

[Transcript] The News Agents / Michael Heseltine on Suella, Enoch Powell and saving Liverpool

This is a Global Player original podcast.

It is appalling, appalling that 70% of our young people want to stay in Europe and they're being ignored by the 70% of old people who want to leave.

The self-interest of this country self-evidently depends on our presence at the heart of Europe. The Brexiteers who are driven by these obsessions of yesteryear, by the delusions of the role of a medium-sized economy and nation-state in tomorrow's world, ignorant of the wishes of the generations yet to come.

We stood down from our position as one of the leading countries of our sort in the world.

We gave up power.

I can't understand that.

That is, of course, the unmistakable cadence, the richness of the voice of Lord Michael Heseltine, businessman, politician, cabinet minister, deputy prime minister and the John Major, uneasy foe of Margaret Thatcher, unlikely friend of Liverpool and the North, the de facto standard bearer of that ever-diminishing band, the Tory Eurofiles.

It has been a voice which has, in one way or another, rang through the sound of our furious politics of the last half century or longer.

Now in his 90th year with his party once again, apparently in rapid decline, with the country once again approaching a political choice, there could be no one better from whom to ask for a little wisdom, a little perspective that could have been king, the prime minister who very nearly was, whose signature political belief has been consigned to history but one he insists will rise again.

It's Lewis here.

Welcome to the News Agents.

Well Lord Heseltine, welcome.

Thank you so much for coming on The News Agents.

A great pleasure to have you here and in this slot we like to try and talk a little bit about contemporary politics but also view it through the prism of the person we're interviewing is life and their experience of politics and experience of politics doesn't come much richer than yourself.

You first elected in 1966 in the Labour landslide year of that year under Harold Wilson.

What was Commons like in that time?

Post-war, very much a characteristic of speeches, my honourable and gallant friend, you don't hear that now.

Meaning someone who'd served in the military.

Correct, yes.

Some very distinguished people who'd had very impressive careers in the military during the war.

You had long wanted to be an MP already by that stage.

How old were you then?

I was 33 when I got into House of Commons.

And you'd long wanted to be there.

I joined the Conservative Party in 1951, unpredictably.

I was actually on my way to have coffee with friends and I saw this hoarding on the other

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side of the road, Henry Kirby prospective candidate Swansea West and I crossed the road and said, can I help?

And then 10 days later I went up to Oxford on my first day in Oxford.

I joined the City Conservative Association, the University Conservative Association and the Oxford Union.

So it was there, indeed someone who taught me when I was 7 said it was obvious you were going to go into politics.

Well of course if it's famously said about you, I think this is not actually true, but the thing that's always said about you of course is that you have this sort of set of ambitions about what you wanted to do in your 20s and 30s and 40s and eventually become Prime Minister in your 50s.

That was not true, right?

No, that was a friend of mine who was a journalist called Julian Critchley who created that and it wasn't true.

I'd rather reverse actually, I never thought I'd make it particularly.

Really?

No, I was rather uncertain I think, but I took the view that if I worked hard I'd have some success.

And your early life I suppose must have been framed by the war?

Absolutely.

No, my driving here today, incredible, I drove through Pickley Circus, I was there the day the war ended and I can remember it now.

In May 45?

In May, later, the Japanese war, yes.

In August 45?

Yes.

I heard Neville Chamberlain declare war in 1939, standing in my kitchen in Swansea and there was this wall bracketed radio, I can remember it quite clearly.

And I remember the war, I remember the bombing, but basically my mother, sister and I, followed my father around where he was stationed until he went to Normandy.

What was that like growing up in the war, hearing that memory vividly, I mean even just talking about it, even puts my head on the back of my neck standing on the ground and thinking about Chamberlain and all of that, let alone living through it, what was it like?

How do you think it shaped your politics?

Without any doubt, that experience was part of the conversion to the European cause.

As it was for so many of that generation?

Absolutely, and the European momentum really came from the men and women of the prisoner of war camps and the resistance movements, who basically, continental, it must never happen again.

This, after all, was the third war in which France and Germany had torn each other apart in 75 years.

The politicians, the elder generation, made the decisions and the young people were sent to die because they couldn't come for remits, and that's a pretty rough way to live.

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And there was this absolute determination in Europe, this must never happen again. And that led to the Schumann Plan, which was a concept devised by the French Foreign Minister, to bring the war-making industries under a common control, steel, coal, iron. That was the first step towards the creation of the European movement. What was your household like growing up, and was it very political, your mother and father?

No, there was no politics.

Really?

Well, I know my father said to me after the war, he was the only officer in his mess to vote Conservative.

It was rather interesting, because they all voted against the Conservatives, despite the incredible veneration of Winston Churchill.

Why did you draw into the Conservative Party?

Your family, you're saying, weren't particularly political.

What was it about politics and then the Conservative Party that made you think as a young man?

Yes, that's the arena that I'd like to enter.

I think it probably is you climb the ladders that are available to you, and coming from a relatively prosperous middle-class background, that was the obvious place to go. That's the way I'd been brought up, that's the way I felt and thought, and why should I want to change the world?

I might want to build on it, improve it, but not a fundamental lurch to the left.

There was nothing in my life then that would have made that a likely concept.

And were there any political figures, politicians around that time, or even later, that you looked up to, that you admired, anyone that inspired you in particular, or there may have been a speech or some such?

You always come back to Churchill.

I mean, even today, I find it incredible to think of the strain of that man in the heat of war, but I never met him.

I stood at his funeral, and I visited his grave.

That must have been an extraordinary event in 65, his funeral.

Yes, yes.

The colleague I mentioned, Julian Critchley, in the House of Commons, described it. He said, there was a division in the lobby in the Commons, and Churchill was voting. The members would stand back and watch history walk past.

I think that's rather a lovely image.

Just honestly about Churchill, to go back to what you were talking about in terms of Europe, both sides on the Europe divide invoke him, don't they?

Both sides claim him as their own.

But only one, legitimately.

We must create a kind of United States of Europe.

He didn't say they must create.

He said we must create.

So you become an MP in 66, you're in the Commons as a young MP.

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Who were your political load stars at that time?

Who did you attach your political personality to, your politics to?

In terms of immediacy, it was rather the other way around, because I found myself working for Peter Walker, who was a very remarkable spotter of people he wanted to have in his team.

And he approached me and asked me to organize a tour of the West Country for him.

Were you the MP for Taverstock at that time?

I was then the MP for Taverstock, which I did, and that went quite well.

Immediately, it was over, he said, will you join my shadow transport team?

So within no time at all, I was actually speaking from the Travis Front bench.

It wasn't too difficult, because we'd been absolutely slaughtered in 1966.

That can be quite a help to an ambitious MP if you come in on a year.

Only 11 new MPs came in at that time, a tiny number.

So a lot of the elderly guys had gone off to try and repair their fortunes or the lax.

So the competition wasn't that tough.

But it certainly happened.

I was speaking from the Travis Front bench for almost day one.

Did you find Wilson an impressive Prime Minister?

He was your first Prime Minister when you were there.

No, he was impressive.

And I didn't admire him or like him, but if you ask him about a skill as a Prime Minister and as a party leader, yes.

And his speech, the white-hot heat of the technological revolution, I think in 1973,

I think it was, was a masterly scene-setter for his election in 74.

And indeed, perhaps the only Prime Minister to have had a divided party on Europe and to have navigated it successfully.

Well, he ran away from it, of course, because he said we'll have a referendum.

So he ran away.

But it went the right way for him.

No, it went the right way.

But nevertheless, he ran away and people forget that.

You've seen so many politicians come and go.

It can be tempting, I know, and people perhaps you should resist this to think, oh, well, politicians were so titanic in the past.

But when I think of politicians of your generation and before and perhaps even immediately afterwards,

you know, if we're talking about the Wilson period on both sides of the house, you know, you've got on Labour, Wilson or Tony Ben or Barbara Castle or Jim Callaghan or Roy Jenkins and then Conservative side, you had Ted Heath and Thatcher and yourself and many others, they do seem, maybe it's just me because I wasn't around and I'm much younger, but they do seem titanic.

Do you think that politicians have declined in quality by comparison to that?

I think the answer to your question lay in your question itself, you're much younger.

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I think it's very difficult to look down at a younger generation and see giants. It's much easier to look up to people who have emerged in great circumstances, in dramatic circumstances, weather the storm and see them as something larger than life. I mean, it was very vivid for me when I left Margaret's government in 1986, there were giants, Willie Whitelaw, Peter Carrington, Quinton Halsham, there were giants. When I went back in 1990, I remember thinking, I'm a generation older than these people. And I'm sure that age does make a difference. But when you look at the cabinet now, do you think that their approximate quality to the cabinets that you were in in the 1980s? It's easy to say no, but that's a very unfair thing to say. First of all, I don't know them. Secondly, I am a great deloader than them. And I just analyse how much easier it is to recognise giants of yesterday than potential giants of tomorrow. Someone who was a giant of the commons, whatever you thought about him, was Enoch Powell, of course, and he was around when you were an MP and you were serving under Ted Heath, and of course he made his famous Rivers of Blood speech in 1968. You were one of the most, and then and since, vociferous voice against Powell and Powellism. I was the first Tory to attack his speech. It so happened that he made it on a Saturday, and with Peter Walker, I was part of a demonstration against a piece of labour transport legislation in Leeds. And so, uncharacteristic of the Conservative Party, I was operating on a Sunday, and so I got asked, and I was the first to attack Enoch Powell. I think it was a totally immoral speech because it took the issue of race, which is incendiary throughout history, throughout the world, in all countries, and all that. And he made a speech which had this total impression that he was saying something, but there was no proposals or solutions in it. So what he was really doing was whipping up the emotion without trying to solve any of the problems. And why did he do it? Because the Labour Party and government were introducing a race relations legislation. There should be no discrimination in colour, class or creed. And I believe that that was absolutely right. My party was opposing it, and Enoch Powell wanted to make sure they voted that way. Ted Heath sacked Enoch Powell, and three weeks later the party supported the legislation. But I had been involved commercially in hotels and employment agencies before my election to the House of Commons. I knew what was going on. Personally, I experienced it, and I believed it was morally wrong and unacceptable. What was going on? Well, I give you two examples. One, a hotel, a very sensible black guy turned up and said, you've got a room, well, we hadn't got a room, and actually we were full.

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So I said, but don't worry, I'm quite friendly with the hotel up the road.

I rang them and said, I've got a guy here who wants a room, you've got one, yes, send him up.

Took him a hundred metres up the road, they took one look and said we're full.

And the other one was employment agencies.

We ran a sort of employment agency for qualified people, and basically we had names and addresses of these people, and we would put that biography on a form and send it to companies that wanted to recruit qualified people who would tell us what their specification for people was, what the requirements were.

And time and time again, there would be no colours, no colours, no colours.

So I knew what was going on, and it had to be stopped, and the Labour government were going to stop it.

My party was in opposition, and I wasn't prepared to join that.

So I defied the Tory three-line whip, but to the credit of the party, it gave in on its opposition and let the legislation through.

Do you think that there are glimmers or echoes of Powell's politics and his rhetoric in our own politics now?

Oh, I mean Brexit is based on it.

That is what Brexit is about.

I think it's based on a sort of incendiary racism that Powell was demonstrating then.

What do you think the statement there were 40 million Muslims in Turkey who might come into this country?

Well, it was all about.

Base.

If you're anywhere near the Brexit argument, the circumstance was very depressing economic circumstances.

It was feeling pressed after the 2008 world crash.

And so you've got to find someone to blame, him, her, them, it, bureaucrats, foreigners, Brussels, and immigrants, all wrapped up in the same wink, nod.

That was the Brexit case.

Rishi Sunak and Soelle Broughman, who of course in their own way son and daughters of immigrants,

I mean, if they were here, they would completely reject that themselves.

They would say that there was nothing racist about the Brexit campaign.

They would say there's nothing racist about wanting to control immigration.

So you're at variance with what they would think on that.

You think they're on?

I know what Brexit's about.

Now, both of them would have climbed the ladders of the Tory party when the agenda had been set.

They didn't create the agenda.

They accepted it.

There's obviously been talk just this week about, from Soelle Broughman, about withdrawing

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from the European Convention on Human Rights, changing the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. What do you think about that?

Is this country going to be the first to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights designed in the post-war world to send a beacon of hope to the people behind the Iron Curtain to say that there will be a nation that will stand for human rights, for decency?

Are we going to be the first major country to abandon that?

You only have to ask the question to say that it's unthinkable.

Well, she's seen that doesn't think it's unthinkable.

So the government doesn't think it's unthinkable.

She actually thinks it could be a good idea.

You didn't ask them.

You asked me.

When you hear the Home Secretary talk about an invasion on our southern coast, do you think that's powerlack?

Yes.

That sort of language?

Yes.

It's quite worrying then.

But look, let's understand this issue.

It is a huge world crisis.

One of the principal sources of the crisis is the world communication system.

The people who are coming to this country are not just coming to England.

They're coming to the honeypots of prosperity.

They know the standards of living here.

They may have relatives who are already here enjoying those standards of living.

And the conditions in which they are living, in which they're bringing up their children and their families, are appalling.

And they want a share of the action.

And that's what most of it is about.

And you throw into that global warming millions, tens of millions of people in coastal communities which are going to be obliterated, see the floods that are taking place across the world in the most recent fires.

And those are the causes of the immigrant crisis.

Now, let's have no doubt, it is already having the most difficult political consequences in one European country after another.

So we have to address this issue.

And we can't do it alone.

The immigrants crossing the channel from France are not French.

Imagine if it was the other way around and they were going to France from here in the French centre, you've got to take them back.

There'd be hulls of indignation.

That's exactly how it is in France.

So what should we do?

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We need to have a martial aid plan of the sort that the Americans used to help rebuild Europe after the war.

So two things.

First of all, we need a common frontier around Europe which we all help to please and man. Secondly, we have to recognise that the constructive way of dealing with this issue is to help create the conditions in the countries from which the people come that are wealth-creating and therefore provide the incentives for them to stay where they are.

The Home Secretary said this week that, like she said before, that no one who is arriving is a refugee, that they're not, they're just economic migrants.

She's even said this week that some people are lying pretending to be gay when they're not gay.

Oh, well I have the slightest doubt that people will say anything to get through the system. Put yourself in their position.

Think where they've come from.

Think what they've faced with going back to.

And they've almost got here.

And what would you say if in those circumstances?

Well, the Home Secretary wants to send them to Rwanda.

Well, we'll see whether that happens.

But the one thing about that policy is that it's a tiny, tiny microcosm of the whole.

I mean, they're talking about a few hundred people out of tens of thousands.

We'll be back with Lord Heseltine right after this.

This is The News Agents.

Let's fast forward to the time you were a Cabinet Minister in the 1980s working on the Margaret Thatcher.

You in a way that came synonymous with levelling up before levelling up was even a phrase because of course you'll work in Liverpool, London, docklands as well.

It's an agenda that you've helped successive Conservative Governments with, including the Cameron Osborne administration.

Where do you think we are on levelling up?

Do you think it's something that Rishi Sunak still cares about?

David Cameron, George Osborne, Greg Clark were the levelling up administration.

And they made real progress.

Their hearts were in it, their minds were in it, their decisions backed it.

Since then it's coasting along at neutral and it's a tragedy because it's so morally right, so economically right to try and recognise the reasons why so many parts of this country are cut off from the main economic strands of prosperity.

It's so obvious why they are.

This is my lesson of Liverpool.

They're far from the centre, they're economically distant from the centre, they lack investments. Show me the problem, show me the person in charge.

And in the Liverpool of 1979, 1981 when the riots took place, there was no one in charge.

Everybody knew what was wrong, he was wrong, she was wrong, they were wrong, never me.

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And I learnt in the three weeks I walked those streets.

First of all, there was a lot of things that could happen if someone drove them.

But there was no one to do it.

And so I spent 18 months finding opportunities, making them happen.

There were some voices that weren't there in the administration at the time, and we know this from the documents that have been published since, who thought that it might be an idea, and I think this included Geoffrey Howe, the Chancellor, that Liverpool was consigned to a period of managed decline.

So you were rather a lone voice.

Was that a common view in the administration at the time?

Well, it's a very interesting question.

And look, Geoffrey is a good friend of mine, and he understood the arguments about poverty and devolution as clearly as I did.

But the Treasury are against anything that costs money, you know, and you can't blame them because they're surrounded by people trying to get more money out of the country.

They're the only tax-raising department, they're the ones who collect the money.

They've got the money, and they don't want to spend it unless they have to.

So whatever comes up on the agenda, the Treasury are going to say no.

The important point is, what did Margaret do?

She supported me.

Margaret Thatcher was committed to the agenda.

She overruled Geoffrey and Keith at a meeting of four of us in number 10 and backed my proposal. That was to do London, Docklands, and it was a civil service.

They were against it as well because they thought that I was interfering in local government.

So Margaret Thatcher owes, Liverpool owes Margaret Thatcher his debt, which you don't hear very often.

You don't hear very often.

You're absolutely right, and I've always made that absolutely clear, and it's quite interesting.

I mean, I go there and people say, but this was you, you know, I said, look, I was a Tory, I was a member of the Thatcher government, and Margaret made it possible for me to do this.

And they still shake their heads.

They can't just, and it's the same argument about Margaret.

What's Margaret's single greatest achievement?

Without any doubt, the single European market.

I want to talk about Margaret Thatcher briefly in a moment, but just on the levelling up question. Obviously one of the big stories this week has been about HS2 and the Prime Minister mooting and leaks suggesting that the Northern leg at least could be cancelled from Birmingham to Manchester and maybe even the connection to Houston.

So you'd have a connection between Birmingham and Old Oak Common.

What do you think of that idea and what do you think the effect would be?

The effect has already been extremely damaging because of the uncertainty.

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I mean, here you have a clear government policy based on very sound principles of levelling up, and suddenly the question is, is it going to happen?

That's uncertainty in itself.

Is it going to half happen?

Or is it going to link up with Houston or just outside London?

And the people where I live in Northamptonshire, but it's like the same in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, who've put up with the environmental damage, with the scarred countryside, with the loss of property values, the noise and all that stuff, and suddenly told, oh well, don't worry, because we're not going to do it.

So those people are not going to be pleased.

They're going to be very cross.

People know that sacrifice for nothing.

Exactly.

Do you think Rishi Sunak's government can say that it is still committed to levelling up if it cancels an Northern leg of HS2?

Well, he can say what he likes, but that's not the question.

Would anyone believe in?

Would you believe in?

No.

I mean, I know that, look, levelling up is a very difficult thing to achieve.

Why?

Because turkeys don't vote for Christmas.

And the levelling up agenda affects the self-interest of very large numbers of people adversely.

First of all, local councillors don't like it because they don't want directly elected mayors.

Secondly, local MPs don't want it because the elected mayors create bigger figures locally than they are.

Thirdly, the civil service don't like it because they have functional responsibilities in ministries and those have to be pulled into a common pot to meet a common local strategy.

The only way to do this is when people like David Cameron and George Osborne and Greg Clark face up to the opposition and go for it.

Talking about Margaret Thatcher and her timing government, you serving her for as long as you did.

Do you think that we misremember Margaret Thatcher now in terms of what she was really like about what her governments were really about, that she's been lionized within the Conservative Party?

And we're remembering a different version of her.

You knew her.

You say we remember.

I don't remember.

I remember exactly what Margaret was like and what she did, her good points and her bad points.

Margaret was an impressive lady.

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I didn't particularly like her, but that's not relevant.

She was a perfectly good colleague until the RR over for Westland.

Indeed, she told the deputy chief, the chief whip at the time.

She thought I was her natural successor and she kept promoting me.

So, you know, one's got to see the thing as it was, not as people misrepresented.

But the important thing, what did she achieve?

Sale of council houses.

I was the minister that did it.

Very important.

Privatization.

I probably privatized more individual acts than anybody else has ever done.

But Margaret was there and in charge of that.

Single European market, Margaret did it.

And so, you come back to the trade union reform and the interesting thing about the Margaret government of 1979 is that it would Ted Heath's government, given the second chance.

The fact is that it was Barbara Castle and Harold Wilson that first identified the overbridled power of the trade unions in Britain at the time.

And it had to be dealt with, Ted Heath tried, much influenced by his wartime experience with perhaps a determination not to push the thing too far.

Ted's government re-elected in 79 with a different leader.

We knew what had to happen.

I said Winston Churchill is claimed by both sides of the Brexit divide.

Margaret Thatcher is also claimed by both sides of the Brexit divide.

Where do you think she would have been in the end?

She'd have gone on making these noises about them and foreigners and bureaucrats, but she'd never have left the European market.

She created the European market.

You think she'd have been a remainder, ultimately?

A reluctant one.

A reluctant remainder.

I mean, what happened?

There's no doubt in my mind what happened.

She created the single market.

Great, huge achievement.

And then the concept...

Based on Thatcherite principles in many ways.

Indeed.

We don't have time to get into, I could ask you so many things.

I could ask you about the Westland affair and all the details about it.

We don't have time to get into it.

But did you ever, in a year since, the many, many years since, and your resignation after your resignation from the Thatcher cabinet, the famous resignation, did you ever think, you know what, I should have just stuck with it.

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Because then I might have become Prime Minister myself.
I might have been her natural successor.
That argument has been put to me many times.
I would have been destroyed by the machinery around Thatcher at that time.
They would have come for you.
They would have destroyed me.
She must have been so shocked when you walked out.
I'm told they were.
Obviously we're approaching a Conservative Party conference this weekend.
You've seen a lot of Prime Ministers struggle over the years.
Prime Ministers very far behind in the polls.
Do you think he's got a chance for the next election, Rishi Sunak?
I think he's got a very difficult circumstance because in the end elections are one and lost on people's well-being economically.
And they're not going to be that much better off, if better off at all.
The circumstances are extremely unhelpful.
What I think Rishi should do at the conference is to confront a principle reason why we're in this difficulty.
And he gets great credit for it because as Chancellor he saw us through the Covid crisis and one should not underestimate in any way that looking back we can see it was containable.
We managed to get through.
But nobody knew that when he was facing the decisions he took.
And he saved huge numbers of businesses, enormous numbers of jobs and very large numbers of people's lives at a great cost.
And partly that great cost is why we're hemmed in today.
And he should be upfront about this and say, look, that's what I did.
It did cost a great deal of money.
I would do it again today in the light of what I knew at the time and what everyone was saying at the time.
And I think he deserves great credit for that.
This long period of Conservative government, though, since 2010, how do you think it will be remembered?
Let's assume it does come to an end next year if there's an election.
How do you think it will be remembered?
You compare it to the Conservative governments of Macmillan and Eden and Churchill in the 50s and then Heath in the 70s and Thatcher and Major in the 80s and 90s.
How does it, will it compare, do you think?
And how will it be remembered?
Well, I think that it will be seen in the context of a world economic crisis, which, first of all, the immigrant crisis, secondly, the economic crisis.
And I think that the David Cameron will get great credit for bringing the Tory party back to sanity and great credit for the devolution agenda, which he enabled his colleagues to pioneer.

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But I'm afraid that the stain on this government will be called Brexit.
Do you think that that will be reversed?
Yes, must be.
How long do you think it will take?
Started.
You think it's already started?
It's already started.
My opinion has moved dramatically.
The decision to rejoin Horizon is an indication that this is the direction of travel.
It's easier to answer the question today than it was a month ago.
A month ago, none of the big political parties would talk about Brexit.
Now, little by little, debate is opening up.
How do you think we're viewed in the world now?
Well, I think people think we're mad, incomprehensible.
The country overall.
Yes, absolutely.
I think our standing is very low at the moment.
We've abandoned the position of huge prestige and influence.
And Keir Starmer, again, you've seen a lot of Labour leaders.
Do you think he'd be a good Prime Minister, from what you've seen?
Look, I remember the Conservative Party.
You still are?
Yeah, of course.
You haven't got the whip in the lords, though, of course, the reason they took that away from you.
No, I haven't.
But it's quite fun, that, because it was quite obvious that someone in number ten told Theresa May this had to happen, and so she let it happen, and I know all about that.
But the leader of the lords, Chief Whip and the lords, was appalled by what they made him do.
And he was immensely courteous, and I like him very much.
But anyway, when he said I'm losing the whip, I said, well, am I going to leave the Tory parties?
Oh, no, no, no.
And he agreed that I should sit on the benches reserved for ex-conservative cabinet minister in the House of Lords, which I still do.
And I get letters from them, full of praise for everything that I've done to help the party and all this sort of thing, and asking for money.
Signed by Boris.
I've got this wonderful letter, signed by Boris.
Of course, it's a psych-decider, appeals letter, but nevertheless, it's quite fun in the circumstances.
You're a successor, of course, in your old seat in Henley.

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Yes, yeah.

And I got on very well with Boris.

But he's a rogue.

He says whatever he thinks will work.

Do you think he was a remainder deep down, as many people do believe he was, but he just moved with where the wind was going?

That would be the basis of his calculation.

I mean, there are these stories of two speeches, one leaving, one staying.

Well, if you can get to that sort of stage where you can't make up your mind, you have to write two speeches, shows that something's going on.

Finally, you talk about still being a Conservative Party member.

You've been obviously a member of the Conservative Party for a long time, but there's no doubt that the Conservative Party has moved a great deal in terms of where the centre of the Conservative Party is.

In so many ways now, you are something of an outlier, and you have a complicated relationship with your party all day, perhaps, of a complicated relationship with you.

Does that sadden you?

Yes.

But if the party does change, not me.

I'm making the same speeches, saying the same things as all those other leaders that I've worked for, for so long.

My great fan is Hal McMillan, who had the courage to tell the British people the truth.

I've never been one of those politicians who are so well-defined by waiting to see the way the crowd is running, and then rushes in front and says, follow me.

Lord Heseltine, it's been an absolute pleasure to talk to you, thank you so much.

This is The News Agents.

Well, that was absolutely fascinating.

I kept saying it, I know, but I really could have spoken to him all day long.

A living link with a time which is falling rapidly out of reach.

That is it from all of us for this week, though.

Remember, you can catch up on all our shows from this week on Global Player and send us story tips and feedback to newsagents.global.com and a special treat or surprise this week.

Keep your eye out on your news agent podcast feed this Sunday.

That's what I'm saying.

Have a lovely weekend.