

[Transcript] The News Agents / Does Rishi Sunak care about the North?

This is a Global Player Original Podcast.

We're straight talking people in the north. It's a yes or a no. Are you scrapping the HS2 line between Birmingham and Manchester?

No, like I said, I'm not speculating on future things. We've got spades in the ground right now and we're getting on. But what people also want to know? Government is always making sure that we get value for money out of everything we do, but that's just a statement of the obvious. But I think what people also should know, because I know there's a lot of focus on this one thing, but actually, what are the journeys that people use most in Greater Manchester or across the north? It's in their cars right now, getting to work, taking their kids to school, making sure that the roads are free of potholes. That's probably priority number one that people raise with me.

We're not talking about potholes. The main story right now, across the country, is people want to know about the future of HS2 and still now, you can't give me a yes or a no and you're the man in control.

Are the beauty of local radio. Anna Jameson there with our Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak. She's speaking on BBC Radio Manchester and she is getting straight to the heart of what she calls what straight talking people want to know about. Will you just tell us what your decision is on HS2? We need to know.

But I love the fact that Rishi Sunak seems to suggest it's a binary choice. You can have HS2 or you can have your potholes fixed but you can't have both. It is a slightly ridiculous argument to be making. There is a big decision to be taken and you get the impression that the Tories sense that they're damned if they do and they're damned if they don't.

Welcome to the news agents.

The news agents.

It's John.

It's Emily.

And it's Lewis.

Either the future of integrated rail transport in the United Kingdom that brings us up to date for the 21st century or the biggest white elephant, most expensive white elephant in the history of mankind with a rail line that will go from Birmingham to not quite London.

I'm glad you added the second bit about the white elephant rather than leaving it on the future of integrated transport in the United Kingdom. This is very, very glamorous, John. It's extraordinary. It should be one of the great examples of us building modern infrastructure to be able to move goods and supply chains and deal with kind of things moving around the country at great speed, which a lot of European countries seem to have taken in their stride and which we still seem to be fumbling around with in the most hopeless way. This is the man who said he was going to be making the hard choices. And he went in saying he'd talk about, you know, future for our children, future for our grandchildren. And don't forget when it came to his U-turn on the green taxes just 10 days ago, he managed to do that pretty much overnight. There was a leak. He came to the podium. He told everyone that, yes, those targets were going to be pushed back. This time he's in this completely, I think, unsustainable position. He won't say it's going to happen. He won't say it's going to be pulled, partly because he's talking to a parliamentary base, which I think is

almost 50-50 split. Fascinating to see former prime ministers saying you've got to do it. Don't you realize you've got to do it? And chances as well, their legacy rests on this. And then on the other side, somebody like William Hague, you know, in a very prominent conservative position, his predecessor, who's saying, well, it should never have got to this.

Can we just rewind a bit, right? I mean, soon after, not for the first time, sounds irritated to be asked about something in an interview, right? It sounds peeved about it, right? And can we just rewind to say why he's being asked about it? The reason he's being asked about it, and for some reason sounds annoyed that he's being asked to rule out or to comment at HS2. The reason he's been asked about it is because his number 10 has briefed to the newspapers that this cancellation is coming. If he didn't want to be asked about it, asked about it no less on the eve of the Conservative Party conference, which is being held in which city, Manchester, maybe it wasn't the most stellar media strategy in the world to brief, you know, week or so before that conference was being held, that one of the biggest infrastructure projects this country has seen since the 19th century, which would reach its terminus in Manchester is probably not going to end up in Manchester. You know, that is the media strategy that number 10 has chosen to have. And they're doing it, as Emily said, partly under the auspices of this kind of we're taking long term decisions in the future of the country, which apparently involves not doing long term infrastructure, which again is an interesting political strategy. Well, I do think that what is particularly problematic about HS2 is that all the building work has taken place over the period of the Tory government since they came to power in 2010. Tens of billions of taxpayer pounds have been spent on the construction projects on all the dislocation and disruption that has been caused by it. And if it ends up, as we think it will, that it's going to run from Birmingham to Old Oak Common, I think it is, wherever that may be. Get used to saying that because it might just be the most famous station in the land. The infrastructure project no one wanted. Exactly. And then you are left with this edifice. We talk about political legacy. The political legacy will be this scar that runs from Birmingham down the Chilterns into the outskirts of London and stops, having cost billions and billions of pounds. And by elections lost. And by elections lost. I mean, what a testament. Are you saying, John, that there's not an enormous commuter demand from all of the commuters who go

from Old Oak Common to Birmingham on a regular basis? I mean, those people are going to actually luck out. They're going to have an empty train and be able to get there in about 20 minutes flat. But I also think this is politically very sensitive for Rishi Sunak himself. You've talked about the legacy of 13 years of the Tories. And Louise Haig, who's Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, is going for the jugular here because she's looking back and saying, actually, this goes right to your doorstep. Yes, you're the Prime Minister now. But you were the Chancellor before that. And you were the Chief Secretary to the Treasury before that. So if you want to look at spending decisions, if you want to ask why this is now troubled, if you want to ask why money is being wasted, it's not just about the party. It goes directly. That chain of command is directly back to the person who was making every single one of those spending decisions. Well, I've seen some briefing on that where it said, well, he did want to stop it, but he was overruled by Boris. Oh, really? Did you make that public? Did you kind of express anywhere that you thought this was a mad, batshit crazy idea and that we shouldn't be spending these billions? It's now got to the

stage where if they do extend to Manchester, it's going to cost a bloody fortune because of the overruns and this badly managed infrastructure project. Yes, inflation has played a part as well. But this has been done while they have been running the country and it's hard to get away from.

And so you either sink billions almost right off the billions that you've already spent and say, well, that was a waste of taxpayers' money. Or you spend billions and billions more and take it to Manchester, even though the costs are now astronomical. Should we just play political monopoly? Like if you land, you've just landed on HS2. Do you cancel it or do you? Have you got a hotel there? Or do you do it? I'm going to go for houses first, I think. Definitely. By the water works privatised, of course. No good. But what would you do if you're him now? Would you build it? Yeah, absolutely. Because this country, right, well, what's great partly is about what John said, which is like the way that we've been talking about this in last week or so is as if like HS2 is part of the weather. Like it's just come out of nowhere. It's, oh, God, the costs, they've gone out of control, haven't they? They've gone out of control while the government, it's run separately, is an independent organisation, but the government and the Secretary of State for Transport ultimately

has oversight. But what is so depressing about this is that we're losing sight of the big picture here, which is that this HS2 overall just raises like profound questions about the capability of the British state. Totally. This isn't the British state like sending someone to the moon. This is, which, by the way, was done in the 60s as well. This is something which has been done in country after country. Decades ago, Japan built its first bullet train in 1964. Well, so did we, I mean, Victorians famously built Britain, right? This is what I mean, right? Okay, so, and this is what I find frustrating. What we've got with HS2, it's an example of treasury brain. Why did the building work not start in the north and happen on the whole line concurrently? Why? Because the treasury at

the time, they wanted to spread the costs out. So it looked like we weren't adding to the public public sector borrowing requirement all in one year because we're obsessed with getting borrowing down. If we'd started it earlier, we would be in a position now where it would almost be finished, or the equivalent line would almost be finished as the London to Birmingham line will be finished in a couple of years. And this is the problem. The problem with treasury brain is that it knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. If the treasury had been in charge in the 19th century, we wouldn't have the west coast mainline, we wouldn't have the east coast mainline, we wouldn't have all of the infrastructure rely on today. And the truth is that in 20 years time, in 30 years time, in 40 years time, if we build this line, literally no one using it, and it will transform the economic geography of our country, no one using it, getting from Birmingham to London in 35 minutes or Manchester to Birmingham 50 minutes is going to be going, what, how much does cost back in the 2020s or the 2030s? That's just not how it works, but it is how the treasury works. But look at the arguments that were taking place when I was a kid over whether there should be a channel tunnel. People were saying that was going to be this great white elephant, why are we building this? And they did it with the Millennium Dome, as we used to call it. The Millennium Dome is peanuts, it's loose change compared to the cost. But it wasn't at the time, it was a massive political football. But the sums of money involved were miniscule compared to HS2. When the channel tunnel was built, people were saying, oh, we don't need this, what on earth is this for? We've got perfectly good ferries that run from Dover to Calais, we do not need it.

And we look at it now and you think, oh my God, you go to Paris in two hours and a quarter from, you know, on high speed rail all the way. And you should think, how fantastic.

But I don't think saying it will seem a small sum in the future is enough. And I think if you go back to the National Audit Office, they were talking about cost increases not being necessary.

And I think that is critical to this, which is that, and again, this goes back to the labour argument, a detailed estimate of the full cost of the programme has not yet been completed.

How could they have been so careless? How could they fundamentally have been so careless with millions that we didn't even know what the expenditure or the waste was looking like?

And I think that still is a question that rests with whoever now makes the decision, either to continue or else to scrap.

And what Rishi Sunak is saying is that what is as important or more important is east-west connections across the north of England and connections in other parts of between cities.

And that's absolutely true, of course they are. And the question is, you know, people talk about Northern Powerhouse Rail, which is the railway line between Leeds and Manchester. Again, that hasn't been built yet. There's no question that if HS2 is cancelled tomorrow, that suddenly all of the money is going to be diverted into that, it won't happen.

But also, as indeed the Radio Manchester host was talking about this morning, the two projects are connected. Actually, part of the plan of HS2 helps enable Northern Powerhouse Rail. So, you know, all of these things are connected and it shouldn't be either or. The Treasury argument is that the cost overrun is so profound now that basically it will absorb virtually the entire British transport capital budget for the next 10 to 15 years. Like if we build this, virtually nothing else is going to get built. But there's two things to say about that, is one, again, the question has to then be why on earth has this been allowed to happen? There should be a public inquiry about it, frankly. And secondly, that's going to be a really good use of money. Well, you know what, maybe because then we would be able to know at least what went

wrong. And secondly, in terms of state capability, like if we can't build a railway line, what hope is there around net zero? What hope is there around decarbonizing the energy grid, which is like 100

times more complicated and 100 times more ambitious than just building a technology, which is around

in the 1960s in which the French and the Japanese did 60 years ago. I ask you for your imagination to indulge your imagination for a moment. If the politician X, Y, Hunt, Sunak stands up now and says we're going to abandon this, but we're going to concentrate on East West railway line, when would that be built? They don't have a need of an agreed on a route that it should take of what it should do, of what the specifications. They can't build a railway again. It's going to be another 30, 40 years before that's built. But it's not... So the idea that you just delay and say, well, we're not going to do HS2, but we will do East West. Oh my God. I mean, you know, that is a council of despair. Well, joining us now is Henry Murison. He's the chief executive of Northern Powerhouse. And as you'd expect, is a firm advocate for HS2. But he's also somebody who's worked very closely with Rishi Sunak, who remembers Rishi Sunak's endorsement of HS2 in the early days and doesn't, quite frankly, understand what has happened to that politician now. So Henry, do you think this is a stay of execution? Or do you think you've actually got them to use a very obvious metaphor, get back on track? Everything these days seems to be about kind of

erasing the Boris Johnson legacy, right? So, I mean, the idea of Northern Powerhouse Rail was one of Boris's big ideas, but it was Rishi who suggested it to him because I helped Rishi convince the Prime Minister back when Boris was running to be leader. And that's interesting.

Feel like a very long, long time ago to make this policy a key part of their domestic platform.

And the challenge is, and Rishi has understood this since that period, because he's never been a huge HS2 fan, but he's always been a big fan of building a new railway line across the Pennines.

The turn here is to what extent is erasing something Boris wanted, enough of a reason to trash your own supposed kind of big idea from when you were a backbencher and a junior minister?

It feels like a very high price to pay just to simply get Boris Johnson out of the picture.

That's what he's trying to achieve. Henry, just answer this for me. You talked about how Rishi Yotsunak has always understood the argument for an East-West route. Can you say we're going to stop HS2 at Birmingham and with the money instead, we'll build a new trans-Pennine route instead? So you could have said that, and he could have said that this morning on Radio Manchester.

What he actually said under questioning was, you don't need HS2 to build Northern Powerhouse Rail.

And the problem is you need a little bit of it. It's significant in cash terms, but you need some of it. And if you deny that you need that, he ended up getting himself in a place where he said that Northern Powerhouse Rail doesn't need to go to Liverpool. Well, Liverpool's always been on the Northern Powerhouse Rail network. They cut hull off it, but Liverpool's still on it. And so if Northern Power of Rail is supposed to go from Liverpool through Warrington to Manchester Airport and then over to Leeds through a place called Marsden, you can't do that if you don't have the tunnel between Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport or the station at Piccadilly that HS2 significantly upgrades and builds a new element to. Because if you don't have that bit in the middle, you can't get anywhere, you'll end up having a railway that starts in Liverpool and ends up in a field near Manchester Airport and vice versa, you'll get to the edges of Manchester and then have nowhere for the trains to go from Yorkshire. So what I think the Prime Minister might be seeking to do is redefine Northern Powerhouse Rail as not including new line and just being an upgrade.

Well, we're already getting an upgrade that's 15 years late that's going to allow one more train an hour between Leeds and Manchester. And I think the Prime Minister might be trying to argue that

an upgrade that's 15 years late that actually is all it's doing is in reality apart from one extra train dealing with a backlog of maintenance and isn't even probably even really as ambitious as Thameslink was for those places that that connected together when the Thameslink program was done by Network Rail is somehow Northern Powerhouse Rail because it isn't. We want a new line across the Pennines. That's the only way to move significantly more people between the Northern Cities. That's what Jim O'Neill envisaged when he did the Cities Growth Commission and then

was brought into government by George Osborne to be commercial secretary.

And so if he tries to argue that Northern Powerhouse Rail doesn't require a line between Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport, then he is seeking, I believe, to start pitch rolling to redefine this railway as not being new at all. And if he is going to try and pull that off, he is going to find an even more negative response than the one he got to the cancellation of HS2

because there might be lots of people in the north of England who don't like HS2 a lot. They might find the idea of it stopping at Birmingham and the most valuable bit to the north not being built as unacceptable. But even more of them will be against the idea that we try and downgrade what was supposed to be a new line to be just an upgrade because that would mean literally that we have the railways the Victorians built us in the north of England. And in 10, 15, 20, 30 years, the Rishisunak legacy would be we would have exactly the same railways that we always had, despite the fact that this Conservative government has spent 13 years promising first to build a new North South network to Manchester and to Leeds because we shouldn't forget about the Eastern leg. And then in that famous Northern Powerhouse speech, George Osborne promised an East West line, again repeated by Boris Johnson with Rishi in the room sat on the front row, promising that East West line again stood in front of that rocket. It's erasing a whole kind of decade, almost and a half of Conservative economic policy, Conservative policy on transport in the sort of the flick of the pen in the approach to spending review. It just feels like a massive vault fast to vault fast on HS2 might be considered politically brave to vault fast on HS2 and Northern Powerhouse rail is basically saying everything I did before I joined the cabinet was all a complete kind of lie. I didn't believe any of it because before we joined the cabinet, that was his top interest was on. It wasn't his free ports. It was Northern Powerhouse rail. He was absolutely obsessed with it. And if he gives up on it, what does that mean about what he really stands for? He's supposed to be resetting himself to be all about the real Rishi. Well, I thought I knew the real Rishi told me it was the real Rishi. And the real Rishi doesn't seem to be the one that I knew when I first met him and was friends with him all those years ago. Henry, really, really good to hear those thoughts. Thank you ever so much for joining us. Thanks so much. This is the news agents.

So we talked about a potential Tory U-turn. There is a Labour U-turn in town today as well, which is around one of the few really distinctive policies Labour have had and have been willing to show some ankle on has been around private schools. And the idea that they were going to withdraw charitable status from private schools and make anyone who sends their kid to a private school pay that on their school fees. And Labour have done a bit of a U-turn on that today or a partial one, because they're now saying that private schools would retain some of their tax breaks via charitable status under a Labour government. They're saying that the party no longer needs to end the charitable status of private schools to achieve its policy of charging 20% on fees and ending business rate relief in England. Cue conservatives and others who like to talk about what they say at Stamford being a flip-flopper saying that he's done it again. But is the force of this that Labour will still be able to levy a 20% VAT on people's school fees? So if the school fees are, I don't know, £10,000 a term, they become £12,000 a term. That is remaining. That's going to stay. But the charitable status, which they were saying before, they would need to end in order to levy that VAT, they're now saying they've discovered they don't need to do that so the private schools can retain their charitable status. But on half the policy, effectively, it doesn't remain. Let's just listen to Rachel Reeves, the shadow Chancellor, speaking in 2021. And she's laying out exactly what Labour are pledging to do. Here's the truth. Private schools are not charities. And so we will end that exemption and put that money straight into our state schools, state schools like the one I went to. Conference, that is what a Labour

government will do. So I've been speaking this morning to people quite close to the Labour leader and I think the feeling is that they shouldn't have enunciated that quite in the way they did at the time they did because it is very clear what she's saying, their charitable status must go. But I think the problem with this is when they started looking into the Charities Act of 2007, they did what they call a public benefit test to see how many of the schools would fall under this charitable status thing. And they said, look, a third of the schools aren't really doing anything. So yeah, fine, we'll get rid of them. Two thirds of the private schools probably are now enmeshed in schemes that are charitable that do include endowments. And so actually, they'd have a really big legal battle on their hands if they pulled out of this now, they can do the VAT, they can end the loopholes. That's easy. You just say, if you want to send your kids to private school, sorry, you're going to have to pony up and pay like everyone else does. You can't get any tax breaks for that. But I think undoing the charitable status is more complicated because if a private school has worked in a partnership with another school, and they're then being told that that status goes, what then happens to the money or the investment or the partnership or the community hall or the shared space, whatever, I think then they've got a lot of problems on their hands. So I think the feeling amongst laborers, they were stupid. They were stupid actually to have said it, to have spelled it out in the way they did. But they've got to the place that they're happy with now, if they can stop conservatives calling it a U-turn, which they won't. Which they definitely will. I've got an idea that would be very simple, just abolish them. Then we don't need to be charities either one way or the other. I couldn't see that coming.

Just get rid.

Lewis Goodall.

Time to just get rid. Then we don't have to worry about them being charities or not. Then we can finally make Eaton Slough Comprehensive and get all the local, well, it can be Slough Comprehensive too. And we can get all the local boys and girls to use some of their silly grand alters.

You could just abolish schools while you're at it and get everyone to come in.

Oh yeah, because that's the obvious next extension, isn't it?

Okay, if we can't have private schools, let's just get rid of all the schools.

Okay, so Lewis, you've set out your radical policy agenda now.

Which is basically no choice Britain.

No choice Britain, exactly.

No, no. It's just the same for everybody, same start in life for everybody, not being able to buy your way around the system.

Okay, that's your choice. But isn't the political problem that Labour have got now is that it does again look like anything that was red meat has become tofu.

It's become bland. It's been sort of muted of any kind of sense of this being a policy that is a distinguishing mark. You know, there's no, what are the clear policies where Labour is prepared to put its flag in the ground and say, this is the big battle where we differ from the Conservatives.

Do you know what I think's happened? I think the Labour of 2021, which is when all those big announcements were coming, was not a Labour that thought that they might get elected in 2024.

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And it's all just happened too fast that Keir Starmer,
and we've sort of explored this little bit, has become three Labour leaders in one.
He was the Kinnock moderniser. You know, he had to move away from Corbyn.
He then had to sort of move into safe shoes of John Smith.
And now he's got to be electable Tony Blair.
And I think if Labour in 2021 could have seen where Labour in 2024 would be,
they probably wouldn't have put so much down.
And speaking to, let's say, Labour grandees,
the moment they get frustrated with Keir Starmer
is when he sets out too much of his spending agenda.
And they just think he shouldn't be doing that.
You should not be putting that out before an election.
We're joined now in the news agent studio by Bridget Phillipson,
the Shadow Education Secretary.
And no big surprise, this is being portrayed as another Labour flip-flop.
It's fair criticism, isn't it?
No, we've always been clear that the way that we will drive those high standards
in our state schools is by ending the tax breaks.
The private schools enjoy so around VAT and business rates.
That's precisely what we intend to do,
because I'm determined that we deliver more teachers into our classrooms,
better mental health support for all of our young people,
but also greater support in the early years
for children's speech and language development.
And we'll use the money that we raise
by ending the tax breaks that private schools enjoy
and putting that money in a very targeted way into our state schools.
But when Rachel Reeves said in 2021,
here's the truth, private schools are not charities,
and so we will end that exemption
and put that money straight into our state schools,
that is what a Labour government will do.
And it brought cheers and whoops of delight.
You're not doing that.
Well, we concluded it wasn't necessary
to touch the charitable status in order to deliver
those VAT and business rates changes.
So why did you say the first place?
These things sometimes do get slightly conflated,
but what we're clear about, what we've always been clear about
is that it's the VAT and the business rates.
Now, I think politics is about priorities
and it's about the choices that politicians make.
I see no good reason why private schools

continue to enjoy these tax breaks
and why conservative politicians,
when they lecture us about tough choices
and not prepared to make what I think
is a relatively straightforward change,
that could happen very quickly,
that would deliver more money into our state schools
who are under enormous pressure at the moment.
So was it ill thought through in 2021?
No, we've been looking at the detail
of how we would implement it
and the conclusion we have reached is that...
Well, therefore, it was ill thought through.
No, is that in delivering the VAT and business rate changes,
we can do that very straightforwardly
and we would seek to do that very quickly
if we formed the next government.
But as I say, you know, conservative ministers
are very fond of telling us there are hard choices.
Soon, I seem to spend all of his time
lecturing other people on these tough choices.
I tell you, he could take that policy tomorrow,
he could get on and do it, we would back him,
but he's not going to do that
because it's other people's children.
Look, we've spent the first 20 minutes on this podcast
talking about HS2 and hard choices
and what the government is doing.
But here we want to talk about labour
and the choice you've made.
You've supported charitable status being removed
and now you've abandoned that.
But not all private schools have charitable status
in the first place.
But this policy, in terms of the tax breaks,
the VAT and the business rates,
we know that that would raise £1.3 to £1.5 billion a year net.
That's the estimate from the Institute for Fiscal Studies
and we would use that money to deliver
high and rising standards in our state schools.
That's where the vast majority of our children
go to school.
That will be my priority if I were Education Secretary.
You've already seen the Daily Mail going

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on the warpath about it.

They've come out and said in yesterday's front page,

Labour's class war begins on day one.

Comfortable with that?

I am very ambitious for children and young people in our country and have high aspirations for them.

But I believe that we should end the tax breaks and put that money into a brilliant state education for every child.

Parents want the best for their children.

Absolutely.

But I've just seen no good reason.

As a question of fairness,

the private school should enjoy these tax breaks.

And when the Conservative Party says that Keir Starmer

is now a flip-flopper of the highest order,

not just middle-order flip-flopper,

but the highest order,

there is a point to it, isn't it,

that an awful lot of Labour people say,

well, we kind of know what we don't believe anymore,

but we're not sure what we do.

Well, as I've just set out,

we will be delivering high and rising standards

in our state schools,

and we'll do that by ending those tax breaks.

That is completely unchanged.

Our focus, my focus,

where it comes to education

is making sure that wherever you're from,

whatever your background,

you have every chance to succeed in life.

And I think it's a bit rich, to be honest,

for Sunak, who cannot give us a straight answer on HS2,

just as he's about to head up to Manchester

around what they're going to do on all of this,

to lecture other people.

And I just think this is a really, really straightforward way

that we can raise revenue to invest in our state schools.

I know this isn't your area,

but you've raised it.

Is Labour giving an absolute commitment

to building the second phase of HS2 to Manchester?

Of course we would want it to go ahead,

but we don't know what the government
are going to do from now until then.
So you're no clearer than Richie Sunak.
Well, if they cancel it
and create a massive black hole in the funding,
that would present challenges
for an incoming Labour government.
And they might have taken decisions
that render the further progress of the line
impossible to deliver in its current form.
I think this represents a real opportunity
for communities right across the North,
not just in the Northwest,
but also in the Northeast too,
where I'm a Member of Parliament.
And I think, yet again,
a government that isn't planning for the long term.
We see it in education too.
You know, the chickens have come home to roost.
The failure to invest in our schools
of state over 13 years
means that as we sit here speaking today,
there are children across our country
in portly cabins,
or at home having remote learning once again
because of the total failure of the government
to plan for the long term.
We will be different.
We want to make sure that we move away
from this sticking plaster approach
and get a much better plan for the long term.
Bridget Phipps, thank you very much indeed.
Thank you.
This is The News Agents.
Just to remind you,
we stayed up so that you didn't have to.
And believe me, you probably didn't have to.
You didn't have to stay up.
Yeah, we watched the Republican debate
that took place in the wee small hours
of this morning, UK time.
It was in California.
And it was a noisy, rumbustious affair,
but with some good moments in it as well.

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Really good moments.
And we will be analyzing that on News Agents USA.
And we are featuring Nick,
who is our journalism student from California.
Who was that?
Is featuring on the News Agents for the first time
and was there in the room,
giving us on-the-minute feedback.
Who's Nick?
Who's Lewis?
Lewis is jealous now.
Yeah, who's Lewis?
Who the hell's Nick?
Nose put out of joint.
Well put out of joint.
Unbelievable.
It's because I went to a state school.
Oh my God, here we go.
It's only YouTube, of course.
Yeah, exactly.
Right, just a little postscript to today's show.
Since we recorded,
Ofcom have made an announcement.
And of course, this relates to what we were talking about
on yesterday's show.
Dan Wooden and his gratuitous exchange with Lawrence Fox,
which has seen them both suspended from GB News.
Well, Ofcom, the regulator,
has confirmed this afternoon
that they are launching an investigation
into Tuesday's episode of Dan Wooden Tonight
on GB News under their rules on offense.
They say they received 7,300 complaints about the program.
And they're investigating under rule 2.3
of the broadcasting code,
my favorite bit of the code,
which states that in applying generally accepted standards,
broadcasters must ensure the material
which may cause offense is justified by the context.
Dan Wooden is lucky that Ofcom
were almost certainly going to be fairer to him
than he has ever been to anyone else.
We'll be back tomorrow.
See you then.

[Transcript] The News Agents / Does Rishi Sunak care about the North?

This has been a global player original podcast
and a Persephoneka production.