

[Transcript] The News Agents / Is Rishi's reshuffle imminent?

This is a Global Player original podcast.
I'd done four years.
I'd done three years as security minister.
That's seven years of, so, 24-7.
It hadn't been quiet on my watch, so,
2017 terrorist attacks, Wanna Cry,
Salisbury poisoning and security,
and then we did the refresh of contests and all that,
and then the defence has never really stopped.
And ultimately, I wasn't going to sign of the next election.
I think it's only fair to the sitting prime minister.
That is Ben Wallace, outgoing defence secretary,
who dropped a bit of a bombshell at the weekend
by announcing that he was standing down,
that he was leaving parliament,
that he was going off to pass as new,
and I spoke to him at a conference earlier on today
about that decision.
And we've also been speaking to Jamie Oliver,
chef, campaigner, the man who you might remember
turned the turkey twizzler upside down almost 20 years ago
in the hope of making our school dinners more healthy
and our kids less obese.
And he has a warning for Keir Starmer today
and Keir Starmer's two-child benefit policy
that he risks pushing more children into food poverty.
Welcome to the News Agents.
The News Agents.
It's John. It's Emily.
And I had been due to interview Ben Wallace
at a conference that we were both sort of chairing today,
although my interview plan got ripped up at the weekend
when he announced that he was leaving parliament.
So rude. So rude.
But of course, there was an awful lot to talk about
when we sat down together at the future of Britain conference.
I think you've taken the Sandra Bullock
in speed element out of this
because about two minutes before John was waiting
for Ben Wallace to appear on stage,
he was still at the M.O.D.
And we wondered if he'd sort of crept into a bunker
so as not to give the first exit interview
to the News Agents to reveal all

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about why he had made this slight jaw-dropping clanger decision just two days ago.

Well, there were all sorts of people talking into their hands saying, he's on the move.

He's on Westminster Bridge.

He's entering the hotel.

He's coming down the stairs now.

He'll be on level minus two in 30 seconds.

And when you tapped on to the onstage.

And I was saying, yeah, we'll be with you in just a few moments.

We're just waiting for Ben Wallace to arrive, but he did arrive.

And the first question that he addressed, we had always thought

that the reshuffle was coming in September,

which is when he would cease to be Secretary of State for Defence.

He thinks it might be coming a lot, lot sooner than that.

There's a rumour there's a reshuffle tomorrow the day after.

In which case, this will be your last hurrah.

Did Rishi Sunak try to dissuade you?

I think he understood the reasons.

He was very understanding of the reasons when I said to him, look, I really done my bit.

I've done my time.

It's time to move on.

So I think, you know, he understood the reasons

and, you know, he's a Prime Minister who wants to fight the next election.

Look, to show our workings,

which is a phrase that I know I use too much.

I love that phrase.

It's all the curtain to pull the curtain back.

When somebody resigns, it's a bit like, who was it that, you know, died?

And somebody went, what did he mean by that?

What did he mean by that?

When somebody resigns, your first instinct as a journalist is to kind of go, what was that about?

And all sorts of kind of rumours had been doing the rounds,

whether it was about wanting to have a more personal life,

whether it was about a spat with Rishi,

whether it was his discomfort or even annoyance

at not getting the NATO Secretary General job.

And when you asked him about the reshuffle and was he going to be pushed?

That was essentially what you were sort of suggesting.

He sounds as if he's just saying, I wanted to choose my own terms,

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which I suppose is a way of going.
Anything could happen.
I prefer to decide the timing, right?
And I think a lot of politicians,
the overwhelming majority of politicians get that wrong.
They always hang around too long.
They always think that they've been pushed out too soon.
And so maybe Ben Wallace is getting out exactly at the moment that he chose.
But they can't really be a reshuffle the day before a pilot.
I mean, would you do that as Prime Minister?
Would you reshuffle your top team just before you were fighting three
pretty significant by-elections?
It would change the narrative, won't it?
I mean, I guess it would change the narrative.
I mean, it will create a narrative of deck chairs on the Titanic
of course, if the by-elections go badly.
I can't believe when Ben Wallace said to me
that there are rumours that I could be gone tomorrow
unless he thought there was something to it.
And apparently, I think he heard from a very senior civil servant,
it was very likely, but a political operative less likely.
So I should have asked his driver, because the government driver...
They always know far more.
They always know far more, more quickly than anyone else.
Memorably, the thick of it minister didn't like his driver.
And it was the driver that dogged him in at the end.
So you do have to be careful, you know, what you're saying,
I guess, in the back of a cab.
So the next question, really, is what he made of politics at all.
Because very few people, I mean, we always say this, don't we,
that all political careers end in tears,
or at least the suggestion of tears.
And it sounded when you were talking to him like he just had enough.
We spoke about whether politics had become more toxic
and whether the quality of candidates was diminishing
and the number of people who want to enter politics is declining as well.
And only yesterday, there was a tweet accusing the Defence Secretary
of having an affair with a former Prime Minister
and it involved apparently lots of a class A drug.
The Hunt Saboteurs said I was having an affair with Liz Trust
and doing copious amounts of cocaine.
I just replied, I'm surprised he didn't identify me
as coming from the planet Krypton or something.
I mean, sometimes these people are so ludicrous.

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It is politics more toxic.

I think it's harder in the media.

I think sensationalism is trumping truth more and more across mainstream media.

And I spend a large part of my time maybe too much correcting things.

It just exhausts you.

It's interesting, isn't it, hearing him,

I mean, first he sort of rebukes or refutes the stuff on Twitter.

And then he talks about mainstream media.

So who's left?

Do you know what I mean?

I think once you've got to the point where you feel that you're fighting everyone, or you're correcting everyone, then you're probably not at your best.

And we remember last week, you know, he was at the NATO summit

and he was talking about Zelensky not quite showing the gratitude that he should have.

And he said, you know, when we're asked to deliver arms and weapons, I'm not Amazon.

I wonder if he didn't particularly like the tone of voice with which that was reported,

whether people thought that they'd sort of taken him out of context

or they didn't really, he didn't really like what he was trying to say there.

Well, is it the army person in him?

Because he's a former soldier who just hasn't got time for any of that.

Actually, there was a lot of the other stuff that he said at that NATO briefing about the state of the Ukraine counter-offensive that was really fascinating.

But of course, it gets lost in the Amazon line.

And he probably hates that, you know, oh, come on, it was just a flip.

It was a throwaway line.

And you've magnified that into a front page.

And I think that that side of politics he's had enough of.

But interesting that he does point to this diminishing circle of people who want to be politicians.

And look, just last week, we were talking with a week before, we were talking about

Mari Black, who said politics too toxic.

I'm leaving today.

We've had a couple more SMP colleagues who are standing back from politics.

I mean, I guess the question you've always got to ask is,

when people say they're leaving because it's too toxic,

do they really mean leaving because I don't want to be a loser, right?

You know, I'm going to lose.

Google Translate will often have that as I'm going to lose my seat at the next election.

So I'm going to say politics is too toxic.

Slash, I want to spend more time with my family.

Slash, I want to get into the job market before all the other colleagues who are going to lose their seats grab the blood jobs.

Yeah, there are a number of other things that I discuss with him.

He thought Ukraine could win the war.

But I mean, he's not going to say anything other than that.

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He talked about getting blocked from the NATO job.

And he sort of implied it was the Americans who had blocked him and that they wanted a head of state, a prime minister or a president to be assuming that job.

But he kind of said that Rishi Sunak had backed him strongly on it.

He also told a fascinating story about the poisoning of Sergei Skripal in Salisbury and that the perfume bottle that they found, his expert said, estimated could have killed 3,000 people.

Extraordinary.

I mean, it killed two, didn't it?

It famously killed two residents of Salisbury as well as poisoning the Skripals themselves.

And yeah, he described sort of pointing to where the perfume bottle was.

There was a bloke sitting on a bench meters away.

I mean, it reminds you just how long actually he's been in the job because Salisbury now seems a long time ago, right?

It's pre-COVID.

It's a long time to have been in a job in a cabinet where they've been playing musical chairs for quite a lot of the time.

Going back to something we were just talking about, about whether he has gone out at a time of his own choosing.

If he hasn't, he's a bloody good actor

because he looked pretty relaxed and at ease with the situation and was enjoying, you know, having made this announcement on his own terms when no one was expecting it.

The exhale.

The exhale.

Yeah.

In a moment, we'll be back at the future of Britain Conference with Jamie Oliver.

This is The News Agents.

Well, we're joined now by the chef and long-time food campaigner, Jamie Oliver.

We've just come off stage, Jamie,

and you were trying to set out what you think is holding back this country now in terms of childhood obesity.

Yeah. Obviously, the country's looking at lots of things to fix immediately around the cost of living, interest rates, this and the other.

I think that's not my area of any kind of expertise,

but I think the concept of 600,000 kids being outputted into the big wide world every year and, you know, and how well they've done at school

and how productive they've been at school is really, really important to me.

And currently, there's 800,000 kids that have slipped through a net

in the free school lunch program, which is the poorest in our communities.

So that, especially now, especially with everything going on, is very, very important.

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But, yeah, I mean, ultimately, I think our attitude to food, advertising food, selling food, the truth of food, how we teach food, where it comes from, how it affects our body, I absolutely believe that that is having a negative effect on British GDP and productivity.

Well, let's stay with the free school meals, because I'm sure an awful lot of people listening would say, well, it's self-evident that the poorest kids should have access to free school meals. Why do you think they don't?

Well, just for context, and I think it's amazing what is poor is a really good question. So to get a free school lunch, you've got to earn, as a household, not a person, less than £7,400 a year.

And that's dealt with.

But what we're saying is because of the design of the universal credit, we've got about 800,000 kids that are very close to that, that are not getting provision.

So that's a massive problem for us, because that means there's still 800,000 kids that are not getting a breakfast or a lunch. When they might not get it, it might be the only hot meal of the day.

We follow it, we track it, we watch those kids, we look at their education attainment, and we also know, last year I was lucky enough to get an independent study done by very trustworthy people, Price, Waterhouse, Coopers, that they showed how that actually free school lunches had a positive £8.9 billion on the economy over 20 years.

But it's the over 20 years that's the problem.

And any politician or maybe CEO will tell you that it's all about the now, it's about the next two years, it's about what they might call the low-hanging fruit.

So I guess my concept is how do you amplify fairness?

How do you really amplify true levelling up?

How do you give us a better long-term sustainable prognosis as a productive country, as a little country in a very interesting, ever-changing world with just quick grab things?

Have you had this conversation about the free school meals for 800,000 kids with Rishi Sunak and with Kirstama?

They haven't come out and said anything yet with regards to, but Kirstama hasn't said anything yet.

Richie I think has declined on extending it to the other children, the lost children.

I know it's tricky times right now, but I think we're all judged on how bad bad is.

And if you go to schools, if you see teachers and dinner ladies and say what does it look like, it's a very, very upsetting place.

So I think what we're asking for is not much.

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We've proved that it makes money for the British economy over 20 years. Morally it's correct.

And I think as a society we want to catch the most profoundly vulnerable.

We heard at the weekend from Kirstama saying that he wouldn't be ending the Tory austerity policy, which takes tax credits away after you've had two children.

What do you think of that?

It's not an area of my expertise,

but what I can say is one of the things that that would by default take away is their ability to have a free school lunch or breakfast, 190 days of the year, if they were a child of poverty.

So I think that they don't seem to be saying anything at the moment and the manifestos haven't been published yet.

Emily sort of said it at the outset.

You've been going on about this for some time.

Are you frustrated that here we are in 2023?

Yeah.

And you're saying, well, the politicians really haven't committed to anything.

We're a year away from elections.

Do you think Kirstama will?

I hope so.

I hope that's what today is designed to do, which is to agitate and inspire the people around him that are writing the manifestos to actually care for something.

I'm a political, first of all,

but I grew up in a very conservative family, running a small family business at pub.

You know, I think there's millions of people sitting on the fence.

We're desperate for change because we don't like them now.

We've had chaos for four, five years.

So he's got a really good chance,

but he's got to earn his vote.

Something's got to matter.

Something visceral has got to be pumping around those veins that he's going to really fight for.

And I think it has to be, maybe unconventionally,

a blend of short-term measures, medium-term measures, and long-term measures.

And it's the latter that most governments and CEOs avoid.

You know, like a 15 to 25-year tactical childhood health plan to make us pump out 600,000 fit, healthy, better educated, healthier children that we know through measurement go into the British side, earning more money and not dying as young and not costing the NHS as much.

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So ultimately, that's where the nuance of food going into the bigger GDP or productivity or NHS, big conversations, like it is all interconnected. So where does that ambition end, that long-term ambition take you? Would you call sugar the new smoker? I think we've done sugar to one degree. We've already created one of the very first sugary drinks tax in the world that was a tax for good, that not only diversified the whole industry. That's just drinks then? That's just drinks, yeah. You could look at milk, you could look at sugary products, for sure. I mean, I think what we need to do from loving our farmers more, we're not going to do very well selling cheap stuff around the world. What people want from us around the world, particularly the developing countries, is the trust and standards and quality of British gear. But from that, all the way up to how do we make it easier to get healthier food, more convenient, more nutritious? I mean, would you be banning trans fats? There are some countries like Denmark, Austria, Switzerland. They've just said no trans fats. Okay, so let me just give you the context on trans fats. They cause cancer. They should have been banned 30 years ago when we learned that. So that's how thick we are. That's how stupid we are. So most of the big brands don't use trans fats, hydrogenated fats, because they know that. But it's the brands that are around them that don't care the laggards. So we can't hope and wish people to be good and play fair. We need standards that people blossom from instead of go deep and dark. That's a very interesting point. Can any of this be done voluntarily? An agreement between the advertisers? We only have data that voluntary doesn't work. We only have data that says voluntary creates split camps, and opportunity for laggards that can clean up when others are behaving. So what you tend to have with voluntary is the biggest brands, whether they're products or supermarkets, doing the right... So government needs to tell people what to do. And even the big brands are saying it now, because they want a level playing field, because it's not fair. It's about what are the rules of the game.

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Whatever game you like. If you don't have rules, you have chaos and anarchy.
So give us your three rules then.

The next government or this government has to bring in
three massive changes that stop our kids becoming too fat
and too short by the time they're full.

There's a long, long list, but I think off the top of my head,
it's making healthier food more affordable.

It's creating standards for the unhealthy food,
so they're less bad for you, and that's on salt, fat and sugar.

It's about truth, which is labelling.

Front of pack, clear, consistent labelling,
so we're all speaking the same language.

It's about keeping an eye on the ever-changing morality
of advertising junk food to kids through gaming, through online,
and even to this day on British TV.

If you watch The X Factor or British Got Talent,
you'll see a whole film's worth of junk food advertisement.

So we've put that through consultation.

It's waiting to be implemented, but we haven't really got politicians
that are getting on with business at the moment,
so it's sitting there, not being done when it's been approved.

And really, the TV thing is important,
but it's also symbolic of what's happening online.

But more importantly, just to kind of give your listeners some context,
the legislation isn't just industrially prudent
and like reformulation legislation works.

Lots of other stuff that's good is quite hard to measure on works,
but it's symbolic of having to reformulate out of that tax
or that legislation, which means they redevelop recipes,
which means they redevelop choice.

So what you'll see from the sugary drinks tax is not a poorer industry,
it's a richer industry. Why?

Because they've reformulated more water, milk and fruit juice products,
which by default gives the consumer not less choice, but more choice.

So often when you listen to campaigners like me that care,
like, oh, shout out, what are you trying to take away my normal Coke
or this, that or the other? No, no, no, no, no.

I love a normal Coke.

Upper mountain, on the beach, have a little sip up.

I grew up in a pub, happy days.

But when Coke becomes hydration along with all the other competitors,
like, OK, so we've changed the rules.

So that tax actually has created more choice,
which means people are making more choices.

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And look, I think we're talking about just that one bit of legislation has edited out a year, 46,000 tons of empty calories, useless calories. So government intervention and clever strategic reformulation, being it taking away bad stuff or adding in good stuff, fortifying things, can be done slowly, cleverly. It always delivers, always. If you look at salt going down over 10 years, you can attribute every ton to less phone calls to 999 and less heart attacks and less death. It's that blatant. So it ain't rocket science because I'm telling you about it and if I can tell you about it, then it ain't rocket science. Like, we need to clear up the shop. We've got to do the basics. Like, there's nuance, there's AI, there's clever stuff, there's all this good golden stuff. We haven't even done the really boring old stupid stuff like hydrogenated fats causing cancer, why not ban them? So just to take the view from where you were in 2005, and it was sort of like the Italian job where you're only meant to blow the doors off. You came out with Turkey Twizzlers, there was a massive change of climate, of desire to bring about things. But there was also the backlash, Jamie, and I'm wondering how that felt because there were kids going, don't take away our high school dinners. I think part of it is because I'm from Essex, and whether a colour, race or religion, there's always prejudice, right? So the fact I was me was part of that. But also, everyone said you took away my Turkey Twizzlers. Just to be technically clear, I didn't. I created the standards that took a product that was in the sort of low 20s of meat content of which 16% was allowed to be fat and made it a minimum of 65% for all patty products and meat products in every school in Britain 190 days a year. How did it feel when you were kind of getting this pushed out? I got loads of crap. If I had basically made it legislation to have pure ketamine or coke or gear, they would have all thanked me. Because I thanked Jay and you've made it much better. So I wasn't taking anything away. This is the interesting thing about campaigning.

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It ain't easy, it ain't nice, it ain't enjoyable.
The two most important years of my life were in Greenwich, right?
I hated every single day. It was miserable, it was dark,
but I knew it was the most worthwhile thing I ever did
and still is to this day.
So I'm not trying to get the violin out on campaigning.
It's bumpy. I don't like it.
I don't want to do it, but because my relationship is with...
I work for the public, that's the way I look at it.
When you're an author, like, they pay the bills.
So I feel obliged to talk about the things
that need to be talked about.
And I can get a backlash making something purer and better,
not worse.
Right, and before making this rudely interrupted my question,
do you still think that you are making progress?
Because as I was saying, in 2005, it was kind of like a revolution.
And since then, we've had Liz Truss and others come in and say,
oh, well, nothing to do with us.
Let people make up their own minds.
In all of its kind of simplicity, like,
obesity and diet-related disease is a normal reaction
to an abnormal environment.
So the purpose of government and legislation
and any kind of civic intervention, public health,
has to be as fluid as the competition and the problems.
We're very clear on what the problems are.
It's some of the highest diet-related disease in Europe.
It's crippling the NHS.
The only way to save the NHS is, ironically,
to not pile loads more money in, which I'm sure they would love.
It's to stop the amount of people needing to go in,
have to go in in the first place.
And now we have to wind up.
We've talked a lot to Jamie Oliver, the food campaigner.
What about Jamie Oliver, the chef?
Because there was a time when you couldn't cross, certainly,
London for Jamie Oliver restaurants all over the place.
It was 46, so not all over the place.
We were medium-sized.
And did that just grow too fast,
or did you lose interest, or did people's taste change?
Interestingly, I think having thought about it long and hard,
I had the best of the best.

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I probably had the best mid-market, socially-orientated business on the planet for seven, eight years, and then lost it over four years, which is utterly painful, and it was something I'd never, ever, ever like to do again. Our rents, we probably signed a rent of 20% over the odds. Our rates went up 40% in two years. High street decline was about 16%, and then our margins, which were smaller because we were selling more ethical food at the same price as someone next door that you probably frequent, that wasn't... So our model didn't work, and we died. But I think I've learned a lot from that, and there's other reasons as well around how things were managed. But I haven't lost faith. I'm still a restaurateur at heart. I've dusted myself down. I did the best version of bad, so staff were all paid, and all my suppliers, with a few exceptions, were made good. So I think I'm still young-ish. I've got 10 years of good work in me yet, I think. So I'm opening back up in October, and what's beautiful is the greatest hits of all my team are coming back without having to advertise and, like... So we're going to get the band back together. I do believe in the industry. It's a beautiful industry. I do believe in our farmers. We've got some of the best farmers in the world. The good guys are very fragile. We must love them. We must love them, and that's what makes our food industry extraordinary. Jamie Oliver. Thank you so much. Thanks for having me. Really lovely. Thank you. This is The News Agents. Welcome back. Tim Davy, the Director-General of the BBC, it seems doesn't have quiet weeks when nothing much happens. Today he is in Parliament, speaking to the House of Lords.

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I mean, a raft of stories about whether the government want to reopen the whole question of how the BBC is funded and what alternatives should be looked at. And let's face it, this is a debate that has gone on for decades now. I mean, the first time, I think, under Thatcher, I think there was called the Peacock Review about what should happen to the licence fee. But it's coming back, and coming back with a bit more force. It's really interesting to see where it's coming back, because it's leading coverage in the Times newspaper, which, as we discussed last week, is Murdoch-owned. They perhaps have a vested interest in making people talk about the licence fee. And it's also leading in The Guardian, which, for the completely other reasons, has a vested interest in, let's say, keeping this conversation going about the importance of the licence fee in keeping the BBC on its feet. And I think it's interesting to hear the kind of language that is being used now, which is that the licence fee is unsustainable. There are concerns from the government that the licence fee is unsustainable, which doesn't suggest it ends tomorrow. We know that the next review is in 2027, and it doesn't suggest that it goes completely. But it is looking at what the plurality of media and paid-for media means in an age where some people will naturally see the BBC licence fee as taxation. And it's inevitable that people are going to start raising questions about whether the licence fee is sustainable, given the fact the way we consume now is not us all sitting around a television set and watching as a nuclear family whatever the big show is that happens to be on that night. It is much more that we consume things on our iPads or our laptops, and so the argument that was kind of made in the 1950s and 60s for a licence fee is very different to date. And it's right that we look at it.

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The problem is you've got actors in it who see it as a way of neutering totally one of the great cultural institutions of Britain, the BBC. And there are people who want to use it for those aims. I think the figures that we're talking about today come from the BBC's annual report, which, amidst all the ferrari of breaking stories at the BBC last week, was slightly forgotten. And this is the BBC revealing that the number of people who are opting to buy a licence fee, I mean, opting is a kind of curious word, but you still have to put yourself forward to actually buy it as opposed to being taxed at source, has fallen by half a million people. So it's now at 24.3 million, which means that actually the licence fee income itself has slipped, used to be at 3.8 billion, and we've now slipped by 50 million, which, in terms of programme making, in terms of people you employ, in terms of the services that you can keep running, is enormous. So this is, if you like, an attrition. It's a shrinkage of the licence fee because people are deciding that they will decriminalise it themselves. They will opt out of paying for it and, presumably, the BBC doesn't actually have the means or the wherewithal to go chasing people who simply are refusing to pay. Look, there used to be TV detective hands that would drive up and down the street and see whether there was a signal coming from a house with an aerial on top. It's not a great look, is it? Well, it's not one, it wasn't a great look then, and two, it's impossible now when you've got Wi-Fi and you're just watching on your laptop. So it's become impossible to enforce in that way. And, yeah, they've got the public refuse nicks and the people who've got the campaigns then defund the BBC. It's just been a crying shame if the debate becomes just defund the BBC rather than how can we have

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the best possible public service broadcasting
that is still a beacon.
So I remember a few years ago,
when Tim Davies was just about to become the director-general,
saying to him,
look, you know, as presenters,
where was at the front line of people asking us
about the license fee and the modelling?
And I said, I'm not financially-brained,
I don't actually know what the best course for the BBC is.
And he amazingly said, right, you and me are going for coffee.
And we went across the road and he sort of set out, you know,
like when you're trying to explain the offside rule to somebody
and you do it with a sort of salt and pepper pot
and he sort of moved things around.
And he basically took me through all the options.
And I said, you know, what about the Netflix model
and what about this?
And he just spelled out, it was really helpful.
He spelled out that no other model gives you the amount of money.
If you do a Netflix model, you just don't get people paying.
There will never be enough to fund the BBC.
But what I think I do understand now
is how regressive it is as a tax or as a payment.
I think I probably agree with Richard Sharp on this,
who came out last week and said,
look, if you can afford to, you should be paying more.
I don't mind paying for my license fee.
You know, I'm in a very privileged position
to feel I'm more than happy to spend that on the license fee.
And I would probably, quite frankly, spend double if I needed to
to keep the BBC and the license fee going.
But I also understand that actually it should be way, way lower
for people who don't have, you know, the same income
and that we should start to look at different ways
of allowing people to pay less if they earn less.
You used a very interesting word a moment ago
about the fact that the number of people who were opting
to buy a license fee has gone down 500,000.
When you are opting, how on earth can you have a tax system?
I mean, I agree with you.
Look, you know, I could afford to pay double for my license fee
and I'd be very happy to because I think, you know,
you get a great amount in return.

[Transcript] The News Agents / Is Rishi's reshuffle imminent?

You know, we're both going to get a little, you know, donations welcome here.

Exactly.

I look at what I pay for my Netflix, my Sky, which I'm happy to pay.

Any of the sports channels.

Any of the sports channels.

But how would you enforce it?

How would you do it?

Because then it wouldn't be opting to pay.

It would be through the tax system.

And that might cause its own resentments.

The BBC license fee is really massively imperfect the moment you start to think about it.

It's just when you try to frame what is the alternative funding model, you keep scratching your head and think, maybe the license fee isn't so bad.

If I go to the cinema with my, you know, 90-year-old mum, she gets a cut price ticket.

If I go with my son who's a student, he gets a cut price ticket.

It was still opting, but when we opt, we pay a different sum of money.

Why can't we do that?

Because there's no way of saying, when you go to the, you know, online or whatever, you know, are you a 40% taxpayer or whatever.

It would be an entirely voluntary thing if you want certainty in financial planning.

Yeah, you've got none.

You've got none because it depends which box you want to tick, about how much you want to pay for your license fee.

So I kind of think that the BBC...

So you're saying we're stuck with it.

Well, I think the BBC is right to say, and Tim Davy is right to say, we've got to look at all options.

But I am yet to see the option you think, ah, that's it, that's the solution.

We'll be back tomorrow, but just a word before we go, of course, news agents, USA will be dropping

[Transcript] The News Agents / Is Rishi's reshuffle imminent?

into your feeds later on today,
where we were discussing the possibility,
not just of Republican and Democrat,
but could a third-party candidate emerge
to upset the apple cart?

With no label.

With no label.

Called no labels.

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This has been a Global Player original podcast
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