off on is Rupert Murdoch, who claims to have stepped aside. Now, of course, Murdoch's something we think about a lot. You interviewed Brian Cox, the great star of Succession, which I think is a pretty fascinating insight. I mean, even if it's slightly off-beam, did you feel Succession was a relatively realistic portrayal of the way that Murdoch, his family, that empire operated?

Well, Brian Cox, the actor, doesn't want anybody to think that it's based on Murdoch. Right.

Because they want to think they're creating something completely new. But if you know and you've seen the Murdochs operating, there's a lot in there. There's a lot in there. And actually, what's really interesting now, just to throw in one question here from Dave H, what would it take to dislodge the disproportionate influence of the Murdoch press on political reporting? We can come on to that. I had lots of sort of interactions with Murdoch and the Murdoch family.

And famously, sorry, to be cheeky, famously, one of the big moments was the decision of Tony Blair and you, I think, to fly out to meet Rupert Murdoch before the 97 election. And that was important because the right-wing media, particularly the Murdoch-controlled media, had been very important in the defeat of Neil Kinneck, the time around. So, getting the Murdoch media at least friendly and onside was considered to be quite a coup before the 97 election.

Yeah. I mean, I've always thought that Murdoch backed us in 1997 because he knew that we were going to win. I don't think we won because Murdoch backed us. And I think you can overdo. I wouldn't understate the influence of media in this, but I think you can overdo it. I think we were going to win. They worked that out. And it was a political risk because lots of people in the Labour Party were very, very angry.

And tell us a bit about where is it that you went to meet them?

The Heyman Island.

Wow.

Yeah.

All the way.

So, that was like on a boat or on an island?

We flew to Sydney. Paul Keating, one of my favourite politicians, put us up at Kirie Billy House, which is the Prime Minister's residence in Sydney. He was, he had some great insights into Murdoch. You remember what he said, what he said. So, you've got to remember about Rupert. His priorities are as follows. Number one, Rupert. Number two, Rupert's business interests. Number three, Rupert's political power. Number four, the family. Number five, everything else. So, let's go to his view.

And 25 years ago, did Murdoch already seem like quite an old man when you met him?

No. He didn't seem old. He seemed pretty grizzled. It was very interesting to watch him at that event. So, this was a thing where all the News Corp editors were gathered together

in the same place.

And you would be giving a chance to talk to all the editors.

Tony did a sort of speech.

Yeah.

But always. So, I think I've told you this story before. So, we're having this, which we flew to Sydney. Keating put on an Australian Air Force jet. We flew up with him. He came with us. We arrived at this.

Can I just sort of stop on that? I mean, the listeners aren't getting many questions here, are they?

But it's a fascinating story. And this is really big news Murdoch stepping aside. I mean, this man has dominated not just the European and Australian, but the American media landscape through Fox News. I mean, he's, you know, a lot of the reason Trump came in. But I'm also sort of wondering, I mean, in Britain, it would look a bit odd for a prime minister using a national Air Force jet to fly out to a meeting with a newspaper editor. I mean, that really gives you a sense of power of this man.

No, I think from Keating's perspective, he was the prime minister of Australia, building relations with Tony Blair, who was widely expected the prime minister of the UK. And he was though, he gave us a lift and he stayed for the whole trip that we were there. We spent lots of time with him.

So, it does illustrate the power of Murdoch that he's able, he was able to get.

And also the fact that we decided, despite the political risk and despite lots of people, I mean, there's a piece, there's one of the most traumatic passages in my, in my diaries. I mean, you know, I love Neil Kinney at the bits, but he did threaten me with a, with a, a boily kettle. He came to sort of say, Neil, what's wrong? What's wrong? He just fucking Murdoch, going to see Murdoch. You know, it was a very, very unpopular thing for a lot of people.

I had a tiny example of something on a much more mini scale, which was before I became politician. So we're back in kind of 2008. And when I was teaching at Harvard and doing stuff about Afghanistan, I was invited to a dinner and I sat next to Rupert Murdoch.

I mean, when he wants to be, he can be unbelievably charming. The first thing that struck me is very unusually for a very powerful, wealthy man. He listened. I mean, generally powerful, wealthy men are just on trans men all the time.

And he speaks very quietly.

He speaks very quietly, listened very thoughtfully. He gave me some very good advice. I was trying to hire somebody for a charity. He said, Rory, my advice to you is all that matters is that they should be loyal and hardworking. Nothing else matters at all, which actually really clarified things for me. But most striking for the end of the evening, he said, you've been very interesting on Afghanistan and I'd like to come pick you up tomorrow morning in my car. Take you down to the Wall Street Journal. I'd like you to speak to all my editors. So sure enough, next morning, car turns up with Murdoch in it. I get in the car. We drive down to the Wall Street Journal. All the editors have assembled. He sticks me in the seat and it was, I thought interesting because I don't know what the political game was. I wasn't a member of parliament. I was just somebody critical of the Afghan war. I think there was a sense that along with all the other things, he has an instinct for news and he

sensed that my criticism of the Afghan war was something his editors needed to hear and he was going to take time out of his diary to move me in the car and bring me. I don't know. I mean, that's the only encounter I've ever had with him. Then when I became politician, I really kept distance from him. I didn't want to go to his parties. I didn't want to get too close. I had a huge rile with James Murdoch, his son, about Afghanistan because it then turned out that his son was very, very pro-Afghan war and the father was obviously more skeptical. So I ended up with Rebecca Brooks and James Murdoch and this big argument and that was really the last time I really encountered them.

So he's announced that Lachlan, one of his two sons, he's got two sons, two daughters who are going to fight over the spoils, as it were. That's the succession bit, which I think is still to play out because there's one, Elizabeth is very well known. She was married to Matthew Freud for a while. She's now married to a very famous artist and they've all done lots of different things, but Lachlan looks like he, Rupert, is trying to put him in the main pole position. But I can remember once when they came to number 10 and it's true. I mean, I'm, you know, when Rupert Murdoch came into town, he would pop in and see Tony. He would usually come through the back door. I think partly his request, partly ours. And I remember once we were having a drink up in Tony's flat above number 11 and we started talking about them at least. And James, who was, as you say, quite strong views on foreign policy, I would say coming at things from a very anti-Israel position. Murdoch very much pro-Israel. Tony sort of sitting there watching this and watching, and eventually James slightly starting to lose his temper about the situation, fucking Israelis and the, you know, and I remember Rupert Murdoch at one point saying, James, you don't talk like that in the Prime Minister's house. Bit of a slapdown. I remember saying to Tony afterwards, that was really interesting, but it was quite, I thought it was interesting that he'd let them go a bit. Anybody who knows Murdoch, it was interesting what people like Andrew Neal and others were saying was that, you know, the idea that he's going to step back, forget it. But he is 92. I'll tell you the other thing that I remember.

92. I mean, that's a serious age.

Yeah. That's 12 years older than Joe Biden. So I think that the other thing I remember from that Heyman Island though, was that, you know, we did see it as quite an opportunity because it wasn't just that you talk about when you got the editors together. If you think that, for example, I don't think any of his newspapers around the world, none of them, I don't think any of them quotes were against the Iraq war. Now that means that basically there is a corporate line here. So that's why perhaps we felt important to sort of keep them on board. Tony got very irritated with him towards the end because he thought that that editorial support gave him kind of the ability to sort of phone when he wanted to say what he wanted. And it doesn't, the truth is it doesn't. But I remember in that Heyman Island thing, it was a very, very interesting insight when we hadn't even finished the speech by the time we got there, we're still working on it. And I sat down at this, there was this barbecue down by the pool at this fancy hotel in the Heyman Island, they're taking over the whole resort. And Murdoch came and sat down next to me and Tony was chatting away to some of the other people who were there. And I said to Murdoch, we've put more work into this speech than any other speech for the part of the party conference. I mean, pretty much moderate bullshit, I would call it. We had put a lot of work into it,

but it was like, it was just small talk. Next thing I know, editor of the Times and the editor of the Sun come and join us. And Rupert says, or mumbles, he says a very important speech Tony Blair's making tomorrow. Oh, yeah, they sort of sit up. And then they disappear. And then they come back 20 minutes later and tell us that it's going to be front page lead, they're going to run extract. So that little sentence. That was it. So it's an extraordinary example of the power, isn't it? Yeah, well, we should, we should get into this because this is a huge issue in our democracies, the power of these companies. I think it is waning. I do think it's waning. I think that. But you're sometimes a bit paradoxical about it, aren't she's good. Sometimes you're like, it's waning in social media is on the rise. And actually, it wasn't that important, the labor victory. But other times when you're irritated, you're like the fucking right wing media are dominating everything.

No, I think that I think when I get irritated is that they can still dominate the agenda. We had a lot. Do you know this? The issue we got most questions about this week by a mile was why was there no coverage on the television of the the rejoin European Union?

Let's let's take let's say question that Lena Pooley, why was there almost no coverage of the rejoin EU march on Saturday? I saw nothing on the BBC or channel for you to use very little in the Sunday papers. However, I've watched very good coverage by a French TV session, which asked why are there no British cameras here? So tell us about much. Fjenni went on the march. She did. I was at the football. And look, I think even when we were doing the People's Vote campaign and we're getting marches of a million people, it was a struggle sometimes to get them there. But I think with this one, I think that that is where I would say the right wing media influences. If the papers aren't covering it, the broadcasters decide it's not important. Right. And why is the Guardian the independent not covering it? They might have covered it a bit. I don't know. Look, let's be honest, the issue is not what it was, because if you've got neither Labour nor the Lib Dems nor, you know, I think the other thing to be honest, that the people who were speaking at it were the same sort of people who were speaking before. I think there was a very interesting piece that somebody sent me actually from the spectator, where they said that, you know, if there had been people there who said, I voted Brexit and I wish I hadn't, if there had been people there who said, this is what I'd used to think and now this is what I think. But it was sort of the same voices. But it was a fascinating thing. I was on the way up to the football and Fiona was texting me updates. So she's there at this sort of, you know, pro-European rejoin the European, Gifa Hofstra is a very good speaker, etc. Next thing she says, oh my God, there's a ban the ban on the bully dogs, march lively at the same time. It was something about a protest going on in relation to Pakistan. And she said the ban the ban people, the bully dogs people, there weren't that many of them, pro-bully dogs people, pro-bully dogs. But she said they were walking down the street surrounded by media. Yeah. Because the media decided this is a more exciting story. Yeah. More interesting. Now, having a mayor, Lisa, after listening to a tale of two Andes, I wonder, were we wrong in Bristol to vote against having a mayor? Absolutely. I'm very, very sad. And I actually was really impressed by the mayor of Bristol. And I'm actually keen to have him on the show. And I think we should have more local government, not less. I mean, I think the anti-campaigners are so good about saying, oh, we don't, their line is always, we don't need more politicians. More politicians. Yeah. But what we actually need is better quality local government with

more resources closer to people and it will be a huge improvement in our democracy. We got a lot of feedback on the two Andes, Andy Burnham, Mayor of Manchester, Andes Street, Mayor of Miss Woodlands. And it was very, very positive. And I think a lot of what they liked about it was the fact that both of them were actually saying they weren't party voices, were they? Andy's Labour, Andy Burnham Labour, Andy Street, but they weren't saying we're here to sort of parrot the party line. They were absolutely about their place. And I thought, I saw Marvin, the Bristol mayor, I thought he was terrific. And it was tragic for me. And that's just part of this sort of, you know, it's what you say in your book, we haven't bought enough into the idea of devolution. And so, no, I completely agree with Lisa. I think we've got to have more more mayors, not fewer. Very good. Here's a bit of a tough one for you. Yes. Okay, well, it's tough one for both of us, actually. Marion Fallon, you never discuss what is happening to disabled sick people. There are millions of others. I've asked this question many times I've given up now. And when you know how Rory Stewart voted on policies that are harmless, there's the reason. So about your voting record, we don't need to go into that. But I think they have got a point. We don't really talk about this very much. And there are millions of disabled people. I'm going to give a shout out to a school I went to last week, down in Exmouth in Devon, the Deaf Academy. Apparently, the 22 schools for the deaf in the UK. What was interesting, really interesting about this one, the, the, well, they're not all children. They're from sort of children up to 25, then young adults. And they're deaf, but also have often special educational needs, physical, mental health. It was a very, very, very inspiring place. I met with the student council. Some profoundly deaf, some with literally no hearing at all. Others who've had implants that they can hear a bit and some with hearing dogs. And it was a wonderful place. Anyway, their current campaigns, they won the campaign to get a 20 man on our speed limit outside. They won the campaign for a zebra crossing. The next two campaigns and the first, I think we should back them on this. The first campaign is they want to have BSL sign language on all government press conferences. Now, they have it in Scotland and Wales, but when number 10 do a press conference, they don't have it. And the next, next request, and the next request, which is relates to the question in a way, they want to have the symbol for disability changed. Okay. At the moment, the symbol for disability is a wheelchair. And so what they say that does is it excludes people with invisible disability. So I think that's something that if we do do a manifesto rory, there's two things that we should be right and let's do that manifesto. And a quick sort of shout out to the Scottish government. So my sister Fiona has Down syndrome. And the Scottish government, who I'm often kicking is that she done really well by her. I mean, I think there's been fantastic support for her in getting her into work. I mean, she had a work coach, they initially helped fund the company that employs her. And Fiona gets, I think real fulfillment out of the time that she spends work, she goes to work every day. And I think the company that employs her is very good at supporting her, but I also think I hope they feel they get a lot out of her. So tribute to the Scottish government. And also my Fiona, who has been to the Apple shop quite a few times recently, and on two occasions, as she's gone in and asked for to see somebody, they've said, do you mind having somebody helping you who's deaf? And she said, no, not at all. And they did it all through an iPad. And these kids down in Xmas, they were when they were talking about what they want to do when

they leave, it was just fantastic. One wanted to be a football coach, one wanted to work with dogs, one wanted to work for the museum. Now, Adam van de Boucher, what five rules should Stammer put in place to improve governmental transparency, integrity, and in the end regain trust in our corrupt forces? I'm going to start. So rule number one, ministers should serve a minimum

of two years, unless there's some completely unprecedented scandal. Number two, they should have a three week training course before they take over with a proper handover. Number three, I think, of course, we should change to something more like the New Zealand proportional representation system. I would like to see half the cabinet being appointed people with real professional skills and knowledge of their areas. And then the final thing is I'd like to see much more radical devolution down to a local level. Those are my five. I agree with most of those. The cabinet thing would be a massive change. And maybe we need that. First of all, I would like here to say in the manifesto, our politics is close to being broken. To repair it, we have to have a fundamental rethink of how we do politics at every level. I would love it if he said during the campaign, I want to put my shadow cabinet on notice that if we become the cabinet, I can tell them now that if any of them ever stand at the dispatch box in the House of Commons and say something

that is a lie, they will be sacked. And if there's something that is untrue or factually incorrect and they don't correct it immediately, they will also be sacked. I think that would really, really signal to people that he's serious about this. And I think the other thing is, I mean, I do recommend, maybe we should put it, you mentioned Angela Reiner in the main podcast, maybe we should put this in the newsletter. I do think that some of the ideas that Angela Reiner is talking about in relation to rebuilding ethics. And the seven Nolan principles, honesty, openness, objectivity, selflessness, integrity, accountability and leadership, I think Labour should persuade Parliament to endorse those for all MPs.

Very good. Okay, Roy, lots of questions to come. Let's just take a quick break.

Helen Laws, what would your advice be on strategy to have the best chance of getting a PR system of voting in to avoid the toxic polarisation that's really, really exciting? So if you were in charge of advising a campaign for changing our electoral system, partial representation, how would you actually think about achieving it? And what is it realistically? Five years, 10 years, 15 years? How would you set about doing it?

Well, we talked a little bit about this on the main podcast in relation to New Zealand.

I do think that there's always a danger in a campaign where you feel it so strongly yourself that you can't quite understand why others don't. You have to get new voices. And so I do think the Liberal Democrats and the Greens, who are the most committed to that sort of change, that they should come together and actually start really pressing the Labour Party.

Because in the end, you can't change it without a government, because it wants to change it. So they should be putting far more pressure on them. And I think doing it by saying, look, we'll help you get rid of the Tories if. Very good. Okay, question from you.

Well, I want to ask this. James Russell,

re-Chris Cabba. Why won't former Attorney General,

Savannah Braverman, be held to account for her intervention? So this is where

a police officer has been charged with murder, presumably after a pretty thorough process by the Crown Prosecution Service. You and I, and nobody else knows more than what we've read,

what we've seen. And this is where a lot of firearm officers have handed back their weapons and protests and solidarity with this police officer. Yeah. And Savannah Braverman put out a statement on social media, essentially saying we can't have a situation where policemen go to work without thinking they're going to end up in court kind of thing. When I was a journalist, you just thought, oh, is that not condemned to court?

It's interesting, isn't it? So we just talked to Theresa May about this in two episodes of *Leading*, which she'll be out on Monday. But one of the things that she was saying is that as Home Secretary, she was under huge pressure as a conservative to always support the police. Actually, she didn't. She's often been very, very critical of the police as Home Secretary. Savannah Braverman obviously made the different choice, which I guess is the kind of Republican, American choice, which is to get... Please right or wrong. Exactly.

I'm always on the side of the police, right or wrong.

But I think there is a... It was interesting, the Solicitor General put out a media advisory note reminding the media and users of social media, he said, of the law concerning contempt of court. And I have no idea whether that was in direct response to Savannah Braverman, but I thought that was quite a big deal.

It's quite a big deal. Yeah.

Another one for you, Rory. What did Rory discuss with Hamza Yousuf? John in Oban wants to know.

Oh, so Hamza Yousuf and I met at the UN General Assembly and, in fact,

I met him just after I met the President of Malawi. And we were discussing Scotland's International Development Program. Scotland has a small international development program, but it's very, very interesting under Nicola Sturgeon and now continued under Hamza Yousuf.

They've been taking some very interesting leads, particularly on the issue of climate reparations and the issue of really making sure that the people who are suffering most from climate change, the extreme poor of the world, get the support that all the climate change money doesn't just go to technological change converting people to renewable energy, but also thinks about the people in Somalia who are experiencing seventh year of drought and are on the receiving end of this. And so,

yeah, I'm very interested in the way in which a smaller country like Scotland can define the agenda in that way. Rachel, this is your friend Gillian Keegan. My daughter's secondary school has been closed for four weeks. There seems to be no plan for a return to appropriate face-to-face learning and Department of Education embargoes on sharing information, meaning media attention has

moved on. Does the government just react to what's in the public eye? Well, and we've gone round and round on this. I mean, this is the question of the fact that these buildings are unsafe. And so Gillian Keegan made the call just before term started to close schools, to the absolute fury, obviously, understandably, of parents, teachers, pupils who suddenly found, just at the beginning of term, that their school buildings were closed. I think it was the right thing to do, but I can also see why people are very angry about it.

She did also say in Parliament that the kids love being in porter cabins.

I was taught in porter cabins. Were you at Eden?

Yeah, in the school that you keep going on about.

You were in a porter cabinet? Yeah. Do you have dreams about that?

Or my English classes from the porter cabinet? No, it's fine, actually.

Rather, you should have the last question.

Go on then. Okay, no, my last question. I'm afraid it's less high-brow than some of the questions you've raised. Oh, is it trivial, like you said this podcast was, or another of your flutter-eye-brow? Are you ever going to understand this?

You shouldn't listen to those things. You really want to see them.

I only listened to it because Elizabeth Day, the interviewee, sent me the clip saying, this is hilarious. So she's just trying to wind you up. She knows where your buttons are.

So what Alice is referring to, and I've really offended him, and I actually,

I also really blame Elizabeth Day for sharing all these clips, because there's obviously no way Alice is going to slog through listening to me on somebody else's podcast.

I won't even go on to shag Mario Void. Yeah, but I've been publicizing my book,

Politics on the Edge, by doing a lot of podcasts, and in them, basically all I get asked about is the podcast. But you will be pleased that when I was on with Lorraine Kelly yesterday on ITV,

I love Lorraine. We did an enormous amount about the podcast. She's a huge fan, and that's probably much bigger listeners than any of these things you're mocking me about.

Now, here we are. Richard Dean, Alastair, I'm not going to answer this to you.

Have you a go-to song that re-energizes you if you're feeling low in energy or uncertain?

Any quite pacey Motown. Okay. Go on, give us an example.

Anything from the four tops. Ain't no mountain high enough, or always does it for me.

Okay. Ain't no mountain high enough. Is that something you do in the gym?

Any of the Vast Abba stuff, a lot of Elvis. Is this stuff you run to, box to, or just cheers you up in the morning? All of the above. All of the above.

And do you play the music very loud, your neighbors hate being next to you?

No, my neighbors love being next to me, because I play the bagpipes very loudly.

I also, I'll tell you the best running music of all time is the BG's Live at Massachusetts.

Go on, give us a line of that. No, okay. No, I'm not.

No, Alastair. I'm disappointed.

No, but it's very hard to do the BG's. What about you? Go-to music?

You're just not into music, are you? No, no, I'm not.

It's ridiculous. I'm not into music.

And it's very, I think it's probably because I'm tone deaf, doesn't help much.

Right. Okay, is that true? Yeah, I can't hold the tune.

Well, I'm not a great singer. No, no, no. It's the same with the pipes.

I can play from music, but I can't play from ear.

Oh, right, okay. Which is a big problem with bagpipes.

It's a major, major problem. Yeah, yeah.

No, I literally, I run to a recording of Handel's Messiah.

That's a lie. No, it's true.

Do you?

Yeah, I do. Recorded by the 16 in Dublin, and I can show the recording on my face.

I don't mind that. I think that's okay. I think, no, I think that's great.

I don't mind that at all. I wouldn't do that. But then again, I was educated in the Porticabin.

All right, good. Well, thank you very much.

Thank you. See you soon. Bye-bye.