

[Transcript] The News Agents / Suella's new powers to curb protest

This is a Global Player Original Podcast.

We are three days out from the coronation, but last night the Home Secretary gave the police brand new powers to stop disruption, and those brand new powers come with really heavy custodial sentences if you get things wrong.

Listen to Suella Braverman from last night.

The right to protest is fundamental to our democracy, but this doesn't extend to locking yourself onto motorway gantries, gluing yourself onto historic buildings, or digging dangerous tunnels.

Such selfish acts risk lives, they drag our police away from communities, and they stop hard working people from simply getting to work.

Now, these harmful acts will be met with proper penalties, and with extended powers, the police can stop activists' intent on disruption before they can strike.

Those who seek to attack our ways of life repeatedly will be met with court orders preventing them from causing chaos again.

I should add that the music bed that you hear there is on the video released by the Home Office, not one that the news agents decided to put on to give it a bit more atmosphere.

It seems that the government is using strange powers, the statutory instruments, to force through changes to the right to protest just before the coronation, maybe calculating who is going to object if this happens now, just beforehand, where maybe there would be a little more alarm if it were to happen post coronation.

And one question, is our right to protest being curtailed?

Welcome to the News Agents.

The News Agents.

It's John.

It's Emily.

And it's Lewis.

And in a moment, we're going to be talking to a former permanent secretary about the appointment of Sue Gray to become the next chief of staff to Kirstama, and the kind of huge controversy that is raging within Whitehall and within the Conservative Party about it. But right now, we're going to talk about these new Home Office powers to curb our ability to protest.

And this comes after we have seen very demonstrative examples of protest by Extinction Rebellion, by Just Stop Oil, by Animal Rising, whether it's on the gantries, on the motorways, at the Grand National. And I think the government has worked out that if ever there was a time to quietly get these fairly major changes under the radar, it was two days before the coronation when, quite frankly, it's much tougher to be the person who stands up and says, we want protest. We want to see protest at the coronation because it is being framed as an adverse act at a time of national patriotic celebration. And that is possibly why these have all been thrown through by Royal Ascent in the last 24 hours.

Yeah, I think the Public Order Act 2023, which is similarly, has just received Royal Ascent. You know, it has been one of those pieces of legislation. It's been a bit of a submarine bill in some ways. You know, there are some pretty significant changes to our liberties and to our civil liberties and our ability to protest, which, you know, it's gone through Parliament pretty quickly, perhaps hasn't received as much attention, as much scrutiny,

much else going on with the economy and so on as it should. But, you know, it is significant some of the changes. So it's now going to be an offence to, among other things, interfere, which is a pretty broad term, with quotes, the use or operation of key national infrastructure. So things like electricity or gas, road, rail. So the road protests, which we've seen so much of. Before this bill, previous sentence would be between 24 and 42 days, usually, or a suspended sentence. Now the maximum protest is going to be a 12 month maximum sentence, which is pretty significant. And it also merges as well, not just with the politics of protest, but the wider politics that's going on at the moment around crime, which is before both parties, Labour and Tory both think it's going to be a big part of the next general election. And it will include powers for the police to stop and search without suspicion, which again is a bit of a reversal from previous moves that we've seen over the government over the years, including under, for example, Theresa May as Home Secretary.

I think that is the one that concerns me the most, potentially, about the changes that are being made. Because the idea that you can just have no suspicion whatsoever and be able to stop someone, you've got a green piece sticker in the back of your car, right, I reckon you are dodgy, pull over, I want to search what's inside your car, or you're just walking down the street and you can be stopped for no apparent reason. Just I don't like the look of you, you look like you might be a green piece protest, or you look like you might be a just stop oil protest or whatever it happens to be. The police have got a job to do. But I think that, you know, you just look at what's happened with racial profiling over stop and search in the UK and in America. It will inevitably skew the figures even more about the numbers of young black people who are going to be stopped, because the police don't have to be able to show any cause for why they're doing it.

Yeah, let me just read you a line from the new bill. A constable may, in the exercise of the powers, stop any person or vehicle, or make any search the constable thinks fit whether or not the constable has any grounds for suspecting that the person or vehicle is carrying a prohibited object. Just cast your mind back a month or so to the Casey report into the Metropolitan Police and just remember how damning that was about the way the police are found to operate right now. She called it institutionally racist as well as misogynist and homophobic. And just look at where public trust is in the Met Police and probably more broadly into the police in this country and ask yourself how we feel about giving police more powers at a time like this.

It also puts the police right in the front line of the political debate and you saw when Sir Mark Rowley, the head of the Metropolitan Police, went before a select committee and came up against the Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party, Lee Anderson, where the MP is saying, weren't you using more powers? And he was saying, well, frankly, you don't understand the law. We don't have those powers. And we operate within the law as police officers. Well now they do have immense sweeping powers. And I think that that will put the police in a very uncomfortable position in term of the policing of protest.

Obviously, this is coming to a head to some extent because of the coronation. And we saw even with the events last night with somebody throwing some ammunition or shotgun cartridges over the walls of Buckingham Palace. Look, there's no doubt the police and the authorities are going to be very, very edgy about this, very, very nervy about this entirely unsurprisingly. It's the first one we've had since 1953. The eyes of the world are going to be on London.

They're going to be foreign heads of government, foreign heads of state here. And that comes against the backdrop of particular groups suggesting or intimating that they might want to use this enormous occasion, this moment in the spotlight to try and push their message. So it is a very, very difficult balance to strike. But at the end of the day, we're not just a monarchy in this country. We're a democracy. And we're a liberal democracy. And if we're not that, we're nothing. Basically, huge powers of discretion are being handed over to police officers, which as you say, actually puts them very often in a very uncomfortable position. There is going to be a protest somewhere. And either you're going to have on the left people saying, oh my God, the police have been far too heavy handed, or you're going to have populist Tory MPs saying, the police are too soft. They're snowflakes. Why haven't they gone in harder? We've given them the powers to do this while they're doing it. And you put the police in the middle. Now, that's, that is a policeman's lot that they are in the middle between rival groups of protesters. But they are being put in the rival camps of politics. And that is not a great place for them to be.

I also think that this legislation is not, as they say, just for Christmas. It's for So the coronation will come and go. And yes, everyone probably wants us to be on our best behaviour for the next three days and showcasing Britain in the world, blah, blah, blah, all the heads of state. But after that, what happens? I mean, what happens to any legitimate form of protest or anyone, as you say, going about their business, who might just be randomly stopped? Because this is now the law. It's not just a week of, can everyone pick up their litter, please? It's the law. It also seems just such a far cry. And I'm not holding up France as an example of greatness in terms of the demonstrations that have taken place, because some of them have been hijacked by extreme groups who are determined to have a fight with the police. But there you have a country where protest is so embedded as part of culture. And yet we seem to be nudging ourselves away. You can't make too much noise. You can't do this. You can't do that. And so that the protest becomes so neutered, that it's not really a protest at all. Well, what are the political and what are the legal ramifications of this change to the law? We're going to talk to a barrister from Garden Court Chambers, Paul Polesland, who's joining us now and specialises in protest rights. Paul, we're going to talk to you about the legal side of things. And as a barrister, how you see the laws. But just to put it in a context, maybe for our listeners and our viewers just ahead of the coronation, you're also, I guess, anti-monarchist. You held up a blank sheet of paper to test the protest laws. Yeah. I mean, that came more from my perspective of being pro freedom of speech and protest rights than being anti-monarchy at the time, really. I saw people being either arrested or threatened with arrest for what were perfectly valid protests, holding up a sign saying not my king, the woman was dragged away from parliament for that. And I wanted to challenge that. So I held up a blank piece of paper and asked the police officer, if I write not my king on this, will you arrest me? And he said, yes. When did you? I didn't because I had to, I was due to be representing a client the next morning, so I couldn't risk, I couldn't risk getting arrested and spending a night in the cells and not being able to represent them. But what you're pushing here is the limits of your freedom and your free speech in terms of these new protest laws. Yeah. And we know throughout history that our rights don't just sort of hang there magically in the ether. We have to fight to protect them. And governments and those in authorities will always try and chip away at them usually.

And you have to push back in order to maintain those freedoms. And I guess that was one way of doing that. And interestingly, it worked because there was a big media ferre about the video with the officer threatening to arrest me for writing not my king. And then the police issued a statement saying they wouldn't arrest for people, you know, having slogans like that. And then we went the next day and did that protest and were allowed to do it.

So I wonder what you think of the new laws that have come into effect as a result of what happened last night. We've heard Swelle Braverman in the introduction to this podcast talking about it. It seems that the police will have sweeping powers now, but it puts the police in the middle of the political battle as well, which I suspect the police aren't desperately keen on being in. Yeah. And we see throughout this, there's already powers to deal with all of the matters that the government is complaining of about environmental protesters. And the police aren't necessarily asking for more powers, but there's a sort of political ferre to give them to them to try and crack down on that protest. And it feels unnecessary. The government would push back on this and say, look, at a time of national celebration, at a time when there's going to be loads and loads of people gathering in sort of tight spaces and the eyes of the world are upon us, they don't want protesters to hijack the day or hijack the roads or hijack people's ability to get in and out or ambulances, police cars, blah, blah, blah. You've heard it all before. What's wrong with that position? Well, there's a couple of things wrong with it. Firstly, if people do in fact overstep the boundaries of things and say, block the road in front of the coronation, there are clear powers to deal with that obstruction of the highway and even public nuisance. It's not like there wouldn't be powers to actually deal with those issues. So we have the law already. We have the law already. And if what the government is saying is that ordinary peaceful protests of people just putting up a banner at the coronation procession is not allowed because the world is watching us, then I would say that our right to freedom of speech is every bit as ancient and precious to us as a country as the monarchy. So has that right to protest been curbed as a result of this new legislation? Well, yes, they've chipped further away at it. And there's also things like people who are just going to a peaceful protest, the police can now have greater powers to stop and search them. But what's also interesting is this letter that was sent to Republic and other organizations, it's not necessarily just about whether people are arrested for something. It's about whether that new law can be used to chill freedom of speech and the right to protest. So almost to intimidate? To intimidate and put people off, because actually it is perfectly valid for someone with Republican tendencies to go on Saturday and hold up a piece of paper with not my king or down with the monarchy on it. That's basic freedom of speech. It's lawful. And what the government seems to be hinting at is they want to use these new powers to stop people doing that because it somehow embarrasses us. Why would that intimidate them? I mean, it might fully charge you to go out if you've got the letter. I think it depends on the type of person that you are. And obviously, I'm both a barrister and also quite a belligerent person in some ways. So if I get that, it'll make me more likely to go out. And that's what happened with the not my king protests with that sign. Actually, it didn't put me off. It made me want to buy it harder. But I actually got quite a few messages from people after that incident that they said that when they'd seen people being arrested for holding up peaceful slogans, they actually put them off going and protesting. And that the police statement that was issued after that video went viral saying you can protest gave them that power and strength to go out and do that. I don't know if we should underestimate how frightening it is for ordinary people to get

letters or other intimidation from the state telling them whether they can and cannot protest. And of course, in the lead up to the coronation, I suspect the mood. I mean, in terms of the political timing is quite smart because people are going to say, well, of course we want the coronation to pass off peacefully. And we don't want people throwing themselves in front of the horses as they're going down the mall in the state coach. But these laws stick around for a long time afterwards. Yeah, indeed. And the point is as well, they're not just targeted at those organizations that might do something like you just described. There has never been any suggestion. I don't think anyone would seriously say that Republic, which is a respected campaigning organization, was going to start doing any of the things you described. They've been very clear from the start that what they want to do is have speeches and banners and all of those lawful, peaceful things that we're allowed to do in this country. So why has the government sent them a letter advising them in these new protest powers when it's never been on the table that they would be doing anything unlawful? So I guess the problem is, Paul, that we think each government that introduces it is the most draconian. And we forget that actually, there is quite often a long tail and legacy on whatever the color, whatever the stripe of government, people trying to curb protest. Yeah. What I would say is that it does actually illustrate quite a neat example of the way that powers can be misused. So one of the powers brought in during the new labor years was over terrorism and the right to question people at the border with no suspicion. And if you don't answer the questions, it's criminal offence. And surprise, surprise, as everyone warned, when it was passed, that hasn't just been used for terrorists, it's been used for politicians, journalists, activists, lots and lots of people. So what we see is that powers once passed can be used in very... Can be abused. Can be abused, exactly. I would also say that each government perhaps can impede our freedoms in different ways. And it does seem to be getting gradually worse, but it also goes back to what I said right at the start, which is that our rights don't just sit there as if handed down on high on a stone tablet to us. They are things that are constantly being eroded and have to constantly be rethought for all the time. And that's why it's really important for people who care about those rights to peacefully and lawfully always push to the edge of them and say, no, I have this right to do this thing. And even if this big ceremony that's happening on Saturday is important, I'm still going to stand up for our right for freedom of speech. Paul, thank you so much. Really interesting chat. Thank you very much. And in a moment, we're going to be talking Sue Gray, the civil servant who wants to go and work for Kier Starmer, and Simon Case, the top civil servant in this country who finds himself in increasingly hot water. This is the news agents. Welcome back. We're going to talk about someone now who probably isn't even a household name in her own household, but she is assuming ever greater importance in British politics. And this is Sue Gray. She is the woman who did the party gate investigation into Boris Johnson and what happened during lockdown in Downing Street, who we then found out has been offered a job as chief of staff to the Labour leader, Sir Kier Starmer. That has led to many conservatives crying foul and also causing a lot of unease among civil servants. And there was a report due out yesterday that we were expecting, but hasn't appeared. And there seems to be a row going on within the

civil service about what should happen and within the Conservative Party.

Yeah. And I think it's important to set out from the start that Sue Gray is being accused of not cooperating with the inquiry. There are actually, just to confuse you, two inquiries. And Sue Gray has completely cooperated with the official inquiry, which is into essentially business interests. When you lead the civil service and when you join a political appointment, there is a process through which you have to submit your answers. And she has cooperated with that.

She has not cooperated with something that she and the Labour Party believe is a bit of a political stitch up, which is something that has been more the invention of the cabinet office, the government, to try and put her through her paces as to whether or not she was compromised when she did that initial report into Boris Johnson and Partygate.

Yeah. I think the reason that this matters, I mean, isn't it? It's kind of ironic. 12

months on. We're still waiting for Sue Gray. You remember 12 months ago, every single week that went by, we were waiting for Sue Gray in the investigation into Partygate. And here we are again, still waiting for another report this time into Sue Gray. But I think the reason this matters is for a couple of reasons, really. One, it really matters whether or not it is perceived that the government is not using the tools that it's disposed, or quite frankly, to hound someone, and is not acting and using the tools of the state to act politically in this way. So the accusation would be that, yes, Sue Gray has gone from this important job that she used to have in the civil service. She used to be the head of propriety and ethics in the civil service. So she knows a lot of the secrets of individual politicians because individual ministers, when they were appointed, she would look through their records and so on and assess whether or not they were suitable to hold a lot of the secrets. And it is important that she is perceived not to have broken rules herself. But at the same time, it is quite something if the government, through this Cabinet Office investigation, were effectively trying to itself act quite improperly to prevent someone from simply taking up a job with a political party. Now, you can have an argument about whether or not it was a good idea for someone so senior in the civil service to go and head up and be the chief of staff for an opposition party. But what I'm remembering is itself not exactly without precedent. There have been other senior civil servants in the past who have gone to work for either the government itself or for an opposition party going into government. Okay, perhaps not someone who had become as high profile as Sue Gray, but it isn't without precedent.

And that is what is creating the question marks over the government's role. I think the other reason it matters is because the role of Simon K is the cabinet secretary who is being briefed against in virtually every direction it seems. I think the thing that I found most astonishing, just from the weekend press, was the idea. You're used to ministers briefing against each other or opposition MPs briefing against each other. There were groups of civil servants briefing against each other where friends of Simon K are saying and friends of Sue Gray are saying. I thought now this is a line that we've crossed that I haven't seen before where different sectors of the civil service are kind of at war with one another. Let's just remind you who Simon K is because he is the head of the civil service. He is the cabinet secretary and Sue Gray only did the report into Partygate because Simon K originally recused himself because in a merge he had actually been at one of the parties. We know that Simon K and Sue Gray do not have a particularly good working relationship. Sue Gray believes that he blocked her promotion to

permanent secretary on two occasions. So as Lewis was saying, there is an uneasy sense here that whilst we all want transparency and accountability and the sense of public inquiry doing its job, we don't particularly like the idea of personal vendetta. And oh, he was mentioned in my inquiry. So oh, he was mentioned in her inquiry. So maybe he'll now do an inquiry into her. That's where it gets really into an e-sign and really ugly. Well, let's try and take stock of where we've got to now because we can speak to Sir David Normington. He was the permanent secretary in the civil service at the Department of Education and then again at education and knows Sue Gray well and is a friend and former colleague. Am I right in saying that, Sir David? That's right. Not seen her so much in recent times, but obviously worked very closely with her when I was in government and have stayed in touch. So do you think that she's followed the rules then as laid down by the civil service in terms of taking this job, although she hasn't been able to start yet as chief of staff to secure Stammer? I'm not absolutely sure whether she has or not. She is seeking to follow the rules by going to the business appointments committee and applying to them. I know there's been this inquiry into her conduct by the cabinet office. I honestly don't really know what that is about. They're obviously looking into whether she broke the impartiality rules in some way, but I'm not sure that speaking to Keir Starmer about a job actually does that. I know that's what the government wants to prove, but I'm not sure it actually does that. So she's doing the right thing by going to Acaba, the business appointments committee, and no doubt they will recommend a cooling off period before she can take up this job. The thing is, John, at the center of this is a very simple issue. She's been asked to go work for Keir Starmer. She's resigned. She has to have some form of cooling off period, and the business appointments committee needs to look at it in an impartial way using their precedents, using other cases that they have considered before. Swirling around it is a mass of briefing against her, briefing against the cabinet secretary, trying to smear her reputation and so on. But at the heart of it is a simple question actually about whether she can and when she can go and work for Keir Starmer. It's a free country. She can go and do that as long as she follows the rules. I guess, Sir David, the question is one of perception. Last week we saw Richard Sharp having to resign from his position at the top of the BBC because there was a perceived conflict of interest because he was so close to the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Sue Gray was literally affecting an inquiry into Boris Johnson's behavior during Party Gate. If she was at that time in talks with the opposition leader to go and work for him, that is clearly going to be perceived as a conflict of interest. Well, that would be true if she talked to Keir Starmer during the Party Gate inquiry. It's inconceivable that she did. I know Sue Gray. She just will not have done that. She's denied that she talked to Keir Starmer in that period. Keir Starmer has denied it too. I think one can set that aside. Obviously, those who are close to Boris Johnson and those in the Conservative Party who didn't like the Party Gate inquiry are trying to lessen its impact by smearing her. But it's inconceivable that she talked to Keir Starmer in that period. I don't think there's that conflict of interest. If Sue Gray had talked to me, I'd have discouraged her from doing it, honestly, or at least I would have said you need to leave the civil service and leave a decent interval before you actually go into this kind of role. But unfortunately, those conversations took place. It was all leaked and she was caught up in this political drama. Just explain to David why you would say that because you don't think that she could do that

neutrally? I think she can do it neutrally, but I think you're right that that is the point of perception. We can see what's happened. There are a lot of people seeking to claim that this is an example of the politicisation of the civil service, that she's always been biased and so on. It was almost inevitable that as soon as it was announced that she was taking this role, that that would happen. So I would have preferred it if that hadn't happened in this way and there'd have been a decent interval, but it would have been better if she'd left the civil service, retired and then had the conversations with Keir Starmer and at a future date then taken up this role. So David, can you put this into a wider context for us of where Simon Case's place comes into this? Because we know that he is also under fire from some quarters for the way he has behaved at the head of the civil service. We know that he didn't promote Sue Gray. We are hearing reports today that he might have watered down this inquiry or delayed the emergence of the inquiry because

he was feeling uncomfortable. How does it tie in to the very top of the civil service in this country now? One of the problems we have is that Simon Case's credibility is being constantly questioned. You never want the cabinet secretary to be the headline news in the national press and in the media and on social media, but that's what's happening and it stems from a fact that actually there isn't a lot of confidence in Simon Case within government, certainly from his senior colleagues in the civil service. He has been rightly or wrongly, fairly or unfairly caught up in too many problems within government for that just to be an accident and what's happening now is that every time there is an issue, as with the Richard Sharp issue, it always seems to come back to him. Now you need as cabinet secretary and head of the civil service to have the confidence both of ministers and of your senior colleagues so that you can provide the confident leadership that the civil service needs particularly at the moment and that is not happening.

Is Simon Case's position still tenable as head of the civil service?

I'd say only just. It looks as though he still has the confidence of the prime minister, which is, of course, ultimately the most important thing, but I increasingly hear he doesn't have the confidence of a lot of senior civil servants. And you're hearing that from people you know, presumably? Yeah. Do you think he'll be gone within the week? No, I doubt it, but if he's got any sensitivity to the position he's in, I think he'll be considering his future. I hate calling for civil servants to resign because I'm not there and also I know how tough it is and I know sometimes you get put in the public eye and it's not your fault at all, but he's become too much of the story. I think the other thing is that he and Sue Gray obviously didn't get on very well latterly. He didn't like the criticism of him in her report and I think that probably has increased the sense that they can't work together. But should he go? Probably, probably yes.

If people are listening to this and saying, gosh, it all sounds very technical, you know, you're talking about one civil servant who might be coming into politics, you talk about another civil servant who's at the very top who might be leaving, why does any of this matter to us as a country, to us as a democracy, to the functioning of government? Will you just try and put it into a better context for us? The first thing is you never want the civil service to be in the news. The civil service is there to support the government of the day and the government of the day should be in the news. That's what you want and for that to happen, you have to have a very effective administration. It is the civil service that actually helps to ensure that the administration of government is working well. And when there is this kind of political drama going on with the civil service, when there are constant accusations that it's not performing well or it's being

politicised,

actually it diverts what the civil service ought to be doing, which is supporting the government of the day to have very effective government. It matters to the government and it matters to the country. And what really matters is that ministers and civil servants work really well together and that the civil service is not part of the story. Sir David, thank you so much for being with us. Great to talk to you. Thank you. Thank you. That was a bit of a wow interview in some of the things that Sir David said there, don't you think? We're going to pick it apart with you in just a moment.

Welcome back. The whole kind of idea of yes minister is that you never answer a question and we've just had a very senior civil servant or ex-senior civil servant who really did answer the questions that we asked. Yeah, I thought it was quite extraordinary. I thought three things in particular stood out. And we should just, people again, if Sue Gray isn't the household name, then David Norwington definitely isn't. But within the civil service, former permanent secretary of the Home Office, could have, if things had turned out a little bit differently, been cabinet secretary himself. You know, this is a senior guy, very senior guy and someone who knows the civil service inside out. And three things for Amandrine, as they're occasionally called, that he said really stood out. One, his suggestion that the Conservative party was basically orchestrating a smear against

Sue Gray, to use his word. Second, and this is really remarkable, he's essentially suggesting that Sue Gray believed that this would be a hatchet job, the cabinet office inquiry into her, and he basically agreed with that. I mean, that's quite extraordinary. Again, for the tools of the state to be being used in that way to conduct a hatchet job against someone of Sue Gray's standing extraordinary. And then third, relating to Simon K's, essentially saying that he thinks he should go, such is the lack of confidence, not only from certain ministers in him, but from the top of the civil service itself. That is very, very unusual for a top civil servant to think that about the cabinet secretary, and for a former top civil servant like him to come out and say it. There was this really interesting pause, wasn't there, before he said it, as if it was kind of being dragged out of him unwillingly. But he had to say, yes, I think Simon K should go. And actually,

and we put this in the context, remember of how we started, which is that he does call himself a friend and former colleague of Sue Gray. So I'm sure there is a loyalty to her there in this. But he also said that if she had asked him about going straight to Keir Starmer to work, he would have said, it's not a great idea. Go off, have your cooling off period. It was quite interesting that he thinks she's actually made a bit of a misstep as well in this by going straight from the civil service to a political position. Because, yeah, we're back to perception. It's not what she's going to do or whether or not she was impartial. He believes that she was and will be endlessly impartial in the civil service. But the perception is that she's muddied the waters by doing it too quickly. There's two things about it, though, right, which are sort of interesting to know. One is, it's just a reminder that kind of the venom that there is towards Gray is a reminder how in some parts of the Conservative Party, the bitterness, the toxin of how Johnson went and how in their view, he was forced to go by this kind of make-believe conspiracy against him over party gate still runs so deep. And that is partly why Gray is a sort of lightning rod for all of that. And they are delighted to try and delegitimize or try and delegitimize that whole process through this whole job process. Now, you might say Gray has sort of walked into that has allowed

them to do that by accepting this job. But nonetheless, I think, you know, that is just a reminder of how deep that venom is. I think the second thing to say, though, is this is that, like, although it's completely true, and fair enough, as Normington was saying, that there should absolutely be a cooling off period for Gray, part because she is the custodian of all of these secrets and so on, you can see why government would be pretty concerned or annoyed that she was going

to work for the main opposition party this close to a general election. It is just worth saying that in terms of the ACOBA process, this committee that's set up to basically authorize not just civil servants going off to work elsewhere, but also ex ministers, they might have a slightly better case if so many ex Tory ministers themselves had abided by the ACOBA process and their recommendations. So just to give you a few example, Matt Hancock didn't go to ACOBA before he went on

I'm a celebrity. Pretty Patel took a role with a global comms firm without asking ACOBA. Nadine Dorris didn't bother checking before she accepted the broadcasting gig at talk TV. ACOBA said that Philip Hammond was unwise for using his government connections to help a bank he was paid to advise

and Boris Johnson, of course, most famously of all, was criticized by the ACOBA committee when he just went and resumed his telegraph column just after stepping down and resigning from being foreign

secretary. So you know what, if you want this process to work for others, you've got to abide by yourself. We will be back tomorrow and hopefully speaking to the US ambassador, which should be fascinating. We'll see you then. Bye bye. Bye for now. Bye bye. This has been a global player original podcast and a Persephoneka production.