

This is a Global Player Original Podcast. An important report has come out today about the behaviour of one Conservative MP who is now leaving Parliament. This is Angela Rayner speaking about it on LBC This Morning.

It shouldn't still be an MP and the Conservative party are a disgrace for allowing it to continue. She's talking about Chris Pinscher, the man who groped two individuals at a private member's club just over a year ago. Compare and contrast her response to that of one Boris Johnson when he was asked about the Chris Pinscher affair on another podcast earlier this week. Would you have listened to your colleagues a bit more when they conveyed their unease over things like the Chris Pinscher affair, the Owen Paterson row at what any of these turning

points? Well, forget snoring, forget boring. This caused endless sleepless nights for Boris Johnson and ultimately brought him down. Welcome to the News Agents.

The News Agents. It's John. It's Emily. And it's Lewis. And we are in News Agents HQ. And later in the podcast, we're going to be talking about Orocy, which I think is being able to speak out loud and the idea that this should play a central part in kids' education because with being able to communicate well comes confidence, comes ability, comes some of the ways and means to get on in life. Excellent public speaking. Thank you, John. Your Orocy is superb. We are in awe, Orocy, of you. I knew this was going to go horribly wrong.

But first, we're going to talk to you about Chris Pinscher because it is pretty much exactly a year to the day that Boris Johnson resigned. And you will remember that the thing that finally tipped him over the edge, the final straw on that final camel's back, was the fact that he had known allegations about the sexual nature of Chris Pinscher's alleged then assaults and had turned his back on them, had refused to actually acknowledge what he knew. And enough of the party and enough of his ministers, enough of his cabinet decided that that was a step too far and they didn't want to be led by somebody who had clearly lied about that and all that that implies. Today, finally, one year on, we got what has been called colloquially the groping report. Chris Pinscher, we know, is now being recommended an eight-week suspension for what the Watchdog

has called deeply inappropriate and shameful behaviour. And this means that there will almost certainly be a vote in his constituency of Tamworth, in brackets, a 19,000 Tory majority.

So this is a report from the Standards Committee, which is itself following an investigation by the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner. And it isn't a terribly long report, but if we are to take it at face value, and there's no reason not to, it is a pretty damning one for Chris Pinscher. People will remember this concerns events about a year or so ago at the Carlton Club, this exclusive hangout in London's Mayfair for Conservative MPs, among others. And it essentially

says, and it is very well sourced because there are multiple witnesses, at least one of whom includes a fellow Conservative member of Parliament. And the report outlines what happened in some detail. So some of the detail of one of the complainants' claims, saying that Mr Pinscher was completely drunk, that he stroked his neck for an uncomfortable period of time, that he held his arm, his bottom.

Complainants said that the incident was traumatic, it's led to him to have had long-term mental health problems and concerns about his career and able to work.

Another witness, in this case a civil servant, said that Pinscher squeezed his testicles,

and that was seen by others that evening. And the committee, the cross-party committee of MPs conclude, as Emily was saying, that Mr Pinscher's behaviour represented an abuse of power as he was

in a position of authority, and therefore have recommended an eight-week suspension.

Mr Pinscher, for his part, says that he doesn't remember what happened that evening.

It is within his gift, should he wish to, to appeal the conclusions, and he has until the 20th of July to do so. If he does do so, this process could run on for many months more, and it's already taken a long time to get to this point. But if he doesn't, as Emily was saying, the process then is, because the House of Commons will vote on these recommendations, if they vote to accept them, then that can trigger a recall petition. If a certain number of Mr Pinscher's Tamworth constituents, you don't need very much. No, you don't need very many. Choose to sign that petition, that will trigger a recall by-election in which he can choose to stand. But given that Mr Pinscher has said that, well, he wouldn't be the Conservative candidate, but he's also said he's going to stand down at the next election, presumed he would not do so, and that would be the fifth by-election that Rishi Sunak is having to fight. Now, you get five by-elections coming in such quick order, one after the other, is a nightmare for a government where you don't have a huge amount of popularity to begin with, and the Tories' 20-plus points behind in the polls. And the three of us were seen, I think last night, at a party for the Spectator magazine, the mood among the Tories there.

When you say we're seen, it sounds as if we're not going to try and deny it. We don't know that we were there, but some of us were there. We've been out here, sir. Also, that people were watching for us. Oh, now they're here now. The Pats can go home. I think it's a bit one-hand clapping, but if we were seen, does that mean we must have been there? Probably, yes.

All right, all right, all right. We were at the Spectator party last night, definitive, and the mood among Tory MPs was pretty bleak, and even some of the people who crunched the numbers.

But one of them made a really interesting point. He said, look, the chances are we're going to lose all these bloody by-elections, and it will feed into the narrative that Rishi Sunak is toast. There is a tidal wave coming that you'll be unable to resist, and we're going to be swept away at the next general election. But just imagine that we hold on to one of those seats, and then Labour won't have done as well as people predicted, and that could change the narrative over the summer towards, well, is Kirsten making the progress that he should be making, given how unpopular, given how useless the government has been since the election?

I also think, in a way, it's not great timing, but it's not the worst timing. If Rishi Sunak can play this as a cleaning out the cupboard of all the weirdos and perverts and all the rest of it, at this point, then he gets to spend the next 12 months resetting. Yes, he might do that with five fewer seats or four fewer seats, but at least he gets to be the one that says, I did listen to the allegations. I did understand that that was a problem. I did get them to step down or whatever it was. I did. He says he didn't stop Nadine Doris and Nigel Adams from going to the Lord, but you can see how this can be framed as a kind of, I'm resetting and I'm not that.

And I think it's interesting that just to go back to the pincher thing, because the report has looked into how he's responded to this, and it's worth putting that he says he apologised very effusively to the parties at the time, and he's accepted that his conduct damaged his own reputation.

But he's also saying, because he attended the Carlton Club in a personal capacity,

it didn't actually affect the government. So he's already trying to do this thing. Or the reputation of Parliament. Or the reputation of Parliament. I mean, it's kind of garbage because he's an MP wherever he sexually assaults somebody, but the point is still that he is trying to put the space between him and Parliament, and it might just be that Rishi Sunak gets to do that in a sort of 12 month way between whatever happens this summer and whenever we get the elections. I would buy that narrative, Emily, but you know, when Rishi Sunak appeared in the Commons this week before the liaison committee and was asked about the report that came out, which kind of over the privileges committee, and whether, you know, Boris Johnson had willfully misled, and that led to Zach Goldsmith's kind of resignation, there was a three page subsequent report that they put out saying, these MPs behaved disgracefully. Rishi Sunak said, oh, I haven't read it. Yeah, but he did correct the Zach Goldsmith narrative, which was really interesting. Zach Goldsmith was mentioned in the report, and he ends up resigning and pretending it's because of climate change, right? I mean, I don't mean pretending, I'm sure there are things about Rishi Sunak's climate change policy he doesn't agree with, but the timing was pretty, you know. But I suppose the point I'm making when he appeared before the committee was to say, oh, I haven't read it. It was him putting distance between himself and trying to have to act in judgment of some of these MPs. And I just wonder whether, you know, it's one of the fights he doesn't want to get involved in. In terms of your point, John, about them losing the by elections and whether they can just hold on to one, I mean, maybe they can hold on to one, maybe they could hold on to this one, if it happens, this could still be some time. Hence, maybe they'll hold on to Selby. When, and if it comes, they'll hold on to mid beds if Nadine ever actually resigns. But the point is, is that, you know, we are talking like, Kistoma doesn't need these seats to get majority. I mean, these are true rock solid conservative seats, with the exception of Uxbridge, which really Labour ought to get, although there is a slight concern in Labour camp about the effect of you, Lez, and all of that. But these are seats that even if Labour gets very, very close to winning, it augurs something very, very ill for the Conservative Party. I think the weird thing is, though, is that we're talking about all of this. I think if, let's say it's worst case scenario, and Sunat loses all of these seats, if all these by elections happen whenever they do, it doesn't feel to me right now, anyway, as if that would yield a move against Sunat. Actually, the sort of truth of this situation at the moment is that- Oh my God! I mean, who else is then? Well, exactly. But in a way, that speaks to the real problem the Conservatives have got. Even if Sunat loses all of these seats, and it would be a terrible run to lose all of these seats for an incumbent Prime Minister, there is no sense of there being any alternative candidate, and there is no sense of there being any alternative strategy. So for all of the noise and so on, Sunat's internal position feels secure. And while that's good for him, in a sense, it is a council despair for the Conservative Party, because it speaks to the complete exhaustion, intellectual exhaustion and political exhaustion, that it feels like there isn't a party right now. Look, I for one would like to congratulate Mr Pinscher for not calling the report a kangaroo court. Well done. Bar's low. But what we don't know, of course, is how Parliament's going to vote on this. I mean,

you'd assume that they will back, like a normal Parliament, you'd assume, including, I would say, all the Conservative Party, would back the report.

But we saw a lot of abstentions over the Boris Johnson thing.

Yeah, I think Parliament's learned its lesson in this regard. I mean, in a weird sort of way, what's happened with the Privilege's Committee report, and what's happened with Owen Patterson as well, there's sort of long story about parliamentary standards. It feels to me as if Parliament's position in terms of enforcing its standards in a weird sort of way, although its reputation has gone through the ringer, has got stronger, because it feels as if now an executive, because of what happened with Boris Johnson. Found at Spine.

Yeah, an executive, I think, would now really, well, two things have happened.

It would struggle a government, I think, would never try and whip against the recommendation of the Stalin's Committee again. And now there is this sense, and we've even seen this in the way that SUNAC and others are talking about the Parliament's processes, there is this sense that the government has got to be more careful, something that the Johnson government was, about rubbishing or disparaging parliamentary standards processes. It feels to me actually as if there has been a net result of all of this individual terrible stories has been a strengthening of the parliamentary standards regime and how it's considered in the last 12 months.

By the way, as our Antipodean correspondent, I have been looking into the whole thing over Kangaroo Court, and where the phrase comes from. And apparently...

There's a DH Lawrence book called Kangaroo. That's about Kangaroo Court, isn't it?

Well, the Kangaroo Court I'm told is to do with the Californian gold rush. And there were so many Australians who moved over to the States to be part of this gold rush that there were kind of improper courts that were set up then. And because there were so many Australians involved over claims of land and stuff like that, it became known as a Kangaroo Court. There we are.

This is like an episode of Call My Bluff. Finally. Tell us what word you like.

I can remember the old theme tune for Call My Bluff. At last.

Away from all this news nonsense. Exactly. Well, in a moment, we'll be talking to Alicia Kerns, chair of the Backbench Foreign Affairs Committee, but also we'll be interested to hear her views on what's been happening in Parliament and the behaviour of certain MPs.

Well, we're joined now by Alicia Kerns, the chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee.

And you've done a very interesting report on hostages and hostage taking at a state level.

We'll come to that in just a moment. But we've just been talking about Chris Pinscher.

What is your take on what happened there? I haven't had a chance to read the reporters yet, given obviously the importance of meeting with the families of hostages today. But it's very clear to me that Chris Pinscher brought the reputation for housing to disrepute.

Unfortunately, I have had colleagues myself come to me and share with me. They've had difficult interactions with Mr Pinscher. Ultimately, I want the public to have confidence that a parliamentarians are respectful and adhere to the law, but also that we have a ability to monitor ourselves and also to essentially punish those within our own

house that make mistakes. Do you think he should resign, Alicia? And do you think he should forgo any redundancy money that comes his way? I do, for my part, given the severity of the situation, severity of what he was accused of. And do you think he will? I can't say this is an individual that I have ever had a relationship with. So I do not know anything into his mind,

but I suspect he will not. I suppose the problem is that it gives Rishi Sunak potentially another headache by-election. Well, we none of us want by-election. I want to see focused on governing. I want calm, sensible, grown-up governance. I want us delivering on the commitments that we've made to British people and focusing on the economic priorities that people have. That is what we should be spending our time on. By-elections end up, unfortunately, into a real tit-for-tat often between different parties when we should be working on that governance. I think it's unlikely that Chris Pinch is going to resign, but I could be wrong given that he will have known the outcome of this morning's report in the days in advance of today. So if he was going to, I suspect he would have announced this morning had that been his plan. Alicia, you mentioned at the beginning hostages, and that's because in your capacity as chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, you've been looking at the way the government has handled Brits that are taken hostage abroad. And you have recommended stuff that seems to have been, I don't know, thrown back at you today? I'm really frustrated because the government has been very good at engaging with the Foreign Affairs Committee, recognising that we're normally always coming from a place where we want to make a difference and make things better. And the fundamental job of government is to get our people home and to make our people safe abroad. Unfortunately, this time, the government did not engage meaningfully with a lot of our recommendations and rejected some that we as a House of Commons, not just as a committee, fundamentally disagree with them on. And this, unfortunately, is a more and more common reoccurrence, whether it's more out of bars, whether it's Jimmy Lai, Karen Merza, Jagdasingh Johal, who these are people that immediately come to mind, but there are more British nationals who are being held hostage because of the power of their passport around the world. Do you think that there is an attitude in the Foreign Office, which has been present over the decades, frankly, that we know best, just mind your own business? No. So I have to say, what I have seen with James Cleverly as Foreign Secretary, I have to be honest, is that actually look at the integrated review refresh they recommended they took in all but one of our recommendations. Some of them were quite enormous changes. So actually, I have found the Foreign Office that have wanted to improve things, want to make things different. This is the one time where we have seen a real defensiveness that was not appropriate, actually, in the context of the fact that our findings came from speaking and listening to families. That's who came to Parliament today to sit behind me as I gave my statement. The families of those whose loved ones are still being held hostage, and actually some survivors who have been drugged and beaten and abused and tortured because of their British passport, not because they had done anything wrong. So just explain to us, what are you recommending that the government doesn't want to take on board? So one of the main ones we wanted a director for arbitrary detention. So that is someone whose sole job is to go around the world getting our people home. The US introduced one a few years ago, he has a direct line to the president. That's what we wanted. One person who learns from case after case, rather than each individual minister for a geographical area looking after it, and then having a civil service directorate, one person who knows what cuts through, what gets people home. What was very telling after the release of Nazanine Zagari Reklev was speaking to her fellow hostage as it were, who said that we were always told to keep quiet. That was always the message that came out, don't make a fuss, don't kick up a fuss, don't speak about it. Just play

the long game and play it quietly. And they told us, the family told us it was the worst bit of advice because actually that's how you played into the Iranian government's hands. So what we actually found was that staying quiet before someone's charge can actually be quite a good thing because essentially you remove the embarrassment of the foreign government, you take the heat out of

it. So essentially you put a very short window before charge to get people home, to get them out and actually that's the best time to be quiet and to do it quietly. Once someone has been charged, that government has declared their interest in this individual to use them as a pawn.

From that point on, we as a foreign affairs committee want to see the foreign office being as loud as possible. We want them shouting from the rooftops. We saw that when MPs are involved in cases, people come home sooner. So there's a very important distinction between where you are on that journey. But yes, Nazanin and Richard were absolutely right. And when you say shouting loudly,

we remember the one occasion where the shout came from the foreign secretary himself, Boris Johnson. Are you able to tell us now in the sort of clear light of hindsight, how damaging his intervention was in Nazanin's case? I mean, Nazanin has been very clear that she saw this as deeply damaging. Unfortunately, we saw too many cases where there wasn't enough investment or

thinking behind what happened. The ministerial term was a real problem. One previous foreign secretary had spoken inappropriately to her family. The giving of diplomatic status to Nazanin, the system didn't make that meaningful. They gave something but didn't think through the consequences or how that might be applied. There were just too many inconsistencies where lessons weren't being learned and applied in the way that with a director they would be.

In the US, we've seen what has happened with the case of the Wall Street Journal correspondent, where it triggers separate efforts to open lines of communication, to work out what it will take to get that person back. And you'll think of the, you know, the swap that took place quite recently with a female basketball player who was a US citizen caught with drugs and the fact that she's been brought back home. Are the Americans better at this than us? The Americans have a very different

approach, but Roger Carson, who's their expert and their lead on arbitrary detentions, he can cut through any government department. He can cut through the silos. He can make sure things happen and he talks to every family in every country. And so he learns from each case and he doesn't, you know, barter them off for other diplomatic benefits. His sole job is getting people home.

The problem is otherwise, these British nationals sometimes diplomatic geopolitical priorities can override the need to get these people home. And that's why we needed someone who's focused on the families and our poor British people being kept abroad.

Alicia, thanks so much for being with us. Great to have you on the news agents again.

We'll be back in a moment talking about Kia Stammer and education.

This is the news agents.

Welcome back. So Kia Stammer was making a speech today in Gillingham, Kent, and it was putting some flesh on the bone of the fifth and final labor mission.

Might remember this. I'm sure we've all been following the very, very close.

Emily, you've got them committed to memory? Yes.

She's not choosing to articulate them, but of course that doesn't matter.

I've got them on name tapes inside my jacket. Yeah, yeah, rightly so, rightly so. And the fifth one, I actually think this was, I mean, maybe the bars little though, but this was the most interesting speech that he's given on these five missions. And it was all about education. And in particular, it was about a word which actually you don't hear politicians talk about that often. And it's class. Listen to this. I see this mission as our core purpose and my personal cause to fight at every stage for every child, the pernicious idea that background equals destiny, that your circumstances, who you are, where you come from, who you know, might shape your life more than your talent, your effort, and your enterprise. And he was saying that, which I think actually is right. And one of the things that I found refreshing about the speech, we can get into whether it will amount to very much in government in a minute, but one of the things that was at least refreshing about it was to have a senior politician talking about education and social mobility in a substantial way again. The truth is, you know, you both remember that, you know, if you go back to the Blair period, in the Cameron period, the early coalition years, public service reform and education in particular, was absolutely central in terms of the political offer of both new labor at that time and then Cameron's conservatives, both Blair and Cameron, both had been education, spoke to people in their respective parties. It was a bit of public service reform and policy that they cared about, and they talked about all the time. The truth is, is that especially since Brexit, where our politics has become so dominated by, you know, pretty big geopolitical kind of structural issues, public service reform, particularly education, has been nowhere. And this was Stammer attempting to reclaim that territory to the extent that he's saying that this idea of smashing the class ceiling, again evoking not just say Blair, but major in the classless society, is going to be the defining mission of his government. Look, I would say, quite simply, if you ask people, many people, what their biggest fear was, it's public speaking, it's saying things out loud. I mean, we're incredibly lucky in that we've had a sort of on the job training in just having to get on, John doing lives, you doing reports, me doing sort of interviews or presenting. It's a training that we have every day to actually get a sense of what you're trying to say. But if you are somebody, if you'd like to make a best man speech, or if you'd like to dare to sort of pick a fight with the council over something that they're not doing with your bins, or if you dare to return a product to a shop, most people will run a mile from that. Really every day normal things, because it takes such a sort of a depth of confidence just to be able to have. It doesn't have to be a confrontation, but it has to be something that shows your ability, your power, just to open your mouth and sustain that. And I think I used to be an ambassador for a charity called Debate Mate, and it was all about going into inner city schools and taking kids that would never do debating. They'd never sit around having philosophical or political discussions with their parents, or chatting about novels and films, and it would just say, you, you need to learn to argue. That was the afterschool club that will do you the most good. Learn to argue articulately, do I mean articulately? With your... Where's your oracy school? I know, with your friends, with your peers, with your... Just not have a row, but just get your points across. And actually that was deemed to be the thing that could move you quickest up any social situation. Well, it's funny listening to you talking about the sort of charity that supported debating that you got involved in. I was a trustee of the Citizenship Foundation, which again was about getting young people to engage in civic issues in government, how to make your voice heard, how to have influence. And this was for school kids,

and it was a really important thing to be doing. The middle classes, by and large, are very, very good at getting their voice heard, whether in a doctor's surgery, whether at a school parents evening, whatever it happens to be, that's what the middle classes can do with great skill. And people from poorer backgrounds often don't have that same opportunity. The one thing I would say is that in America actually, for all the thoughts of the education system there, kids being asked to stand up in class and talk and make presentations and do this sort of stuff, is celebrated, I think, much more. Well, back to Lewis's acorn. Yeah. I mean, it's the show until moment. Oh, no. I thought we agreed we're going to talk about my acorn again. Not outside of the courthouse. Just a little moment. But that's the point. Kids in primary school bring in their show and tell, their fluffy bunny, or their object, or whatever it is. They're onto fluffy bunnies, Jesus. You've got too many. And they learn to stand at the front of the class and just speak. And half the time, it doesn't have to be wildly interesting, but it has to be fluent, and it has to be unashamed. And it has to be, I suppose, a sign of their confidence. See, I suppose I thought that was the most interesting idea in Stammer's speech today, because the idea of oracy lessons is interesting. Frankly, him standing up and saying, your background shouldn't be your destiny. I mean, can you imagine if any political leaders said the opposite? I mean, all political leaders believe... Forward's not backwards.

Yeah, exactly. All these slogans. It's just so tiring.

Yeah. What else is he going to say other than class should, you know, not be a barrier to how high you can achieve. Although some politicians don't talk about it. I mean, the selection of topic, I agree, is important. But the message that we must get the best out of everybody, and we need more meritocracy, amen to that. Three cheers. I mean, the thing about social mobility as a conversation, which as you say, John, well, I think all politicians would, if they're ass, say they agree with, some politicians choose not to talk about.

Actually, the truth is, and in a way, Stammer wouldn't address this, and politicians never address this. The truth is, the principle of social mobility is a deeply, deeply radical one. Politicians dress it up as a sort of obvious humdrum thing. But it's really radical if you really believed in it. Because if you really believe in social mobility, yeah, you believe in... You pull people down as well.

Exactly. You believe in people at the bottom using their merits to go to the top, but then you would also believe in the people at the top, the kids of the people at the top, going down the ladder, the ladders two ways. And in practice, that almost never happens. Because... It is starting to happen, actually. I think it's starting to happen...

Really? Where?

Yeah. I think it's starting to happen in our universities. If you look at the shift between kids who thought that they had access to the top universities in the country, now do not think that there is an automatic access to that. And they're doing different things, going to different places.

Well, the Daily Telegraph thinks there is, because they run a bloody story every couple of weeks saying how outrageous it is that people who didn't go to the top public schools or private schools are being discriminated against, quotes, and so on.

So you're telling me shock or the Daily Telegraph is shocked.

But I'm just saying, I think this is the beginning of a shift. And if you ask, for example, the Cambridge colleges, many of them have now got a quota system where they absolutely register

that some of the more fortunate kids must come down to push the other one down.

It's a complicated piece of social policy, because the greatest engine of social mobility when I was growing up, I got to a grammar school. I got to a selective school, aged 11, and went to the grammar school. But the corollary of that was, and there were lots of kids when I went to university.

See, corollary from a grammar school, that's what you get.

Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

The corollary was that there were lots of people who ended up at a secondary modern school, where educational standards were much worse. And, you know, you had a whole generation of people

left behind. Yeah.

And so that's not great. Yeah.

Yes, you had people who were at university who'd come from very working class backgrounds on full grants.

Bluntly, this goes back to Blair, you know, Education Three Times, in that you have to lift the standards for everyone if you actually want to improve social mobility in the sense that until you've got the equality of opportunity through an education system, you're not going to get it. One thing I would say, though, about the Keir Starmer speech, which I really noticed, is where it landed and where he wrote for today. And that was The Times. And The Times, as we know,

you know, Murdoch owned, has always been a big backer of Rishi Sunak and pretty much any other conservative. This time, the leading article in The Times is about how they agree with Keir Starmer. He is right to say inarticulacy is a barrier to social mobility. Watch this pattern now, because I have a sense that The Times is starting to feel that shift. You know, it was only last month he went to the Rupert Murdoch party, right? Are they now accepting that Keir Starmer is probably going to be at Downing Street? And in that case, they have to find the things that they agree with and like. And if that means, you know, encouraging him to write for The Times, supporting him in the leader article, I think we're starting to see quite a shift here.

And he wrote in the sun as well. So it was a double-headed thing.

Exactly.

And perhaps that's even more significant in terms of kind of the Labour Party.

All right, yours is more significant.

No, no, no. I'm just saying it's all part of the same thing. I would say on the thing about social mobility, though, it's true that it might be that we're seeing more in higher education institutions, rightly so, taking in more states called kids, although the proportion is still, you know, way off. Truth is, though, is then the question is, what happens after that? What happens after that? They may have ended up at a good university with

a, you know, good degree. But you can guarantee that the kids from, you know, wealthy backgrounds,

it's not like they're going to go down the social mobility scale, but just go to other universities and their income and inherited wealth is going to be so profound that it's not really going to do anything. I think the thing is about the allsy thing.

Sorry, Lewis, you don't really want to pull kids down if you can raise other kids up.

No, I want kids who, I want them to have a society where, frankly, less able kids who are from wealthy backgrounds fall down because they're less able, because ultimately there are only so many jobs.

But that's just, that's a terrible judgment. That's a judgment down meritocracy and saying, well, you're brainy and you're thick.

No, but that's what meritocracy is.

Yeah, but maybe meritocracy is not that great because you're just saying that thick kids should be punished. That's actually what you're saying.

I'm not saying that the thick kids should be punished. I'm saying that people should get the jobs that you know as well as I do. Look at where we are in terms of the top professions. Judges, education, media, the whole lot, they're dominated by a certain narrow social cast of kids. But that's why you have to raise up kids.

No, but there are only so many of those jobs. There are only so many editors of top newspapers, for example. You're not going to be able to just create new...

We could probably have more doctors. We could probably have more judges.

Yeah, but there are only so many jobs of particular types. I'm saying that that should be approximate to people's talent.

This goes back to the fruit-picking conversation we had at the start of the week.

The Tory MP for Ipswich was kind of, you know, saying, oh, well, it's good to be a fruit-picker, but I don't want to be one.

Well, to be fair, he got where his talents went. He went to the Radish department, didn't he?

Yeah. So actually that's...

And then the leaked one.

And then the leaked one.

Did you work out on the leaks? I'm so sorry about that.

The thing is though, is that one other striking thing from the speech was that ultimately, or else is great, we all know that that matters.

And it matters because as we know, even if you've got kids who've had a great education and come from a working-class background, it is about like soft skills, right?

And soft sort of social capital.

And we all know that like in workplaces, there's a kind of way of communicating.

And if you haven't been... I mean, I had that when I first left university.

You just grunted, didn't you?

I just grunted. I still do, as you know, particularly early for our morning meetings.

But, you know, you have to learn these things.

And that's one of the important things about sometimes going to these top universities because you kind of learn that stuff. You get inculcated in it.

But at the end of the day, it's only going to go so far.

And when Starrman was asked about the money, which is a sort of crucial thing in terms of...

Because he kept saying, well, look at the last new labor government, the labor government, the transformation that happened in schools.

And there was a transformation in schools.

Nearly every school was rebuilt, class sizes came down.

Like the school's budget doubled in that time.

And there was an extraordinary legacy of that.

But we're not in that position now.

So he's sort of saying, well, look back to the last labor government.

The economic conditions of the last labor government, and this, if there is going to be an incoming labor government, are so different.

And that is still a fundamental question that is left unanswered about what Starrman is saying, not just on this area, but in others.

Okay, there's no money now. When will there be new money?

And is that the thing that's important in terms of driving changes in standards in public services?

Because if it's not, then how different fundamentally is that from the current government's position?

And the whole question of money and what labor are prepared to spend on certain things led to the speech being interrupted at one point today.

How ironic.

How ironic.

Yeah, so the kind of, we're talking about Oral-C and Kirsten Starrman gets interrupted.

Insecurity is the enemy of opportunity.

It places barriers.

Not just economic barriers.

I gave my, on the mission on Green Power, we did that last month.

We've done that one.

We are on the side of economic growth.

Will you just let me please get on with this?

Thank you very much.

We have already, will you just let me finish this and I'll come and talk to you about it.

Thank you very much.

I mean, talk about soft power, how to deal with a heckler should be rule number one.

And what you hear from Kirsten Starrman is somebody, and I think I feel kind of safe in saying this, who probably doesn't find or didn't find public speaking that easy, who didn't come from a background where you would automatically make your heckler gags, but he's had to sort of do it on the job as a barrister, as a prosecutor, and now as leader of the opposition.

He hasn't got the most sort of voice friendly way of speaking.

If Kirsten Starrman becomes the next prime minister, it won't be because he's the greatest orator that we've ever seen.

He's got better though.

He's got better.

Yeah, but he's not, he's not Neil Kinnick in his mellifluous Welsh voice.

He's not Blair with the persuasiveness or the kind of the son of the Kirk of Gordon Brown.

I do think it's easier if you're Celtic.

Yes.

Isn't it?

I don't know what it is.

The accent, the passion, or whereas when he gets passionate, it sounds sort of slightly puterish.

It's kind of, I'm not quite sure what I'm going to say.
But in a way that the most famous Kinnick speech may be,
one that Biden, of course, famously plagiarized,
talking about why am I the first Kinnick in a thousand generations to get to the universe.
Biden didn't say that was some ridiculous.
No, no, but he changed some of the words.
But you know, in a way the themes were not a million miles away from what Starrman was
talking about today.
In that sense, it is a sort of safe place for the Labour Party to be.
But it is at least when people are sort of saying,
well, what's the defining mission?
This is what he's going to sort of keep coming back to again and again.
And maybe it's not new, but it is in some senses a radical one.
We'll be back with something new in just a moment.
Threads, are you on it?
Oh, I'm on it.
Big time.
Welcome back. So we were told first thing this morning by our editor to get ourselves onto threads.
And in a remarkable technological revolution, dear reader, I managed it.
Well done.
I was amazed when I saw you turn up.
I thought it was a parody account.
But then again, I often think that about your social media activity.
So it's kind of hard to know.
So I joined Instagram years ago, never did anything with it.
And I set up it with a silly name.
Yeah.
With my French name, Jean Le Savon.
Jean Le Savon.
Oh, God, John.
John Soap.
So I've still got that.
Sounds like your Hornstar name.
So I've still got that name now on threads and I don't know how to change it.
So I might have to go to IT.
That's exactly my problem.
I'm going to IT as well.
I think you should keep it.
Might start referring to you as Jean Le Savon for this.
When we finally do news agents friends.
I thought it meant the wise man.
Yeah.
Be Savon.
Savon.

Yes.
I thought that's what you were saying.
No, Savon.
Soap.
Will it take off?
Do you reckon?
Well, I don't know.
I think it has done.
It's got 10 million.
I mean, millions of people have subscribed.
How many followers you got?
I've probably got about eight.
As opposed to about...
12?
Yeah, exactly.
I mean, yeah.
I've got 4,000.
That's why he's plugging his username on our podcast.
Just searching Jean Le Savon.
So anyway, that's it from Jean Le Savon for today and we'll be back.
I know.
But isn't that the problem though that, you know,
look, you guys have got hundreds of thousands of followers on Twitter.
Between us, over a million followers.
Do you go to something and start from scratch again?
When you've already...
It's exhausting, isn't it?
It's just, it's a moment.
I also registered on Blue Sky as well.
Have you been on that one?
No.
Oh, that's another one.
And this year, I thought, oh, it's like moving to a new school
and you don't know anybody.
But now I feel like I'm just at multiple schools at once.
Yeah.
And you know what's going to happen?
Somebody's going to say, can you please delete that post?
It was really offensive.
And you'll spend the next three days looking for it.
Yeah.
You won't remember where it was.
And do you just post the same stuff or different stuff?
You know, it's a minefield.

It's, I think the reason that this one will probably work in a way that maybe some of the others won't is just because obviously it's got meta behind it, right? It's got meta behind it.

They're serious.

They've already basically, they're trying to do something which has been the holy grail of social media companies for a long time, right? Which is bring together the individual bits of the different things that work.

On each site, which really works.

So whether it's TikToks videos or Instagram and the pictures or the sort of news element of Twitter and Facebook and so on.

And obviously just thinking this is the thing that we kind of bring it all together.

And you already inherit so many followers if you've got an Instagram account.

So that's clearly the biggest threat to Musk.

And then there is one other factor.

And you've just said it, Musk.

I think there is such an antipathy.

It's brilliant.

And the feeling that he has just blown this thing up, kind of highlighted at the weekend when suddenly you could only look at so many tweets before you get locked out and so that's enough.

And I just think that, you know, he's having a Gerald Ratner moment where he's kind of crashing a brand.

Well, maybe this is about getting Musk to raise his game.

I mean, they've already agreed to a fist fight, right?

Those two, Musk and Zuckerberg.

A cage fight.

A cage fight.

That's what we're doing next week.

Well, you know, it technically, this is the technological cage fight now.

And I'm here for it.

Because quite frankly, if it means that Musk starts making a better platform than with the winners.

Do you find Twitter less useful now?

Have you noticed?

No.

You don't find it any less useful.

I mean, I do still find it useful,

but it is less useful than it was.

Why?

I think since Musk has taken over Twitter,
it's just got worse.

It's a less good experience,
particularly on live news events,
not having verified accounts
that you can see and think,
okay, that's a verified thing.

I understand that.

I know that that's from a decent source.

That is a problem.

And then you also,
and he's reinstated so many of the absolute nutters
on there as well.

The one thing I'd say is that Zuckerberg's offering threads
as a kind of friendly space.

Let's not forget that Zuckerberg
was also behind Facebook,
which created one of the most unfriendly spaces ever
in the lead-up to the 2016 election.

We'll be back tomorrow.

Well, I won't.

Will you, mateless?

No.

I'm just going to be on threads.

My new home now.

Bye-bye.

Bye-bye.

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