

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 186. Question Time: Nigel Farage's plan to become Tory leader

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

And me, Alistair Campbell.

I wanted to start with a question from Senkai, who I think is a young student friend of mine. 24th of October this year marks the fifth anniversary of the retirement of Jeremy Hayward as the Cabinet Secretary. I was wondering if Rory and Alistair could reflect on the role of the Cabinet Secretary at shaping government policy and share any recollections they have with Lord Hayward's impact on public service. So let me start with that. Tell us a bit about Jeremy Hayward.

Well, Jeremy was somebody I first was aware of when he was Norman Lamont's private secretary. Norman Lamont, Chancellor of the East Checker under John Major, Black Wednesday and all that. And Jeremy was this rather skeletal figure that I used to see the whole time.

Skeletal because he was quite skinny.

Very skinny. And I used to see him.

Skinnier than me.

He's definitely skinnier than you.

Oh, well, right.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

He was always there. He looked incredibly young. He looked very calm. And then when we won the election in 1997, I think he would have been at the Treasury then, but he was always somebody absolutely seen as a civil service high flyer and did various roles.

And let's just sort of dig into that. What makes from the perception of you or the new Labour Government coming, what is the civil service high flyer? What are the characteristics if you were to tick off two or three characteristics of the civil service high flyer?

I'd say with Jeremy, phenomenal work rate and intellect.

So they're very clever. They work very hard.

Yeah. And also we were aware that he'd done this job for the Conservatives. And yeah, the minute that we came in, he was absolutely there for us as a government delivering on the government agenda.

Now, one of the things that I've been grumbling about with the current Cabinet Secretary, Simon Case, who's this very unusual person who got the job very young historically, having not really had the traditional career that they're out there.

Dominic Cummings' appointment.

Right.

I didn't know that. Interesting. So one of my grumbles about him is that he hasn't been conducting himself, as you can see from the WhatsApps during the COVID inquiry, with the kind of formality and dignity that I would have associated with the great Cabinet Secretary's deposit. Just to remind people, Cabinet Secretary, the most senior civil servant of the British government runs the whole civil service. And because it's not the United States, we have very few political appointees. 99.9% of government is run by the Cabinet Secretary.

But the great people, you know, my father worshipped a man called Sir Burke Trend, Sir

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Robert Armstrong, who was Mrs. Thatcher.

He was the economical with the truth man.

That's right.

He was defined by that, sadly, for him.

I guess those people were quite sort of intimidating, quite formal figures. You can't really imagine them sending cheeky texts under the table, making jokes about the Prime Minister's wife.

No, Jeremy was not that sort of person. But he was somebody who, I mean, Jeremy would just as likely be on top of the budget and what was happening in the budget process, but was also very good at spotting some of the difficult personal stuff that was coming down the track as well. I mean, you know, particularly in the modern age, we get so much about the wives, the kids, all that sort of.

Jeremy was just, he was across everything, very straightforward to deal with, very honest, would always give a frank opinion. But ultimately, this is why, you know, when we talked to Theresa May for leading, and she said she never had a sense of the civil service trying to block, Jeremy Haywood saw his job as trying to help the government deliver on its agenda. So a great guy, and by the way, his widow, Suzanne, I'm going to shout out to her and her book, she's written this amazing book called Wavewalker about her childhood, where her parents just decided one day that they were going to, the kids were going to grow up on a boat, traveling around the world, constantly sort of, you know, going to terrible storms and capsizing and all sorts of terrible stuff.

And so it's not, it's not a romantic story, it's not a wonderfully positive story because I was fantasised about putting my kids on a boat or something like that.

If you do, I wouldn't do it like this. And I've got to be honest, I think that Susanna has come through it to become an incredibly successful person in her own right with the childhood that she had is a pretty amazing story. Now, Rory, talking of people becoming, you know, very, very successful to the point that they get invited, as I was a couple of years ago into important television programmes, Stuart Prebble, is that name that it brings about?

You might be amused to know, he tells me, that Rory is a sitter in next Wednesday's episode of Portrait Artist of the Year on Sky Arts. He is only the second sitter in ten years who has chosen to stand for the entire four hours that he was being painted. The only other one was the rugby player, Gavin Henson. Now, Rory, first of all, who is Gavin Henson?

Not Gavin Henderson, Gavin Henson.

Gavin Henson.

Right.

Do you know who he is?

No.

You obviously didn't follow the British Irish Lions tour that I was on in 2005 closely.

You obviously weren't promoting it well enough.

Well, that is not the case because I got into a lot of trouble for overpromoting Gavin Henson, which if you Google Alistair Campbell, Gavin Henson Photograph Storm, you will read all about that.

And he was a rugby player.
And are he and I similar people?
You're very, very, very different.
Apart from this thing about standing.
Apart from the standing thing.
I don't know if they're still together, but he was married to Charlotte Church.
So what was the standing thing?
What was that about?
Well, I do love standing.
I don't like sitting, but it did turn out to be a mistake because once you start standing, you can't move because you've got three painters in front of you and you have to hold the same position.
And I began to realise as we entered the fourth hour and I was rocking back and forward on my feet.
And how were the paintings?
Extraordinary.
It's incredibly unfair to portrait painters.
I know because you have to stand there and judge them.
Yeah.
And also they make them do them in four hours.
I mean, I think to do it properly, they would have wanted days.
One of them was a woman who essentially produced a sort of caricature of me.
It was a kind of slightly grotesque, a slightly combative caricature.
There was another rather nice portrait, which was of me full length, only one of them actually attempted to paint me full length.
I discovered at the end, having stood up all the way through two of them just put it on my face.
So that was a total waste of time?
Yeah.
But anyway, she paints me full length.
And then the third one that I selected was very impressive, but a bit embarrassing.
It was an enormous canvas, sort of six feet by five feet and just my head.
And it was painted by Scott, who'd read my books, was very excited to be painting me, felt that we had a great connection with mountains and walking.
But I'm struggling to work out where to hang it because you can't really stick up in your own house.
A sort of six foot picture of your own head.
No, you can't do that.
I've had quite a lot of portraits done and sent to me and one of the many reasons I was upset that my mum's death was the fact that my mum was the only one who really wanted them.
Yes.
Yeah.

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But the one that I chose as the best was actually quite a small one, which we do have at home. And then there was another one, which was kind of slightly David Hockney-esque.

But you've also got three children.

Can you not shelf them off?

No, they don't want huge portraits of their dad either.

Maybe when I'm dead.

I don't think right now they do know.

Perhaps the Restis Politics Office should just have our portraits up.

Very good idea.

I think they should.

Excellent.

The Spotify studio could be brilliant for that.

Yeah.

Now, here's a question for you.

William Dobson, we talked a lot about the Middle East on the main podcast, but did anyone else notice the irony, says William Dobson of Rishi Sunak, within the context of a governmental position to decry all forms of terrorism, meeting his Israeli counterparts at the King David Hotel?

Yeah.

For that we need to tell the story of the King David Hotel.

Just to remind people of this.

This was in 1946, and it was an attack by Jewish terrorists, approved by Haganah.

This is when Britain was the occupying power in Palestine.

They went into this hotel, which was where a lot of the British military was based, set off a bomb that killed 94 people, including women, and was a devastating moment for Britain. Because particularly people like Churchill, who'd been strong supporters of the Zionist movement in the state of Israel, were having to get up in the House of Commons and work out what to say about an attack, in this case not by Arab terrorists, but by Jewish terrorists that had killed 94 British people.

But you don't think it's sooner it should not have gone to the hotel because of that?

No, I don't think so.

We definitely had meetings in the King David Hotel.

It is a reminder of the complexity of this, and people maybe don't remember that history.

Question for you, which I know you like, Celia Richardson.

I know Celia Richardson.

I know where this one's going.

Yeah, that's it.

I've actually met her too.

One of the authors of the book, The War Against the BBC, how an unprecedented combination of hostile forces is destroying Britain's greatest cultural institution and why you should care.

Very long subtitle.

It's now looking into attacks on the National Trust.

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Do Alice and Rory think they are parallels?

Are they members of the National Trust?

Have they voted yet?

Voting really matters.

Members have until the 3rd of November.

See, you have voted.

You have voted.

I'm a member of the National Trust.

And I have voted for what you might call the anti-restore trust ticket.

So we keep coming back to this largely because I think you're a friend of Celia Richardson, and there is a very interesting standoff happening in the National Trust.

And actually, of all the polarizing issues in British politics, this is perhaps the most polarizing.

But who's doing the polarizing?

My attempt to try to do an explainer here is going to get me in trouble.

It certainly is.

Because Alice was very clearly on one side of this.

So the argument of restore trust, and they have candidates including Lord Sumption, who was the Supreme Court Justice.

He was my lawyer at the Hutton Inquiry.

He did very, very well, but I think he's a bit off the pace on this one.

Right.

Okay.

Anyway, he's their candidate for this.

And the argument of the restore trust people is that they feel that the National Trust is moving away from the interests of its members for a couple of reasons.

One of them is that they feel that the National Trust is increasingly putting more and more focus on landscape and nature.

National Trust owns hundreds of thousands of acres to the British countryside.

For example, it owns the place where the Sycamore Gap, where the Sycamore Tree was cut down, owns a lot of H. N.'s wall.

And probably the most exciting thing that the National Trust has is it owns an enormous amount of Britain's coastline, had this incredible thing called Project Neptune, where it put together a lot of Britain's coastline.

But the argument for the restore trust people would be that another very fundamental dimension of the National Trust is its historic houses and collections.

And they feel that the staff of the National Trust have often become, they think, embarrassed about the historic houses and collections too apologetic for them, liable not really to present them in the way that the people who donated these houses, the trust would like them presented.

And to try to hit a balanced line on this, English Heritage, which I talked to a bit, would say that maybe some of the things the National Trust did presenting some of these houses five, 10 years ago is not the way English Heritage would dealt with those issues.

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Well, I was also speaking to somebody from English Heritage recently, and I was asking them to explain to me what they thought was going on with this restore trust thing.

The person I was talking to took a very different line.

They basically said they felt this was yet another part of the kind of so-called anti-woke cultural right, trying to find another cause to get people excited about.

I do think there's something really strange going on in our politics at the moment.

The BBC is a classic example.

I think you and I both would agree that we might sometimes criticise the BBC on individual stories and individual decisions.

I'm not sure it's very wise for Tim Davies to be going to the 1922 Committee, for example, unless he's also doing the same for the PLP.

But the BBC is a massively important institution, and we should defend it and promote it.

And I think the National Trust is in the same place, and I do see a parallel in that these are good institutions being undermined because they don't fit this very narrow world view.

Yeah, I think it's something that I also think, though, that you can have incredible wonderful institutions, and the BBC is a fantastic example of that.

But I've just been rewatching W1A, the amazing comedy about the BBC.

And of course, there is a truth in all these bureaucracies that they can get a bit peculiar and a bit absurd.

You also need to be able to say, all these things can be improved, all these things can be reformed.

You don't want to get into a sort of knee-to-toe defense.

And I think there are some really interesting questions around the National Trust.

So for example, in our landscape management, how they get the balance between protecting small farmers, so Bittrex Potto, I hit this in Cumbria, basically gave her land in Cumbria as somebody who really believed in small family farms and rare breeds and sheep farming, and the National Trust has increasingly emphasized rewilding, which is making a lot of those tenant farmers very unhappy.

So there are issues to get into there.

I think there are issues around the place of volunteers in the National Trust.

I think a lot of the volunteers who gave a lot of time and life to National Trust felt that they were increasingly seen as a bit embarrassing and a bit marginal, and the whole organization was professionalizing, and it wasn't giving enough space to volunteers.

So there's stuff that can be done, and I think it's a pity if you have to be either in the form of abolish the BBC or in the form of everything the BBC does is wonderful and there's no bureaucratic nonsense.

Yeah.

Okay.

James O'Leary, will Nigel Farage's prophecy that he'll be Tory party leader by 2026 come true?

If he does, what does this say about Conservative politics and the direction it's going?

Well, what do you think?

Look, I said on the podcast, and I think you were a little bit taken about.

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I think Nigel Farage does have his eyes on the Conservative Party.

It was really interesting at the party conference that he and Liz Truss and Suella Braverman were the ones who were getting all the love from the crowds, and he was a Conservative.

He's a game player.

You talk about political entrepreneur.

He's somebody who moves effortlessly from one campaign to another.

He's just a campaigner.

I mean, Nigel Farage would be utterly hopeless as a minister, utterly hopeless in a position of government, I think.

But if the Conservative Party loses the next election, I think it will move substantially to the right.

Suella Braverman is probably the favourite to take over as leader.

I think she will very quickly become horrendously unpopular with the public.

And I think Nigel Farage by then might well be back inside the Tory party and want to take it on.

Do you disagree?

Well, boy.

I mean, I hope we're a long way from that.

I mean, I do agree with you that the most likely betting is that when the Conservative Party loses the next election.

And you'll definitely win now.

Yeah.

I think it's almost impossible for me to see Rishi Sunak winning the next election.

The latest by-elections just totally confirm that.

And I think we also enter in a politics where even if there hadn't been the catastrophes of most trusters, economic management and the catastrophes of Boris Johnson's Premiership, people want to change.

People don't like incumbents.

It's not climate suits incumbents.

And I think there is a lot of anger from the right of the Conservative Party against people like Rishi Sunak because they feel he betrayed their great hero, Boris Johnson.

And they've learned all the wrong lessons.

They think that the reason they're not more popular is they weren't right-wing enough.

You've got Liz Truss signing her budget and saying, you know, we should have gone even further, cut taxes more.

We've got other people saying we should have done an even harder Brexit.

And this is what the Conservative Party did under Ian Duncan Smith when it lost to Tony Blair.

It went to the right.

But eventually, of course.

Historically, it's done when we've lost.

Yeah, with Michael Foot and Jeremy Corbyn.

Yeah.

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Yeah.

Go to the left.

But in the end, of course, these parties come back, if and when they come back, because the party members begin to want to win again and then they move back to the centre ground.

And that's what happened with David Cameron.

They finally got fed up with being the sort of extreme French party and they wanted to win again.

They moved back to the centre ground.

There's a related question from Tom.

Is reform a strategic advantage or disadvantage to Tories in the coming election?

What might the implication for future elections be?

And Richard Tice, the leader, he did an interview at the weekend where he was absolutely vicious about the Tories.

Now, Therage used to be vicious about the Tories and then did the deal with them that helped them win the last election.

But Tice was basically saying there is no way they're going all out to try and destroy the Tories.

They didn't do that well in the by-election, but given they'd had pretty low profile, they didn't lose their deposits.

No, it can be a big problem.

And one of the reasons why David Cameron agreed to the Brexit referendum is that in the local council elections, the European elections, Nigel Farage's party was taking an enormous number of votes from the Tories.

They were getting up towards their 20-25% margin.

And he really believes that it would be almost impossible for the Tories to secure a majority without promising a referendum.

And by doing so, he actually did huge damage to the country, right?

But what he was able to do is to put that threat from the right to bed.

So I think it could be a real issue.

Okay, Rory, lots more questions.

Let's take a quick break.

Question from Joe Rooks.

I'm currently on a maternity ward waiting for my third born to arrive.

My wife and I have yet to choose a boy's name.

Have you ever noticed a pattern of impressive people with a shared name?

Any suggestions you can offer?

My wife has already vetoed Alistair and Rory.

That's very sad, isn't it?

Perhaps it's a girl.

Oh, it's a boy's name.

It's a boy's name.

I read something in one of the magazines at the weekend that it's now big business in America of advising people about their names.

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God, can we go again to that?

Well, I get the discipline to the podcast.

Yeah, yeah.

But somebody was making like a fortune, giving people...

Advice from what?

Fitting, you know, where the vibe of a certain name fits with the siblings' names, fits with...

Brilliant.

The whole thing sounded utterly ridiculous.

You don't think AI could do that even more quickly?

It probably could do that, yeah, absolutely.

When I saw a picture of Elon Musk with one of his children...

I wouldn't recommend Elon.

I'm not recommending Elon.

I'm very down on Elon at the moment in lots of ways.

But his child has this mathematical formula.

And what are you supposed to do?

Go along and say my name is A squared minus MC2.

Yeah, the artist formerly known as...

What are we going to say to Joe, though?

Well, so I...

Why were you called Rory?

I think I'm called Rory because my mother had a friend at university who she adored and thought was the most glamorous man in the world, called Rory McPherson, who was the kind of perfect Scott.

He was an incredible...

Were you christened Rory?

No, because the priest in Hong Kong, I was christened Hong Kong, refused to christen me Rory.

Said it wasn't a proper Christian name.

So I was christened Roderick.

So you were Roderick on your birth certificate?

Yeah, because the priest said, I can't christen you Rory because it's not a proper saint's name.

So you've got a saint Roderick, but not a saint Rory?

Apparently, yeah.

Sometimes if you become sanctified, would that solve the problem?

Yeah, but I promise I'd still be Saint Roderick, wouldn't I?

We called our son, first born Rory, we've got no Rory's in the family, but I'd written a novel where the hero was called Rory, and I think there was something going on with that.

It's a nice name though, Rory.

I like Rory.

Not bad.

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And I called my eldest son, Alexander, on the grounds that it gives you a lot of choice.
So you can be Sandy.
Al.
Al.
Alex.
Alex.
Zand.
Zand.
Zander.
I used to be Sasha.
Yeah, how did that happen?
I don't know.
We called him as a baby and it's just really stuck with him.
He loves it.
His second name was Wolf and I thought maybe...
Wolf?
Yeah, I thought he might want to be called Wolf Stuart.
That might be quite a strong name.
Wolf with one O or two?
With one L.
Yeah.
One O.
How did he O's?
One O.
One O.
One O.
Okay, so Wolf the animal, not Wolf the name.
No, the animal, yeah.
Wow.
But he didn't go with that.
Joe, I don't know if this is helping you at all.
I noticed last week, I mean Gary Linnick, as you know, as our boss, somebody sent me something saying that nobody in the United Kingdom was Chris and Gary last year.
No.
That can't be true.
That's extraordinary.
Grace, our daughter's name has become very popular and Callum, our other son, that's becoming popular as well.
We chose our names partly because there weren't that many people using them at the time.
Well, when I was called Rory, it was very unusual.
Yeah.
And it was actually very helpful for my political career, as I guess it was for that rather horrible person we don't mention on the podcast to have an unusual first name.

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Oh, him?

Yeah.

Yeah.

I think Tony Blair was a good name for a politician.

Gordon Brown, that was a good name.

I had this thing of people running on Rory the Tory, or I'd go Tory for Rory.

Right.

I get quite a lot of people say, they say to me in the swimming pool, how's Rory the Tory?

They do, so they do that.

Good.

Okay.

What about the size of British Army?

Peter Wilson, is the size of the British Armed Forces a problem, given all that's going on in the world right now?

Yes.

Yeah.

I don't know whether that's the Peter Wilson who was the senior advisor in Downing Street and should be our next ambassador to China.

I presume not.

Oh.

The British Army sits at one of its smallest level on record, and although we are spending ...

You can fit the entire army into Old Trafford, is that right?

Yeah.

I mean, it's terrifying.

I mean, to put it in context, we talked about China on the pod yesterday.

China's got an army of about 2.3 million.

We've got an army which hovers around about 70,000.

Taliban future in Afghanistan, cactus mark.

Afghanistan seems pretty far from being the societal collapse that was routinely being predicted when the Taliban took over.

Is it time to accept the Taliban will be the governing power there for the foreseeable future and engage with them?

This was the question that got my colleague in enormous trouble.

This was Tobias Elwood, the chair of the Defense Committee, eventually forced to resign from the Defense Committee.

Because he basically said yes.

Because he basically said yes to this question.

I'm aiming to get back to Afghanistan in the next few weeks, and maybe we could do a little bit more of a detailed pod when I'm back there.

But I think first thing to say is security has massively improved.

I mean, that's not necessarily credit the Taliban because they were the people setting

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off the bombs in the first place, but you can, for the first time, for 22 years, travel safely from one end of the country really to the other.

And also, there is now a culture of a climate of fear.

There is a culture of people doing things that they might have done before.

Absolutely must make it clear that the Taliban continue to be incredibly chauvinistic and aggressive towards women and opposed to female education and a lot of female participation in the workplace.

However, and it's always difficult when you have to say however, it is true that the country is secure and stable, which it hasn't been for a long time.

So many Afghans will say, look, I don't like the Taliban, but thank goodness I'm not in fear of my life all the time.

And there isn't really much of a sense of a credible alternative.

Nobody else is emerging soon.

And sanctioning the Taliban doesn't make any difference to the Taliban because they're not people who want to go shopping in Harrods.

It tends to just hurt the Afghan people.

So I think the idea of engaging responsibly and thoughtfully with limits with the Taliban has to be the path that we go on because they are a fact.

They're going to be there.

So the Tupai-Salward situation is very interesting, then.

So essentially, he's lost a quite significant position where I think he was doing a very good job because he said something that was not far off where we ought to be.

And that just underlines that we're in a kind of mad world where you can't actually say what you think.

Yeah, you have to be absolutely incredibly careful.

Now, look, talking about saying the right thing, Joseph Mansel says as follows, I'm 27.

I've always been very interested in politics and I'd like to run as a local councillor, brackets Labour.

In my stupid typical younger years, I was a strong Corbyn supporter, along with making some stupid remarks on social media.

I'm now slightly left of centre.

I've become a more reasonable and mature person.

Would this completely ruin any chances I had to get into politics?

My insight is I hope not.

I think most people look.

I think this is quite smart, this question, because the only way that he's going to get out is to be totally open about it, get straight out there on the front foot, admit it, go to the UK's top most listened to podcast and reveal the fact that he said stupid things to me.

Depends slightly what he said.

His name again, Joseph Mansel.

Joseph, you don't say where you're from, where you're going to be a local councillor.

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It also slightly depends what exactly you did say on some stupid remarks on social media.

It does depend what they are, but most of us, Joseph, I've done...

Even you occasionally sometimes make remarks.

I did some terrible things when I was young.

Yeah, that's also true.

I mean, terrible and things which, frankly, had I been running for a serious job in government or that alone...

Could have got you in real trouble.

I could have, yeah, and should have done, but I was totally open about them.

I actually, at one point, sat down with Tony Blair and said, I'm going to go through every single thing I've done in my past that might be embarrassing.

How did he take that?

He took it reasonably well.

By you got to the ninth thing, was he sitting there looking at you thinking?

It's the 25th thing, was there?

So, Joseph, I hope don't be put off, be honest, be open.

And I think actually the whole thing about it, if you think that Kier Stammer's whole stick about Labour is the Labour Party's changed, if you go to the Labour Party and say, well, I've changed as well with it, then I think that's fine.

I hope you make it.

Very good.

Okay, well, final question.

So, Daniel Woodrow, following Gillian Keegan's proposal this week for minimum service levels to be introduced in schools and colleges, should there also be minimum service levels for MPs?

And what would you include if you wrote them?

You first, then me.

I don't know what they would be.

You like the Nolan Principles, remind us the Nolan Principles.

Honesty, openness, objectivity, selflessness, integrity, accountability and leadership.

But they're quite, some of those are quite hard to measure.

So, the Nolan Principles just remind people that they were Nolan, Lord Nolan was a person that John Major appointed to put a framework of agreed standards for public life.

And by the way, it's not just ministers, it's for people right across the public services.

I think every minister and every MP and every public servant should abide by those.

I think it's very, very hard to have for MPs.

I think that what's Chris Bryant's book, which concludes that this is the worst parliament and we've now had another one with Peter Bone now, the latest in a long line of MPs who's got himself into trouble and that may be another by-election fairly soon.

But I think far better is that we have really good people wanting to be MPs and lots and lots and lots of them says that local parties have a real choice.

So one of the things that I felt really disappointing when I came in to parliament is that there was no proper initiation or induction.

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I write about this to plug politics on the edge, but I try to describe the scene in the book because I arrive and I think...

Did you go to the book out?

No, I've got a book out.

Did you know that?

Yeah, thanks.

So I arrive and I think this is going to be an opportunity to really explain to us as MPs what this job is about, what the moral expectations this job are, what we're supposed to achieve and instead of which it was the most underwhelming disappointing thing.

Essentially, we just sat there with the chief whip while he said, basically, your job is to shut up, vote with the government and if you behave and keep your noses clean, you might eventually become junior ministers someday.

The contrast, I was very briefly in the military and as you can imagine, Santest is just a massive machine in trying to communicate values, trying to turn people into officers and gentlemen or whatever the phrase is, serve to lead was there.

I think you should have an induction to become an MP where you sit down, I don't know how many days or weeks it would be, where you say, this is the most important job imaginable.

This is our code of honour.

These are the values that we expect.

This is how we expect you to conduct yourself.

These are the great heroes, the past.

These are the models that you should be looking at.

This is what virtue and politics feels like and it's shocking that we don't have that.

I was at Santest a few months ago because they do this podcast on leadership and I was interviewed for it and they gave me the book, the update.

Serve to lead.

I can't remember what it's called, it's the army leadership handbook and it's a really good read.

It's really, really interesting.

I think you're right.

Actually, I think of MPs to sort of have that sense of purpose and leadership.

I also, I really, I think Janine Key didn't do herself any favours because to teachers, I go into schools the whole time, teachers are working their balls off, constant fear of off-stead, constantly being asked to be social workers and mentors and some of them just barely finding time to teach and yet seeing this utter shambles of a government constantly saying that teachers are to blame for what's going on in schools.

Yeah.

I mean, I think that's a difficult one and obviously I'm going to defend Janine Key and again.

Of course you are.

You're a friend.

You're a friend.

I did find when I was dealing with prisons that minimum standards can be a helpful way

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of thinking about things.

What would you have as minimum standards for MPs?

You've given the sort of big picture thing, but what will you say to an MP?

Because for example, lots of people get angry when they don't vote.

You could set minimum expectations around what you'd expect, how much time you'd expect them to spend in a constituency.

You could set minimum expectations on replying to constituents' emails.

You could set minimum expectations on the number of certain kinds of work, but I think it's difficult.

Questions?

Well, part of the problem is that the whole job is a bit weird because as soon as you become a minister, you're still an MP, but being a minister is a full-time job.

So being an MP can't be a full-time job, otherwise you wouldn't have any time.

Tony Blair was an MP when he was prime minister, so I'm sure he loved his constituency and did a good job for them, but his main job, I would hope, was being prime minister.

Who's being prime minister?

Maybe there's a case, actually, as an MP, so people point to people to run their constituencies, but maybe we need MP teams so that you're electing not just the MP, but if you become a minister, you then have a somebody who is a public figure in the constituency.

Be honest about that, because often when I spoke to primary schools in Cumbria, people would say, what are you doing going to Westminster, why are you not in Cumbria?

Just communicating how strange this job is that you're supposed to be in your constituency all the time.

You're supposed to be in Westminster all the time, voting all the time, and you're supposed to be in your ministerial office all the time, and that you can't do all three.

Right, well, I'm at Job Creation Scheme for Politics, let's call it a day and see you next week.

Very good.

Thank you.