

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / Politics On the Edge (Extract)

Hi there, Alistair here. I hope you enjoyed our Restless Politics episodes this week and also the interview with Kathy Ashton on Leading. But we've got something a little extra special for you. We've got an extract from Rory's new book, Politics on the Edge. Or if you're in the United States at the moment, you see a book called How Not to Be a Politician, that's the same thing. And you may have heard of Politics on the Edge through the exceptional plugging that Rory's been doing on the podcast and elsewhere. Now, we've talked before about how the best political memoirs are not always entirely honest, somewhat economical, *à la* *l'actualité*. But having read and frankly re-read Politics on the Edge, Rory's account of the challenges and absurdities of 10 years in parliament really does set it out as it is. It's filled it with some extraordinary anecdotes and it's a very, very interesting read. I can't recommend it enough. You can get it from any good bookshop. And if you prefer to listen, as I often do, particularly on long drives, then you can get it in as an audiobook as well. So I hope you enjoy this extract of Politics on the Edge, where Rory takes us through the first time he's promoted from the back benches and meets his new boss, Liz Truss.

In the spring of 2015, Cameron summoned us to a retreat in a conference hotel in his constituency in Oxfordshire. It was the parliamentary recess. Some MPs chose to stay away, but most of us did what we were told and turned up. We rambled into the lecture hall bearing paper coffee cups and paper plates of Danish pastries and took our place in cinema seats. MPs, who I had only seen in dark suits and white shirts and blue ties, were experimenting with the idea of casual clothes. One had a pair of pressed blue jeans, another a pink polo shirt, but only the prime minister's inner circle or sneakers.

George Osborne came on the stage. He introduced Jim Messina, a thin man, with an underpowered voice.

He said that Messina had just won the second election for Barack Obama through his use of Facebook and Twitter, and that he had been hired to win the same victory for us. The party we were told had raised tens of millions of pounds for our new campaign, buying consumer data and building a new software platform. We were to be the first generation of British politicians to enter the world of big data, AI, and social media. Messina's data scientists would micro-target exactly the right supporters in the key target constituencies with the most efficient allocation of money and resources and persuade them to vote through their phones. The older MPs glanced at their phones as

though unsure whether they had turned them off. In March 2015, Cameron called the election, and I returned for six weeks of constituency campaigning. Every few months, over the five years, I and other backbenchers have been dragged into presentations on internal opinion polls, which were optimistically at odds with the national polling. But even the most loyal conservative pollsters didn't suggest that we could win an overall majority. That, Cameron insisted bitterly, would only have been possible by reducing the number of MPs and changing the boundaries, and we had lost that chance in the House of Lords Rebellion. Instead, the general consensus was that both Labour and Conservatives would fall short of an overall majority, and we would have to form another coalition with the Lib Dems. I was sent down to campaign in Cheltenham,

far from my own seat. The candidate, Alex Chalk, was busy with the party chairman Grant Shaps, who had emerged in shirt sleeves with a gleaming smile from a battle bus packed with very young

and overly anxious would-be MPs in tight t-shirts. I was sent to Canva's some back streets with a local councillor. Our sheet didn't direct us to every door, but instead to a seemingly random collection of doors in every street. Number five was followed by number 17. This, the councillor explained, came from the consumer shopping data, which the party had bought from the big supermarkets

and other retailers. Our new software used this data to predict which numbers in the street were likely to vote Conservative. How does that work? Well, I suppose it's something like, if we know they bought Stilton, perhaps, as opposed to Edamame at Tesco's, they're more likely to vote Conservative. But Cheddar, I was not sure if he was joking. Still debating politically indicative dairy products, we turned up another path. If someone answered the door, the councillor explained, we were to interview them about policy and write down their mobile phone number.

Someone else would then collect our canvas sheets and enter the data in a computer.

An algorithm would compare this to other data sets, adjust its parameters, and generate an ever more accurate real-time picture, not only of how each individual would vote, but which issues in particular would motivate them on election day, generating tailored messages with just the right claims on the NHS or education or defence, and ping them to phones. This was apparently how Obama

had won his election. Except the first door to which the computer directed us had a labour poster in its window, the next target had been rented out as a student squat. We passed a house which the councillor said morosely contained Conservative voters, but which the software had failed to identify. It had taken me nine hours to get to Cheltenham from Cumbria. In three hours of campaigning, we found only one potential Conservative voter. We reported this name to the campaign headquarters, now filled with Grant Shaps's young activists, apparently readying for the post-battle bus party. Elsewhere, colleagues were gloomy.

Campaigning back in Cumbria, I began to notice that if a house was filled with books, the occupants would not be voting Conservative. I was exchanging texts with many MPs. Each assumed that we would

fail to win a majority because we had failed to be the kind of party which we each separately imagined. I, for example, felt that we had seemed too vindictive in our spending reductions, lamentable in our lack of support for the civil service and the BBC, had not sufficiently supported rural communities or delivered on the promise of the big society, and had conducted ourselves without dignity. Quasi Quoting, who was still a backbench MP, told me the problem was that we were not right-wing enough. He felt his voters were more sympathetic to the Eurosceptic party, UKIP, which had taken 25% of the vote in the 2014 European elections. He had applauded Cameron for refusing to approve a European bailout for Greece.

Cameron's refusal horrified me, and he was pleased that Cameron had promised to hold a referendum on Europe. But Quasi felt we had squandered the right-wing voter base. He was immersed in the history of local constituency elections, and he felt the national polls concealed how weak our position was at an individual constituency level. How many of the people who are canvassing in Cumbria are genuinely enthusiastic about Cameron? Do you really think we will be able to hold a marginal, like Carlisle? I agreed. I had not felt much enthusiasm for Cameron in Carlisle. Perhaps Quasi and I found it difficult to believe in our government because it had given neither of us a job. But most journalists, and perhaps Cameron himself,

also agreed that we could not win a majority, and therefore would not be held to the promise of a referendum on Europe. The Lib Dems would throw the referendum out in the coalition agreement.

Only my friend John Hatt predicted that we would win. He had compiled a list of 232 errors of judgment made by David Cameron during his time in office, from economic policy to his handling of Rupert Murdoch, and said that in any normal situation we deserved to be crushed. But he said that Cameron's offer to hold a referendum on Europe would be enough to win the election. We needed to put nothing else on our leaflets. None of this matched what we were told by the internal pollsters who assured us that Europe was number 15 in the public's list of priorities. I guarantee and will give you an omniscient bet that the pollsters are wrong on that, said Hatt. When the results came in, I had won a record majority. We increased the vote across Cumbria and indeed across the country. Our Lib Dem coalition partners were wiped out, dropping from 57 seats to eight. Labour lost every seat in Scotland to the Scottish nationalists, ending a century of domination in the North. The old two-and-a-half party system seemed to be over. How much of this was due to Jim Messina in his digital campaign and how much to the promise of a Brexit referendum was unclear. Each MP attributed our success to our own ability, charisma and dedication to our seat. But political scientists insisted that it had been a national swing and the character of the individual MP made very little difference to the vote. Cameron read this victory as a firm endorsement of his particular style of politics and it emboldened him to feel he could win the Brexit referendum just as he had won the Scottish referendum

and the election. First, however, he was faced with filling empty Lib Dem seats in his government. He therefore set out to, in his words, harvest the crop of talent from the seeds sown over the past decade or more. I, of course, hoped he would promote me and some of my friends, harness from among the backbench MPs Damien Heinz's toughness, calmness and modesty, Nadim Zahawi's practical, if piratical, management skills, Gavin Barwell's patient eye for the incongruous, Charlotte Leslie's empathy. But these were not the people who Cameron had been fast-tracking for the last five years to the cabinet or whom he meant when he said he was building a modern, compassionate, conservative party and ending the idea that the Tories aren't open to talent to women, to minorities. He meant nine people in particular, not people on whose advice he relied or whose judgment he particularly trusted. For that, he still relied on his inner circle and his old etonians. Not people who spoke particularly well in the House of Commons. Some did, some didn't. Not people with particular strengths and running departments. Some of them were competent, others incurious, uncritical and inept. He meant the team players. Or at least, so it appeared to my jaundiced eye. I divide the world, Cameron liked to say, between team players and wankers. Don't be a wanker. A team player was someone who parroted the party line with fervour,

never rebelled and was never abashed. His younger promotions, Priti Patel, Liz Truss and Matt Hancock, took this to a vertigo inducing extreme. The older women, such as Amber Rudd and

Anna Subri with adult children and long careers before parliament, were blunter, even funny about some issues in private. But in public, all these high flyers from my intake were fanatically supportive of David Cameron. Did he worry about what they really believed about him or the European Union? Did he speculate on how willing they would be, if one of his rivals such as Boris Johnson took over,

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to shift their allegiance, champion a completely different position and deny that any contradiction had occurred? Did he ask himself whether the younger ones would be more idealistic and loyal to Cameron conservatism or whether the older ones would prove more steady? Was he worried about who exactly Pretty Patel or Liz Truss were, how well they governed or what exactly they believed? I doubted it. But by promoting these people consistently, Cameron had created the future leadership candidates for the Conservative Party and probably made, at least one of them, a future Prime Minister. I'd been encouraged to keep my phone on in case Downing Street called with a promotion. I did so for three nights, was woken by calls from the States and Afghanistan, and finally, increasingly certain that I would not be promoted, turned it off. I work at 8.20 on a Tuesday morning to find four missed calls from Cameron's chief of staff and texts.

Where are you? Call me. I called. So sorry my phone was off.

Not a very good time to keep your phone off, is it? The Prime Minister wants to see you in 20 minutes.

I put on a white shirt, dark blue suit and sober spotted tie. At South Kent Station, I picked up a cappuccino. A British diplomat who I knew from Iraq was on the District Line platform and wished me luck. Transferring the paper cup to shake a hand, I squeezed too hard on the cup and cappuccino foam exploded down the right breast of my navy suit and my right trouser leg. She convinced me that I didn't have the time to go home to change. I dabbed it with a thin disintegrating napkin. As I walked through the gates into Downing Street, the flashes exploded from the cameramen and I strode past with one hand raised, my lip jutting out like Mussolini's and my body angled towards the wall in the hope of concealing the shreds of paper and beige foam on the crotch of my damp suit. For the first time, the door of Number 10 was opened before I reached it by the policeman who had been watching me on a camera. I sat in a waiting

room, officials whom I knew walked past smiling congratulations. After five years of waiting for my first job, I was not sure what Cameron would choose to use me for. Perhaps because of the work I'd done on Broadband, a job on digital infrastructure, or perhaps having run a heritage charity, I would be appointed to the Ministry of Culture, big society minister, or maybe as a Scots and a Unionist campaigner I would be put in the Scottish office.

Colleagues who had seen on Twitter that I had been called to Downing Street began to text advice. They said that Cameron would try to promote me because he wanted me inside the tent, not attacking him from the outside. I should not undervalue my position. I should refuse anything that wasn't a senior job and remain as chair of the Defence Committee. The chair of the Culture Committee had been put directly into the cabinet. Finally, I was called into the cabinet room. I had never seen it before. A dining table more than 30 feet long, laid with green bays, ran the length of the room, lined with 30 red leather chairs. The walls were a pale yellow and mostly bare. Two glass bookcases on my right, held almanacs and registers. There were a couple of small, old-fashioned clocks. Looked like the dining room of a 1970s country house hotel.

David Cameron sat at one end of the table, facing the door, with his chief of staff beside him.

Hello, Rory, he said. I understand you want a chance to do something different.

He sounded a little distracted. I would like you to be, he said, glancing down.

Parliamentary undersecretary in the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs dealing with issues like farming. Actually, probably more with the environment, said the chief of staff.

It was the most junior position in perhaps the most junior department in government. But my chance had come to stop simply being a commentator, get off the back benches and start governing. I thanked him warmly. David Cameron made a non-committal noise. I glanced at the chief of staff, wondering if there would be a second to discuss what was expected of me in this role. But he raised his eyebrows and nodded towards the door. So I thanked the Prime Minister again, got to my feet and walked out, with no indication of why he had appointed me or what he wanted me to do.

Outside the door of number 10, a black government car was waiting.

Journalists were waving and shouting questions. The car shielded my stained trousers from the cameras.

We drove down Whitehall, round the awkwardly sized bronze fetishes of dead politicians, each out of scale with its neighbour, and then south along the Thames to a granite block, carved with giant images of men with haunted faces in scientific coats, holding laboratory instruments. This, the driver said, was the former headquarters of Imperial chemical industries, ICI, the manufacturer of insecticides, fertilizers, explosives, and poison gas weapons known for its exploding factories and chemical spills. Now, it was DEFRA, the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, charged with regulating insecticides and chemical spills.

Two men and three women were waiting on the steps. They said,

Welcome, minister, and guided me past the staircase glittering with chrome balustrades, to an elevator with walls of blue art deco glass and burnish steel, marked ministers only.

We emerged in a tight flock onto a boardroom corridor lined with black and white pictures of former ministers of agriculture. On the facing wall was a set of posters celebrating Britain's greatness. Wallace and Gromit appeared under the headline, Creativity is Great, another poster, Innovation is Great, depicted a dark robotic hand that seemed to represent Britain as Darth Vader reaching for the throat of the world. I was introduced to two women whose tasks included serving afternoon tea to ministers. Passing through an outer office apparently for my private secretaries, and a waiting room with leather sofas and an 18th century landscape on the walls, I arrived at my new inner office. Long windows showed sunlight on the Thames and fresh green leaves on the plain trees on the embankment. Across the river, I could see the red brick castle of the Archbishop's Palace. Promently displayed on the long dining table was a cherry red, lead lined briefcase packed with manila folders. On its front was a royal cipher and the gold title Parliamentary Undersecretary for the Environment and Rural Affairs. This was my red box. Whether the lead lining was there to sink the secret papers or protect me from a bullet was unclear, but its design was identical to the one used by Gladstone and at £1,000 a box it served, I was told, to sustain the British traditional craft industry. Three women, Joe, Liz and Susie, and one man, Tom, asked if they could sit down at the table.

We are your private office minister, they said in the tone of a concierge team at an expensive hotel. They explained that the department consisted of three ministers. Liz Truss was the Secretary of State and my boss. The Minister of State, the second most senior minister, had been given the portfolio for food, which meant farming. I, as the Parliamentary Undersecretary, had been allocated the Environment and Rural Affairs brief. Would you like a coffee, Minister? Given that the last one was on my trousers, I gratefully accepted. Joe got up from the table in quest of a cappuccino from Pret. Liz pushed over my diary for the next two weeks. Susie handed me one of the red briefing folders, also marked with a gold royal cipher. Its neat sections, each marked by a coloured label,

had just been pulled together for a minister of whose identity they had been completely unaware, 20 minutes earlier. I glimpsed in Tom's hand what seemed to be my speeches from hand side. Presumably, he had been reading them in the hope of getting some clues on my beliefs. The folder told me that I was now responsible for the nation's forestry, all the rivers, the national parks, the country's nature and biodiversity, flooding, chemicals, air quality, billions of pounds of annual environmental payments, and much more. I felt an excitement I had not felt since establishing Turquoise Mountain in Kabul 10 years earlier. I paused, looking at the four junior officials who formed my inner team, each with neat clothes, neat smiles, and even neater files, as crisp as the limewood carving on the walls. They were all my guests in their 20s. Tom looked as though he'd only just left university. The big question I said is what should we change? How will we make the world a better place? They didn't reply. Not me, all of us together. What should we do? Still, they didn't reply. I requested a flip chart and Joe returned quickly with one, whose three unsteady white metal legs seemed more suitable to an industrial estate and slough than the Art Deco office. Asking them to call out my various roles, I began recording in different colours my responsibilities. I wrote, environmental payments and flood money, brackets, three billion pounds a year, close brackets, forestry brackets, 150,000 acres, close brackets, and wrote, action, question mark next to each. I proposed that I should make an immediate visit to the headquarters of the Environment Agency and ask them to arrange an emergency flood exercise, for I feared that a flood might come before I knew what I was doing. I requested round tables on chemicals, air quality, and international conservation. I sketched out a job description so that I would know what exactly to request in my first meeting with the Secretary of State. They remained silent. I stopped. Of course, I'm sorry. I don't have any idea what I'm talking about. I've only been here 15 minutes. You're the experts. Come on. Argue back. Tell me I'm talking nonsense. We'll change things together. What would you like to change? Now the senior of the three spoke in a tone that oozed restrained competence. We will definitely think about that minister and come back to you. I took a moment, stretched and walked to the other end of the vast office. I had heard that it was Labour who had spent millions of pounds restoring this building, right down to the glass mosaic in the ministerial lift. Now it seemed that the Conservatives wanted to sell it for apartments. I opened a cupboard. It contained glasses and half empty bottles of liquor, tequila, and apparel. I turned and grinned at the team. Legacy of a Labour minister? They smiled politely back. I opened the draw of the elaborately carved Edwardian desk which sat in a scalloped alcove. It was empty, apart from a comb. Whose comb is this? Our apologies, Minister. We should have removed it. Well, whose comb was it? Minister Rodgerson's minister. Who? Dan Rodgerson, your predecessor. I had to open Google on my phone to remind myself who he had been. I was reminded of a quiet man younger than me who had spent an afternoon in Cumbria, listening to me pitch different ways in which this department could invest more in Penrith and the border. He had seemed a little confused by my approach and we had received no investment. What is he doing now? We are not sure, Minister. Is he no longer a minister? He's no longer an MP. Returning to Wikipedia, I discovered to my embarrassment that Dan, who I had assumed was an obscure Conservative colleague on the front benches elected on some earlier intake, had in fact been a Liberal Democrat who had been given the ministerial role as part of the coalition agreement and having run the

environment and rural affairs portfolio for a year and a half had lost his seat to the Conservative candidate. Could you at least tell me what Dan Rodgerson was trying to achieve before he left? Yes, Minister. We will prepare a note. I asked for his mobile number. They said they would try to get it, but they didn't sound confident. A month earlier, they had been anticipating every nuance of Minister Rodgerson's diary, supporting him on shifts 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But it was already clear that there would be no pretense of a handover, no explanation of my predecessor's strategy and uncompleted initiatives. The arrival of a new minister was Groundhog Day.

Dan Rodgerson was not a ghost haunting my office. He was an absence whose former existence was suggested only by the black plastic comb. I was beginning to question whether ministers had any significance or presence at all when my friend the Conservative MP Richard Benyon knocked on the door.

Richard, Dan Rodgerson's predecessor, was 54 and looked 20 years younger with an open, handsome face. I asked the private office to leave and Richard helped me work steadily through the portfolio. He had ingenious ideas about canals and shrewd suggestions about my new team. The tea ladies, who it seemed worshipped him, kept us nourished with cake, served on a set of boned china, apparently salvaged from some even grander ministerial office. I was astonished that Cameron

had demoted someone so committed and knowledgeable about his brief. But Richard would not join me

in criticising Cameron. He seemed to view every Conservative leader with an adjutant's loyalty, never presuming to judge whether the eccentricities of his commanding officer reflected wisdom or shell shock. Then I was summoned to meet my new Secretary of State. I thanked Richard and walked down the corridor lined with photographs and posters to her office, where I was told that she was in a meeting and that I had to wait with her secretaries. After what seemed a long time, her inner door swung open. Liz Truss stood very close to me in the doorway, blocking my way. Yes, Rory? Hello, Secretary of State.

Yes, Rory? She said again. And she suddenly swung away, letting me into another absurdly grand space with floral carvings running over the pale wooden walls. This, I suspected, had been the boardroom of the Liberal MP and Minister Alfred Mond who had financed this building, while my room had once been his private office. Liz was younger than me. We had entered Parliament

together and David Cameron had made her a Cabinet Minister within four years when she was 38. I was told that she had been promoted faster than anyone because she was a strong media performer.

Intrigued by this, I had watched a number of her interviews. In none of them had she reflected, apologised, explained, empathised or attempted to persuade. Nor did she ever, except in the rarest cases, answer a question. Instead, she approached interviews as broadcasts, opportunities to repeat the party attack line, never giving ground or varying her tone.

I wondered how Cameron had developed any views on her skills as a Minister, her ability to inspire civil servants or be patient with difficult briefs.

The problem with you, Rory, Liz said to me conversationally, is you try to be interesting in Parliament and the media. Never be interesting. And yet she was herself unusual. She was known for submitting her civil servants to a barrage of questions about mental arithmetic and popular

books on economics. And although her speeches were generally confined to the blandest opinions, she liked to emphasise her fondness for British cheese, for example.

She delivered these banalities in the tone of someone challenging an entire establishment consensus.

Off the public stage, she delighted in winding up colleagues, in my case, because she saw me as a foreign policy specialist. This involved saying, I cannot see why you waste your time with foreign policy. I cannot imagine a job I would like less than to be foreign secretary.

I think the Foreign Office is a waste of time. Everything she did, I was concluding, had the flavour of a provocation. We will, she said, sitting me down very close to her, become the most open, transparent department in the government, and the most efficient.

I want you to write a ten-point plan for the national parks.

Yes, Secretary of State, I said, addressing her with the formality I reserved for generals, I will get straight out to visit the parks, and then we will get the heads of the national parks down. I will have a plan ready for you within four weeks.

You have three days, Rory. She said with such exaggerated firmness that I wondered if she were joking. We need to get it into the telegraph on Friday. I looked at her and concluded she was not joking. But, Secretary of State, if you could just give us a couple of weeks, we might really have a chance to. Come on, Rory, I can write it myself already. Do you want me to give you some clues? Point one, connect young people with nature. Point two, apprenticeships. Point three, health and well-being. Make it eight points if you can't find ten, but ten is better.

And again she smiled as though she were testing me.

The details it seemed mattered hardly at all, nor did their implementation, for this was only a press release masquerading as a plan. She showed me a picture she had just posted on Instagram. Liz Truss was the leading exponent of Instagram in Parliament. She seemed to be using images of herself in different costumes to suggest a pattern of progress, just as she used provocative policy statements to create an impression of forcefulness.

I explained that I wanted to review our flood plans around the country, recruit a brigadier from the army as my crisis deputy, and get straight onto the ground if a flood happened. She said that she thought that sounded fine. I said I was concerned by the Met Office flood forecast maps, which appeared to represent the probability of a flood, with no indication of its severity. Frankly, I don't understand the forecasts I said. I would have thought that unlikely but severe floods are much more of a problem than milder frequent floods. While I understand the forecast Rory, she said, with a grin which emphasised her confidence in her intellect, stripped some of the provocation from her tone and seemed to signal agreement. And I said I've taken the liberty of writing a job description for myself. I would like the CEOs of all the arms-length agencies to report directly to me every Monday morning.

She took the job description I had drafted and glanced at it and said that too was fine.

Anything else? No, thank you Secretary of State.

Very good Rory, she said laughing. Now let me tell you what I want you to do.

We're going to begin by cutting the department, she said with great relish.

I want you to cut 25% in your part of the department.

My rural affairs team I had learned was down to six people.

It was impossible to find even £100,000 for a new waste strategy. I stared at her.

Don't worry Rory, I have a mentor who is a very successful businessman,

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who says all businesses can always be cut by 20%. I want 20% staff cuts too. We need to make better use of technology, we can put back offices together. But Secretary of State, this scale of savings, you can do it. But the rural affairs section of the department already hardly exists, it's down to half a dozen people. If you cut it further, how can we claim to be the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs? I don't believe in rural affairs Rory, I think there is no relevant difference between rural and urban populations. David Cameron, I was beginning to realise, had put in charge of Environment Food and Rural Affairs, a Secretary of State who openly rejected the idea of rural affairs, and who had little interest in landscape, farmers or the environment. I was beginning to wonder whether he could have given her any role she was less suited to, apart perhaps, from making her Foreign Secretary. Still, I could also sense why Cameron was mesmerised by her. Her genius lay in exaggerated simplicity. Governing might be about critical thinking, but the new style of politics of which she was the leading exponent, was not. If critical thinking required humility, this politics demanded absolute confidence. In place of reality, it offered untethered hope, instead of accuracy, vagueness. While critical thinking required scepticism, open-mindedness, and an instinct for complexity, the new politics demanded loyalty, partisanship and slogans, not truth and reason, but power and manipulation. If Liz Truss worried about the consequences of any of this for the way that government would work, she didn't reveal it. And data, Rory. Defra is the most data-rich department in Whitehall, with much of it millions and millions of files worth billions of pounds. Think of the possibilities. Eight thousand sets of data. We will use lidar data, she said. I nodded although I could only guess that this was an acronym for some type of imaging system. It can pinpoint which places have the best soil and microclimates to grow grapes for English sparkling wine. Isn't that right? She challenged her private secretary. That may be more an idea for the Copernicus Satellite System Secretary of State. We will work with games companies and do hackathons, she continued unabashed. You can lead a hackathon, Rory. And we're going to win the government red tape challenge. A secretary said, could we talk about some of this? Tell me if you want to lift with me in the ministerial car to the votes tonight. I will. Hashtag OpenDefra, she said smiling again, as she showed me the door.