This is a global player original podcast.

The battle for the general election is getting started and it's not going to be easy.

This country cannot survive another five years of Tory rule.

Ask yourself what will be left.

That was Angela Reina, Labour's deputy leader addressing the trade union congress this morning, laying out what Labour is now calling a new deal for workers.

And she's promising a game changer for employers as well as their workers

and talking about strengthening the power of the unions.

She's laying out, as you heard, the terms for an election battle now very much on its way.

So today we're going to be asking if it's enough to pull those skeptical about Labour

in from the cold or whether it risks turning off Middle England.

Welcome to the news agents.

The news agents.

It's Emily. There is no John. There is no Lewis.

The boys have gone off to start their own provisional wing of the news agents.

But on today's episode we're going to be hearing election strategy

from a key Labour front-bencher after a reshuffle that many thought was the revival of the Blairites centrists.

Little later we'll be talking about spies in Westminster,

with a man who knows intelligence inside out, Christopher Steele.

Yes, he of the Donald Trump PP tape dossier is he surprised by the revelations

of what appears to have been going on in Parliament.

But first, to that new deal, the reiner new deal.

And to be fair, it is really far reaching in terms of what it's suggesting

of the new relationship between workers and their employees.

Because the deputy leader today talked about cutting zero-hours exploitive contracts.

She talked about negotiating a special wage for social care workers that goes

above the minimum wage to try and attract people into the sector

and make them feel valued and prepared to work in it.

And crucially, perhaps most controversially, Angela Reiner has pledged to strengthen

trade unions within the first hundred days of a Labour government.

She's promised to repeal those anti-strike laws that were brought in

under recent Conservatives and to empower workers to collectively

secure better paying conditions if her party, if Labour, wins.

And I guess to try and put this in context.

Just a week ago, last week, we had a reshuffle where the dominant word people used

about Keir Starmer's new look cabinet was centrist, was Blairite.

There was a moment where I guess the left of Labour wondered if there was still a place for them.

And perhaps we should be seeing today's speech as the offering.

The people in the party who are asking what Labour is really for,

who are asking what the difference is between Tory light and Keir Starmer.

This is their response to that.

But at the same time, it will be gold dust to those in the Conservative party.

We've already seen a tweet from Jake Berry today within minutes of Angela Reiner sitting down

saying this is what you get from Labour.

They're promising to make it easier to strike.

They're promising to bring our country to a standstill.

They're promising to give the unions more power.

So today, on the news agents, we're going to be looking at those new battle lines being drawn and talk to Peter Kyle about how Labour actually thinks it can win.

Well, Peter Kyle was Northern Ireland's shadow secretary until a week ago.

Now he's covering science and technologies for Keir Starmer.

I guess, Peter, we should talk a bit later about how you get your head around a new brief and whether expertise is lost in a reshuffle.

But Peter, you're also leading the by-election campaign in mid-beds.

Nadine Doris, old seat.

We're going to discuss how that is going in a moment.

But let's start with today with this new deal for workers.

Just talk us through what is all this about?

What is at the heart of this?

Our primary mission in government is to be able to get the economy growing.

And the only way that we're going to get the economy growing is by using every bit of potential and talent that we have in the country, starting with working people, people who are in work. And we're just thinking, what is good in our economy at the moment and needs accelerating? Where are the challenges and emerging challenges in the economy and what needs tackling? And that is the basis of Angela's speech today.

So just take me through collective bargaining and the unions because it sounds as if the threshold for striking will be lower now.

You don't have to get to the 50%.

Are you sure that's going to be popular with the public after a year of strikes?

I'm not entirely sure of the detail of that announcement because I haven't seen her speech and the detail of this speech yet before I came to speak to you.

But what we want to do, let me put it this way, what the government have been doing

by using a language of saying that the unions are over powerful and then pushing unions to one side, is forcing them to take more extreme action in order to get noticed.

So when Rishi Sunak stood up in Parliament and others stood up in Parliament and started saying,

but France has minimum service guarantees, well, France has five times the number of strikes.

And they're using as a model a country that has much more fractious relationships between the state and its workforce than we do in this country.

So what we need to do is capture what works.

And what works is when there is a union that has a good productive working relationship with the employers and it is a constant set of negotiations going forward.

We know that it drives productivity when that relationship works well.

I'm just going to try and find the bit in her speech because I know she's only just finished saying it and she doesn't go into big detail, but she says we'll level up the rules to allow trade unions to use secure and private balloting.

And she talks about how the balloting would work.

It sounds as if it is going to become easier for the unions to organise to strike.

And Jake Berry has just put out a tweet saying, next time you can't see a doctor, your kids can't go to school, your train doesn't turn up.

Remember UK Labour's plan to give even more power to those who are trying to hold Britain to ransom.

You could have written that.

I'm sure, you know, you will as a party imagined that that will be the response.

Not in a million years will the British public be lectured to about the trains not turning up, about not being able to see a doctor, about industrial action, about nurses, doctors, teachers, and in the entire public sector workforce not turning up to work because of industrial relations by this government.

So the idea that they can legislate for people to go to work in poor conditions and wages that don't put food on the on the plates, but not actually do the right thing, which is to sit down with the unions and negotiate their way out of this problem, is absolutely absurd.

So Jake Berry can say what he likes, but nobody believes him because his is the government that's led to more industrial action than we have had since the 1980s.

So what we want to do is, yes, we want to make it easier for people workers to have their voices heard.

Look, there's a poll out today.

There's a YouGov poll out that says 54%, they did it for consultancies, says 54% of voters say they would definitely not vote conservative.

So on the one hand, you've got people really turned off what feels like a failing country right now.

On the other, you've got Keir Starmer, who is having to constantly correct and reinvent the policies, the promises that he's laid down, whether it's on the 28 billion on green energy, whether it's on the university tuition fees, whether it's kind of shuffling things around on his gender promises and the trans debate, or whether it's the wealth tax just last September, a year ago, he was talking about raising income tax.

I just wonder what it's like being a front-bencher and having to go out constantly and go, I know we said this, but this, how do we know that Keir Starmer's not going to go out in two months time and go, we would have loved to do that, but this.

A responsible party adapts to the circumstances.

We've had a pandemic, we've had an economic crisis caused by the mini-budget last year with Liz Truss and Ouasi Ouarteng.

We've had underperformance and massive fraud against our government.

We've had a crisis in standards in public life.

And the fact that we are consistently polling so far ahead of the Tories at the moment shows that our ability to adapt to the time shows a responsible government with a good solid leadership that's forward-looking, based on the circumstances of today, not yesterday, is actually being rewarded by citizens, by voters, by residents.

I'm running the political side of the campaign in mid-Bedfordshire in the Dean Dorris's former seat, where the conservative vote shows every sign of totally collapsing. These are responses.

Go on, talk us through that then, because this is your other hat.

How much time you spend in mid-beds?

What happens on the doorstep now?

And you don't need to say, oh, they hate the Tories, they love Labour,

but how engaged are people when you knock on a door?

Do they want the by-elections coming up on the 19th of October?

Oh, they'd like it tomorrow, I think.

I think they would just want this to be over.

And they have done for quite a while now.

Keira pointed me to this straight after she resigned.

Nadine Dorris resigned the first time, not the second or third time, and the other time.

What is this count?

But we saw something really interesting right from the very, very start.

Firstly, you asked the question about what people are saying.

It is probably the most informed community of voters that I've ever come across,

and considering it's 52, 56 villages, rather than just one urban area,

which is what we, you know, I'm used to campaigning in myself,

it is incredible how informed everything was.

So they clued up about what's happening?

No question.

It's like a hive mind, everyone knows what's happening.

And then the next bit of the conversation is,

do I presume you normally vote Conservative?

Oh, yes, absolutely.

Do I presume we'll be sticking with them?

Oh, goodness, no.

And the phrase that keeps coming up is, they don't deserve my vote.

It's really quite astonishing.

For us, the thing that's so exciting and quite exhilarating is the fact

that we have the potential to engage and have a conversation

and win the trust of people we never have in our whole history.

And it's something that we're grabbing with both hands.

But you're also fighting the Lib Dems there.

This was, I guess, a moment for what the electorate might call grown-up politics.

You know, the Lib Dems think, oh, they're going to get Tamworth, Chris Pinscher's old seat.

You can take that one in the West Midlands.

We've probably got a better chance in mid-beds.

Labour should step aside here.

A bit of tactical voting.

Why wasn't there a sense of, yeah, you know, these parties are working together now

because we realize what's at stake?

What you've just done is very well and accurately described the Lib Dem approach to these things.

I feel my political instincts, my blood starting to rise when you do it.

You're about to scream.

Well, simply because I think elections are about voters and residents.

They're not about us as political parties.

So if there is a community of people and they are saying they want to engage with us,

you know, what would it mean for us if we then said, oh, no, no, no, we think you

should go to another political party because we've decided in a meeting that we had in London.

So what would it mean if the Tories come through the middle then?

Will that strategy, that blood boiling strategy have seemed...

So look, I've never supported the idea of a progressive alliance.

I think that is, that's politicians and politics telling voters what how to vote.

It is a perversion of how I see politics in an open democracy,

which is we go out there and try and earn every single vote the hard way.

And it's sort of trying to avoid the hard choices in politics.

But you have to be smart.

In some set and froome, we didn't need a meeting with the Lib Dems in a darkened room in London to know that it would be a waste of Labour Party membership money

to pile it into a seat that we really could never win.

And the fact that the Lib Dems could wasn't something we needed the Lib Dems to tell us.

We came to that conclusion ourselves.

There were other opportunities for us, which we exploited with both hands,

which is why we won in Selby.

Now, what I don't understand is why that smart approach to politics,

that listening and empathetic approach to how you listen to voters in one area,

isn't being adopted by the Lib Dems because they're not just doing what we're doing.

And I'll tell you something else we're doing there because I feel very strongly about this.

You asked about voters in mid-Bevichure,

and I said that they are the most informed I've ever come across.

We have done almost no conservative attack in that election so far.

We have done zero Lib Dem attack because that is a community that says we want to know

the best of political parties going forward because we have experienced the worst.

And what I'm seeing from the Lib Dems is deeply personal.

It is aimed at the person, our candidate,

not at the policies or politics of the person or the party.

And I see hints, and I sense a style...

Have you said that to her, Davey?

Have you said what on earth are you doing?

I've had the opportunity to, but I sense a style of politics by the Lib Dems in mid-Bevichure,

which is reminiscent of the campaign they ran against Peter Tatchell in the 1980s.

And I have no doubt because they are so desperate to make an impact in mid-Bevichure

that if our candidate was gay, they'd be doing a family values campaign.

That's the level to which they...

You're saving they're homophobic now?

No, I'm saying that they would go nowhere.

Moral high ground does not count in the way the Lib Dems are acting in that constituency.

And I don't think, because I have respect for Davey,

I don't think he realises what is happening locally up there.

And I like to think he doesn't.

I like to think that they aspire to better.

But I've seen statements, and you might well have had one of these emails from the Lib Dems saying that our candidate has character issues to address.

Who does that in emails to journalists if there isn't?

Because because there isn't.

So what are they saying?

What I'm saying is that...

No, no, what are they saying with character issues?

I have no idea.

And it might well be that he went on a Greenpeace rally, which we knew in the past, which actually shows he's a passionate guy that wants to get stuck into big issues.

That's not a character issue, is it?

What does that mean?

No, no, we have no idea.

Genuinely, with my hand on my heart, I have no idea at all what they're talking about.

But this is what they're doing, what I would never do in a million years,

and have not allowed to happen in our campaign.

Because we are loving every single conversation we're having people,

because they want to talk about the future, they want to talk about policies,

the policies that keep coming up, our developments that's happening locally,

no access to doctors.

So can I just ask, with respect for the electorate that you talked about,

treating voters as people that you actually want to listen to and give choice to,

does that extend to Jeremy Corbyn potentially coming into the Merrill race in London?

Would you say, come on in?

There's plenty of room for you as well as Sadiq Khan.

Yeah, but I wouldn't stop him.

I think that if he...

Is anyone trying to talk him down from that?

I honestly don't know.

But look, we do communicate as parties, and I think the public

expect us, when it's possible, to work together across party.

And I would like to think in times like a point of evidence that I've just wanted to do that.

Come on, back to Corbyn then.

Would other people saying he must not stand,

because that will open up London's morality to the Tories?

I'm not going to say that anyone must not stand in democracy,

because that would be a strange thing for me to say.

I think it would be irresponsible if he stood, but that's...

Why?

Because the only thing he could achieve is possibly the height of his ambitions.

And I don't think there's any evidence to show that he could win it.

But what he could do possibly, if you look at some of the polling,

is he could prevent Sadiq and the Labour Party winning.

Again, it is a decision that Jeremy has to come to having to know those facts.

If you weigh those two up though, isn't that a contradiction?

That when Jeremy Corbyn does it, you think it's irresponsible.

But when you and the Lib Dems do it in mid-beds, it's democratic.

Well, so don't put words in my mouth, because I never said it was irresponsible of them to stand.

But I think that the tone and conduct of the way they are campaigning

is not up to the standards that people in mid-eventure expect.

No, but what I'm saying is, you said that if Jeremy Corbyn would stand in this one,

you said that would be an irresponsible decision.

Whereas when it's the mid-beds question, you're saying,

well, that's just what democracy looks like.

No, I said every single person has the right to stand,

and I would never stand in the way of that.

But I also say that the Labour Party is smart when it comes to where it invests its resources,

both of our activists' resource and also the money that people donate to the party

and we raise through our membership.

So smart use of our money is putting it in places where we can connect with voters,

that we can take seats back, that we can strengthen our relationship with the electorate,

and we can further our policies and our politics and get people into parliament and into local government.

Unwise use of supporters' money is going into a fight you can't win,

particularly if it delivers an outcome that is perverse to what you say you aspire to in public life.

Let's get back to where we started, which was,

you've only been the science and technologies shadow minister for a week.

What does that feel like from inside?

Because you've got people like me badgering you and saying,

what's happening? What's going on? When will we know?

Are they changing the top five and all the rest of it?

And you have become really expert in Northern Ireland,

and you really know your shit there.

And then suddenly, that's taken away, and you're going to something that's brand new.

I mean, is there not a bit of you that thinks I just want to become an expert in this thing?

I mean, does science suit you?

Do you feel an affinity with your brief now, or do you think, oh my God,

please don't ask me about nuclear fission?

I would always be honest about the things that I'm not fully on top of yet.

When you get a brief like this, it is daunting and really exciting in equal measure.

You know, big, big, really great excitement, really great daunting.

And if I'm brutally honest, to start with for the first few days,

it's like you're looking at these pieces of a jigsaw in a pile on the desk in front of you.

But you haven't been able to see the picture on the front of the box yet.

So you're not quite sure where everything fits together,

because my brief covers now everything from the space program through to 5G

and broadband rollout through to the tech innovation,

but also things like social media regulation,

then making sure that we are the best place in the world,

magnetic enough that these big companies want to come and innovate here,

and they have the freedom to innovate here,

but they have the freedom to innovate here safely.

Too often we've slid into the potential dangers that these technologies throw up.

I think we really need to also balance that with the opportunities that are out there

for our economy, country, society, and us as individuals going forward,

because it can be liberating if you look at life sciences and technology.

And it's exciting.

And this is phenomenally exciting.

Really liberating.

After the reshuffle, the word that everyone used

when they looked at the sort of new cabinet was blerite,

centrist blerite.

I sort of think of you as a bit of a blerite.

And it is funny when I looked at your conference manual,

the brochure for the October conference,

there is a picture where Keir Starmer now looks like the spitting image

of Tony Blair taken from the 97 manifesto.

A carbon copy.

I don't believe that was a coincidence.

Are you now setting Keir Starmer up to be Tony Blair?

What you think we shouldn't have made him look like a winner.

The trouble with the term blerite is it's really out of date now,

and it's quite hard to know what it means in this particular era.

But for me, because I worked for that government for a couple of years

as a policy advisor, for me it means work ethic.

You know, when I started working for that team in the Cabinet Office 2006 and 2007,

my God, I thought I could work hard.

But I came out two years later being able to work an awful lot harder

and an awful lot more focused.

We were driven incredibly hard.

We had very, very tight direction.

You know, we knew exactly where we needed to get to.

But I'm just asking you about the picture.

I mean, it is the spitting image, Blair in 1997,

and the exact same pose of Keir Starmer in 2023.

Isn't that getting a bit kind of culty?

No. I mean, look, I mean, have you,

did you actually look at a photo of Wilson

when he was doing his white heated technology speech?

Is he on the motion next to you?

Well, I mean, but it's, you know, Keir looks like a winner.

You know, he feels like a winner.

He sounds like a winner.

I went on a trip to Macclesfield to AstraZeneca with him last week $\,$

to look at life sciences.

You know, with the private conversation we have,

you have somebody who is, who knows precisely

what he wants out of me in this job.

He speaks with real clarity for it,

incredible sense of ambition.

He speaks with real excitement about the potential.

But if you ever show a hint of complacency,

you know, he comes down on you like a ton of bricks.

He's more relaxed than he was a couple of years ago.

He is more comfortable with the scale of challenge that he has,

but also I think he's more comfortable partly

because I think he's got not just his team of advisors around him,

including Sue Gray,

but also right the way from top to bottom within the party.

He feels like we're all working together

and that takes a lot of the heavy lifting off of his shoulders

so he can focus on the pure leadership role.

He is someone who feels 2020 is looking forward.

And when you look around the world,

the other countries that have turned to social democrats,

who are achieving really quite astonishing things,

I think here fits very well into that group of people

and it feels very, very modern to me.

It certainly doesn't feel...

Keir doesn't feel sound, look, or talk like somebody

who is 25 years out of date,

which is what Blairism really is.

And that's not, you know, disrespectful to Tony

if he happens to be listening to this.

He always does. He never listens to this.

But he...

Is he some of the people who text...

One of the people who text late at night as well,

which is why we have to bring in that rule to stop people,

you know, the right to...

The right to switch off your phone.

The right to switch off.

We've learned a lot from Tony

and the way that he succeeded in government

and the way that he led the party and the government.

You know, he led with clarity.

Keir is leading with clarity.

Tony, he led a broad team.

You know, Keir, for all of what you've just said,

it's a broad team.

And, you know, because we spent the first half

of this conversation talking about

Angela Reina's speech today,

you know, we are still a broad party that has...

That is a progressive party,

whether it's technology, whether it's right,

we will make sure that those people who need it the most

will get the most support and attention from us.

And for those people who are innovating

and need freedom in order to do their work,

we'll make sure that they get the space they need

as long as they act responsibly.

You know, this is a party that is rooted

in the 2020s going forward, not in the past.

Peter Karl, thank you.

Thanks.

In a moment, we'll be talking about spying in Westminster.

Is it possible there is actually a ring of people

who have infiltrated our Parliament

to pass secrets back to China?

We'll be asking Christopher Steele.

This is The News Agents.

Welcome back.

We're going to talk about spying,

spy rings in Westminster.

And that is off the back of the 28-year-old,

who we should say has firmly denied,

categorically denied that he is a spy.

But it's a young man who works for the China Research Group

set up by the man who is now the Security Minister,

Tom Tuggenhart.

And it really calls into question

who is operating in Westminster that we don't know about

and whether they are actually able

to influence the direction of government

or the direction of select committees

or the kind of policies that we think are now being made

in the name of British democracy.

And we're going to talk to Chris Steele, who is sort of paramount in this

because he knows the Russia desk of MI6 inside out.

He ran that and has come very close,

I would say, Chris,

to an understanding of this kind of infiltration

in so many areas now of public life.

So I guess the first question is,

were you surprised when this story broke?

I mean, we're not naming him,

but we've seen sort of pictures of this very young man,

not charged, as I say, with anything,

but potentially they are looking at questions of treason.

Yes, I'm not particularly surprised by it.

I think that the problem at the moment

is that hostile intelligence services

are not just carrying out, as it were,

their traditional tasks of trying to steal secret documents

and find out where our nuclear submarines are and so on.

There's a gray area now, which is massively important,

which is all about influence.

It's all about influencing policy.

It's all about plugging in, really,

to divisions that may already be there

and tensions that may already be there.

And this China policy of the government

is a classic example of that.

The government is clearly divided

and has been for a generation

between those who are emphasising the importance

of a security focus on China

and those that see China as a business opportunity.

And that's not going to go away,

and the Chinese will be hugely aware

that that is an area where they can influence

for their own benefit.

Except you've got people, you know,

stalwarts like Ian Duncan-Smith

saying we've got to treat China as a threat.

Liz Truss, you know, for better or for worse,

saying the same thing, we've got to treat China as a threat.

They're not going to suddenly listen

to a 28-year-old researcher.

I think there's a lot more to it than that.

I mean, we could go on to other areas that the Chinese are particularly interested in the UK, obviously, relating to Hong Kong, relating to human rights activists from Hong Kong who have resettled here. And you'll recall that only a few months ago, the Chinese government actually put out a bounty on a number of dissidents from Hong Kong that are based in this country, one of whom Nathan Law, I know quite well. And of course, if what we're being told is true and holds up in court, then that sort of person playing that sort of role in Parliament would have had access to some of these dissidents and will possibly know where they're living, where their movements are and so on, which could be extremely dangerous for those people going forward. How do you think he got in? I mean, we know how he got in, in the sense that he just got a parliamentary pass. He went through the vetting procedure, they did the whole thing as normal. I mean, I guess that suggests we're not really asking the right questions or maybe that it is impossible. To ask the right questions. It's not that we're not asking the right questions and a question of resources, I think, probably. I mean, the number of special advisers and researchers and all the rest of it in Parliament is vast, as you'll know. I mean, every MP has several. Now, not all of them are going to be working in these sort of sensitive areas. But even, you know, trade and other things with regard to China are really important. And certainly legislation is. You'll have seen the Economic Security Act that went through recently, which is an important step forward. It covers a vast range of different things, including sensitive technologies.

And so to vet each of those people to the sort of level we're talking about, the sort of level perhaps that I was vetted to in the past, would be vastly expensive and logistically impossible, I think.

What would you ask me if you were trying to work out if I was a spy?

I mean, what are the questions?

You know, if you're talking about vetting,

yes, you can go back through my whole history.

You might find out that I lived in Hong Kong for six years.

That might kind of ring alarm bells, blah, blah, blah.

But what would you really actually be asking me

that would open your mind to suspicion of me?

It's fundamentally about vulnerability.

And vulnerability will come from things like

economic insecurity, financial insecurity.

It's about that plus motivation plus opportunity.

And opportunity comes usually in these cases

when somebody spent a considerable amount of time

inside the country.

And that gives you the opportunity

to recruit someone, to cultivate someone

and to train them up in whatever role.

So would a potentially hostile state like China

target people already on the inside of Parliament?

Or would they try and, if you like, groom them and get them in?

I think looking at the profile,

the highly likelihood is that he was approached

when he was living in China.

And in fact, I've seen this before

on at least a couple of other occasions

when associates of ours

who also were either visiting China or lived in China

were approached by the Chinese intelligence services,

all of which were reported, of course,

to the appropriate authorities here.

But it shows you a modus operandi, quite an aggressive one.

But one where the Chinese are much more aggressive

on their own soil than they are in the UK.

So Chris, how much damage do you think

a spy in Parliament could do?

Difficult to say.

I mean, I'm not in a position to know exactly

what he had access to or who he had access to.

Obviously, he was working with or for

both Tom Tug and Alessia Cairns

and sort of spoiler alert here in a sense that, you know...

They're probably not party to state secrets, are they?

I would think they probably are.

Oh, yes.

And the fact is that firms and people like me

share intelligence with select committees on Russia,

for example, with the ISC when they did their report.

And indeed, more recently,

we've shared intelligence with Alessia's committee

about the Wagner Group report on that.

And so there's a real concern, I think,

amongst people like ourselves,

that the system may be faulty and may have been penetrated.

And that has implications for our own assets

and our own security.

Do you think MI6 will be scared?

I think they won't be surprised.

I think that, as I said, it's a very difficult thing.

A lot of it is about education.

It's about sensitising MPs in particular

to the sort of threat that we're facing now,

which, as I said, is a very nebulous sort of

a threat that's difficult to define in many ways.

A lot of these things weren't actually illegal in any sense

until very recently.

We just didn't have the legislative or framework

that we needed to try and police this sort of thing.

We didn't have a Foreign Agent Registration Act.

We didn't have a Fit for Purpose espionage Act.

And the lobbying act in itself is deficient, in my view.

So he would go, if convicted, to prison for treason.

Is that right?

It's possible, as I say, I don't know the ins and outs

of what he had access to.

But I think there are...

I mean, that's a very, very rare charge, isn't it, treason?

I mean, I think we've, you know...

It's a rare charge to try and court,

because, of course, there are all sorts of issues

involved in trying these cases.

One is that you often reveal your sources and methods

in the process.

Secondly, you have to have evidential material,

which is up to 99% proof for a criminal court

or a criminal jury.

And those things very rarely happen in counterintelligence.

Usually, it's about monitoring, it's about understanding,

and it's about disrupting this kind of activity

rather than bringing it into the courts.

I mean, your work, I think,

if you... Much more as the Russia expert on all this.

Famously, the man who wrote the dossier

that was then taken by James Comey,

put on Trump's desk in his first week in office

to warn him that Russia was probably looking

into his activities in a hotel room in Moscow.

And we can all remember the rest

of that slightly scatological story.

But do you now see, Chris,

Russia and China essentially working in tandem?

I mean, does being at war with Russia

also mean that we are essentially at war with China now?

No. it doesn't.

And I don't think, actually,

that there is much history

of close intelligence cooperation between China and Russia,

which is an interesting limitation, if you like,

on their state, corporation, and liaison.

But what I think there is,

is in a sense learning the lessons from the others.

This is all about deterrence in a way.

If people think they're going to be caught,

if they think they're going to be sufficiently punished,

they won't be conducting this kind of operation.

And I think, particularly in regard to Parliament,

I mean, we've talked a lot about things like,

you know, the appointment of Lord Lebedev

and things like that as the son of a KGB officer into Parliament.

Into the Lords.

Into the Lords for life,

which is a hugely questionable activity or decision.

And the Chinese will have taken note of that.

Don't forget that this isn't the first actual case.

There was a case of Christine Lee, if you remember.

Again, I think some months ago,

where the security service issued a natural public warning about her activities in and around Parliament.

And it does take me back to, I have to say,

a report that I contributed to or we contributed to in 2020,

if you remember, partly relating to Huawei,

but generally relating to state capture by China,

elite capture, actually,

in which some of these things were put forward and were flagged up.

And it took three years, including on the Christine Lee issue,

for this thing to be actually acted upon.

So we're very much behind the game on this.

You know, if a group of private sector intelligence executives

and officers and others can come up with a comprehensive report

on Chinese elite capture in the UK,

where's the government in all this?

And MPs did see that report at the time,

and it doesn't appear to have been acted on.

Crystal, thank you.

Thanks very much.

And we'll be back in a moment.

This is The News Agents.

Before we go, I just want to say a really big heartfelt thank you

from all of us on the team,

both for the messages we've had today and yesterday

about our episode on mental health.

We really appreciated you getting in touch

and saying that that had been helpful and valuable

and you were glad that we'd covered it.

And really a huge thank you for all of you

who shared incredibly personal and often quite heartbreaking stories,

actually, about your own experiences

and those of your loved ones.

We've been through a lot of the voice mails and messages

and the texts and emails that you sent.

And we just want to say a big thank you

for trusting us with those stories.

If you haven't heard it, it's still available on Global Player

or wherever you get your podcasts.

And later on The News Agents USA,

you can hear a discussion with David Frum

from the Atlantic, former speechwriter for George W. Bush

about this impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden

and about Vladimir Putin's love in with Donald Trump,

newly reestablished and what Trump was doing in Iowa,

flipping burgers. That's all to come on The News Agents USA and it's out tonight on Global Player. See you later.