

[Transcript] The News Agents / How students are getting screwed...again

This is a global player original podcast at the end of June I left university without the history degree I've been working towards for the last three years.

Because my degree is weighted solely towards final year, it means that I've left university with nothing to show for it.

No marks, absolutely nothing.

This is the class of 23.

The graduates who have emerged at the most benighted time I would think to be a student.

Because you've gone through Covid, you've had a lot of your lectures online, you've lived your university life at home, you've done your finals and you haven't got a degree certificate at the end of it.

Because the university lecturers union has not been marking papers as part of their industrial dispute with the college and university authorities.

This dispute has been going on for months and it hasn't been reported that much but it is now coming to a head because of course we are at the time of the year where students who've just left university should be receiving their grades, their marks and happily going on to their master's courses, going on to their graduate jobs and yet thousands and thousands of them cannot because of this marking boycott.

So on today's show we're going to be delving into this situation and asking when it might be resolved on what wider effect on the economy, yes the economy, it might have.

Welcome to the news agents.

The news agents.

It's John, it's Lewis and these students that are kind of emerging from their ivory towers of academe are just doing so as well with tens of thousands of pounds in debt.

What they have to show for it is a degree certificate that sort of says to be confirmed.

We don't know yet whether you've passed, we don't know yet whether you've got a two one or a first or a two two and of course all sorts of things hinge on that degree, what job you get, the offers you've had, whether you go on to do a master's.

You hold panoply and so you've got a generation who spent their first two years at home and now in abeyance waiting for this situation to be resolved.

Yeah and it is basically purgatory for thousands and thousands of students.

It's estimated that up to 13,000 students won't be able to graduate at all because it slightly depends on the kind of rules of each particular institution or college or whatever it happens to be.

A graduation ceremony is up and down the country.

I know some of you listening to this will have experienced it yourself either with your kids or you as a student.

They are being handed literally pieces of paper which say this is a degree but it doesn't say first on it or two one on it or two two on it or whatever, it just says a pass or it just says this is TBC.

Now obviously if you've spent three years or longer working on a degree, your dissertation which also by the way probably hasn't been marked, 15,000 words, 10,000 words, whatever it is and you can imagine the frustration that despite the fact that you've put the work in, your lecturer or your examiner or whatever it happens to be isn't doing the same and this all comes back to a long standing dispute that really in a way goes back about

a decade or so when changes were made to university lecturers pension funds which basically meant they were taking a cut, a haircut in terms of the sort of money that they would be able to get when they retire and lots of other things since then and so rather than going on full strike and we have seen lots of full strikes from lecturers as well over the past year or so and longer, often now lecturers are withholding part of their labour which involves the marking and examination part of things for their students.

But the funny thing is that in a conventional industrial dispute, employees try to hurt the employers and this is a strike and which makes it so controversial and so interesting and so kind of troubling in a way to try and unpick is that the people that are being really affected by it are the students who are kind of powerless pawns in this much longer battle as you say has been going on for 10 years when some of these kids were probably 10 or 11 years old, it dates back to and yet now that they're trying to take their first steps in life, they don't know what's going to happen to them.

I'm the pro chancellor of my old university at Southampton.

Are you?

Yeah, I didn't know that.

Oh, we're in such an academic or gusts academic company.

And you know, and one of the things I do is I go and do the graduation ceremonies, I kind of do the honour for them.

Yeah, exactly, exactly.

But it is such a joyous occasion for the families.

This is such a staging post on people's lives where they feel that there is a transitional moment.

It must be really nice when you do that.

They go in as graduands, they come out as graduates.

So a lot of pomp and ceremony and all the rest of it and you wear silly Harry Potter wizard robes.

I bet you hate that.

Yeah, exactly.

And there is something magnificent about it.

And I just feel sorry, so sorry for the generation of 2023 who are coming out and don't have anything to show for it in that concrete way.

And it's such a weird occasion for the families that, yeah, well done, Billy, have you graduated?

I mean, have you got the degree or have you passed or have you got a first or have you got a third?

You know, what is it?

Yeah, and it goes back to this idea, I suppose, in a way about what a university is and this idea of also students paying for universities.

You said, John, they're paying an enormous amount now, not unusual for a graduate to leave with 50,000 of debt.

A debt, by the way, as we've discussed on this show before, that they're quite unlikely, very unlikely often to pay off.

The interest they're paying on it is going up and so they often log back in every year and find that their, the actual stock of debt hasn't declined at all.

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It very much despite the fact, the idea when we moved to that fee system was the idea that students would get better and better return for their investment.

And a lot of students, leaving aside even this question about the strike, have long questioned that, that although students have paid for a long time, the service that they're getting, the quality of education they're getting isn't necessarily proximate to that.

We've kind of created a market in higher education, but it's a very odd market.

It's not a really functioning market.

There is one other big effect of this as well that we should talk about, which is that higher education, and we so rarely talk about it in this way, and we should, higher education is one of our biggest and best exports in this country.

It is absolutely central to the British economy.

It is one of the best industries that we have.

We do it better than most, certainly most other European countries, if any in fact.

It's one of our top export earners and there will be, and as we know, higher education institutions have become more and more reliant on foreign students and there will be a lot of foreign students who by the way are paying even more than domestic students who are going back home to the United States or Asia or wherever they happen to be from, and they're China and they're parents who will have been forking out a lot for this top dollar British education.

You can imagine a reaction in terms of that as well, and if this goes on and isn't resolved, you can imagine impact on that higher education sector, which is so important for us and the economy overall.

If you have got a graduate workforce that can't start work, then that has an effect in terms of industry and business and so on.

Well, let us hear the voices of some of the students who have been affected because won't come as a surprise to you that people were quite willing to get in touch with the position that they're in.

Hi, I'm Imogen and I've just graduated this summer.

I think the thing that's frustrated me the most is the fact that the universities haven't really communicated with the students throughout this.

I had a graduate job at the end of this and I didn't even know when I was sitting my exams if I was going to be able to do it.

It was actually the lecturers who offered to do character references and everything despite the fact that they were taking industrial action.

And I think this is why a lot of students actually sympathise with the lecturers because I think we're both frustrated with the fact that the university is taking both students and lecturers for granted.

Hi, my name is Victoria and I think I've just graduated from the University of Exeter.

I was really stressed for results today and then I just got a blank transcript and it just feels it's always our year.

We were the first year to do research on type of GCSEs.

We then did our A-levels and then during our first year of university we had lockdown and we didn't get any teaching.

Then we've had strikes throughout our other periods and then no results at the end of

it and it's just kind of sitting here waiting for something to go right.

I graduated from the University of Manchester three weeks ago but without a grade rather than a certificate.

I was just given an apology letter explaining that I won't receive a grade at the moment.

I need at least a 2-1 to get on to my master's course and I'm almost guaranteed to get this but I won't receive a certificate to show to my next uni until after the strike ends which is after our master's course has already started.

My name is Yasmin and for me it feels like the university is simply just not holding up its side of the contract.

My professors and supervisors throughout my degree but especially in this last year have delivered a really education.

I feel like I've been so lucky and I've really enjoyed it and I've put in so much work, so much stress and literally over £27,000 tuition fees but it just feels like for some reason that's just not enough.

Thank you so much for getting in touch and we can talk now to Tom because he has just graduated with a, well, we're not sure what.

Tom, am I right in saying you've graduated or have you not quite graduated because of what's happening?

So I have graduated but I'm without a classification so though we've had kind of our lovely ceremony and stuff, it's all been a bit null and void.

There's no kind of sense of when we're going to get anything.

So your dissertation presumably was what, 10,000, 15,000 words, something like that? 10,000 words.

10,000 words and you handed it in some time ago and you and the rest of your classmates have not had any mark back.

I did get my dissertation back but there are two other things I didn't get but half the people in my dissertation group, for example, didn't get their dissertations back entirely depending on who kind of supervised the mark.

So there are people on my course, some have graduated, some have classifications, so many don't and there's this real kind of sense of frustration I suppose.

So it's completely arbitrary, ad hoc, some people have got some mark, some people have got some others and it's just luck of the draw.

And there's no kind of, there's no communication about any of that, it's just, you know, we've got an email maybe two weeks ago saying, you'll get, you'll see it, it'll come up when it comes up and then we've got nothing else, so we've got no way of planning or anything like that.

We'll come on to the consequences of that in a second, but isn't it just exasperating?

I mean, it's, I'm the class of 2023, we came in COVID, we've had all this stuff to deal with and then we're at this point where it should be finished and all those kind of difficulties we had, it should be over and now we're just, as I said, we're just left in this kind of bizarre limbo, no idea what we're doing.

It's so frustrating.

And practically, Tom, obviously it's frustrating in its own terms, as you say, you're part of a cohort which have had probably the worst luck of any generation, any scholastic generation

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for many, many, many years, but there are practical consequences, right?

How is this affecting you?

So for example, I want to go into a Masters next, but that can't be approved until I've got all my classifications and in fairness, admissions, they are lenient, but again, there's just, there's no communication and I know so many people who have got grad jobs that are dependent on the grade they get and they're kind of just sitting there and there'll be a point where the kind of the employers have decided, we can't wait forever because if this goes into September or October when it will officially end, that's a long time to be waiting.

So people who've got jobs lined up where if you get a 2-1, then we will offer you this job.

Yeah.

The job is in abeyance because they haven't got a 2-1, they haven't got a 2-2, they haven't got a 1st, they've got to be confirmed.

Exactly.

And so again, it's just working on a case-by-case basis.

So some employers, they'll be okay to wait and I get the impression that some are kind of at this point getting quite agitated about it, but the students have no control over any of this.

I suppose in a way, Tom, this must remind you, I mean, I did a lot of reporting back in 2020 on the exams crisis, which you would have been part of, of that cohort.

And it was so arbitrary, which school you were in depended, basically on what grade you were getting, the whole point of the exam system was sort of taken away, that standardising element.

There are hallmarks of that all over again, aren't there?

Well, again, and I think my whole time at university has been all this disruption has kind of become normalised.

And who'd you blame, Tom?

Who's to blame?

Finally, talking to professors and lecturers and PhD students who support us, the people who are taking the strike action, I don't blame them at all.

I think this is symptomatic of a kind of a further education system that especially after COVID and, you know, in kind of all the economic hardships that it's faced is just really at breaking point almost.

And I think it's this kind of wider sector problem.

Because they are profit making almost.

And then you get these really hardworking, fantastic lecturers that are just overburdened.

So I certainly don't blame them for the strikes.

That's very generous of you.

I mean, you know, there are an awful lot of people who are incredibly hardworking.

A lot of people would say the lecturers, they get very nice lives.

They get long holidays.

Yeah, absolutely.

You know the caricature that is easy to paint of academic life.

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Can you hold any of them responsible for the fact that you're in limbo?

I think, you know, the way that universities are kind of looked at, and yeah, I mean, professors often, you know, they do, they get good wages, they've got, you know, oftentimes jobs they specialize in and they often enjoy, but it's not just professors.

It's like lots of other kind of strike action, you know, there are always examples of people who are kind of high earners, who people point to and say, you know, why are they striking? But it's more about the whole kind of structure of it is failing, you know, so many people on short term contracts being in university and seeing all these people, I won't lie and say that.

I haven't found it frustrating from time to time, bloody hell, can't they just kind of get moving on it?

But I do think this is this kind of this wider problem of the way that universities are run.

If you know what I mean.

Tom, fantastic to talk to you.

Listen, very good luck with what comes next.

All right, thanks guys.

Talk to you later.

Right.

Well, we've heard from the students side of things, so let's talk now to Joe Gray who is the university and college union general secretary.

So Joe, this strike has been going on for some time, this sort of quasi strike, I suppose.

When is it going to be resolved so all of these students can get their grades?

I mean, the strike, as you say, has been going on now for over a year.

Our employers were warned about this a year ago when we started balloting.

Our door is open and always has been for negotiation.

The question as to when this ends is really in the the court of the employer.

We need a negotiated settlement at the minute they are refusing to budge, you know, students are suffering, but we are here because of the arrogance, the inaction and the intransigence from an aggressive but also organized employer.

Could you just distill briefly exactly the nature of your grievance and why you're taking this drastic action?

So this dispute is about pay, but it's also about other issues.

So pay of university staff has fallen by 25% since 2009.

This is despite record levels of income in the university sector.

So for example, the total income last year was 44.6 billion, 3.5 billion more than the year before, and they've got over 44 billion pounds of reserves.

So there's more than enough money to pay people properly.

But in addition to that, we have unsustainably high levels, both workload, but then the sector is riddled with insecure working practices.

We have over 90,000 insecure contracts in higher education, and many of those people are the people that teach students day in, day out.

So we are asking for sustainable working lives, for sustainable careers in terms of offering some security for people, and yeah, a wage in which means, you know, a sector that's earning all that money that we don't have staff using food banks, which is what happens

right now.

Joe, we've had the student we've just spoken to saying that he was, you know, frustrated that he hadn't got his degree, but supported what you were doing.

And I saw you post something on Twitter, or whether we call it the X-Files now, I can't remember what we call Twitter now.

But anyway, you posted something about very powerful and talking, and there was someone standing up in support of you.

I should say that some of the reaction to that has been a lot less supportive.

Shame on you, UCU.

I'm absolutely pro-union and pro-worker, except with this marking boycott nonsense.

This cohort of students has suffered enough, it is a stain on trade unionism and a stain on you appalling.

I mean, I don't think you can claim to be pro-worker and say that.

Let's just take a step back.

Well, someone has.

Well, and I'm going to challenge that, you know, the marking and assessment boycott is a form of strike action that falls short of full withdrawal of labour.

It's similar in that sense of the RMTRS left, you know, not undertaking over time.

It is part of our industrial army as a union.

It's one that we deploy lightly.

And the reason we have taken this path is because strike action, balloting, campaigning, negotiating, public shaming of employers and other political activities have not worked.

So you cannot claim to be pro-worker and say that at that point, you just have to lay down and accept whatever your employer is doing.

We believed taking this step would have forced employers who were set on piles of cash, £44 billion of reserves, would seriously negotiate with us.

Let me just read you another one.

What a load of hogwash.

Get on with your jobs.

I work delivering bread for Tesco through the nights, earn a quarter of what you get for far more physically demanding work.

I'm still waiting for my low value foundation degree grades and it's only cost me a year's salary.

I mean, these people are angry, but what they are is I would say that they're angry and should be putting their frustrations at government that have set up this system and employers who are sat on piles of cash and treating their staff like rubbish.

Joe, you're the one who's made the choice to boycott marking students' work.

That has a direct effect on people and their lives now because their lives are held in abeyance.

That's your choice to have chosen that method of industrial action.

Our members have voted for this form of industrial action and as I have outlined, we as a union have tried every other method.

We warned employers who have sufficient resources to pay people properly over a year ago that we would do this if they did not negotiate a settlement with us.

Sadly, they have decided that crushing their own workers and alienating students and potentially trashing the reputation of UK higher education was more important.

I don't disagree that if you are a student, you will find this deeply frustrating, but the answer cannot be expecting the staff that teach you, that support you, that offer you mental health services have to be further driven into the ground when there is a sector that can afford to pay people properly, can afford to put people on proper contracts and is refusing to do so because crushing their staff right now and trying to punish the union is their supreme goal.

But you will know, Joe, that of course you talk about the 44 billion in reserves and there are a lot of HE institutions that have a lot of resources, you're right, but you'll know of course as well that there are lots of that don't that operate far close to their margin in their bottom line and they are not replete in a wash with resources and they will say those vice-chancellors will say, we can't afford to do much more than we're doing. So within our negotiating framework, there is manoeuvre for institutions that are genuinely financially struggling to open their books and for us to come to arrangements with them with which they can pay staff pay awards that fit within what is happening there. We haven't even got to that point with the employer, they're not even interested in budging from the offer that they've made or even introducing some of the cost-neutral stuff around casualization, putting people on proper contracts or even looking at how they might close pay gaps between black and white staff or men and women.

They're not budging on anything.

Are you willing, therefore, for this marking boycott to go on well into the next academic year so the students who are currently about to start their university career, they can expect that they won't get any marks or they won't be examined properly?

Our door, as I said, has been open since day one.

We want a resolution.

Our door has been open for a year.

The students are going to be starting their academic career this year, taking out that 9,000 of debt and so on and they're going into university and they're going to be getting at best a pretty half-based experience.

It doesn't have to be that way, but there are two ways out of a dispute, an agreement or defeat for the union and I'm here to tell you there's absolutely no way that we're going to be defeated.

If you're a student now thinking about to start your academic year and come September, October, I mean, you'd be forgiven for thinking what's the point in going, right?

What is the point of going if your work is not going to get assessed?

Students should care and I think the reason, you know, when you speak to students, many are sympathetic.

They could say you should care about us.

Well, yeah, but if your staff are burnt out, if they can't afford their rent, if staff, you know, the 90,000 people that are not in secure contracts aren't here from one month to the next because some staff are on a 0.46 weeks contract, that is the extent of the way in which insecure staff are just plugging gaps in universities.

My recommendation would be, you know, if you're a student and you want a good degree,

apply to a university and ask what they are doing to settle this dispute because until universities start treating their staff better, this dispute is not going to go away.

And you know, in the media, in political sort of establishment networks, everybody wants to talk about why the worker is wrong rather than why the worker has had to do it through multiple bureaucratic hoops, it is not easy to win a ballot.

You know, there are so many things you have to do to call action and yet people are still willing to lose money in order to change their workplace.

Joe, I know you're locked into a dispute with the manager and the vice-chancellor and all the rest of it.

I'm very struck by the tone, which seems to be a total lack of sympathy or empathy for what the students are going through and that it's just, well, I'm sorry, that's their fair game in this dispute.

I think that's completely unfair.

If you've spoken to any UCU members, you know, we, especially if you're one of the sort of members of teaching staff like I was.

Well, I'm just listening to, I'm just listening to what you've said to us now.

I mean, there has been very little about the students' experience and what they're going through.

Because you've been asking me to defend why we're taking strike action and I am here to speak on behalf of UCU members.

Nobody would say that what students have been through, whether it's the pandemic or the last year, is good for students and nobody, you know, in our membership, we spend years building connections, relationships with students, making sure that they can do their research properly for their dissertations.

But we are here because despite knowing from the offset this dispute would lead to damaging consequences for staff, students and parents, employers have pushed us here.

So you know, I used to teach lots of students, this is awful, but it is not of our choosing.

And that is what I am trying to explain to you.

Employers don't care.

They don't care about students' concerns.

They don't answer staff concerns.

You know, they don't even answer questions properly in the media.

And what we are seeing is a university management actually treating students with the same disdain that they treat us.

It's why you will have seen so many students on campuses despite this being really traumatising and stressful for them, still supporting their staff.

So I understand that if this has been your dream, and you know, particularly if you're working class and you've got into lots of debt to be at university, you are going to be beyond upset.

You know, I understand the tweets that you've read out, but what I am saying is the solution and the way forward isn't that we as workers just give up the idea that we can ever make anything better, because our working conditions are students' learning conditions, it is about standing firm that despite the upset and the damage this is doing, employers have to respect us and treat us properly, and they are not doing that.

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Finally, Joe, have you had any interaction or any signal from the government about whether they would be willing to intervene or get involved?

I think they've, you know, attempted to sit a lot of disputes out in the past 12 months, almost suggest that, you know, things should just be resolved every now and again.

I think ministers will acknowledge that the money is there in the sector to pay staff better, but they'll point out that universities are autonomous and, you know, should be left to sort of manage the sector on their own.

Do you think that maybe in this case, if you think that, you know, your staff needs better pay, that students need to pay more?

No, that's not the answer at all, because the money is there and I wouldn't be in favour of making that argument whatsoever.

If anything, the marketised environment that we have in higher education has led to some of those things I was talking to you about earlier, such as, you know, insecurity in the sector.

I don't think students paying more when the sector already has enough money to pay staff properly and also could solve the issues without extra money is the way forward at all.

Joe, thanks so much for talking to us.

Thank you.

I really appreciate your time.

You're welcome.

Bye.

Thank you.

Bye.

This is a story we're going to continue to follow and please keep us up to date with kind of what's happening with you and whether you're getting your degree certificates and your degree grades and marking, because we'd really love to hear how that's going on.

The impact, of course, that it may be having.

In a moment, we will be back with a story about the Conservative Party in London, but it's sort of wider than that.

This is The News Agents.

Welcome back.

So, as John was saying, there has been a bit of a saga going on for a while now about the London mayoral election next year, 2024, and specifically who the Conservatives are going to put up against Sadiq Khan.

This is an internal party selection.

There was an expectation that one of the frontrunners would be Paul Scully, who is the Minister for London.

To everyone's surprise, he didn't make the shortlist.

A guy called Daniel Korsky was selected.

He had to then drop out after certain allegations were made against him.

And in the end, they have now adopted, as their candidate, a woman that you probably haven't heard of, called Susan Hall, who has a bit of an eccentric reputation.

But even yesterday, there was another twist to this tale in terms of further controversy about this.

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And the guy who got the story is LBC's Henry Riley, who's joining us in The News Agent Sanctum, just a few floors down from LBC Towers.

Thank you for having me.

No, no, it's our pleasure.

So what's been happening, Henry?

So, I got wind that Greg Hans, who's the Chairman of the Conservative Party, essentially had a lot of pressure from Conservative MPs.

They were calling him up and saying, what is going on in London is crazy.

We've lost two elections there already.

Zach Goldsmith, of course, lost.

Sean Bailey lost last time around.

And with the selection process that you referenced, Lewis, this time around, they were quite concerned.

And many London MPs are Conservatives, particularly in the Outer London boroughs.

And I think there was a sense that they could see there was a problem brewing here.

And they were calling on Greg Hans to do something about it.

Now, when in doubt, you launch a review, of course.

So he's launched this review, and he's put a man called Eddie Lister, Lord Lister.

And he's Johnson's old ally and advisor.

And he was Chief of Staff to Boris Johnson.

And really, I mean, he's a man that London Conservatives sort of worship because he was leader of Wandsworth Council right in the period where council tax was virtually zeroes.

Margaret Thatcher's favourite council, as it was often described.

And he was Deputy Mayor of London.

So he's bought this in.

And Greg Hans essentially under pressure from a lot of Conservative MPs who were essentially not happy with how the London party is operating.

What I find so extraordinary about this story, and it's a great story, because it's sort of about London and, you know, why should anyone in the rest of the UK be interested in it?

But I think they should.

Because what normally happens is you select a candidate, you get behind that candidate, you run the election, you hope you win.

And if you lose the election, that's when you launch a review.

But it seems like the Tories are going for a pre-mortem rather than a post-mortem.

The patient's still alive on the operating table.

The patient's still alive.

Susan Hall must feel that her legs have been cut off.

Yes.

And she tweeted yesterday that she was fully behind the review, and she thought it was a great idea, as I suppose that she sort of has to.

She had a gun to her head.

Yes.

A loaded revolver was pressed against her temple when she put that tweet out.

She's in a tricky position.

And I think speaking with some of her allies, and indeed just Conservatives generally, I mean, I was speaking with Richard Barnes, who was a former Deputy Mayor of London. And he said, it's inconceivable that you've got a review going on when you have a candidate. And the Tories, it's not like the Tories didn't have any candidates.

There were 11 people that put their hat into the ring to be the Conservative candidate. As you referenced, Paul Scully was, I mean, he is the Minister of London now. He's been the Minister of London under three Prime Ministers, and yet wasn't good enough to make the shortlist this time around.

So Susan Hall, I think privately, must be very concerned.

But actually, the Conservatives are saying it's not just about Susan Hall, it's a wider operation because I think really to show that they're not totally throwing their candidate under a bus.

There's so much division in the London Party, London Conservative Party.

I think the London Conservatives for a while were clinging on to Boris Johnson, and they've always done that.

And it's always been our man, Boris Johnson, he was the Mayor here for eight years, he was then Foreign Secretary, he was then Prime Minister.

And that figurehead has now completely gone.

And whilst he hasn't been Mayor for a number of years now, he was always sort of there or thereabouts.

And now they're really lacking that leader.

Rishi Sunak is, of course, miles away from London.

He's up in Richmond in Yorkshire.

And there's no real central figure in the London Party that you identify and you go, they are the leader of the Tories in London.

Susan Hall is quite a controversial person, isn't she?

Yes.

Most people won't have heard about Susan Hall.

Just tell us about her sort of pedigree and her history.

Firstly, she's a very pleasant person.

You meet her, she's very down to earth, she's...

I love the buzzer!

I love the buzzer!

There are loads of pleasant people, Henry.

I can feel a buck coming!

Well, there's no ears and graces, but it's fair to say she's put her foot in it a few times.

Firstly, politically.

I mean, she was a big supporter of the mini-budget and of Quasie Quating and she was tweeting on that day saying it was the most conservative thing and we've waited for this for years.

She then got in to trouble regarding Gemma Collins and about Gemma Collins' appearance, the TV personality.

She's also made a number of remarks in the past that she's very much seen as being on

the right of the Conservative Party.

And so I think there was a suggestion with party members, and perhaps we saw this with Liz Truss on a national picture, that they wanted someone who wasn't afraid to say what they think, and I would say she sort of models herself on being the Nigel Farage of Conservative London politics.

She's very pro-Trump, isn't she?

She's very pro-Trump.

She's expressed those views in the past.

That should go down well in London.

The MAGA candidates.

Yeah.

It's fair to say that might not pull particularly well in parts of London.

Is there any possibility that this is just a prelude to killing or office the candidate and central office imposing somebody who they think is more to their liking?

Well, I did wonder that, and there was certainly a sense for a few weeks that Paul Scully, they'd sort of re-look at the shortlist, because after Daniel Korsky was forced to drop out, that was the sort of window with which the Conservatives could have intervened and gone, no, there needs to be three candidates on the ballot.

I think now, the truth is she will survive is my view.

I mean, I was speaking with a source close to the Mayor of London, and to be brutally honest, they want to keep her in place.

So they're not running any stories against her.

They think her being the candidate will mean Sadiq Khan wins that third term at City Hall and only in the few months before the election will they really go hard in on her.

So I think you have a pretty easy ride in the media and amongst her opponents for a few months.

And then when it's too late, that's when Labour will strike and it'll be too late for the Taurus.

But there is one path for her, isn't there?

Which is that there are lots of rumours around that Jeremy Corbyn might stand as an independent. Now if Jeremy Corbyn were to stand as an independent and with the change that the government has

made to the mayoral electoral systems, it was AV, so it was also sort of, it's not quite proportional, but it was a way of redistributing your votes.

You ranked your candidate, you won too.

Now it's first passed the post.

So there is a world where if Corbyn were to stand and he split the Labour votes, then who would come through the middle?

This woman, Susan Hall, the Conservative Party doesn't really want.

She's sort of pro-Trump and kind of on the eccentric end of part of the Tory party.

She ends up as the mayor of London.

And I think that is her only route really to getting it.

If Jeremy Corbyn does decide to stand, Sadiq Khan, I imagine will have a few sleepless nights.

[Transcript] The News Agents / How students are getting screwed...again

Fascinating.

Thank you so much.

Thank you.

This is The News Agents.

So before we go, we're going to bring you the football transfer news here on The News Agents.

I think that Lewis always follows him.

I follow extremely closely.

I believe the window is closing and John has got the latest news on this. John.

Well, Harry Kane.

Harry Kane.

Harry Kane.

He's one of our own.

The fellow who missed the penalty.

Don't go.

That's not a way to remember him.

That was an unfortunate moment against France.

It's quite a big unfortunate moment.

It was a big unfortunate moment.

You wouldn't have done that.

I've seen you down at the top.

I'm deadly.

I wouldn't have done that.

I wouldn't have got any nerves at all taking a second penalty, but why do you think you added Pecancy?

There's a clue there.

Is he like a sort of nice velouté or something?

I don't know.

It's because he was taking the penalty against Hugo Larisse, who was the Spurs goalkeeper as well as the France goalkeeper on that night.

A very great man.

Yeah.

Very great man.

Very great man.

You haven't followed this at all.

Anyway, I think a little bit of WHO.

You have some words for Mr. Kane.

Yeah.

The stars are not wanted now.

Put out everyone.

Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun.

Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood.

For nothing now can ever come to any good.

[Transcript] The News Agents / How students are getting screwed...again

You don't get this on The Restless Football, do you?
No, you don't.
You see, they wouldn't go into W. H. Orden territory.
They wouldn't go into W. H. Smith alone, W. H. Orden.
Anyway, that's us more or less done, but Lewis, I think it's your final day, isn't it?
Whatever.
Is the transfer window closing on me as well?
No, no, no.
Am I going to The Restless Politics at last?
No, it's just your last date of being a single man on the newsagents because she's getting married this weekend.
I am indeed.
Well, you and me are going out on the town tonight, aren't we?
Well, we are.
We're going to go off to Annabelle's.
On the piss.
We're going out on the piss.
But before we do, a little newsagents present for everyone who's wanted to contribute.
You've got to open it now.
You've got to open it now.
It's an entirely visual thing, which people don't see.
Here's the rustling of the paper.
Yep.
Here we go.
Oh, what lovely paper you've got.
We've no expense spared, mate.
No expense spared.
I bet you're excited.
Honestly, I can barely contain it.
What have we got here?
We've got here some shoe polish, some laces, and a brush.
Well, there we go.
I'll need that for my married life, won't I?
I'll need that for my...
I can't go around with my shoes like I have been now.
You started the week having a go at me for not wearing any socks.
Well, you are now.
So, we're both ending the week better than the men than when we started, and you can't say fairer than that.
Have a lovely, lovely wedding and celebrate it.
I'll see you there.
Yeah, we'll see you on Saturday.
See you on Saturday.
And I'll be here in the Lewis slot tomorrow.

[Transcript] The News Agents / How students are getting screwed...again

We're off to Wetherspoons.

Any marriage advice, John, before I go?

None.

Bye-bye.

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