

## [Transcript] Leading / Bernie Sanders: A fight for equality

So, welcome to another episode of The Rest is Politics, leading with me, Alistair Campbell. And with me, Rory Stewart.

And we have our second American interviewee, although technically our third, because Fiona Hill, though born British, became an American citizen, and then Michael Johnson, an athlete, and now another athlete, somebody who was once third in a mile race in New York as a young student, but went on to bigger and better things as a very well-known globally in politics, longest serving independent in the history of Congress, being a mayor, a congressman, a senator, two-time runner-up in the race for the Democratic nomination to be president. And I guess you could say, Rory, the leader of a global progressive movement I think he probably sees himself in that way.

Very much. And of course, you're talking about Bernie Sanders.

Indeed, I am.

Yeah, we're here to feel the burn. And no, so he's an extraordinary figure, isn't he?

And I suppose in Britain, we often see him through the lens of Jeremy Corbyn, who again, I guess, was somebody who was seen as an idealist out on the socialist left of his party, who managed to attract an extraordinary youth vote. I mean, in the case of Jeremy Corbyn, doubled the Labour membership, had people chanting for him at Glastonbury. And Bernie Sanders, an even bigger version of the same phenomenon at about the same time.

And an even older version. He's now 81 and been around a long, long, long, long time.

I mean, I've just finished his book. He's actually in the UK because he's pretty, he's definitely got energy, the guy. He's everywhere promoting his book. It's okay to be angry about capitalism. And it is, for those who haven't read it, it's like listening to a kind of very, very, very long Bernie Sanders speech.

And he does give some long speeches. He famously once gave a speech of seven and a half hours, I think, in the Senate floor.

Yeah. Yeah. So he knows how to keep the message going. And there's an awful lot of anger in there. And there's something you might want to pick up with him, Rory, because you're always saying that I've got more left-wing with age. He says he's got more left-wing with age.

I believe it about you, not so much about him. I think he was pretty left-wing in this country. He was a member of the Socialist Party of America and sit-ins in Chicago in the early 60s.

That's true. But of course, left-wing in America doesn't really mean the same thing as here, does it?

No. Well, actually, interesting, his brother, of course, his older brother is a British politician who really is left-wing. Larry Sanders, who was a Labour councillor in Oxford and then left because he thought you and Tony Blair had gone too far right-wing, set off to the Green Party, stood in three elections to be a member of parliament. And again, like Bernie Sanders, very much from the same background, which I hope we're going to be able to dig in a bit as we start our interview.

So here we go, our interview with Senator Bernie Sanders.

Senator, thank you very, very much for coming to speak to us. And we'd love to, if we can, start a little bit with your childhood and your background and hear a little bit about where you came from. And can you give us a snapshot of what it was like growing up in

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New York, who your parents were, how they formed your values?

My father came to the United States from Poland at the age of 17, and he had no money when he came. And my mother graduated from high school in New York City. We grew up in a rent-controlled

apartment, very small apartment for kind of lower-income folks. And I went to public schools, which are public schools.

State schools.

State schools in Brooklyn. And I think my childhood was shaped by two important factors. One lack of money in the family, something that I've never forgotten. And number two, the fact that my father's family was wiped out by Hitler in Poland. So those are some of the major factors, I think, that shaped my political perspective.

You don't, in your political life, you don't talk much about your Jewish faith?

Well, I'm proud of being Jewish. But I don't like to talk about myself all that much. I think in America, too much of politics has to do with personality. And I prefer to focus on the significant issues facing working people.

Do you believe in God?

In my own way, yes.

Bunny, can I come back to just your life then after that? So you went to University of Chicago and sometimes reading about your early life, you were on sit-ins at the University of Chicago. You joined the Great March with Martin Luther King and the I Have a Dream speech. And then you moved to rural Vermont, where I think you lived in a tiny little hamlet of 88 people as a carpenter. It's difficult to avoid the kind of impression that you were kind of proto-hippy, is that right?

Not really. I was surrounded by hippies, but I myself was not. Although my hair was, at that point, I had more hair than I have now, and it was fairly long, not racistically long. But I was clearly shaped by the 1960s, the important part of my life. I was involved in anti-Vietnam War activity. When I got to Vermont after a certain period of time, I became involved in a small, what we call a third political party, which was voted kind of focusing on economic inequalities and the war in Vietnam, opposition to the war in Vietnam. So I got my start in electoral politics during that period.

You've got a new book out. It's okay to be angry about capitalism, which we've read. And there is a lot of anger in there. Where does the anger go? Because it feels to me it's clear what you believe and you believe it passionately, but has the dial really moved in the United States on the issues that you're writing about?

Well, I think we have in the last number of years made some very significant progress. And the point of the book is that people have a right to be angry, but it's important that you take out that anger in the right direction. In America today, in the richest country in the history of the world, we have more income and wealth inequality than we have ever had. So the middle class continues to shrink, working class people are really struggling, and yet almost all new income and wealth goes to the people on top. People have a right to be angry about that. Right now, in the UK, in the United States, we're dealing with inflation. What we have determined in the United States is probably more than half of that inflation has nothing to do with the war in Ukraine, has nothing to do with supply chains. It has to do with corporate greed and very large corporations taking advantage of the moment

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to raise prices at outrageously and enjoyed record-breaking profits. ExxonMobil, for example, had \$200 billion in profit, while people pay very high gas prices. People have a right to be angry about that. They have a right to be angry that in the United States, we have a political system in which billionaires can make unlimited campaign contributions. To both sides.

That's right. To both sides, which means that you have a political system heavily dominated by billionaires and people sometimes who are democratic, then they vote Republican. Nothing really changes because the big money has such enormous impact on the political system. So the point about this is that if you're a working person, you have a right to be angry. Let's organize. Let's go forward. Let's take that anger out against the people who have caused the problem. That is the people on top.

And, Senator, one of the things that's striking when you talk about inequality and your deep-deep convictions around inequalities of wealth and your strong repeated statements that there shouldn't be billionaires and that we shouldn't be living in a strident society, it's striking that your focus remains so, so firmly on these questions when other parts of the progressive left have increasingly been caught up in other issues in the United States. So many people talking about gender pronouns or talking about guns or talking about abortion, but your book isn't really about those kinds of issues, is it? Does that tell us something about where your priorities are or...?

That's not a question of priorities. I feel very strongly about the issue of racial justice. I think I have a 100% lifetime pro-woman voting record, and we do everything we can to protect the woman's right to control her own body. I feel very strongly about the issue of guns, and I feel very, very strongly about fighting bigotry in all of its forms. But I think at the end of the day, if we're going to make the kind of transformative changes that we need, we need to take on the billionaire class and the oligarchy in America who are doing phenomenally well while so many other people are suffering. So I look very much at the need for the mobilization of working people, whether they are black or white or Latino or Native American, whether they're gay or whether they're straight, around a progressive agenda that speaks to the needs of all, not just the few.

Santa, just to pursue this one more stage, I spend a lot of my time at the moment working on global poverty, and I sometimes get a little bit frustrated that the conversation is moving off addressing extreme poverty globally and is increasingly absorbed with other types of progressive issues from climate change through to conversations. Do you sometimes share a frustration that a lot of the progressive conversation seems to be going away from the fundamentalist use of wealth and inequality?

Well, first of all, in terms of climate change, that is one issue that one cannot run away from. One cannot have too much discussion about that because that's the future of the planet and what kind of world we're going to be leaving to our kids and our grandchildren. But I think there is a reason in the United States we have in the Democratic Party there are very strong differences of opinion. And some people say, well, look, what we want is to create a society where if you're black or if you're gay or if you're a woman, you could be the head of a large corporation. We want equal opportunity for all. And I share that view. But on the other hand, I also worry very much about the power and the greed of the large corporations, whether the leader of the corporation is black or gay

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or a woman or whatever. I'll give you an example. Not so many years ago, there was one woman in the United States Senate out of 100, unbelievable. And we're making progress so that they will come in the near future where half or more members of Congress will be women. That is a good thing. But it's not good enough to say, oh, my goodness, you're a woman. Isn't that great? Well, what are your politics? We have women now who are governors and senators who are totally reactionary. So it's not good enough to be a woman. It's not good enough to be a Latino. What is your politics? How do you stand on the major issues facing working families? And I think if you're asking me, have we gotten away from that? Yeah. And that has a lot to do with media. And one of the things that you know, if you read the book, I have a whole chapter on media. And my critique of the corporate media is not that it is, quote, unquote, Trump's fake news. That's not the case at all. But if you have in America eight huge media conglomerates providing information to 90% of the American people see here and read, do these billionaires who own that media have a bias? Well, you've got to be a moron not to believe that they do. And what is the bias? They do not want class issues to be discussed. Who has the wealth? Who has the power? How do we bring about change? So you'll see very little discussion really of the suffering of the working class in America, which is intense of the trade union movement. In fact, right now, as we speak, I am involved with my committee in taking on the Senate Budget Committee. No, it's the Senate Health Education Labor Committee. I've moved on. And right now, we're taking on the billionaire owner of Starbucks, who is trying to crush a union organizing effort, the multi-billionaire owner of Amazon, who is trying to crush a union organizing effort, et cetera, et cetera. Just if I can take one very well-known woman, Hillary Clinton, do you take any responsibility for her defeat at the hands of Trump in that a lot of the attacks that Trump ventilated did actually, in his sense, come out of your campaign against her? Not at all. Trump didn't need me to tell him about Hillary Clinton. But you attacked her as a fat cat. You put her in as one of the kind of corporate Democrats. And was she? Well, you talked about her, but did that stop her beating Trump? When you run for office, you try to tell the truth, and I try to tell the truth. So if you're asking me that Hillary Clinton received a lot of money from Walshby for her speeches. But did she turn her back on working people? In my view, just in regard to Hillary Clinton, let me be very clear. After I lost the nomination, taking on the entire establishment that supported Clinton, taking on the corporate world that supported Clinton, taking on the media, I worked as hard as I could to see her get elected. I worked day and night. I ran all over the country trying to get her elected. But you don't think some of your attacks on her were ventilated by the Republicans? No, I do not. I think that, you know, there is a reason why Hillary Clinton lost the election. But I did my best to make sure that she would have been elected, took on Trump as boldly as I could. But, you know, all that you're asking is we have a system in America where we run for office. If I run for office, I try to do my best. She tries to attack me. And that is called the political process. But after I lost, I worked as hard as I could for her. And just we talked to Fiona Hill, Ukraine and Russia, an expert. And she made very, very clear that she was pretty worried that Trump might return. And she was pretty clear as well that that would be a disaster for America and for the world. Do you believe that at heart Trump is a fascist?

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Look, you know, American politics is different than European politics. This is what I believe. Trump is a pathological liar. Trump is somebody who is now propagating, has since he lost the election, the big lie that he actually won the election. Trump does not believe in the rule of law. Trump does not believe in democracy. And that is who Donald Trump is. So I don't want to put a term on him that is more European. But surely this is not a man who believes in democracy.

The democracy is at risk in the United States if he comes back.

Of course it is.

Yeah.

Senator, I'd love to bring you back to your development as a politician and have some reflections on what it means to be a politician. One of the things that strikes me is that through the 1970s, you kept plugging away. I mean, you were a politician from an early age. You ran an elections where you got 3%, 4% of the vote in the 1970s.

Try 1% actually.

Got 1% of the vote in the 1990s. And in the end, you came through and became an incredibly successful and now the longest-serving independent. But tell us a little bit about that. I'm full of awe for that. I was a member of the Conservative Party, then I tried to run as an independent and I found it incredibly tough. I was picking up 13%, 14% of the vote and the endurance required to keep fighting in the face of those kind of defeats. Tell us a little about what that felt like through the 70s and how you kept going.

Well, you know, my initial involvement in politics had nothing to do with elections.

It was opposition to the war in Vietnam and the fight for workers' rights. And when I ran in those elections where I got 1% or 2% or 4% or 6% of the vote, one had no illusion.

The American politics is different than British politics and we didn't have any money at all. No one knew who we were. We weren't tied to any major party. We had no illusion that we could win. But it was a lot of fun. So we were able, in my small state of Vermont, which is one of the small states in America, we were able to run around the state, do radio shows just like this, get involved in debates, hang out on street corners, talk to people.

It was actually quite exciting and interesting. And I love doing it. I mean, I love the idea of talking. We're doing it right now, talking about the real issues facing people. It's kind of fun and it was fun back then. But we had no illusion that we're going to get elected.

And then what happened in 1981, I live in the city of Burlington, Vermont, which is all of 40,000 people, but the largest city in Vermont, literally a friend of mine said, you know, we looked at past election results. You only got 6% of the state, but you got 12% in Burlington. You got some districts. You got 18%. Why don't you run for mayor? And we put together, I ended up putting together with others a coalition, which is a wonderful coalition and nothing has changed for me. It was of workers in the unions. It was a low income people. It was of women. It was environmentalists. It was the kind of broad coalition that we have today. And we ended up winning that election by 10 votes. 10 votes.

What, the first time you became mayor?

At the mayor of Burlington, I won after a recount by 10 votes.

Well done.

And then I won re-election two years later.

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What was the first vote before the recount?

14 votes.

So you lost four votes.

I lost four votes.

You lost three against you, the recount, right?

Yeah. But we had a lot of, you know, my wife was here with me and she became head of our youth office and we had an enormous amount of fun. We involved parents. We involved kids. We built childcare centers. We built teen centers. We had newspapers for the kids. We built affordable housing. We stopped some bad road projects. It was a lot of fun. And after that, I was able to run for statewide office one. And you know, to answer your question, if you talk to the issues that ordinary people feel strongly about and you're honest and you're prepared to fight for them, often they will be supportive.

Then you've got to keep going. You've got to be resilient. You've got to keep going.

Of course you do. But you get your inspiration from the people themselves.

Okay, Senator, Rory, we're going to go for a quick break.

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Alastair and I are often pushed to try to set up a new independent movement in Britain and challenge the big political parties. But in Britain, as in the United States, we're in the first past the post system. And I guess people must ask you that 10 million times more than they asked me in Alastair. What are the opportunities and the problems of trying to set up a genuinely new third party in the United States?

They're very significant. That's a good question. In the United States, elections as people are learning right now are run by states. It's not the federal government. So we don't have one election system. You've got 50. That means you've got to get on the ballot in all 50 states. And every state has a different level of standards. So in some cases, it's pretty easy. You've got a few hundred signatures. You're on the ballot. And other questions,

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they create almost an impossible task to get on the ballot. You need to hire people. You need to spend a whole lot of money. So literally getting on the ballot in 50 states is not easy and it is very, very expensive. And then the Democratic and Republican parties have massive infrastructures, which is funded by a whole lot of money, big money, which obviously people like me would not have. What I'm very, very proud of is when I ran for president, we were able to buck the trend and we didn't take big money. And we were able to get millions of small individual contributions, which was kind of revolutionary for politics. But going outside the two-party system is difficult. And there has been some success. I'm an independent. I get elected outside the two-party system. And some other people do. But generally, it is a pretty hard task.

Can you see it changing? Because the thing that comes through in your book is that the sort of problems that you're analyzing, they sort of feel overwhelming at times. That sense when you're raging against the Bezos and the musks and the Murdochs and all these guys, it feels like to get rid of that grip on the power structures of America and to get rid of the kind of culture that says money is good, greed is good, it feels like it's a long way off and that system is going to be here for a long time to come.

Well, you know, the answer is, let me give you a firm political answer, yes and no. How's that?

Not a good political answer.

Yes, we can and no we can't.

You know, during my campaign, I used the quote, it was very funny. I think I was in Iowa. My grandson, it was probably then 9 or 10 years old, somebody gave him a sign to hold up, you know, you hold up these signs and it was from Nelson Mandela and the sign said, everything is impossible.

Everything is impossible.

Until you make it happen.

Until it is done. That's what he said. It's a really profound thing. What he said is, the obstacles seem enormous and that's true, you're quite right, they are enormous. But after you accomplish them, well, no big deal, everybody knew that that was the right thing to do, right? So, you know, it's kind of the way I look at it. You know, there are areas in social life in America, incredible changes. I mentioned women's rights. My God, when I was mayor of the city of Bruneyton, we had zero police officers who were women. We introduced the first women. You go to the Capitol Police in Washington, you see, I don't know what, 30, 40, 50 percent, half of the senators will be women in five or 10 years. Everyone said, of course, that's the way it should be. Medical school, there are more women than men now in medical school. Believe me, it was not the case 40 or 50 years ago. Nobody would have. We elected in 2008, Barack Obama was elected president, right? First African-American man. Trust me, when I was a kid, nobody in a million years.

Hmm. Including you.

Including me. Oh, absolutely. The country was much too racist. We would never elect that after. So, my point is, you are quite right. The problems of income and wealth inequality, the power of corporate greed, the power of big money is extraordinary. And it is fair to say, my God, it's a daunting enterprise to overcome that. That's a fair statement. On the other hand, sometimes when people get angry enough and get sick and tired of the

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status quo enough, real change takes place. And that's what the book is about.

Yeah, but isn't there a danger, particularly look at America and the number of people who don't even vote. And of course, the Republicans make it harder. We've got a similar situation here where they're changing the rules on voter identification, which I think is part of the same trend. Is there not a danger that anger just leads to disengagement? How do you fire the anger into engagement?

That's a great question. And I think you're quite right, by the way, about talking about voting laws here. Same thing. What Republicans are doing is they understand that young people are voting against them. They understand that a significant number of people of color are voting against them. So rather than sitting down trying to figure out how they can address the issues of concern to those constituencies, what do they do? Say, well, let's make it harder for them to vote. That's a terrible anti-democratic thing to do. And for the ruling class, it is a great thing if people don't vote. Nothing could be better. In essence, let's tell working people, you are powerless. Why are you going to waste your time to vote? Well, I got all the power. Don't kid yourself. Stay home.

Always. Or nothing's going to change.

Nothing is going to change. Exactly. And what we are about and what our movement is about is saying the very opposite. And I'm very proud that while, you know, we of course lost in 2016 and lost in 2020, and the book makes this clear, we won the overwhelming support of younger people, people 40 years of age or younger. And that means that there are tens of millions of people who are ready for transformative change.

And one of the things that you talk slightly less about is constitutional structural change. So a lot of the transformation that you want to bring, I would have thought would be helped by compulsory voting like Australia, a proportional representation system of the sorts that we have in Europe, campaign finance reform, which would break the whole of these new parties, ways of changing the whole constitutional structure of the United States to allow new voices, fresh voices to emerge, independence to be elected more easily. Do you agree that to actually get where you want, you're going to have to move beyond the current first pass to pass system?

I think we do. And I do touch on some of those issues. Certainly the current campaign finance system in the United States is an unmitigated disaster. Billionaires should not be able to buy elections. The other thing that we have is systems of gerrymandering. I don't know how familiar people in the UK are, where legislatures are able to manipulate districts to very much benefit the party in power. In this case, the Republicans have gone really quite overboard.

And how about electoral reform, proportional representation, compulsory voting?

Compulsory. I always had ambivalent feelings about the compulsory. You don't like to say to somebody, you have to vote or you're going to get fined. I'm not unalterably opposed to it. But I think the most significant issue is why historically, it's changing a little bit, has the United States had such a low voter turnout. And I think it gets back to what we were talking about a moment ago. If people don't feel that their vote matters, if nobody is listening to their pain, why would you want to vote? So I think the more important issue is to have a political movement and elected officials who say, A, we understand what you're going through. And in the United States, when over 60% of our people are living



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paycheck to paycheck, when a half a million people are homeless, when people can't afford childcare or higher education, we hear that, we understand that, and we are going to change that. We're going to change a tax system in which billionaires pay an effective tax rate lower than a nursery truck driver.

So I think the main thing is for the preservation of democracy is create governments that listen and know what's going on and respond to the needs of working families.

One thing that strikes me is you got so much joy and satisfaction out of being the mayor of Burlington in Vermont. You brought so much substantial change. You changed the architecture of the city, the mixed residential units. And then you decided to become a legislator, which is a very different kind of thing. And I just wonder whether you could reflect a little bit about those two very different visions of politics.

I should explain for you here, Bernie, that Rory tried to become the mayor of London. It's on his CV of political failures. So there's a yearning there.

There is a yearning there because I think there's something so attractive about having direct operational control, being able to really run a budget, run people, change things, which you don't really have when you're delivering filibuster speeches in the Senate. Can you reflect a bit on that as my last question?

Well, I think you're right. You're absolutely right. Being mayor was a lot of fun. It was more hands-on. And you could see the results of what you do. If you start a youth program, you go out, you see the kids playing ball. If you build housing, you could see the housing being built. If you start an arts program, you go to the concerts and you enjoy them.

So you're quite right. That is the joy of being a hands-on mayor.

On the other hand, as the United States Senator in 2021, I was able as chairman of the Budget Committee then, help write a \$1.9 trillion. That's a lot of money. A piece of legislation would be the largest in American history.

And governments are allowed to have trillions. It's just individuals. We can't have billions in the Bernie Sanders world.

Quite right. Which went a long way to helping the United States get through the pandemic and the economic crisis that took place. So it is a different world. There are joys and pains in both. But I am comfortable where I am right now as, right now, chairman of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, which are dealing with some of the most important issues facing hundreds of millions of people in my country.

One of my favorite sections in the whole book is your analysis of schools in Finland. And Rory and I argue quite a lot about education. I know of the old-fashioned view that only if you have 100% of people committed to state education will you actually even begin to start thinking about building a genuine meritocratic society. I love your analysis of the media in Norway. And also your assessment of the healthcare system in the United States just brings home to us what a catastrophe it is.

So do you feel actually that what European progressives have managed to do is should be a lesson for the United States?

The short answer is yes. And one of the things that has bothered me about American politics and American media is we have not given credit to many of the enormous achievements in Europe. Look, I don't have to tell you. UK has more than its fair share of problems in every country in the world does. Last I heard there's no utopia out there, at least I have not seen

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it. We all have our problems. And I want people to hear this in the UK that this country right here has an enormous amount to be proud of. We're in 1948, way back, with Nair Bevin and the Labour Party. This country said healthcare is a human right available to all. Stop and think what an enormous step forward for humanity that was. Right? It's not just the rich who can get great care. You're poor, you can walk into the doctor's office, doesn't matter how much money you have. That was a great, great achievement. And you know, you see that more or less in different styles of healthcare policy all over the world. And you're right about America. Our system, and I understand now the NHS has its problems, people are talking about it, please do not emulate the United States. Our system is an unmitigated disaster. We spend twice as much, more than twice as much as you do. And we got 85 million people who are uninsured, underinsured. You don't even know what a deductible is. The people in the UK don't even know what a deductible is. You can have insurance and you've got to pay thousands of dollars out of your own pocket before the insurance kicks in. You are living longer lives than we are. We don't have enough doctors, we don't have enough nurses, we don't have enough psychologists, we don't have enough dentists. Alright? Figure out your own problems and solve them. Don't look to America as an example.

Okay, well, I'm very generous. Alice is bringing me back for a very last question. But give us just as a final thing some reflections on what is horrible about being a politician and what's positive about being a politician as a way of encouraging new generations to come into politics in a realistic way, where they're aware of what the downsides are of this job.

Well, again, politics in the UK is very different. You're a different political system than we are. An example of what is horrible. In 2006, I ran for the first time, I ran for the United States Senate and I ran against a guy who happened to be the wealthiest person in the state of Vermont. And this guy put ads on, so many ads on television. I literally could not watch television because you're watching it for five minutes. Bernie Sanders is this and Bernie Sanders is terrible, terrible, terrible, horrible. And it impacts yourselves and impacts your entire family. The kind of hatred that exists is not pleasant. No way that anybody, everyone says they're thick skinned, but nobody is immune to that kind of vitriol that comes our way in the United States. Again, I don't know how it is here. And in America, this issue of money, I have been fortunate and that we have been able to raise money from small donations. But I'm not crazy about asking people, even if it's a \$20 contribution, I don't hustle big money, I don't want that money, we never have that money. But this constant obsession with having to raise money is also not a pleasant experience. And the good things? If you've got a young person come to you and say, Senator, should I go into politics? What's your answer?

The answer is yes. The answer is that the world now faces unbelievable challenges. And if you don't get involved, who is going to get involved? Are you going to leave it to the big money interests who have done so much destruction already? So you asked me about the negatives of it, there's an almost positive. Think about the joy of actually bringing about some significant changes which improve the lives of millions of people. We were able to expand community health centers, very good form of primary healthcare from 10 to 30 million people. You know what? That's pretty good. We're able to take care of our veterans in a better way. That's pretty good. But to answer your question, we are fighting to save the

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planet from the devastation of climate change. We're fighting to address income and wealth inequality and create countries in the United States and the UK and elsewhere where government works for all of us with the explosion of technology. We can, in fact, create a decent standard of living for all people. We can do that. And we need energy and brains and courage on the part of young people to get involved to help us do that. So I strongly encourage young people to get involved in the political process.

Well, thank you very much for your time. Thank you for your fire. The fire is still burning in your belly.

Well, unfortunately, the belly is getting a little bit larger too.

Great story.

But thank you both very much.

Thank you very much indeed.

Well, I was really won over. I was really charmed by him. I thought I was going to get a pretty sort of humorless, ranting person. And actually, I thought he had a lovely, lovely manateum. I think he's serious without actually being pompous. And I think I can completely see why so many people under 40 wanted to vote for him. I'm very tempted to vote for myself. I thought he was a very attractive type of politician.

Yeah. I think the thing that strikes me, you obviously are looking at him down a lens as it were sitting next to him, is that I just hope I have the energy 81. I like to think I've got a lot of energy at 65, but he's 81.

It's amazing, isn't it?

And I think I saw your question about how do you keep going? His basic answer to that was you just keep going. And it's about the depths of belief. And I do think there is a... I was a little bit, was I disappointed or surprised that, you know, compulsory voting that he couldn't see the value in that? I can see maybe that's just sort of anti-liberal thing. I don't know.

He also ducked the proportional representation three times. That was a good politician. I asked him three times and he wouldn't answer.

Yeah. But also, how do you change... The point I made about the thing being overwhelming and he's right about that Mandela quote. I mean, my book is... My book about... I wish I'd interviewed him before I'd finished the book because I could have... I could have picked a few quotes for the book from that one, but I saw them... You know, that Mandela quote is right. He's absolutely right about that. But it feels... America feels so far from being the America that he's talking about wanting. And I guess you do have to inspire the next generation to do it.

I think there's also... Obviously, people talk a lot about authenticity, but you do get the sense that it would be very difficult to replicate the 30 years that he had before he went into Congress and Senate, the years spent as he said on demonstrations against the Vietnam War, the years living in a tiny village in Vermont struggling as an independent, the 10 years running the city of 44,000 people. Just that 30 years of kind of everyday interaction with people, which I think gives the edge to his voice in a way that's very difficult to achieve if you're a professional politician who's come skipping in in your early 20s. Didn't I being asked about Hillary, I sensed?

No. Well, he obviously doesn't like Hillary. I mean, that's something you picked up in

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the book, isn't it?

I know you've picked up in the book. I've sort of picked it up over the years. Not just Hillary, I think with Bill as well, that he... I think he did feel that they were too close to the money class.

And I know you wanted to push him on the question of whether you thought that his attacks on them had helped Trump. Is that something that you think is true, that he'd helped to discredit them?

I mean, he's right that in a campaign, you kind of, you can write your own strengths and you go for your opponent's weaknesses. But I just thought it was noticeable that when Trump did go for Hillary, and it's true, he went for it in a much more brutal way, but the whole sort of fat cat corporate Democrat line of attack did sort of come from him. But then he didn't write fairly made the point that both with Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden, since he'd lost the nomination race, he went flat out campaign for them. And my God, he's a flat out campaigner. He never stopped.

Yeah, he's also... I mean, I was wondering, I mean, normally with a politician, you can catch him out in a bit of sort of piety and hypocrisy, but I didn't feel that was so true there. We could have had a bit more of a go at him on his record on voting on gun control, for example. But broadly speaking, I believed him when he said he's got a pretty close to 100% record on progressive issues.

I was always going to jump in and say at one point, so basically what you're saying is, it's the economy stupid. He's basically saying to progressives, I think you were right on picking up, don't get driven too far down all the distraction routes, stay on the really big stuff. The big stuff is that the system rigged against you, the rich people are waging war against you, and you got to wake up to it. And it's about the economy. I felt that's what he was trying to say.

Yeah. And I think that that's partly his background in Marxism and socialism, isn't it? That in the end, it's about class, that all these other issues are subsidiary to class.

Rory, I've been telling you this for a long time, it's all in the end, it's all about class.

Well, anyway, I thought that was a real privilege. I went into it a little bit relaxing, and I've come out thinking there was a degree of seriousness, sincerity, energy, vision to him that I've seen in very few politicians.

Good.

I guess that's goodbye from me. And thank you and see you soon.

That is good bye from me. See you later. Bye-bye.