

[Transcript] The News Agents / Labour's disappearing £28bn... and Nadine resigns

This is a global player original podcast.

This was Rachel Reeves Labour's Shadow Chancellor in September 2021 at the Labour Party Conference.

I can announce today Labour's Climate Investment Pledge, an additional £28 billion of capital investment in our country's green transition for each and every year of this decade.

And this was Rachel Reeves, still Labour's Shadow Chancellor on Friday morning on that same £28 billion a year pledge.

We will ramp up and we will get to the investment that is needed but we've got to do that in a responsible way. I will never play fast and loose with the public finances and put people's mortgages and their pensions in jeopardy in the way that the Conservatives have.

So Labour's biggest spending commitment has gone, or rather it's partly gone.

Earlier this week on this show we spoke about how central that battle over the £28

billion a year for green investment had become within the Labour Party,

while we now know that the sceptics won. On today's show, what that means for Labour, for the UK's industrial and political future and what it reveals about the balance of power in Keir Starmer's Labour. It's Lewis here, welcome to the newsagents.

Right, we've got a show for you, even more packed than the Donald Trump Childsheet today and we're going to get to former Culture Secretary Nadine Doris' shock resignation as an MP and Boris Johnson's not so surprising but still shocking resignation on his list later.

But we are going to do Labour first because though it will inevitably get buried by a yet more Tory psycho drama, all the signs are we are heading for a Labour government and what happened on Friday morning with a retreat on Labour's most radical plans is going to be important for them, for all of us and for our politics, far into the future.

So, background first, this money was massive and significant. It was Labour's biggest spending proposal by far as part of its green prosperity plan. It was said it would power Britain's next industrial revolution, greening our economy and power supply and insulating homes. It was a remnant of Corbynite radicalism.

Falling for money means knowing when and where not to spend, but it also means knowing when and where to invest to prevent far greater costs further down the line. There is no better example of this than in the case of climate breakdown. As Chancellor, I will not shirk our responsibility to future generations. No dither, no delay. Labour will meet the challenge head on and seize the opportunities of the green transition. I will be a responsible Chancellor. I will be Britain's first green Chancellor. Conference, that is what a Labour government will do.

Reeve's argument today is that much has changed. The economic situation is now profoundly different

and she is right about that. To some extent, this is another symptom of the era of cheap money being over. Arguably, Brexit and Corbynism were only really possible because we lived in a period of ultra-low rates which empowered states or parties to take bigger risks, to be bolder, to be bigger. With rates high and climbing, the risk premium for states goes up with it.

Politics, or the political horizon anyway, shrinks.

There is a danger, as even George Osborne said today, that Labour is losing almost any point of differentiation with their opponents. But we should remember that £28 billion, even by the halfway point of this parliament, which is what Reeve's is now suggesting, is still a lot of money. Jim Pickard is chief political correspondent at the Financial Times.

The first big piece of analysis that we ran this week was trying to address that question of what would the Labour government do? What would they do differently to the Conservatives? And they've basically made themselves such a small target on things like immigration and Brexit and crime by sounding so similar to the Conservative Party that it's easy to escape the fact that actually, on quite a few things, they would have a different agenda. And one of those is employment. They would bring in a whole load of changes to improve employers' rights at the expense of management, loads of stuff on flexible working, getting rid of fire and rehire, getting rid of zero-hours contracts. But the green investment plan was, and I would argue still is, the biggest point of differentiation, because even after this rich Reeve's announcement on Friday morning that they wouldn't hit the £28 billion of borrowing until halfway through the first term of the parliament, it still adds up to quite a lot of money. I mean, Jeremy Hunt, the Conservative Chancellor, put out a tweet saying it's still over £100 billion. And he's not wrong. If you do £28 billion, even if you only started halfway through the parliament, you're still getting to something over £70 billion. And Rachel Reeves is not saying that, she's saying they would do some borrowing and spending in the first two and a half years as well. And it's a big point of differentiation. It is, of course, very similar to what Joe Biden has been doing in the USA. And I think that the Tories are under a little pressure as well to come up with something maybe in the autumn financial statement or budget, to come up with something which answers the question of if the Americans are subsidising all this low-carbon industries, electric cars, batteries, wind farms, the Chinese have been doing it for decades, the Europeans have been spooked into following suits with what the Americans are doing. The Conservatives haven't really answered the question of how does Britain not get left behind by this. So the policy is more of a minor change, but the politics of it are nonetheless very interesting. What it partly shows is that Labour has not successfully made the rhetorical link, the argument that A, or borrowing isn't bad borrowing, that borrowing to invest is of a different order to borrowing for unfunded tax cuts or day-to-day public spending, and B, nor has Labour convinced the public, as Joe Biden has done, of the link between climate change spending and jobs and reindustrialisation, or at least Labour are not convinced that enough of the public is convinced. We're going to get into the Kremlinology of what all this says about the balance of power in the Labour Party and the Labour leadership in a minute, but first Darren Jones is the Labour MP for Bristol Northwest and chair of the House of Commons Business and Trade Select Committee since 2010. Darren was £28 billion a year necessary because presumably when Rachel Reeves made that commitment she thought that it was necessary. Why would it not be necessary now? Well, £28 billion as a target is still necessary and that is still our policy. What Rachel has been explaining is a kind of reality check of government for people. I mean, it put yourself in her shoes as a new Labour Chancellor after the next election. It would be impossible for the government to spend a whole £28 billion in the first 12 months in an effective way. These things take a bit of time to get through the system and that's why she said we'll be ramping up to that target at the midpoint of the next Labour government, which I think is just a practical reality of the way government functions. But if it was a practical reality of the way government functions, i.e. the British state wouldn't really have been capable of delivering £28 billion in the first year anyway. Why did she promise it in 2021? Why wasn't she realistic then?

Well, she didn't promise to deliver it in the first year of a Labour government. She said that Labour would spend £28 billion a year on average over 10 years and that's the commitment that she's made. I'm amused by the media coverage that this is a kind of a U-turn or a watering dollar. Wait, wait, wait down. But wait a second. I mean, to some extent, that's how she's presenting it. She's saying that as a result of fiscal responsibility, which she says is absolutely paramount and she says is non-negotiable, she's the one scaling it back. So it's possible that she wants to kind of play the fiscal responsibility card whilst keeping the policy more or less intact, but she's the one dressing it up like that, not the media. Let me put it to you, Lewis. If you went to the banks today to borrow money, to spend money on, I don't know, decarbonising your house, but you couldn't get the company in to give you a heat pump just yet, would you borrow the money now and start paying the interest on that? You know, you'd wait until you were ready to be able to spend the money effectively. Again, Rachel's just being pragmatic here. There's no point borrowing the money and paying for it until you're ready to spend it. Wait, so she's not doing it for fiscal responsibility, she's doing it because she doesn't think it was deliverable. This is what's confusing. Either she's doing it because she says the Tories have screwed up the economy, that's what she said, and therefore Labour can't afford to spend as much as they would have wanted to do. That's what she said in the interview this morning, but you seem to be saying it's more, actually, the policy is more or less intact. It's just recognising the realities of government, which is it? Well, fiscal responsibility is at the very heart of what I've just said, Lewis. I mean, you don't borrow money if you're not ready to spend it because you have to pay for the interest on it, as opposed to spending that on other day-to-day spending. That is fiscal responsibility. Now, there is a secondary point that you're now referring to, which is separate to the point that I'm making around the capacity for the state to deliver infrastructure spending, which is, of course, that when Rachel announced this pledge seven years ago, I think that was before Liz Truss and Quasicotang came and everybody saw what happened then. So again, Rachel is just being honest and realistic with the public about what physically a Labour government should and is capable of delivering within the confines of Whitehall. There's no point in promising stuff that we can't deliver. That would be dishonest. But do you understand why some people will be very disappointed by this? Do you understand why it seems that almost on every front, Labour, instead of being ambitious, instead of saying we can transform this country, essentially seems to be saying week after week, oh, actually, it's going to be too difficult. We can't do that. We can't do everything. We can't do very much at all. I mean, what is going to be transformative about the next Labour government? I would just say to you, Lewis, look, we've not cancelled the pledge, the green prosperity plan that's still at the heart of our economic policy. We've not said... But you're going to be spending tens of billions of pounds a year less than you would have done had this change not happened today. If that's not the case, then what has she said today? Nothing. I think this is a very Westminster bubble and kind of excitement for people. I mean, look, if I had to speak to Michael Stisham's... Daryl, Daryl, now, wait a minute. She's the one who wrote the piece. This isn't like some journalist saying this. She's the one who wrote the piece today to say it. She's the one who went onto the radio to announce it and say that as a result of Labour's great attachment to fiscal responsibility, the next Labour government is going to do less

than it otherwise would have done. So you can't have it both ways, either that or... No, no, no. I'm not trying to have it both ways, Lewis. All I'm saying is you've just said many, many things which Rachel did not say, either in her article this morning or in her TV interviews. All I'm saying to you is explaining that what she said and why she said it. And the reason I say it's a Westminster bubble excitement is because, if I may say so with great respect, journalists are kind of hyping this up in the way that you have into something which I just don't think passes the sniff test. It's the reality check about what can and can't be delivered. Honestly, I do not understand what you're saying. This isn't something that journalists have just come along and said. She's the one who's written it. She's the one who's made a song and dance about it. She's the one who's written the piece. No one made a go on the radio to say this. No one made her write the piece. She's the one saying it. You can't have it both ways. Either Labour is leaning hard into fiscal responsibility and saying, as a result of that fiscal responsibility, as a result of the Tories screwing up at the economy, as a result of the Ukraine, whatever, we can't do as much as quickly as we otherwise would. Or you can say, actually, the policy is more or less intact. You seem to be trying to have it both ways. I don't understand what you're saying. Well, I've tried to explain it to you. Let me try and explain it to you again. I mean, put yourself in, let's say, Lewis, you're the next Labour Chancellor, you come in on day one. What I'm telling you is that physically, you would not be able to spend £28 billion in an effective and impactful way in the first 12 months of your chancellorship. It's just not possible. So what Rachel has said today is we will get to that target, but it will obviously take time for the business cases to be signed off, for the suppliers to be appointed, for the work to be done, for the space we put into the ground. Look, these things are complicated. I think the public recognise that. I understand that. But if that was always impractical, why did she pledge it in the first place? Well, she didn't pledge to spend £28 billion a year, but over the past year she did. Over a 10-year period. I mean, I don't really understand. I'm just telling you, the physicality of being able to spend £28 billion that quickly is not possible. That's all she said today. That's perfectly practical. Is there a danger, though, because if we think about the rest of Labour's energy policy at the moment, one of the other controversial things has been around the decision pledge not to grant any more oil and gas licenses in the North Sea under a Labour government. And now you're scaling back the level of green infrastructure and investment that's going to happen. I mean, isn't that the worst of all worlds? So we're not going to have any more North Sea oil and gas, but we're also going to have less in the way of green energy transformation. That's going to be a problem. We could end up with a problem either with keeping the lights on or ending up buying more Saudi oil and gas. I mean, this is another example where the question, if I may say so, misses the detail. We have not said that we're going to turn off oil and gas from the North Sea. I didn't say that. You're setting up a complete false premise. I didn't say that. I said there would be no more licenses. No more licenses. Go back and listen to your recording list. Go back and listen to me. You said there will be no more gas from the North Sea and wouldn't that be a problem for net zero? No, I said... I'm not going to try the question again. I'm going to repeat the same question. Labour said there are going to be no more licenses for oil and gas exploration in the North Sea. My question to you, which I think is a perfectly legitimate question, if I may say so, is that not a problem if, on the other hand, there is going to be less green investment under a Labour government, that we end up in the worst of all worlds and

we
end up more reliant on Saudi oil and gas, which I'm sure you would agree we don't want to be in that situation. Okay, let me answer the question, but let me also say I hope that you keep this whole discussion in the recording because you did say to me that there would be no more gas from the North Sea. And all I was saying was that questions were not put in that way was wrong. If I said that, well, I certainly will go back and listen. And if I did say that apology, I certainly didn't mean to say that. I meant to say about licenses. So if that's the case, it's my mistake and vice versa. So let's just get on with that question. Apology accepted. All I'm saying is that I'm going to answer the questions that are based in evidence and not kind of political hyperbole. The point that you were making is around the transition from having supplies of gas from the North Sea and from other parts of the world until we get to a fully decarbonized energy system. And there will be overlap and it will take time for that to happen for the obvious reasons that people understand. Now, the kind of news reporting cycle around what Labour has said over the last few days is about the difference between new licenses for exploration of brand new sources of oil and gas in the North Sea versus what we currently have, which is standard practice, to say if you've already got the oil rig in the sea and there's gas there that can be brought through into the system that you will allow an extension of existing licenses to allow for that to happen. What we said is that there will not be any brand new licenses for exploration, which is in line with international guidance on how to hit climate change targets. And again, that is based in evidence and it's perfectly pragmatic. DARREN, great for your time. Thanks so much. Thanks so much. Well, as you'll have heard, I did in fact talk about licenses, but never mind, I'm sure DARREN can buy me a barrel of Brent Crews to make up for it another time. So we're joined by Patrick McGuire from The Times, who has written a lot about this and energy policy, had a cracking piece about it in The Times a week or so ago, well worth reading, although you don't really need to, because he's here. He can regard yourself to it. Here I am. Maybe you can do a little reading for us. I can recite it, a dramatic reading. The 28 billion question storm of us answer. There will be that. Let's leave it like that. You wrote in your piece that if the 28 billion survived, that something would have, quite significant would have happened, something would have transformed in the way politics is going to be done. We now know that the 28 billion a year is not going to survive. What did you mean by that? And what have we learned by the fact that it's been abandoned? Well, I'd say since 1992, the Labour Party has worked on this assumption that it's never going to win an argument on sort of fiscal expansionism. They can't be seen to borrow, to invest, to deviate from Tory spending plans. Obviously, the big exception that was Jeremy Corbyn in 17 and 19. And that sort of failed experiment has only redoubled the resolve of people like Rachel Reeves and Pat McFadden, her deputy, the most important man in the Shadow Treasury team, I think. I called him Starmer's Mr. Gradgrind in that piece because he is slightly so dry on the economy. Bet he loved that. Probably did. I don't know. I don't know. Maybe he did. He probably took it as a compliment. Where Streetering said of him, I was speaking to Where Streetering recently, he said, if you say spending three times in front of Pat McFadden, he apparates with a scythe. So, you know, he revels in that. This is a Labour leadership that doesn't like being seen as profligate in any way. But the fundamental thing that would have changed in British politics was one, that a conventional Labour leadership, the Labour right, were willing to make and win an argument on borrowing to invest and to fight an election on those terms. That would have been a really fundamental change in how that wing of

the party does politics and indeed their understanding of how you win elections in this country. And 10 days later, they have reverted to type. They are not willing to make that argument with their full throats. But of course, I mean Reeves made this argument in late 2021. And it isn't something that she inherited. Yes, the economic situation has clearly changed. We've had Lys Drus. We've had Ukraine. We've had inflation. We've had big changes in interest rates, which makes all the sort of higher spending, the sort of Corbynomics kind of agenda much, much more difficult. But nonetheless, she made it. She didn't have to make it. So is it just you think that the economic situation, as she said, has changed and that explains the change? Or is there something slightly deeper going on? Well, it's interesting. The question you ask is, the premise of your question is that Rachel Reeves agrees with this herself. Now, I think this is slightly overplayed, but there is a wing of the Labour Party that will say, well, it wasn't Rachel. You've gone understand Ed Miliband bouncer into that, right? You've got the specter of Ed Miliband lingering around occupying a certain place in the sort of Blairite psychology is the last vestige of Corbynite or sort of crypto Corbynite thinking in the Labour Party. So one, there is a big and influential strain of opinion in and around Keir Starmer's office that this was a Miliband hangover, right? That this was Ed's idea and that Ed's an election loser. So you can't be seen to listen to Ed or pay attention. But look, you've got to take what Rachel Reeves wrote in the Times this morning and said in the Today program at face value, which is that interest rates have gone up 12 times since then. But I think there are lots of people in the Labour Party who say, well, look, that's a cautionary tale. That's for listening to Ed Miliband in the first place, right? Their economic thinking is based on a range of assumptions that have turned out to be wrong, right? We're not living in a nonstop age of low interest rates. And that just goes to show that you can't listen to or legitimize that election losing wing of the party. So I think there's there's two points. One, the economic picture clearly has changed substantially. But two, it's all about the taboos and conventions and assumptions that sort of rule the thinking of influential people around Keir Starmer. And, you know, it all flows back to you don't do anything expansionist or paradigm shifting on the economy. They think that there is a playbook for how a very limited playbook for how the Labour Party wins elections. And in a way, I suppose let me look, there's loads of differences between the Corbyn leadership and the Corbyn Labour Party and the Starmer leadership and the Starmer Labour Party. But I suppose in a way, one of the most fundamental differences, right, seems to me is that the Corbyn leadership took pride in trying to confound that playbook, right? They took pride in basically saying we don't play by those rules. There was a different way of victory. Starmer is completely the opposite. They're completely orthodox in wanting and thinking they must play by those rules and that playbook. Yeah. And this is the interesting thing, though, is on fiscal policy, you know, on questions of tax spending and borrowing. That's absolutely true. But why this is such an interesting decision from Rachel Reeves is all of her fortnight ago, she was in America giving a speech on her new economic thinking, in which she signaled explicitly the age of unthetic globalization is over. We've got to think of a new economic paradigm and our green prosperity plan, the 28 billion, is at the very heart of it. And clearly, Rachel Reeves is thinking on the economy, right, and, you know, a world in which Britain has to be more resilient and self-sufficient, et cetera, et cetera, can't rely on globalized supply chains, is at odds with her very orthodox fiscal thinking, Pat McFadden's very orthodox fiscal thinking, as you say, that election-winning playbook. There's an interesting tension there. And in the end, her fiscal rules have run out, the campaigning

strategy has run out over the new economic thinking, which is quite interesting. I think that's got to be spot on there. There is a tension there, because if you're going to indulge, you're going to lean into this, you know, secure anomics idea, you're going to have all this on-shoring of supply chains, you're going to invest in British industrial resilience and energy resilience, that costs money. They're still pledging to spend a lot of money, but less than they were. Do you think they've worked out in their heads how to overcome that tension? Or is it a case of doing what Blair and Brown did in the mid to late 90s, which is, you know, you hammer fiscal discipline early on, and then at some point, make the pivots. You take the top sum. The short answer is, well, one, they are aware of that tension, right? I had a conversation with a very senior Labour person recently who said, we need to offer the political positive reason to vote for us, to which I said, well, hang on, the problem is surely your fiscal rules, which sort of preclude any sort of big bowl thinking, to which they sort of suddenly nodded, right? There's an awareness in Labour circles that this puts quite a low ceiling and narrow horizons on the scope of whatever vision they're going to offer to the country. Now, maybe that question is academic. On the second question you raised about whether, you know, they'll do the Brown like prudence with a purpose thing and then have a, you know, massive giveaway budget as Brown did in 2001. 2002. You know, the economy was growing at a clip in the late 90s, nearly noughties. So different. That is not the fiscal situation they're going to inherit here. The economic situation they're going to inherit here rather. So look, as much as I'm sure there are lots of people in the Labour Party, they didn't get into politics. Well, with the possible exception of Pat McFadden to be very prescriptive and dry as dust, physically orthodox on the economy. But, you know, they're both hemmed in by their political thinking and by the economic circumstances. But it is a problem, isn't it? Because what is ultimate, the diagnosis for the Labour Party on area after area, if they look at health, they look at education. Fundamentally, we know that in their heart of hearts and indeed publicly, their diagnosis is there's not enough money being spent on this stuff and there hasn't been for 13 years. But because of the fiscal rules, because of Reeve's pre-doctrinaire fiscal rules, that what's the answer? There's no answer. The answer. Apart from reform in some areas. Exactly, right. And which is a complete false dichotomy because meaningful reform has money costs a lot of money, right? You know, the reform versus spending dichotomy, you know, you press people on that and say, okay, we've got to make spending conditional on reform. Well, again, that still involves some sort of capital outlay with the public finances where they are tax rises, borrowing, something is going to have to give at some point. And maybe these decisions to be deferred, well, these are decisions to be deferred until just before an election. So the Tories don't have time to come back. I know that's the thinking at the top of Labour Party that you've got to leave any sort of fiscal announcements right before so you can't have a sort of 1992 situation where the full force of the Treasury gives you a good kicking. Just on the actual £28 billion. I mean, there does seem to be an interesting tension in terms of how the Labour Party or different bits of the Labour Party is explaining this today, right? We saw Rachel Reeves basically saying, look, we'd like to do this, but the Tories have ruined the economy, you know, we don't have as much money to play with interest rates, etc, etc. And then it seems that, you've already mentioned, Ed Miliband, and perhaps people who are closer to the Ed Miliband vision, we had Darren Jones on this programme basically saying, similar sort of thing, basically saying, actually,

not much has really changed. Actually, the £28 billion is still central. I mean, that's a sort of, I mean, it reveals some of the tensions that you've alluded to, right? And also, but it is a sort of interesting tension in how to explain this thing in the first place. Well, exactly. Whatever way you slice it, whichever explanation you use, i.e., okay, we're all about fiscal discipline, okay, and the initial pledge was, fiscally indisciplined. You shouldn't have done it because Labour can't afford it, and you couldn't be absolutely sure you were going to afford it in changing circumstances, so it was unwise. Or it's politically indisciplined because you've committed to something which, as your listeners will have heard from Darren Jones, there are people in the Labour Party, you know, people like Ed Miliband, Darren Jones will be giving that explanation saying, well, it wasn't practical anyway, you know, of course you couldn't come into government and spend £28 billion. Okay, then why say it? Clearly, you know, this is an operation that now, after several changes of personnel, prides in a way that deliberately evokes new Labour, not least because several of the same people are involved, prizes message discipline and seeing round corners. If this wasn't something a Labour government was going to be able to do from day one anyway, why promise it? It's either way, it reflects, you know, a certain, you know, Darren Jones and Ed Miliband and whoever will give that second explanation in a sort of Mexico-patriot way in a sort of way that's meant to offer mitigation. But actually, they're inadvertently making the argument for opponents of the £28 billion, they would say, well, it was a stupid pledge anyway. Just fine. I mean, you've mentioned Pat McFadden, who's famously very close to Tony Blair, Blairite, is one way of seeing all of these stories and also the sort of general move in direction in terms of politics, policy, sort of feel around the Labour Party at the moment and indeed the playbook that we've talked about, is one way to understand the gradual sort of strengthening of the Blairite wing of the party if it's still sensible to call them that. People who still basically think that this is a how you win elections, but also this is the sort of prospectus that you have to have and not just weakening of the left, but also of the soft left that we all thought Stammer was part of. Yeah, I'd say that's a really important way to understand it. It's Blairites and post-Blairites, right? People who, people whose opinion, they went around in 97, but their politics were shaped by a notion that everything was bad after Tony left. You might not think Tony's politics are the prescriptions to today, you know, there was 30 years ago he won, but yeah, certainly I'd say the Blairite wing of the party is back in the ascendancy, or people who believe that this isn't a question of politics, it's a moral question as much as anything, right? Remember when Tony Blair was interviewed just before Jeremy Corbyn won in 2015, he said, you know, if you think in your heart you want Jeremy Corbyn to win, get a transplant, it's that sort of thinking, the idea that not just the left, but the soft left, and I know very influential around Keir Starmer, people around Keir Starmer thinking this way, the left and the soft left of the party, it's a question of political morality, it's not just about political strategy, it's not just, you know, we want to play the 97 playbook or reject the left because we think it's politically expedient, it's because they think it's, they're right, right to do it. Yeah, exactly. And that sort of thinking rules the rules now. Well, Patrick, not only can I thank you for that very interesting sort of set of analysis, but I also thank you for not reading out your article or even your excellent book, because had you done so, it would have been far harder to resist John Soples' attempts to consistently read out extracts of his own book on this show week after week, so grateful to you

for that. I'm glad not to set that precedent. Yeah, well, unprecedented indeed, as one of his books is called, as he never ceases to remind us. Patrick, thanks so much, really interesting. Right, that is quite enough Labour shenanigans for one day. Back to Tory shenanigans instead. And up next, the moment you've all been waiting for, it's the NAD show right after this. This is The News Agents.

So we were about to put the show to bed, as our friends in Fleet Street might say, when, as so often before, Nadine Doris caused some trouble. She tweeted late on Friday afternoon, out of the blue, the following, I have today informed the Chief Whip that I am standing down as the MP for mid-bedfeature with immediate effect. It has been an honour to serve as the MP for such a wonderful constituency, but it is now time for another to take the reins.

As well as tweeting, Nadine Doris also turned up shortly after announcing her resignation on Talk TV, explaining why she'd made the decision.

But this story hasn't come out of nowhere. Boris Johnson had nominated her for a peerage as part of his now fabled resignation honours list. Number 10 had apparently taken her off the list, not wanting to have a by-election in her mid-bedfeature seat.

Doris, almost certainly in fury, has responded in kind by resigning and forcing a by-election anyway after spending more time with her television show. Earlier in the day, before she announced this, she had been on Talk TV where she did hint about what was to come or not to come in her future. The last thing I would want to do would be to cause a by-election in my constituency. Laura Spirit from the Times has been following this slow burn story for months and back in November she was the one who broke the story that Johnson's list would include or rather he wanted it to include current MPs. Laura, welcome back to the news agents again. This is a story we've kind of known about this resignation honours list for some time, but the move from Nadine Doris

is more unexpected. In November of last year, I wrote that there were four sitting MPs who'd been put on Boris Johnson's resignation honours list that were expecting this afternoon today, and of those four, Nadine Doris was one and today she has announced that she's standing down from Parliament. Now, it's very interesting because the Times reported this morning that she was not going to be able, she'd been taken off the list because she was intending to kind of trigger a by-election, and it seems like she's now standing down anyway despite that. So, I think there's been reports that team Johnson is absolutely furious about how this has been handled. I think actually if you'd read much of the reporting over the last few months, you would have noticed that actually the government and the next government had long held that these sitting MPs being able to take peerages was going to be constitutionally difficult. There's no known precedent for a sitting MP being a peer simultaneously, and the whole lack of the body that vets these appointments had made clear that they didn't think it was going to be constitutionally proper for this to happen. So, in some senses that resolution is not particularly surprising, but the political fallout of this, and Nadine Doris announcing that she'd been standing down, even though she's not going to be on this list, is pretty staggering stuff. And I think for Rishi Sunak having hoped to waive these honours through as a way to soothe tensions between him and his predecessor is now facing the opposite of that really. We can deduce from this, right? She's trying to embarrass him. She's got a rock-solid seat, but a by-election in the current circumstances is inherently unpredictable, even in a seat like that. We've seen what's happened in previously rock-solid Tory seats over the last year or so, and she's hoping to wound him, isn't she?

Given current polling, more of which we've seen this week, no seat, as you say, is necessarily safe. And the last thing that CCHQ want to do is to put their activists through a gruelling race when they're trying to get Rishi Sunak's reputation above that of his predecessors.

That Nadine Doris' name hanging over that contest and the fallout from this honours scandal I think is going to be very difficult for them. I mean, the other MPs had been going through this process of persuasion with Downing Street, Alistair Jack, the Serving Scotland Secretary, most notably saying pretty early on that he wasn't going to be standing down in order to take a period, imminently, that he wanted to stay in that cabinet post. But Nadine Doris was always going to be a little bit more sticky, I think, not least because she's long since left the cabinet, but also because her personal loyalties lie pretty exclusively with Boris Johnson, and she hasn't really held back from any of her criticism of Rishi Sunak since. I suppose the question is whether anyone else joins her. Number 10 will be eyeing what Sharma does. If Sharma were to go, then it looks far more coordinated, and he's got a far more marginal seat in reading.

Yes, and I mean, their names kind of resubmitted to Holak for vetting. I think one of the possible solutions that number 10 had been considering for some time with this was this idea that, yes, they weren't going to be able to put the sitting MPs on this honours list without triggering possibly very damaging by-elections, but would those MPs be kind of sufficiently reassured by this promise from Rishi Sunak? Perhaps that they would be on a future list or that their periods could come after the next election or when they stand down. Now, I think for the non-Nadine Dory's MPs in that batch of four that I wrote about in November, so Nigel Adams, former cabinet office minister, Alisa Jack, the 70s Scotland secretary that we've mentioned, Alec Sharma, who you mentioned, the COP26 president, I think for them that's a more believable promise perhaps from Downing Street. I think for Nadine Dory's trusted wounds so thin that for her to take this assurance that actually she could get it at a future date, wasn't actually particularly a very appealing one, and I think if you listen to the noises being made by Team Boris at the moment, this was definitely not part of the plan either, and I think they had long been expecting these MPs' names to go through. They'd often cited what they thought of possible precedents like Ruth Davidson delaying her period when she'd been an MSP, but actually for quite a long time people in the House have always been saying it's really not the same. There isn't a precedent for this. A period is confirmed when it's offered and you cannot be in both houses simultaneously. So actually this has been a looming constitutional battle that we've seen for some kind of could have expected for some time, and I think unsurprising that Sunak's made the decision that he has. Late on a Friday afternoon, not a bad time to get out the resignation on the list, is it? Especially for us. No. Lara, thanks so much. Cheers.

So a by-election to come in mid-bedfordshire. Summer fun, Tory majority is huge, about 24,000, Labour and the Lib Dems who aren't far apart in votes, second and third respectively, will have to have it out as to who should be the main challenger. It is a big majority, but then so was Tiverton, so was Northropshire, so was Chasham and Amisham, all lost by the Tory party over the last couple of years. This is going to be a moment of inflection and danger for Rishi Sunak. And just after we'd finished speaking to Lara, at about five o'clock, again a good time to bury bad news, the full Boris Johnson resignation honours list, both peerages and honours were published. And as expected, they were dominated by Boris Johnson's close political friends, his former political operatives and his political allies. And just to give you a sense of some of these names, here are a selection. Dame Hoods for Andrea Jenkins, former whip for Boris Johnson,

a Dame Hood for Amanda Milling, the former chair of the Conservative Party under Boris Johnson, a Dame Hood for Preeti Patel, the former Home Secretary under Boris Johnson, Knight Hoods for one of his close political friends, Connor Burns, also a minister under Boris Johnson, a Knight Hood for Simon Clarke MP, the former levelling up secretary under Boris Johnson, a Knight Hood for Ben Elliott, the former co-chair of the Conservative Party under Boris Johnson, a Knight Hood for Michael Fabricant, a close political ally and MP of Boris Johnson's, a Knight Hood for Jacob Rees-Marg, the former Brexit Opportunities Minister for Boris Johnson, a CBE for Guto Harri, the former head of comms at number 10 under Boris Johnson, a CBE for Jack Doyle, another former head of comms under Boris Johnson, this time during Partygate, and then the peerages, not including Nadine Dorries or some of the other MPs that he'd hoped to nominate, but instead dominated again by his close political allies and people who used to work for him, including Dan Rosenfield, who had to resign from number 10 partly in disgrace over Partygate, his former chief of staff, Ben Gascoigne, a deputy chief of staff for Boris Johnson, Ross Kempson, a man who is not even 30, who is now going to have a seat in the legislature for life, a former political aide to Boris Johnson. The list goes on and it goes on. You can see why Sunak sat on it for so long, knowing how embarrassing it was going to be, and it's going to have two effects. One is to once again lessen any chance that Boris Johnson returns. This list looks like it stinks, and quite frankly, it does. As we said earlier in the week, it makes a mockery of our political system, the honor system, and indeed the House of Lords, and it is also going to have the effect of lessening Boris Johnson's personal reputation. We spoke again earlier in the week about Harold Wilson and his lavender list, how it had damaged him for years to come, just the impression of cronyism. This feels similar. The question is, and we probably know the answer, does Boris Johnson even care? One thing is for sure, the headlines from this going into the weekend are going to be that Boris Johnson has rewarded many of the people who oversaw and were part of the Partygate scandal. And though in some ways those headlines are helpful to Rishi Sunak, in the sense that it reminds the Tory Party and the wider public why it was that Boris Johnson had to go, it also reminds voters of days, of weeks, of months of scandal, which blackened the Conservative Party's reputation, and which they'd rather forget. Next, a change of pace. The next part of our series of extended conversations with politicians about what drives them in politics, what keeps them in politics, what makes their politics up. And today is a cracker, and it is right after this.

This is The News Agents.

Welcome back. So next in the hot seat is someone who has made a big impact in Parliament since she was elected only in 2019. It is a hackneyed old Westminster cliché, but she is a rising star of the Tory benches in a year that had a very big intake. She's already risen to become the chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, and in an era where people say they yearn for straight talking politicians with a real background, then she fits the bill on both counts.

Alicia Kenyon, MP4, Rutland and Melton. Or even better, Rutland and Melton the Vale and Harbour Villages. Oh, lovely. Do you get, I mean, presumably you get a load of pork pies?

I wish I was given three pork pies. I made a big error after my maiden speech, which was, I decided to give everyone who'd come to listen to pork pie top of Stilton, because also the home of Stilton hadn't realised they were like £5.50 each, and also hadn't realised that that 50, well, that's before inflation, and that was at least 50 people came. So my

slight lovely idea to kind of, you know, share the love of my constituency cost me slightly. So you were elected in 2019, succeeding Alan Duncan, famous diarist, of course. Sir Alan. Sir Alan, very apprentice, Sir Alan. And already, I mean, you haven't been in Parliament very long, but already you're the chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. You've become a real voice, particularly on foreign policy, obviously. First three years in Parliament. Was it different to how you imagined? It's tough. I remember in our first week, the Deputy Chief Whip said to us, this is the loneliest job in the world. Now, I was elected with 106 other colleagues. So I was like, what is she talking about? You know, it was a high, it was, you know, a massive, yeah, what's that group? A massive electoral victory. But it is, it is the loneliest job in the world. And it's tough, but also the privileges that come with it in terms of, you know, what you're saying about my voice. That's all MPs really have is our voice. We don't have a budget that we can dole out. We don't have lots of other powers to do things. But when you raise your voice, people listen. And that actually is an enormous privilege because too many people are silenced or feel like others don't want to give them a voice. And why is it tough? What's tough about an MP's life? So I think it's no one thing. But for example, the pressures on families. So I think what 80% of all conservative MPs elected in 2010 were divorced by 2019. You don't see your family. You know, I've got kids aged two and four, you know, you don't see the multiple nights a week. Well, that's the thing. And you have to commute between them. There are MPs in the past that behaved abominably. And that unfortunately has now created a public environment where people assume that MPs are on the take. They assume that MPs are acting in the worst possible interests. But also people are angry. And there's a really tough time in the moment in terms of in the world and globally what's going on. And unfortunately, MPs are the easy punch bag. So I get emails sometimes that are so aggressive and so full of abuse. And when I reply, they go, Oh, my God, I didn't think you'd read it or actually reply. I was just venting. But that's quite hard on a daily basis. Oh, you don't deserve to breathe air. I know you're on the take, you're evil, you're this, I hope your children suffer and go to hell. And then there's the actual death threats. The actual death threats, you deal with properly and through a proper system. But the average everyday level of abuse is actually what gets you down. Because especially my staff, you know, my staff really suffer because they read it every single day as well. And they say to me, Alicia, I've worked in tough jobs before, but just seeing the level of hostility on a daily basis. And I don't live, you know, in a super marginal seat. So the fact that we're getting that in that seat. So we do need to deal with this. But it also has come down to the kind of loss of the ability for people to be allowed to make mistakes, to allow to disagree with each other, to change their minds and to have a proper debate. What was your inspiration to get interested in politics? I think you said that your parents are both quite left-wing. Yeah, yeah, very left-wing. Yeah, yeah. How so? Sort of Jeremy Corbyn left-wing? They met in East Germany in the 70s. What were they doing there? Very, very left-wing. My father had been traveling around the USSR because he was politically very interested in politics. My mum was studying German as a foreign language and was lecturing on Irish politics. So they were in the DDR? They were in the DDR. So she was living in West Berlin for office reasons, but they met in the East. And it was her last day in Berlin, his first, and he flew home with her to England the next day because they were so in love from the day they met. Oh, wow. And a lot of that had to do with their political interest and political sparring and wanting to talk about this. Something good

came out of the Soviet Union. Not much. But essentially, my parents brought me up having a very political household, but not party political. Right. So we were always talking about politics and international affairs, but it wasn't so much just talking about political parties.

They were Labour voters. You know, I was brought up in a Labour household. I had never met someone

who called themselves a Tory, thought it was a term of offence, but they had also brought me, my dad's Irish, so he was raised during the Troubles, and he saw just how awful that was.

So my father's mantra was never hate. You can intensely dislike, you can disagree, but never, ever hate. And I think that brings me to quite a different place in my approach to politics of the chamber, because I don't hate the opposition. I fundamentally disagree with the way they want to achieve things, but I don't hate them. And that's why you don't really see me engage in the kind of theatrics and the shouting. So what made you realise, let me just be like, in that sort of household, a bit like sort of coming out, what made you realise? It was like coming out.

I've said that before. Yeah. So it was prisoner voting, which is a bit of a strange one.

What made you realise you were a conservative? That made me kind of start the thinking process about what my politics were. So I was working in the Ministry of Justice as a civil servant, and I thought I was a Labour voter. Prisoner voting came up, and I realised that I fundamentally disagreed with the opposition to it. Because look, you know, when you go into prison, it's because you have chosen to harm our communities. You need to be rehabilitated. And then once you come out,

of course, you should get your rights back to vote. But I think voting is a right and a responsibility. And when you've harmed our communities, you don't deserve to have any.

And this was something that the time of memory serves was a European thing.

Though actually the government, the time, the Labour government time, was opposed to in the main, but there was a suggestion it might happen on the fringes, sort of, for people with lesser sentences. And so this was while the Conservatives were in power.

Oh, right. But essentially, yes. So we were saying we were not going to allow prisoners to have the vote. And I support it. And it kind of made me just go, oh, so my concept, my conceptualisation of rights and responsibilities, is that different to the Labour Party?

So this is quite late on then. I mean, this isn't like when you were a student.

Yeah, yeah. Oh, no, I was, you know, I was left-wing as a student.

Really?

Although I wasn't involved with Politics University.

No.

So I didn't get involved with Student Union. I wasn't involved with any political parties.

And this was at Cambridge, right?

If people had known the student this year, then they would have thought that she was on the left.

Yes, but I didn't really talk about politics when I was at university. So I was deeply interested in the world, but I wasn't necessarily, I was not party political, and I wasn't doing debating.

And I lost my father in my first year of university and that kind of derailed my entire university experience. So actually, I spent more time doing events and theatre than I did working or doing politics.

Was there has been a political moment or political events which has driven your politics?

I mean, my decision to go into Parliament and to kind of abandon the career that I loved

in the Foreign Office, and I really loved what I was doing, was the fact that there was so much ill-informed discussion in Parliament about counterterrorism, about countering hostile states. You know, it was Jeremy Corbyn era. So, you know, people like saying legitimately they would leave NATO. People who didn't, you know, post Salisbury, the fact that people weren't recognising the threat of Russia. And I'd been on a no-fly list to Russia since 2015.

So I was acutely aware of the risks. And then also in the Brexit debate, hearing people talk about how it was the EU that kept us, say, rather NATO and Five Eyes, I kind of thought that I had to step forward and have a voice and make sure that we could improve the quality of debate in Parliament. So that was quite a pivotal moment for me because the Foreign Office said to me, you know, we want you to transfer in, we want you to become a diplomat, we want this to be your, you know, long-term career. So to give up something that was, and I really loved my time at the Foreign Office. But I stepped forward, lost my mind, quit, sat the tests to be a conservative

MP, thankfully passed. What are the tests? So David Cameron introduced this, and it's so good, because in the past, I think there probably was too much kind of people who knew people, kind of, you know, shoulder tapping. But you go to an assessment centre, which happens to be in Cambridge, and you have to do group tests and psychometric tests, and you have to do a group test and a speech with no warning, a one-to-one interview, and they're really trying to work out, and things, you know, they keep evolving it. But it's about trying to make sure that someone like me, who hasn't got a political mentor, who's supporting the process, or people like me, who haven't worked within the system, are able to just step forward and say they'd like to be a politician. And you've become known as someone who is not afraid to speak their mind. I mean, it is common for new MPs to keep their heads down, because they're thinking about, you know, climbing the ministerial ladder, and so on. And, you know, maybe that is ahead for you in the future. But you've not been backwards about coming forwards. Was that a deliberate thing?

So I think it's about being true to who you are. So I wear my heart on my sleeve, and anyone I've ever worked with in the civil service, anywhere else, will say, you know, Alissia is, you know, Alissia speaks her mind. And, but that's because I care deeply. And the moment at which I stop caring is the moment I need to resign and stop doing what I'm doing. You've had, already, in your short time in parliament, you've had a few prime ministers, a few party leaders. You stood for election under Boris Johnson Manor. And I was, I was supported by Boris.

Did you sour on him? Why did you become such a vociferous opponent, given that you stood on his platform? Oh, yeah. Because when you are prime minister, you walk people up a lot of hills, and you need to lead those troops, and you need to bring them with you. And leadership requires integrity. It requires you to put yourself after the people that you are fighting with and supporting and asking to follow you. And in my experience, Boris let us down. He did not behave in the way that I expected a prime minister to behave. And unfortunately, in my personal engagements with him, he did not tell me the truth in discussions we had. Such as when? Such as talking about, for example, his last week about certain people's behaviors, such as talking to him about the ways in which we should be approaching certain things. It's the Chris Pinter affair that ultimately brought him down. Oh, his last week. His last week. Sorry, yes. So when he said things about what he did know or didn't know about Chris Pinter, which turned out not to be true. And the reality is when people say, you know, he was brought down by some great plot, he wasn't. The reason he had to resign was that his ministers did not believe that what he and

number 10 were telling them was true. And that ultimately was officially, unfortunately, I came to that position a lot earlier. You thought he was a liar? Yes. And unfortunately, yes, in my personal experience, he was. Am I still incredibly grateful to him for some of the decisions he made? You know, Ukraine? Absolutely without question. You know, the COVID vaccine? Absolutely.

But unfortunately, he is a man for a certain time, and he was right to get us through the Brexit deadlock. But he's not so good at peacetime leadership, in my perspective.

Does it make you despair, though, that still so much, I mean, just take the last couple of weeks, still so much about our political discourse is about the Boris Johnson show, and about his role in all sorts of different things. Does it make you despair in terms of perhaps the hold he still has over the Conservative Party? He has the right to want to clear his name. And that is obviously a big part of this. There is, however, a big need for accountability. And that is what the process is that's going on. I don't know how long this process is going to go on for. But do I want us to do boring, grown up governance? Yes, that is literally my ask of the government. And Rishi is delivering on much of that, which I've asked for, you know, boring, steadfast, delivering on the objectives that you've set, show that we can be grown ups and show that we're capable. Did you ever have to have a conversation with him or at what point, a parliamentary meeting

or whatever, where you just said, this isn't this isn't working, you've got to go? I've had some private discussions with Boris, but I don't go into private discussions. I mean, that must have been a hard conversation to have or set conversations to have. And his response must be very interesting. So I think my greatest frustration about Boris is that he was let down by the people around him. He did not have people around him who delivered tough messages. He did not have people around him who frankly looked after him as they should have. You know, when he fell sick with COVID, I don't think he got the support and care he should have got as quickly as he should have gotten it. He had people around him who saw him as a vehicle for their own

success. And he has proven himself to be incredibly loyal to those around him. And sometimes that's misplaced because I'm not sure they're as loyal to him. But you, I mean, you were accused of helping to orchestrate a plot against him. I mean, the so-called pork pie plot in reference to your constituency. I mean, was that true? I mean, what was all that about? So a group of us, Conservative MPs, about 20, met in my office and we had a discussion about were we happy with the direction of the party, were we happy with party gate, you know, this is three months off the first party gate allegation. And that is the legitimate thing for Conservative MPs to do. And the papers were, there's just Johnson supporting papers went after you. Oh, they did, absolutely. And that's because the whips told them to. How does that? The whips told the papers to go after you? Yeah. So essentially, 20 of us met. That was our duty because only Conservative MPs can decide who is Prime Minister during a political term. That was right for us to have a conversation.

Did I was I launching a plot the day before I flew to Ukraine on a burner phone without my phone? No, I mean, no one can plot without their phone. But I came out the meeting.

Well, I came out the meeting and the whips briefed it out immediately. The whips came up the term. Your own party whips. Yeah, my own party whips. And the chief whip then had no interest in me meeting with Boris and having a discussion about what had or hadn't happened.

And what's really disappointing is in the week after it happened, there was 20 of us in the room, only two women. Who did they go after? The two women in the room. They briefed out that one was having an affair, which she was not. And the other they briefed out that I was a bad mother. And that was their response to try and scare people because they recognized that Boris's behaviors had caused significant upset within the party. I mean, that is dirty. You then had again, a quite difficult relationship with Liz Truss. She's obviously still making a series of interventions, especially on foreign policy. We saw her trip to Taiwan. What do you make of her role now? When Liz Truss came to power, I just got on with it. I went and did my job. I didn't undermine her. You supported Penny more than. I did support Penny and then Rishi and the leadership. But a decision was made. And I let her get on with it because that was our job except the decision that had been made, let her get on with ruling. And I didn't go out and brief against her. I didn't go out and publicly attack her. I did my job and let her do hers. But the reality is that she didn't command my support because of my experience I'd had with her. But when you are given a new leader of your team, your job is to back them. Well, what experience? So when she was foreign secretary, when she appeared before the Foreign Affairs Committee, meetings with her as a colleague, we weren't a good fit for each other. In what way? You know, you've worked in normal organisations. You do not have a natural fit with every single person you work with. And she and I were just not people who meshed particularly well. We didn't gel, if you want to use that wording. Or was it about how she did the job? No, it was a mix. You've seen me hold her to account when she appeared before the Foreign Affairs Committee. I didn't always agree with her approach to foreign policy. How do you feel more generally about the direction of the Conservative Party now? So the megaphone of the party is on the right. The vast majority are one nation centrist Conservatives. If you look at the Conservative Party membership, actually the majority are one nationers. People who are socially liberal, but economically to the right, welfare, security, defence. But we're not necessarily the loudest. And we're also the least likely to be a renter quote. So, you know, most of the time when you see me doing interviews, I'm talking about foreign policy. I don't really... I can see you're uncomfortable when I sort of push you about sort of personality. I can see a slight reluctance in your body language, because you don't like it. Yeah, because I come from a background where you are a team and you fight as a team. And bear in mind that you are under attack from every angle when you are an MP. You've got the opposition, you've got the media, you've got people unhappy with you. People think you're taking the wrong position. You've got hostile states trying to undermine you. Fighting for your team matters. And yes, I have been deeply unhappy with some of the ways that I have felt the Conservative party behaviour recently and some of the actions that have been taken. But I am still inherently Conservative. And that's why I want to bring us back to what I think is the right kind of conservatism for us. One where I think actually we reflect the majority of the country. You've been attacked for being accused of being pro-trans. What do you make of the direction we've seen in the Conservative party, which sometimes Rishi Sunak is indulging as well, to focus relentlessly on sort of cultural issues? So I think it's exhausting. I also think it's dangerous. And I also think it's wrong to malign vulnerable communities. My position on trans rights is I'm a libertarian. Let people live their lives. I don't think the state should be interfering in the way you want to live your

life, who you want to sleep with, how you want to behave. The moment you hurt someone, I will come down and you're like a ton of bricks. I believe in a tough justice system. But the reality is the majority just want to get on and live their lives. Does that mean that I think in prisons people should be able to just change their gender and go to a different wing or prison? No, I absolutely do not. Do I think we have to respect and protect women's rights? I'm a woman, of course I do. From the age of 12, I haven't worn headphones and a hoodie on the street because you don't know who's coming up behind you. As a woman from a young age, you always work out how you're going to get home. The experience of women is very different. But just let people live their lives. And we've been told that the cultural stuff doesn't win elections. Look at Australia, it didn't win elections for them. But also for me it's just inherently not the kind of politics I want to do. Why do you think it's dangerous? You said it's dangerous or could be dangerous. Because it victimizes people. It creates an extremism. I look at kind of the way in which the digital environment has changed the way people think. And it used to be that you weren't confronted with so many complex issues that affected you from all over the world. You had a more blinkered existence. So now where you're being forced to talk about Ukraine, to talk about AI, all these other things people would not normally have talked about in their normal lives, you have to recognize that there is no such thing as black and white. Everything is gray and complex.

So because there's so much information out there, people end up veering desperately to the black or the white. Because it means they don't have to question themselves. Because they don't have the time to do the thinking and the complexities and the nuances of it. And that makes things dangerous because it reduces the quality of the discussion. We should not be using individuals, some of whom are going through incredibly complex experiences, as a political football.

So when you see, for example, I mean, Zola Brevin, at the other week, basically made a joke saying, oh, Kirsten, I might end up as a woman next. Given what you're saying, then you'll hump a sink when you hear things like that. We have a trans MP, a conservative trans MP who I want to support. So no, I don't think we should ever use people as a football. I'm incredibly strong on LGBT rights. I will continue to be or make jokes about it. Let people live their lives freely, keep the state out of it, but make sure defences are there to protect people who need it.

So I mean, you've been in parliament for three years or so, four years. You're standing again? Yes. Next election. I don't know what I do. Otherwise, who would have made it? But I mean, what's your aspiration in politics? I mean, you've been in parliament for such a short time, but I'm not being overly complimentary when I say you have made a big impact in a way that a lot of new MPs don't, at least for a while. Are you happy doing what you're doing now? Would you like to climb the ministerial ladder? Would you like to, I don't know, if the party went into opposition? Should you think about standing for leader? One of my great frustrations, and Will Rag and I talk about this a lot, is the fact that people have fallen out of love with the role of parliamentarian. As a Bat Bencher, I have fought campaigns to make sure women didn't give birth on their own. As a Bat Bencher, last night, I won a big victory on the procurement bill where we're now going to have national security at the heart of it. Confucius Institutes, Chinese police stations,

[Transcript] The News Agents / Labour's disappearing £28bn... and Nadine resigns

rural deprivation, funding for dairy farmers, you can change things and make a big difference as a Bat Bencher. Whereas actually, having been a civil servant, I've seen how junior ministers are constrained, how they can't necessarily achieve things. And I have been able to speak out about whatever I want, whatever I'm passionate about, whatever matters to my constituents as a Bat Bencher. So we need to bring about that love of being a parliamentarian. But for me, it's all about the campaigns. You know, I love fighting. In my maiden speech, I said I want to be a voice for those who other seek to silence, whether it's the Balkans and Kosovo, whether it's women, whether it's people who have been hurt. So we're never going to see Elisa Cairns running for leader of the Conservative Party. Do you know what? I cannot, at this point, I cannot imagine anything worse. Because when you're Prime Minister, you couldn't walk down any street in this country

without people recognizing you, shouting at you, spitting at you, hating you. You probably couldn't walk around the streets of other countries. You also, you've got your heavies to deal with that. That's fine. Yeah. But do you really want to live the rest of your life with security? I just, I feel like you can make, you know, am I saying I don't want to be a Secretary of State at some point? No, I'm not. You could make an enormous difference. But actually, I've been amazed at how much as a Bat Bencher you can achieve great things and have the freedom to also make sure your party operates the best way you would like it to. Well, if you do become Prime Minister, will you come back to the news agency? Yeah. I think you'll be waiting a very long time. Oh my God, so rude. No, not for you. I meant as in Prime Minister. Oh, I see. No, sorry. No, no, no. You know what to be fair. That's what they all say to us anyway.

We'll wait and see. I think it's going to happen. I think it's going to happen one day, and then you can come back to the news agency to tell us about it. Can we see your currents? Thank you so much for being with us. Thank you.

So as no journalist has ever said or really meant, news, news, too much news. We didn't even have time for this. This has been going on for seven years. They can't stop because it's election interference at the highest level. There's never been anything like what's happened.

I'm an innocent man. I'm an innocent person. So I just want to tell you, I'm an innocent man. I did nothing wrong. I'm an innocent man. We will prove that again. Seven years of proving it. And here we go again. Yes, Donald Trump indicted for federal charges for hoarding hundreds of state documents. It raises the specter of a man heading to prison or even in prison running for president. And they said things would go back to normal.

But I can even see at the corner of my eye, as I'm literally recording these words, two of his own lawyers have just resigned and they said that things would go back to normal. We will have loads more on this next week. Never fear. Right. Well, you should probably go and enjoy the sun, shouldn't you? That is it from all of us for this week.

John and Emily couldn't be here this Friday. John's flight to Venice was cancelled. So he's hitching. If you see a man trying to offer copies of his Trump books on any motorway, anywhere in Europe in exchange for travel, for God's sake, give him a lift. Emily, meanwhile, is property hunting on the moon. And if you don't understand that, you clearly don't listen to all of our episodes or the jokes really on you, probably. Remember, you can catch up on all our shows from this week on Global Player and send us story tips and feedback to newsagents at global.com. Thanks to our production team on the news agents, Gabriel Radis, Laura Fitzpatrick, Ellie Clifford, Georgia Foxwell, Will Gibson Smith,

[Transcript] The News Agents / Labour's disappearing £28bn... and Nadine resigns

Alex Barnett and Rory Simon. Our editor is Tom Hughes and our executive producer is Dino Sophos. It's presented by Emily Maitlis, John Sopel and me. Lewis Goodall. We'll see you on Monday. Have a lovely weekend. Stay cool. Unlike me. This has been a Global Player original podcast and a Persephoneka production.