

Sometimes, in politics, you can just feel the political winds shift.

It's hard to put your finger on it, but somehow, imperceptibly, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, how we, the media, start to treat to talk about one party or another changes.

It moves.

This week, we're supposed to be the relaunch week for Rishi Sunak, the start of a new political term, where Sunak got to set the terms.

Instead, it's been a catalogue of disaster.

Six minutes to 12, six minutes to the first Prime Minister's questions of the season, and the government has now published the list of schools affected by RAK.

Here's what you need to know, 147 schools are on the list.

Birmingham is officially broke.

The City Council, the largest local authority in Europe, is effectively bankrupt.

This is an escape as audacious as it is embarrassing for the prison services.

Daniel Khalifa, it's believed, escaped by strapping himself to the bottom of a food delivery truck, being driven off the prison, and now a nationwide manhunt is underway.

Crumbling schools, a bankrupt council, an escaped terror suspect.

Somehow, day after day, it's felt as if their authority has been ebbing, that they've not been listened to, that they're not being treated as seriously as they were before.

Exhibit A, ITV's lack of fear in releasing that footage of Gillian Keegan.

Does anyone ever say, you know what, you've done a f***ing good job because everyone else has sat on their arse and done nothing?

No signs of that, no?

Hard to imagine them doing that when Boris Johnson was in his pomp.

And in politics, for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction, as the Conservatives decline, as they're treated increasingly as yesterday, so Labour ascends as tomorrow.

Perhaps for the first time since the late 1990s, as a government in waiting.

Yet what do we really know about them, about their most senior figures?

Something barely written about at all is their approach to foreign policy, how they would engage with the rest of the world, what would be distinctive about it, how would it be different not only to the Conservatives, but to the last Labour government, which inhabited in so many ways a different world.

Yet we are only 12 months away or so, perhaps less, from Keir Starmer on the world stage, at the UN, at the White House, who knows, with a President Trump.

The man who will be at his side is David Lambie, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, a great survivor of British politics, an MP since 2001, the son of Guyanese immigrants, and perhaps our next foreign secretary.

What does the future of Britain on the world stage look like?

On today's show, we talk to David about his life, his political journey, and where Britain goes next.

It's Lewis here.

Welcome to the newsagents.

So the man himself, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, David Lambie, MP for Tottenham since 2001, here in the newsagents bunker, descended from the LBC floor where, of course, you can find him on a Saturday afternoon.

We should start with that.

Do you like doing that, David?

Since we're in global, we might as well talk about LBC.

We both do LBC.

Do you enjoy it?

I like the platform and I like the range of issues.

Obviously, doing foreign affairs, sometimes abroad, I'm totally focused on how we present ourselves to the world outside, but, you know, LBC allows me to range across issues, issues often that my own constituents are thinking about, and people approach me in the street and they call me, you're the LBC guy, almost as if they didn't know I was a member of Parliament. I've been around for quite a long time.

Well, we're going to talk about your political journey, because you are actually one of the great survivors of British politics now.

I can see that with that slight sort of curled smile, because it's almost at the point of being called a veteran, which I assume you wouldn't enjoy.

But you are.

I mean, you've been an MP since 2001.

Before we get onto that, though, I suppose just the news of the week, you're still here.

You're still the Shadow Foreign Secretary.

You weren't reshuffled.

You weren't afraid.

I am still the Shadow Foreign Secretary.

Must be a bit of a gut-clenching moment, reshuffle.

We all know that you serve at the will of the leader.

That's the bottom line.

There are only two people in the Shadow Cabinet that I can't see any circumstances under which they wouldn't be doing their jobs, and that is Rachel Reeves and Angela Rayner.

And of course, you can be moved around or you can be moved out.

That is just the reality of politics.

You know, I've been at this game for many, many years.

I understand that.

I wasn't expecting to be moved, because I think there have been quite a lot of indications that the people that had the major sort of five-mission departments, climate, education, health, crime, would be staying around, and probably also me speaking for foreign affairs.

So I wasn't expecting to be moved, but it was very nice, obviously, to get the call from Keir, David, I need you to stay, I want you to stay, do you want to stay, talking about some of the issues that we're going to focus on over the next little while as we run up to the election, and getting the opportunity to frame foreign policy and international development on behalf of the Labour Party.

Since you mentioned it, just out of interest, I mean, you said that you could never imagine any situation in which Stammer would move Rachel Reeves, the Shadow Chancellor.

What's their relationship like?

Because it's not really talked about very much, and yet it is basically absolutely going to be central, isn't it, both through the election campaign and potentially afterwards.

What's your impression of their relationship?

My impression is it's very warm, they're sort of similar people.

I sit quite close to them on the front bench, so I can hear some of the things they're saying to each other, and we hear some of the lines that come out of Rishi Sunak and others, and they work very, very close, their offices are very close together in terms of the Leader's Opposition Office and her as Shadow Chancellor, so they work very, very closely together.

It's not going to be like Blair and Brown, or maybe the good bits of Blair and Brown.

Oh, I'm thinking back to those days.

You saw them.

You know, I was a much more junior figure in those days.

I don't detect sort of deals and those sorts of things that can cause the sorts of problems that are well documented in that period.

Well, let's go back to the beginning, your political journey, because it is an unusual one.

I mean, what?

Just tell us a little bit about people who aren't familiar with it, your background, how your political journey started.

Were your family very political?

I mean, I grew up in a typical West Indian family in the 1970s and 80s in London, in Tottenham.

I would say it wasn't a local, you know, it was parochial really.

I didn't go much beyond the N17 postcode.

I remember the couple of times heading down to South London to visit family in Stockwell or Brixton.

I remember going on an inner-city train for the first time when I was about 11.

And I remember...

You were 11 first time.

Yeah, the occasional trip that we made to the seaside with loads of West Indians piling into coaches, going down to Bournemouth or Skegnes, taking Tupperware and West Indian curries and rotis and jerk chicken and that sort of thing, out of the Tupperware and eating it on the beach.

And it was a particular time and I have to say, there is no way I could have imagined sitting here as Shadow Foreign Secretary at that time because it was an era also in which there just weren't many black role models in that.

So we weren't on TV.

Were there any at all that you remember?

Well, there was people like some of the early footballers, Laurie Cunningham breaking through their Lenny Henry emerging, I think, just about towards the end of that period.

But most of the time, someone was taking the mickey out of you, I mean, I'm thinking of Alf Garnett and some of the comedians around at that time.

So I felt quite small, my life was quite small, family life was quite small, but not always easy because my parents didn't have the best marriage.

My father developed a drink problem.

He left us when I was 12.

So there were some real, there were some challenges.

In terms of growing up in Britain at that time, how aware were you of race?

I mean, you averted to it there or hinted at that, of racism, the racism in our society at that time.

Were you very aware of it?

You're saying your world was quite small, so perhaps not so much?

Initially, I was aware of the National Front.

I was aware of skinheads and danger in relation to that movement.

The National Front were driven out of the London Borough of Haringey in that period.

It was quite contentious, but I was born into that context where you could be beaten up quite badly.

So this is in the 80s?

This is in the 80s.

And of course, the legacy of that remained in parts of London.

I'm thinking of the murder of Stephen Lawrence, who was around the same age as me at that time.

But no, I mean, I think that I got this big break, you know, and my big break was to be a Cathedral Chorister.

It was an age where choral music, choristers, Allie Jones was doing well in the charts and

I used to sing in the local church choir and I got this opportunity and ended up in Peterborough, which was a, I saw a very different side of Britain.

I thought it was a very different, I didn't realise that if I'd just gone three miles up the road to Enfield, it would have been virtually the same, but that's what I mean about a very sort of small, parochial, working class sort of life.

So that was your break?

It was actually through choral music that you started to see a different sort of world, different political world, all that sort of thing?

Definitely.

And at different, it was the first, I thought, wow, you know, there are avenues and routes and rows and trees and the school had huge, wonderful sports fields.

It was like sort of Wizard of Ulcerity, it was like sort of landing in a different world.

But a veil lifting in a way.

And a veil sort of, you know, lifting before my eyes.

I don't want to do down Tottenham though, because...

Your consistency.

No, no, because I, even though my life at that stage was small, our lives were small in Tottenham.

You know, I do remember family was strong.

The 70s, nobody had any money.

It was a different era.

And I grew up with the Irish, you know, great Irish friends, Cypriots, Asian families, and we were in and out of each other's homes and all of our parents were working class.

There wasn't the big differences in society.

You know, the technological revolution that we take for granted now hadn't appeared. So in a sense, there were no sort of mobile phones and things, you know, you only, someone was home, you got them on the landline, so it was a different era, it was a very different era.

And what point did you start to become political?

I was quite political from a very early age.

I think so.

And what was it that bit that, but what was it?

It was apartheid.

It was apartheid.

It was turning on the six o'clock news and seeing these scenes coming out of South Africa and coming to this understanding that this was happening because these people looked like me.

It was an era in which that then became quite contentious in the UK.

Some people wanted Margaret Thatcher to support Nelson Mandela, who was in prison.

I saw him.

Many others saw him as a freedom fighter.

She refused to post-sanctions.

She refused to post-sanctions.

There was some discussion in the Conservative Party that he was a terrorist.

There were decisions about whether we should boycott cricket.

So those were the issues that really brought politics into my life in a real way.

And then I think that the 80s became harder.

We were in recession.

As I say, my dad, who was self-employed, his business ran into the ground.

He started to drink.

Unemployment started to soar.

I sort of understood that we were living in a community with high unemployment.

In fact, the local authority used to publish the figures every Friday above the town hall and that somehow we were on the losing end of that 1980s story.

And that sort of builds up to things like the poll tax riots, some of the miscarriages of justice cases that became quite high-profile, whether it was the Guilford Four, the Birmingham Six, the top number three, those sorts of things that were quite contentious at the time.

And a sort of sense of social strike, the minor strike, that sort of era is my coming of age.

And it was a very political era.

And I suppose the juxtaposition of Tottenham and Peterborough, Peterborough being this new town, new opportunity, picket fence, a holiday once a year in Marbella, different sorts of people that Margaret Thatcher had appealed to and then Tony Blair took, if you like, from Margaret Thatcher.

That was my sort of coming of age politically.

And there was no question for you that it was always going to be Labour.

That was just...

Oh, no, no.

I was always on the...

I would say centre-left of the political spectrum.

Tottenham was represented by the Great Bernie Grant, who was radically on the left.

I found Neil Kinnock a very attractive figure.

I thought it was something that Neil did.

I loved his oratory, his speech.

I thought he would win in 1992, which was the first time that I was voting.

I was captured by what Tony Blair did to the Labour Party when he won in 1994.

I sort of understood, because of that experience in Middle England, that the ingredients of what might work in Tottenham would not work in other parts of the country.

So I understood the project to change the Labour Party.

And in that sense, even at a very young age, I would say I was on the centre-left of the political spectrum.

And I'm fascinated by this, which is that, as you say yourself, you're from a working class background.

You were a young black man growing up in 1980s Britain, which was not necessarily a very comfortable place to be, particularly when you left places like Tottenham, which were far more diverse.

What was it that made you think, yeah, I could do that.

I could go into politics.

Not only that, but even to go to apply to university, which I assume had not happened to your family.

I didn't think those things.

I didn't think those things.

I mean, I did not, you know, many of my friends in Tottenham did not go to university.

Some of them, frankly, went to prison.

Others ended up under the strain of mental health.

She only loomed because of the sort of school I ended up at.

And I am so grateful for that my music teacher in Tottenham, wonderful and called Mary Shepard, she's not alive anymore.

But I'm sure her family will listen to this podcast and I'm really grateful to people like her local priest.

He's not alive either, Ken Evans, who encouraged my mother to apply for this opportunity for me.

That was my break.

And to be clear, it was an assisted places scheme.

This was a scheme that the Conservatives had at the time, Labour abolished, where inner city kids like me, just a few of us, could have the opportunity of a different kind of educational experience.

For mine, it was music was central to it, but it was controversial and that was my opportunity.

And in a sense, I mean, I applied to Harvard Law, I would say, because there was a show on TV called LA Law, and there was a black guy on it and I wanted to be him.

Once role models were curious things that you saw on television, occasionally, I want

to be that guy.

How did you feel then when Labour abolished that?

It was one of the first things that the new Labour government did.

It must have led to some conflicted feelings on your part.

If you're saying that that was your big break and maybe we wouldn't be having this conversation.

Well, it was abolished on the basis that the offer should be there for all children, not just some children.

And I suppose I was acutely aware that I had an opportunity that many of my contemporaries did not get.

And to some extent, I was in the right place at the right time.

And I don't think that fortune should be that arbitrary.

So I think I was comfortable with where the new Labour at that time ended up.

What was it like in higher education at that time?

Suddenly you were in a very different sort of place, right?

Oh, you know, I mean, I was first in London at SOAS, wonderful time, exciting to be in London, politics alive, the poll tax riots being central, Margaret Thatcher left office very early on.

Later I then went to Harvard.

I think Harvard left me with tremendous self-confidence.

I've always had deep down inside, like a lot of working class people, that niggling thing, the imposter syndrome you sometimes feel, should I really be here, am I capable enough?

I remember arriving in Parliament, in fact, and it was the era where you had George Osborne, David Cameron, the Miliband Brothers, Pernal, Bruce Kelly, all these people that had, you know, done PPE at Oxford, and then gone to work for an MP.

It takes a while to understand that your working class background, the fact that you know about parents not being able to put food on the table, the fact that my dad was a drunk, that we had very little money.

Actually, you can stand on that and represent your constituents and try and speak with an authentic voice.

And it took me some time to work that out.

And Harvard was helpful in giving me that sort of self-belief and confidence that propelled me at an early stage in my life.

Now, I look back because I was just 26, 27 at the time to think, yeah, actually, I can be a member of Parliament when Bernie Grant sadly died.

And I thought, yeah, I'm actually the right person to represent the constituency of Tom.

Got to know Obama, of course, famously, later on, right?

I mean, I did.

And that was...

Was that at that time when you were there or later on?

It was a bit later on when Barack Obama and someone who went on to become the Governor of Massachusetts, Deval Patrick, part of the Harvard alumni, actually reached out to me because they spotted me as a young junior minister in Tony Blair's government, but nevertheless a minister that stood out because I was young and black.

They were not in power.

Bush was in power in the United States.

So they reached out.

We became friends before Obama goes into politics and the rest is history.

And we've kept that friendship all these years and, of course, his own journey completely inspirational.

What's he like to have as a friend for Barack Obama?

Not everybody can say that.

He's what you expect him to be.

He's a charismatic.

He's a wonderful human being, very bright human being.

I have to say he married well.

His wife's incredible as well.

So, you know, I'm honoured to call him a friend.

What's...

I mean, you, partly because of your current job, but also because of your connections with the US, what's your current assessment of American democracy?

How worried are you about the future of American democracy?

We saw what happened on January the 6th.

Trump could come back.

Biden is a good president, you might argue.

He's got quite a lot done, but he's 80.

What's your assessment of where we are with American democracy and Trump and the threat he might still pose?

This morning I had a breakfast meeting with Condoleezza Rice, who's...

Former US Secretary of State.

Former US Secretary of State, somebody else that I've got to know over the years who's obviously been very visible in foreign policy, and actually I agree with Condoleezza Rice in the sense that, of course, I worry about populism in politics, and I think we've got a degree of that in our own country, frankly, within the current government.

And I say that trying to be generous because I have friends who are on the centre-right of the political system who are natural conservatives worried about some of the direction that they see that party going, and indeed my own party in a previous incarnation had a degree of populism in it coming from the left, so I'm not making a partisan point.

I worry about that.

Having said that, when we're talking about democracies, one also has to think about the checks and balances that correct those elements creeping into the system.

And I see in America, it's a country I know very, very well, I didn't just study there, but I work there, the right checks and balances that challenge that, and it must be the case that we should always be a bit careful about judging or too quick to rush to judgement about democracies that have the ability for the people to turn away and vote for something else basically.

That's quite different from a dictatorship or an autocracy where, frankly, that freedom doesn't exist.

But theoretically, I mean, if you're foreign secretary and could be foreign secretary by the time of the next presidential election, certainly by the time the next president takes up office, you could be working with President Trump.

Absolutely.

How would you feel about that?

Well, look, America's a great country.

You think it's racist, don't you?

Well, look, I think there are lots of people of colour that took issue with some of the ways in which Donald Trump chose to talk about the global south.

I'm not going to use the swear word he used.

I'm thinking of my family and relatives in the poor country of Guyana, for example, which would be included in his descriptions and some of what we saw creeping into the system.

However, America is a great democracy.

It's a great ally.

And the bottom line is that we're living in an age where we've had the most awful invasion in Europe.

Maybe he pulled out and did stop supporting them.

You got to worry about that.

Look, I actually, having spoken to now many Republicans, I'm not sure about that at all, there's always rhetoric going into an American election on both sides, but then there's the reality of the White House when you get there.

As you know, well, there is a strongly isolationist strain within the Republican Party, right? There is.

That is true.

Trump isn't the only one arguing that they should pull support from Ukraine.

That is true.

That isolationist strand exists in American politics, and successive presidents have faced it.

But there's also a sense in which that fight for democracy, for freedom, for liberty is more than just about the United States.

It's actually in the United States' interests, and that usually prevails.

I want to talk a little bit more about the future of British foreign policy under you.

But before we do, you become an MP in 2001 for Tottenham.

Pretty young man.

How old were you then?

27.

So really young, 27.

What was that like becoming an MP?

You were still at that time one of the only black MPs.

What was that like becoming a young man, becoming an MP?

Was it what you thought it would be?

Did it surprise you?

Well in all seriousness, I came from a community in which I had some friends who had gone to prison.

I had a father that had left me at 12.

I'd grown up in a constituency that had riots, high unemployment, there were struggles within my own family.

So in some sense, yes, 27 sounds young, but I think a lot of working class people listening will understand that business of actually seeing quite a lot, even at a young age.

So there was also, I think, a preparedness to take on responsibility.

But on another level, yes, in terms of Westminster, I'd never been to the House of Commons.

I'd barely come out of Westminster Station.

You've never been to the House of Commons for the first time?

Well, my first time.

I wasn't seasoned in the Labour Party, and the minutiae of the Labour Party, and who knows who, and politics can feel quite tribal, and there were certainly moments where I felt, as I said before, a degree of imposter syndrome, which is what a lot of working class people feel in those circumstances took me a few years, really, to find my voice and to find my feet.

But I hope those listening would say, by the time of the 2011 riots, the Windrush scandal, Grenfell Tower, and Brexit, and successive things, you know, I had found my voice by that stage.

Do you think that you've been in receipt of racism in your political career, in terms of how the media talk about you treat you since 2001, maybe it's got better now, but how much racism do you think you've been on the receiving end of?

I'm not, I haven't, I'm not, I'm not that conscious that I feel hard done by, in that sense.

I think I prefer to leave that for commentators who look at these things in more detail than I do.

I think what I would say is that the atmosphere in this country certainly has felt more fragile, more challenging, and at times one's seen more racism as a consequence of really the birth and acceleration of social media, coupled, I think, with the very divisive time that was the decision on Brexit.

But that hasn't felt so much about the media establishment.

Look, I've got a show on LBC, I don't think I can complain as opposed to some of the things that we've seen going on in wider society as a whole.

Well, indeed, and we've seen politicians increasingly use rhetoric that perhaps we wouldn't have heard some years ago.

When we had the Home Secretary talk about an invasion on our southern coast, I mean, what did you think about that?

How did you react to that when you heard that?

Pretty divisive, isn't it?

Well, look, I think that we always have to search whatever your political tradition, whether you're speaking from the centre left or the centre right, for a politics that unites us.

One nation Tory tradition, I would say, speaks to that.

What we're seeing at the moment is nowhere near that.

And I just think that Suella Brafman is the sort of member of parliament that I just don't

think would have been Home Secretary under previous Conservative prime ministers.
So I think the system's probably getting better at learning to be a bit more temperate, particularly about language on social media.
And I think that, you know, I've tweeted the odd thing back in the day, not so much these days where I've looked back and thought maybe I shouldn't have said that.
Why?
Because you can generate a pile on.
You think you've done that before?
I did do that once and I was very upset about it.
I wrote about it in my book, Tribes.
I can't now remember the detail of the incident, but I was critical of a senior female journalist.
I didn't think she was neutral.
She was a BBC journalist in the way that she presented some of the Boris Johnson had done and I criticised her on Twitter.
And then there was a pile on and I felt really bad because all these horrible people basically picked on this journalist because she's a woman.
And that was not what I intended.
So I do think you have to be careful with the mediums that are there.
And just while we're talking about Suella Brafman and the small boat situation, you would...
I should never apologise to that journalist than she forgave me.
Yeah.
Very admirable.
You would never support us pulling out of the European Convention on Human Rights?
No.
I mean, that's an extraordinary thing to suggest.
One of the great architects of the Convention was Churchill.
You know, it's part of the rules-based order that we were instrumental in setting up.
So Labour government that you were part of would never touch that idea?
Absolutely not.
Right.
We will be back with David in just a minute.
My brother-in-law died suddenly and now my sister and her kids have to sell their home.
That's why I told my husband we could not put off getting life insurance any longer.
An agent offered us a 10-year \$500,000 policy for nearly \$50 a month.
Then we called select quote.
Select quote found us identical coverage for only \$19 a month, a savings of \$369 a year.
Only you need a \$500,000 policy or a \$5 million policy.
Select quote could save you more than 50% on term life insurance.
For your free quote, go to selectquote.com, selectquote.com, that's selectquote.com.
Select quote.
We shop, you save.
Full details on example policies at selectquote.com slash commercials.
This is The News Agents.

We are back with David Lammy.

So David, you're in the Privy Council now, you ended up going to the Coronation, didn't you?

I'm in the Privy Council now.

How does that feel?

Are you part of the establishment now?

Yes, I probably am.

You are.

And you're so comfortable with that?

I don't think you could.

It's not a great hell you could suggest if you're a Privy Council standing around pledging allegiance to the king.

And how do you feel about that?

Because you're not part of it.

Yeah.

Again, to talk about the working class thing, there is, and this is something I think people often never quite understand, or when they're talking about this middle class people never quite understand.

Actually, sometimes people talk kia-stama, right?

They like to say sir kia-stama, but it's like actually a lot of working class people really like that.

And do you feel like actually being part of the Privy Council, you're comfortable with that being part of the establishment is actually what you aim to be in a sense?

I think people are okay if you earned it.

I've known Kia now for a few years.

I can tell you his respect in the legal community is very high.

I have dear friends that worked very closely with him when he was a young lot.

He always worked for Midlandly Hard.

He earned it.

He earned that knighthood.

I don't think he's very comfortable with being sick here.

He doesn't use the phrase himself.

I don't think he's that comfortable people using it around him, but I think the public understand that he earned it.

He doesn't like it.

They're less happy if they feel you didn't earn it.

You don't think he likes some sort of hand out?

I don't think he's comfortable with it.

Why not?

I don't think he's privileged to have had the odd pipe with Kia and watched the odd football game.

Good drinking partner?

He likes a beer.

What's his tippie?

You're torturing me.

We've just had a room shuffle.

I've kept my job.

I'm not intending to lose it.

We've been in space for a week.

He won't mind.

He's a friend of the show.

Let's talk a little bit about foreign policy.

How would it be different under a Labour government?

Under you as Foreign Secretary.

The fundamental difference that I set out with the Conservatives in a speech at Chatham House earlier in the year is that we need to reconnect Britain with our allies and friends across the globe.

Why did I say that?

I think the situation with the European Union where we're not even having structured dialogue, this is regular four times a year meetings with the European Union is extraordinary.

Having a former British Prime Minister describe the French leader as an enemy is extraordinary.

It's clear that when the review of the trade deal is up in 2025, we want to revisit that deal sector by sector and certainly we want the situation that's better not just for the European Union but for British business.

If you look at the way that traders felt with the European Union, for all of those reasons we're serious about our allies and indeed the war in Ukraine demonstrates that.

We need to reconnect with the global south everywhere I go.

Countries like Kenya, South Africa, Brazil where I was a few months ago, raising real issues about Britain's decision not just to cut aid from 0.7 to 0.5 but then to spend a significant amount of that 0.5 here in the UK not supporting much of the world coming out of the pandemic and facing the climate emergency.

For all of those reasons, I want to reconnect Britain, take up our place in the world and rather than saber at all about leaving the European Convention of Human Rights, I also set out this year that we want to get back to supporting the rule of law, get back to that rules based order.

It's important if we're to stand up to forces like Russia and others that would seek to wreck that system and cause havoc I think for many, many people in the global community.

So just on the development story, this is something we covered on Wednesday on the news agents which is the fact that a third of our development budget is now being spent in the UK supporting asylum seekers refugees within the asylum system in hotels and so on.

I mean you don't want that to continue, you think that that is.

I mean Yvette Cooper's been absolutely clear, she's been scathing.

So we should find that money, that three billion from other sources.

The processing of these claims is taking more than two years, going on for years and years in which we're not in enough dialogue with our European partners, we're out of the Dublin agreement with all the consequences that that brings and of course we're now asking the British taxpayer to fund all these hotel bills because of the mess that we've had over

the last 30 years.

We fix that, we fix some of the issues that arise in relation to aid and in relation to the global south.

Just on development, it had previously been, and maybe it's still here, maybe you can clarify for us, Labour Party policy to reinstate the Department for International Development.

Is that still the case?

What we've said is that we want a new model.

We haven't set out yet whether that is a fully-fledged Department for International Development and the reason for that is because we're not clear quite what we're going to inherit.

We've had several budgets just in the last while, everyone can see what inflation's like and two, because the world that we were in in 1997, very clear they should never abolished it but the world that we were in in 1997 when we came to power last time round is different to where we are now.

Not the challenges that face the global south in some ways they've got worse but the prescription for how you then address those issues is one that I think Keir Starmer wants to take into account.

So it could be the case that you remain the foreign Commonwealth and development secretary that there isn't a restoration of a separate secretary state?

Well, look, I think that the Tories created an unholy mess to try and alleviate that mess.

The Prime Minister appointed Andrew Mitchell, they've now appointed an Assistant Permanent Secretary to be responsible for international development.

We have mirrored that of course with our Shadow Cabinet, Lisa Nandi takes on that role alongside me.

I'm really excited about working with Lisa.

Is that a bit awkward, David?

Because she used to do your job, didn't she?

She was Shadow Foreign Secretary and now she's going to effectively be, while she's in your team as a more junior member, is that going to be a bit awkward?

No, because this is an exciting time where we are in a space of policy development on international development.

And I have to say, Lisa Nandi is one of our most articulate presenters of policy.

She's a big fish, definitely.

She's not been given the biggest fish job exactly, has she?

Community that is labour.

Well, that's a question you've got to direct at Keir and her, but I think she'll do an excellent job and I'm looking forward to working alongside her.

We've been friends for many, many years and I hope that in combination we can present the UK's international development offer and it will be very, very different to what we've seen from this government because it's necessary in an age of the climate emergency where people are fleeing borders.

It's necessary in an age where people are coming out of a pandemic and there's rapid and massive food insecurity across the world and certainly where local populations raise issue of immigration, part of the way to do that, to keep people into countries, to be present in the global community.

It hasn't been a demotion for her, then.

You don't see it as a demotion for Lisa.

I'm thinking back to the last Labour government.

I'm thinking back to Claire Short's leadership.

She had her own department.

Of DFID and I'm thinking about the effective way that she led that department and raised those issues in our public life and all of the movement and sector that stood behind her and I think that that era will come again with the labour when we come back to power.

So we're recording this on Thursday and this is the day where the government has announced that we're going to be rejoining Horizon, the EU science programme, albeit as an associate member.

I mean, I take it that you welcome that, but I mean, do you see that in a way as a bit of a model?

Well, the first thing, of course I'm pleased that we've finally gone back into that scheme.

It was extraordinary that they chose to come out of the scheme, but worse still that we've lost £2 billion worth of investment as a result of being out of it.

The cycles of funding in the Horizon scheme are about seven years.

Science has lost out, Britain has lost out, the economy has lost out at a time when we couldn't.

So why is it taking them that long?

That's the first question.

Look, I think the way they've approached the European Union has been wrong and I've been really, really clear and so has Keir Starmer that whilst, of course, we're not going to rehearse the debates around the single market, we do want a stronger relationship.

I'm pleased that we finally got back into Horizon, but there are aspects of it that we want to look more closely at the detail.

Why aren't we in the Euroatom scheme?

What does that mean for Atomic Energy, which is a huge part of our industrial base, for example?

Why have they chosen that decision?

So they've made this announcement today, I and others will get into the detail about that.

Peter Keil, John Healy, our defence spokesman over the coming days, but as always with this government, I'm sure we haven't got the whole picture.

We're not going to rehash the whole arguments, as you say, but politics is very fluid now. It's very volatile.

Yeah, things can happen that you don't really expect or things that seem impossible suddenly become possible.

I mean, do you think it's inconceivable that it's not going to happen under the next Labour government, but at some point Britain could re-enter the EU?

We had the messiest of divorces.

In some senses, the Windsor framework and the decision to re-enter Horizon is, if you like, after divorce finally working out the custody arrangements for the children.

As I said to you before, under this government, there isn't even a formal mechanism by which

we meet with our European partners and discuss the issues of the day that concern us. I think it's hard to talk about getting married again when you haven't even been on your first date.

So I don't envisage that, but I haven't got a crystal ball, but I don't envisage that certainly in the next political cycle that we're entering.

One day?

As a result of the general election.

I mean, I don't know what the future holds, and I totally recognise that there is a younger generation of people in this country who feel very strongly about that vexed debate.

Of course there is.

I don't also know what will happen within the European Union itself.

I mean, look at the debates the European Union is having.

It's having a very big and slightly split debate on enlargement at this time, enlargement to the east, of course, as a consequence of the war in Ukraine.

It's got an election cycle coming up in France that could see after Macron, Pan, and there are problems in coalition governments in Spain, we've got elections coming up in Poland.

So look, I don't know what's going to happen in the European Union, let alone what Britain's relationship with the European Union will be, except to say that we're committed to reviewing the deal that was struck in 2025, and we believe that we have to be close to our allies, and that's in the best interest of the UK.

We'll be close.

At the end of the next parliament under Labour government, we'll be closer than we are now.

I think so.

I think so.

Look, I think the macro context of rising powers like India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the rise of China as a superpower alongside the United States all suggests growing regionalisation. The way that small and medium-sized countries deal with that is clubbing together, and that's the European Union.

It's why I think, by the way, it was a good decision for us to enter into a trade agreement in the Indo-Pacific, which is going to represent the lion's share of growth over this 21st century.

It's important that we're there.

However, the government themselves say that it's 0.08% it's going to add to our GDP, and that's because in this growing context of regionalisation, where there's a degree of protectionism that's come back globally in some senses, the Inflation Reduction Act in the United States represents that, the European Union have got their own version of that. Of course, you can find a situation where the UK is shut out, and that's why we have to be closer to the European Union than this government, I think, have devised and have set about and the sort of allergic nature that you see in Rishisunak and others, I think is problematic.

Well, we could diplomatically than we were before.

That's fair to say.

Well, no, I think, look, in the end, we are a...

This is a corollary.

Look, we have a seat on the Security Council.
Yeah, but we're still strong.
We're weaker than we would have been.
We're the sixth biggest economy in the world.
To be a straight talker.
The future for Britain is huge, is significant, but we have to play our part.
Is it?
And you do that.
Is only 70 million of us.
No, no, you do that with alliances.
You do that in alliance, in partnership in the modern world.
We cannot go out alone.
There have always been, and you'll recognise, there have always been two traditions, if you like, in this country.
One is Great Britain that looks outward.
The other is Little England.
I'm really clear which side of the divide I fall on in relation to that.
Are there any foreign secretaries you really admire that you want to emulate looking back through doesn't have to even be in this country?
Well, look, I mean...
Not Boris Johnson for the only...
Not Boris Johnson.
Liz Truss.
Not Liz Truss.
Not Dominic Robb.
Probably not that recent.
Okay, we'll probably have to go a bit further back.
Look, I think that let's be generous.
The benefit of being in opposition, when you're doing well, you've got a strong leader, and you're in with a shot at taking office, is preparedness.
And of course, in reappointing me, I am able, alongside Keir Starmer, alongside Lee Sinardi and others, to really craft a foreign policy in a direction for this country.
You set it out in speeches, you set it out in pamphlets so that your own civil servants know what the changes might be and the international community.
The last foreign secretary that had that position was William Hague.
That was the last time, I think, that the office really commanded significant respect.
And as I go around the world, people raise with me William Hague's period.
But of course, I can think back also to Robin Cook, to Jack Straw, to Margaret Beckett that really brought climate to the fore, and to my very dear friend, David Millarband, who I think was a very effective foreign...
Keir, very interesting in foreign policy.
It's not something we hear him talk about that much, naturally, because he's focused on domestic issues for the election, but you must talk to him about it.
I talk to him about it.

Do you think he'll be a good prime minister on the world stage?

I mean, you might have to say yes, but do you think that it's something that he will enjoy?

Oh, absolutely, because he's naturally someone who likes building alliances.

I've been with him when he's met Olaf Schultz.

I've been with him when he's met Justin Trudeau.

We're spending some time together next week on foreign policy.

He is very engaged, very on the issues.

Obviously, previously, in relation to all the issues around Europe, he was our shadow of Brexit, so he knows all of those issues.

He doesn't like talking about that, does he?

He's got all of his eyes on relation to that, and you will have noticed that in his period as leader of the opposition, he has spent a lot of time in Northern Ireland.

His own background means as director of public prosecutions, he spent time in Northern Ireland.

He understands our responsibilities there very closely.

We try to strike a cross-party position on some of the issues that came out of the Windsor framework particularly.

So yes, absolutely, foreign policy is on the radar, but you're right.

In the end, I suspect the next election will be default on domestic issues, but people understand that the cost of living crisis we've have is largely driven by geopolitics, and so foreign policy and domestic policy intertwine and combine.

I just want to ask you, though, about on foreign policy, are you surprised the Prime Minister is not going to hunger?

I mean, that's ridiculous.

Why is it so boneheaded?

I just can't understand it.

I should just say this is the UN General Assembly.

This is the UN General Assembly.

You explain.

I mean, you know, and he's been criticised by other former global leaders.

All the world leaders tend to go.

Why?

Because you go, it's a chance to showcase your country on a world stage.

We are a member of the Security Council.

We were one of the countries that really set up the United Nations.

But more than that, it's an opportunity to have bilaterals with lots of smaller countries that the UK Prime Minister is not likely to visit.

Why would you pass up that when it's in the UK's national interest to be engaged around the world?

I have no idea.

You're surprised.

I suspect it's got something to do with a sort of weakness that he's demonstrating, perhaps he thinks that people will think I'm getting on with these issues domestically, but it weakens our position and there's going to be a lot more for us to do as a consequence

of him sort of bottling out of these things.

He was not going to go to COP and now he's not going to Unger.

Finally, David, let's assume that you get what you hope for, which is that Labour will win the next election in whatever form.

You become Foreign Secretary.

Your parents were from the West Indies.

They're not with us now, right?

They're not with us now.

What do you think they would have made of it, seeing their boy as Foreign Secretary?

I think that they would be shocked, shocked, but they did both love this country in their own ways.

This country offered both of them the opportunity to change their lives and their fortunes, to get a better opportunity for their children.

I think that they would be so tickled, so surprised.

I wish they were here to see it, but I have got aunts, uncles who are still alive.

I make it my business to be in touch with them the whole time and I sort of get some of that joy at what might be about to come from them.

It would be quite a moment in a different way, wouldn't it?

The Foreign Secretary's office and all of the kind of building and the architecture and the sculpture and everything, it's deeply colonial.

The C in the FCO used to stand for the Foreign and Colonial Office, not Commonwealth Office.

It would be quite the thing to have a son of West Indian immigrants as Foreign Secretary sat in that office surrounded by all that.

Yes, it would be, but you know, I'm serious about when you can't be a member of Parliament if you don't love your country.

This country gave my parents a lot.

It's given me a lot.

You've talked to me about my own life story, going to Harvard.

That was down to wonderful teachers in Tottenham and Peterborough.

In a sense, great countries always pose the ability to change and flex and be something new in different times, that sense of renewal.

Prime Ministers can strike that sense of renewal.

I'm thinking of Atley, of course, of Wilson, of Blair, but also of Margaret Thatcher.

In a sense, Britain's modern identity, the Britain that won the Olympics and presented itself to the 2012, is part of that story, if you like, that multi-cultural story that the world recognised when it granted us the Olympics, and we came together so beautifully in 2012.

So it doesn't surprise me that that is a prospect, but let's see what the British people decide.

David, talk to you all day, but you've got things to do.

You've got to go and prepare for your LBC show on Saturday, most importantly of all.

So our mutual bosses will insist I let you go.

So thank you so much, David.

Thanks for coming into the news, Agents Bunker.

Thank you.

Right, that is it from all of us this week.

The head of LBC is going to kill me.

David Lammy's show is on a Sunday, of course.

Catch it while you can.

Remember, you can catch up on all of our shows from this week on Global Player and send us story tips and feedback to newsagents.global.com.

No, John and Emily, of course, this Friday, called it the Metropolitan Police.

They were last seen in Richmond Park.

Anyone with any information can contact us in the usual ways.

Next to our production team on newsagents, Gabriel Radis, Laura Fitzpatrick, Georgia Foxwell, Will Gibson-Smith, Alex Barnett and Rory Simon, our editor is Tom Hughes.

It is presented by Emily.

I live with a squirrel now, mate.

This is John.

Just call me Steve Irwin-Sople and me, Lewis Goodall.

We'll see you on Monday.

Have a lovely weekend.

The newsagents with Emily Maitlis, John Sople and Lewis Goodall.

This has been a Global Player original podcast and a Persephoneka production.