

[Transcript] The News Agents / The Fury of Trump (and Nadine Dorries)

This is a Global Player Original Podcast.

It's nine o'clock in the morning, rush hour, outside Miami's downtown federal courthouse, where a city has sprung up overnight of gazebos, of tripods, of lights, of cameras, and the world's media, awaiting Donald Trump's court appearance charged with 37 offences.

It is serious stuff, and what's at stake here for the former president is the possibility that in two years' time he becomes the president again and is sitting in the Oval Office, the most powerful man in the world, or he is in a federal prison behind bars, having been convicted of the mishandling of classified documents.

The stakes could not be higher.

In Florida, this week is the start of the hurricane season.

The first one to arrive is going to be Hurricane Donald in a few hours' time.

Welcome to the newsagents.

The newsagents.

It's John in downtown Miami.

And it's Lewis in downtown newsagents HQ.

And I have to say, John, you're looking absolutely beautiful in your golfing gear just there.

It's almost like Rory McElroy's before me.

I thought that if I came up in a shirt like this, there's every possibility that Donald Trump will stop the motorcade on his way into court and say, do you want to round a golf afterwards?

Because there's no way he's going to end up in prison after this case.

And he has been staying at his US Doral golf course here in Miami.

And you know what these things are like.

A city has sprung up overnight of gazebos and camera crews and technical equipment and catering trucks and all the rest of it, as the world's media has descended on this bit of downtown Miami.

No, I think that if you turned up in a suit, the bigger danger was that the BBC camera crew there might just mistake it for old times and just start putting you on the news channel.

Worse things have happened.

What's the atmosphere like there?

At the moment, it's very calm.

I mean, you know, look, in the lead up to this, all the talk has been of mass demonstrations and a call to arms.

Allah, January the 6th, 2021, with thousands of the MAGA crowd descending on the courthouse.

Actually, I've got to say, it's all very relaxed.

There are helicopters overhead.

I've seen some security, but for the moment, and it is only kind of quarter to nine in the morning here, it's pretty calm.

Donald Trump's not due in court for six hours.

And I've got to say, you'd have to be pretty damn diehard MAGA to stay out in this heat for six hours waiting for the appearance.

So I suspect it will change a bit.

But at the moment, it's kind of very relaxed.

All the American broadcasters doing their breakfast shows.

It's not going to be relaxing for Trump though, right, John?
I mean, what's he actually going to have to do today?
Because the whole thing is a briefish process.
But what is he going to have to do?
So think of this in British court terms.
This is just the remand hearing.
This is just this is what you're charged with.
Fingerprinting, apparently.
I don't know whether they'll be taking a mugshot, almost certainly not.
I don't know whether they would have him in handcuffs, almost certainly not.
Because, you know, you've got the secret service there.
It's not like Donald Trump is a flight risk at the moment.
He's not going to leg it out the courtroom.
Well, we don't think he is.
I think this is just the formality of the charges being laid to him.
But make no mistake, these charges are really serious.
You know, we debated a couple of months ago when Donald Trump faced an indictment in New York about whether it was really that serious, the paying off of the porn star.
This is of a different order.
And these are federal charges, i.e. these are being laid by the US government.
So the Department of Justice that he was in charge of just two and a half years ago is now using the Espionage Act to bring him to book.
The severity of the sort of charge sheet against him is sort of hard to get your head around, right?
And it feels as if, and people can, you know, be forgiven for being confused because of the endless numbers of different accusations against him, in cases that have been going through the courts against him.
But it feels as if, certainly in terms of the severity, this is all just of a different order of magnitude compared to the New York case.
Look, if you read through this 49-page indictment, it lays it out pretty boldly what he's accused of, but not just what he's accused of.
They've got transcripts of conversations, you know, Donald Trump, when he was at his golf course in Bedminster, which is in New Jersey, you know, brandishing a secret document before somebody and saying, look, you know, this is a classified document.
When I was president, I could have declassified it, but I can't now.
So you better not tell anyone about it.
And you're thinking, hang on, the phrase being caught red-handed, comes to mind.
And you've also got evidence from his own lawyer about what Trump was asking him to do in terms of hiding documents and not telling the truth to the FBI when they came to investigate.
And so it is pretty damning.

And these are nuclear secrets.
This is about America's readiness for an attack.
This is about the military readiness of America's allies.
This is what we would do in the event we were attacked.
Now, whatever the motivations were,
and I don't believe for a second that Donald Trump ever
was going to try and flog these on the black market
to make as much money as he could.
I suspect it was much more to do with bragging rights
and saying, look what I've got, look what I can show you.
And it is against the law.
Yet the Trump people are saying, foul,
this is a political persecution, this is a witch hunt.
You're just going after Donald Trump
to take him out of the next presidential race.
Well, I suppose what adds to that is the fact
that there have been these other stories, right,
that have swelled around or come out
over the last sort of six months or so, right,
including someone like Biden himself
having documents that he ought not to have done.
But I suppose what's the answer to that,
to people listening to this who might be thinking exactly that,
this is something that in one form or another,
presidents do usually by accident,
or people who've left public life have done
possibly by accident.
Well, I think there's a huge difference
between Joe Biden and Mike Pence,
it should be said, the vice president,
who was found to have had one or two classified documents,
is that they took these documents probably by accident.
We know that Donald Trump has been very proud
to tell people that he's got these documents.
So I think for Donald Trump,
the motivation was different.
I think with Biden, it was a kind of mistake,
you're taking away thousands of your personal documents,
which presidents do because all presidents
set up their presidential library once they have left office
with some of their papers and some of the things
that are declassified that they are able to put on show.
With Donald Trump, the motivation does seem entirely different.
And then when he was found to have had those documents,

it was what happened before and after that.
What happened initially was to deny
that he had any documents, he did have.
Then the FBI raided, found documents,
and the Trump people said,
well, you've now got everything that there is to get,
there were more.
And so it's the attempt to keep hold of these things
that marks him out as different from anybody else.
But the MAGA crowd will say, you didn't go after Biden,
this is a legal system that is politically motivated.
And of course, the other thing that Donald Trump does,
all of this is part of the playbook.
And frankly, some of it we saw in the past few days
with Boris Johnson, is to not only say, it's a witch hunt,
but it's persecution.
And if they can get me, they can get you the American people.
And so he goes sort of apocalyptic.
He says, this is the last fight.
And if I'm rolled over by the American justice system,
they will be coming after you.
And that is what Trump is trying to do
and is trying to shape the battle.
And of course, it's working.
How few Republican leaders are coming out
and saying this is wrong.
Although William Barr, the former attorney general,
Donald Trump's attorney general,
has said if even half of this is true,
Donald Trump is toast.
Yeah, I mean, watching Kevin McCarthy,
the speaker of the house yesterday or overnight,
the mental gymnastics that he was trying to have to pull off,
just to be able to try and justify
this extraordinary picture that exists
of all of these files in this room
in a clearly, like, completely chaotic way is amazing.
You must have been speaking to some of your old fans,
John, the MAGA crowd out there at some point today.
John's back.
They must be thrilled.
They are delighted to see me, of course.
And so, look, we've been speaking to some of MAGA crowd.
And as I say, it's early days.

They are fervent and listen to the comparison this person makes.
I came from Hollywood, California,
to support the president.
Why President Trump means so much to me?
It was like he took a dark cloud over the nation,
and it lifted and became sunlight.
And he made people believe in God bless America again.
Do you think it's a witch hunt?
Yes, I do.
I do, from day one.
Ever since he said he ran, they were against him.
This is the worst thing, I believe,
for the Republican Party, what's happening to President Trump,
since the assassination of President Lincoln.
Since the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.
That was quite a few years ago.
I mean, arguably, the Republican Party has had some turmoil since then.
But, look, the people who believe, really believe,
and I'm sure lots of them are going to be out here today,
and there are a lot of them in the country.
And that is why you've got the Republican leadership
sort of straining their necks to look in the opposite direction
over the charges that are being laid here in this Miami courthouse.
Well, for a start, John, I suppose we should probably salute you.
You've managed to find the only MAGA person from Hollywood,
so it's quite impressive.
But the other thing that we should talk about,
and the thing that's really struck me,
is the invective and the hint of violence,
which is being constantly implied
and constantly alluded to by so many of Trump supporters,
which, when you consider after what happened in January 6th,
is even more extraordinary.
So, you know, like Carrie Lake,
Republican gubernatorial candidate in Arizona,
refused to concede defeat in 2022,
you know, being suggested as a potential running mate for Trump,
saying, I have a message tonight for Merrick Garland
and Jack Smith and Joe Biden,
and the guys back there in the fake news media,
you should listen up as well, this one is for you.
If you want to get to President Trump,
you're going to have to go through me,
and you're going to have to go through 75 million Americans

just like me, and I'm going to tell you,
most of us are card-carrying members of the NRA.
That's not a threat.
That's a public service announcement.
I mean, it's absolutely extraordinary and chilling.
Well, and yeah, the NRA is the National Rifle Association.
These people carry arms.
And there has been a Republican congressman
in the House of Representatives
who has put stuff up on tactics of resistance
to stop this court case actually happening.
This is an elected representative advising Americans
on how they should break the law
and how they should stage an insurrection
to stop Donald Trump ever being allowed to appear.
So the language is crazy,
and it is as though America has learned nothing
from the 6th of January, 2021.
And there are those who want to ferment
a similar sense of chaos and crisis
and bringing the Republic to the edge
and bringing the democracy to the edge.
And they think this is a fight worth fighting.
Where if you look at this rather sober document,
the indictment, it looks like the wheels of justice
are turning and no one is above the law in America.
Not even ex-president Donald Trump,
but for millions of people,
and I do use the word advisedly,
for millions of people, they do not see it like that.
And they think that everything that is ever done
to Donald Trump is personal.
It's a witch hunt.
It's because they're frightened of him.
And yet the evidence points in another direction.
And the other thing that strikes me
is absolutely astonishing, John, is the prospect,
the very real prospect that, okay,
if this trial goes on as usual,
maybe it'll take a year or so,
assuming as Trump's lawyers almost certainly will,
they try and kick as much sand into their gears
to delay it as long as possible.
This could be going on and hanging over

potentially candidate Trump,
going into the 2024 presidential election,
and that voters won't even have the outcome of the case
to hand when they make their choice
and make their election.
And indeed, there is the possibility
that the best hope for Trump to avoid jail time
is to become president and potentially pardon himself.
When you look at the stakes in this case,
it's just hard to imagine,
kind of win or lose an election.
In British politics, if Keir Starmer wins or lose,
if he loses his election,
he probably stands down as Labour leader.
If Rishi Sunak loses the election,
he probably can find another job somewhere else
in Goldman Sachs or wherever.
For Donald Trump, the stakes are,
you either sit behind the Resolute desk in the Oval Office
and you have Commander-in-Chief
of the biggest armed forces in the world,
leader of the world's preeminent democracy,
or you're behind bars in a federal prison.
And that is why this is such an important moment
for America, for the world, for liberal democracy,
if you like, as well, to be grandiose about it
and why Donald Trump's people are trying to personalize it
and characterize it in the way that they can
so that their public opinion turns against the court case.
One other thing to add to this, Lewis,
is that the judge who has been chosen,
and it's apparently a random lottery,
is a judge that Donald Trump appointed
who is very pro-Trump and during the earlier hearings
set all sorts of legal precedent
which were overturned by a conservative appeals court
because she had behaved in such an outrageous way.
So I think Donald Trump might get a little bit of hope from that.
But I mean, there's always with Trump
the chaos that goes with him.
And some of that chaos is the fact that
he's scrambling around trying to get together,
pull together a legal team at the moment
because so many of them are saying,

we don't want to be part of it
because if you act for Donald Trump,
you very quickly become part of the case
and you can find yourself a defendant in it
because you are asked to do things that cross lines.
And so Donald Trump has not got
a fully assembled legal team together yet.
I mean, obviously it's a big day for Donald Trump,
it's a big day for the American justice system,
but more, dominantly, it's a big day for the news agents.
Hang on, we've got a little protest taking here.
There's a whole group holding up t-shirts
saying blacks for Trump 2020.
And Gabe, our producer, is going over to one of them
and I think he's going to come over here.
Let's get him over.
Yeah, they're coming over now, they're coming over.
Hey guys, so you've got a sweatshirt saying blacks for Trump 2020.
Y'all come over here.
So why are you here today?
I'm here to support Trump.
We're here to protect him and let everybody know
that he's not a colonizing racist
because we're the black men that were the protectors then,
we're the protectors now, the royal guard of King's side.
Okay, and you sir, you've got a hat on?
Only I talk.
Only you talk?
Okay, fine.
Because I just, your friend's got an ultra-maga hat on.
Right, sir.
So you would describe yourselves as ultra-maga, would you?
I'm ultra-god, which is maga, yeah.
God is maga?
Right, right.
Yeah, make America great again.
This is New Jerusalem according to Yahweh, Ben Yahweh.
That's right.
So I'm going with that.
I don't care what other people think.
Okay, guys, listen, thank you very much indeed.
Thank you very much indeed.
Hang on, mind the cable.
So if you hear that way, that's great.

Well, yeah, so this is some of the ultra-maga crowd that are here today.

They're just kind of filing away and obviously got some religious overtones to it as well.

And this is what I was saying at the top of the show.

It is a bit of a circus that is unfolding with all sorts of groups.

Trump's does or not racist is on the back of their t-shirts and blacks for Trump on the front of their t-shirts.

So we're getting a little flavor of what's unfolding outside the courthouse now.

Well, John, they've obviously got wind like so many people of the new show.

Exactly.

So the new show, they just wanted to be on Newsagents USA and they could be our first guests on a weekly podcast dedicated to all that's happening in American politics.

And that's why I'm here outside of Miami Courthouse because it is all happening in American politics.

And that will be available on Global Player initially and then afterwards in all your feeds wherever you get your podcasts.

Right, John is going to be staying with us.

And after this, after the break, we are going to be talking about who else, but Boris Johnson and the person I think it's fair to say, his most supportive ally, Nadine Doris.

Alas, not Baroness Doris, not yet anyway.

This is the Newsagents.

Welcome back.

Right, from Miami Beach to Nadine Doris in a segue that literally nobody has ever made before.

There has been yet more extraordinary fallout from the Johnson and Doris resignations, which almost rivals the ferocity of American politics.

And Nadine Doris, the former culture secretary of course, and one of Boris Johnson's incarnations on earth, not that he's dead, politically dead perhaps, was on talk TV last night with Piers Morgan.

And she was asked about why it was that she resigned.

And she had the most extraordinary excretion of Rishi Sunak, who technically just about, I think, still remains her prime minister.

This story is about a girl from Breck Road in Liverpool
who worked every day of her life since she was 14 years old,
had something offered to her for that.
People from that background don't get offered, removed
by two privileged posh boys who went to Winchester and Oxford
and taken away duplicity and crawly
because they have known for months
that it wasn't the case and yet they let me
and they let Boris Johnson continue to believe
that was the case.
It was upsetting.
My heart bleeds. I don't know about you, John.
Are you moved?
Well, I just thought it was extraordinary.
Look, she has got an interesting story.
And I don't take anything away from what she has achieved
and her own background.
And a lot of people have done extraordinary things
from difficult backgrounds,
but not everyone gets a peerage or a knighthood or a CBE.
And I just think the idea that the reason
you are telling your electors in Mid-Bedfordshire,
not Liverpool, but Mid-Bedfordshire,
why you're no longer going to be their representative
is because you're pissed off that you didn't get a peerage.
I think it's just pathetic.
It's just, you know, oh, diddums, oh, poor you.
You didn't get a peerage.
So you're just going to turn your back
on your voters and your electors.
It's just astonishing.
It's completely astonishing.
This is the thing that I can't get over with it.
I mean, you would think that some deep fundamental right
had been snatched away from her
and from, you know, listening to what Johnson's
got to say as well, that the airwaves
and the column inches have been full of arcane
and complicated and dense explanations
and counter explanations as to who was right
about what Rishi Sunak said and what he promised
and what Johnson said and this meeting that they had
and what Holak, the House of Lords Appointment
Commission has said and who had the right to do what.

I don't care.
Like no one cares.
This is so completely dense.
This isn't a matter, the word injustice
or grave injustice has been used.
This isn't a grave injustice.
This was a matter of someone wanting to basically
escape the democratic duties of being a member
of the House of Commons before their term was up
in a way that her voters could never have anticipated
when they elected her in 2019, the same for Nigel Adams
and so on, and instead just get a place
in the legislature for life before that term had expired.
That isn't owed to anybody and the indignation about it.
And like you, I admire Nadine Dora's background,
the fact that she's working class.
You know, this is something I care about.
There are far too few working class people
at the top of politics or British culture
or British political life more generally.
But my God, the sense of entitlement with it
is completely extraordinary.
And also, like in terms of if you're a shesunat right now
and you're number 10 or you're a conservative party,
instead of the conservative party sounding like it cares about
and is talking about the issues
which are truly driving politics,
we've had news today, for example,
of yet more chaos in the mortgage markets,
inflation's still a big problem, et cetera, et cetera.
What is the conservative party talking about?
What is dominating the front pages?
Whether or not Nadine Dora is in Nigel Adams,
because Boris Johnson said so on the basis of a conversation
that may or may not have happened
in a way that both parties dispute
are getting a peerage or not.
I mean, to say that it is deeply introspective
and a party talking to itself
would be the understatement of the year.
Well, I honestly, you know, you said about working class
and upper class and all the rest of it,
I think it is just totally unclassy what she has done.
Because if you were feeling fed up

that you didn't get a peerage or whatever
and you felt you'd been promised it
and it didn't come through,
then you say very effectively, quietly spoken,
I'm very disappointed in this.
It does seem odd that people from my background
seem to struggle to get this ultimate accolade,
but I was elected by the people of mid-Bedfordshire
and all my concern is, is to serve them as well as I can.
And at the next election,
I'm going to consider what I'm going to do.
Instead of which it was, I'm throwing my toys out
at the pram, instead of which she said, right, okay,
well, if you're not going to make me a lord, I'm going now.
If I'm not going to become a lady, I'm going right now
and there's nothing you can do about it.
So screw the lot of you.
And that just seems to me petulant slightly
in the reaction to it.
And you're absolutely right.
We do need to broaden the number of people
and the representation of those who sit in the house of lords
and at the top of government and across all areas of life.
But the way this has been gone about just smacks of,
it's my turn and I want to do it and on my terms.
And I just think it's ugly.
Well, as I say, it's bad for the party.
There are lots of people who are very angry about this.
And actually one of Nizim Doris's justifications
with Peter Morgan's essay was that not only would it have meant
a lot for her from her background to be in the House of Lords,
but also the idea that this was the sort of place
where proper scrutiny happens,
that the House of Commons is retreated
from legislative scrutiny and that's where she wanted to be.
I mean, to be perfectly blunt,
and the same would go for Boris Johnson as well.
I mean, since they left ministerial office,
neither Doris nor Johnson have been particularly frequent
attenders of the House of Commons.
They haven't spoken in many debates.
They certainly haven't been scrutinizing much legislation.
They've been missing votes and so on.
So why you would think that you would go from the democratically

elected House where you're supposed to scrutinize legislation to be given a place for life in the Lords to do it on the basis of that record?

Well, I'm not sure.

Obviously, she's a longstanding parliamentarian, nonetheless.

But as I say, I think the thing for Sunak is that, you know, what Sunak wants to do is both project stability and to actually have stability.

And I think the problem with the last, what, 96 hours now or whatever is that on both scores, he's failing.

He's failing because the party, the public are looking at this and they're seeing what remains an unstable political situation. They're seeing Boris Johnson continuing to dominate the party.

Yes, Sunak is starting to step outside of his shadow, but it's a very long process.

But also, in terms of stability, in fact, the actual substance of stability, increasingly, we see that's not happening either.

As I say, the chaos that's going on in the mortgage markets, again, because of what we saw today with wages that's arising but still not as fast as inflation,

the bond markets factoring in higher borrowing costs

for the UK government as a result,

the costs for the government to issue debt or to borrow is now higher than it was in the last trust period.

We're increasingly starting to see a prime minister who not only doesn't look like he's embodying stability, but isn't providing it either.

And that's just a big problem for him.

Can I just make a more general point on the honours system?

And I'm going to talk personally in a way that I haven't done before on the news agents.

But I went to Buckingham Palace when my mum got an MBE.

My mum had had polio as a child.

She became a social worker in the East End of London.

And then she was a magistrate for many, many years.

And she got kind of one of the lowly gongs.

And we went to Buckingham Palace

and I watched as the Queen pinned a medal on my mum.

And I couldn't have been more proud.

And she had worked for 40 years in public service and was duly rewarded.

And there were loads of people there that day at the Palace.

There is a woman who is 29 years old,
who is on Boris Johnson's list,
who is being made a life peer,
having spent six years as a parliamentary assistant.
What on earth is that all about?
How can people have faith in an honours system,
which I broadly support,
when you get such egregious examples
of someone who's just been a political hack for a few years
and gets a peerage age 29,
able to rule for the rest of her life
and vote on the laws of the land,
and people who don't get any recognition,
yet who work tirelessly in their communities.
And I just think it is left a really, really unpleasant
with an odour.
Yeah, I think it's spot on, John.
And I think that this is a really important point
to remember as well when we had the last 24 hours
and all this talk of war between Johnson and Sunat,
which is obviously there now.
But we should also remember that actually,
the Doris thing notwithstanding,
the Nigel Adams thing notwithstanding,
actually, Sunat gave Johnson almost everything he wanted.
I mean, the honours list,
as far as we can see is largely intact.
There are gongs and honours for, you know,
people like Pretty Patel or Andrew Jenkins,
who's only been in MP since 2015,
or Jacob Rees-Mogg becoming a knight.
And indeed, as you say,
peerages for whatever their merits as individuals,
very, very young political operatives
who are now going to be in the House of Lords
for the next 50 years.
So in reality, Johnson got most of what he wanted
out of Sunat, but the little that he didn't achieve
was still enough to cause all of this,
well, as you say, petulance.
I should probably let Tiger,
I should probably let you get back off to the fairway,
shouldn't I?
There's another nine holes to finish off

before the news agents USA later.
For what?
I've got my driver ready.
Well, the chauffeur and then my driver.
Isn't that giving you that as well?
I've got it right.
Before we wrap, I'm going to let you go.
John will be back tonight from Miami with Emily
for the very first episode of the news agents USA,
and you can listen on global play from midnight.
I'll be back after the break,
talk about my own travels up to Scotland,
which I've just come back from,
talk about the SNP,
Scottish independence and more on the arrest
and release of Nicola Sturgeon.
Stay with us.
This is the news agents.
Right, welcome back.
So I've just got back from Scotland.
We're all on the move this week.
Edinburgh, Holyrood, the Scottish National Party,
still reeling from the astounding news
that Nicola Sturgeon was arrested on Sunday morning
in connection with the SNP party finance scandal,
albeit then released without charge,
pending further investigation.
But what it's done is to further reveal
and widen the fissures within the SNP,
partly about strategy over independence,
partly about domestic governance,
partly about the personality of Sturgeon herself,
between backers of the former First Minister,
which include her chosen successor,
Humza Yousuf,
and those who always quietly bristled under her dominance.
Yousuf said yesterday that he won't be suspending her.
That's drawn criticism from opponents,
including some SNP MPs and MSPs.
Such public disagreement would have been unthinkable
within the SNP, known for total unity,
only a year or so ago,
and just below the surface for some,
barely suppressed discontent among some Sturgeonites

with the investigation itself.
When I was in Scotland,
I caught up with one such MSP, James Dornan,
a SNP member for the Scottish Parliament,
for Glasgow Cathcart.
The issues of people being suspended before
were about internal party matters,
where you could see that the behaviour
was causing the party harm.
You don't think that the former leader being arrested,
the former party's chief executive,
who happens to be that person's husband, being arrested,
the former treasurer being arrested,
is causing the SNP harm?
Of course it's causing them harm,
but what I'm saying is,
where does the information,
where does the evidence come
that leads such to a point
that those three should be arrested in the first place?
But the police obviously have come to the conclusion
that as part of their investigation,
they ought to be arrested,
and my question to you is that given,
we're talking about the former party leader here,
maybe at some point in the future,
if this investigation goes nowhere
and they decide to leave the matter,
reinstate her then,
but in the interim, surely, surely,
for the party's reputation,
I mean, for anything, she should step aside herself.
From what? She's a member of the Scottish Parliament,
she's a member of the SNP,
and as far as I'm concerned,
that's where she should continue to be.
But once this is over,
if Nicola's charged with something,
I'll come on here and say I was wrong.
What do you make of the record
that you've had three SNP first ministers
and two have ended up arrested?
It's not ideal for the party, is it?
It's not ideal. Of course it's not ideal,

but it doesn't mean that Nicola has done anything wrong.
What do you think all of this is going to do
in terms of the popularity of the SNP?
Just now, it's clear that we will take a short-term hit,
but what's happening is that
whilst the SNP are taking a short-term hit,
the cause for independence is if anything grown,
because I am not alone in being disturbed
by what I see going on around about this investigation.
As I've said a couple of times,
there are MSPs and there are MPs
who are unhappy with the decision
that the first minister was taking.
What's your message to them?
Support your ex-first minister.
Support the person who helped
has become the most powerful political parties
that Scotland has seen,
that can lead us to independence,
that can make sure that life is better
for the people of Scotland,
and do not be distracted by sidelines,
because at this stage, it's a sideline.
It's a side-act, there's nothing.
Nicola has not been charged with anything,
she's not been found guilty.
But you know what you do remind me of?
I'm sure you won't appreciate the comparison,
using that logic.
You remind me of some of the defenders of Boris Johnson.
They use exactly the same logic.
They say, let's not go after this guy,
who may have broken the rules, whatever,
but he got us an 80 seat majority,
he unlocked the Brexit and passed,
he did Ukraine, the vaccine,
and you might agree or disagree with any of those things.
It's the same logic.
It is logic is, this was a great figure in our party,
she was brilliant, we shouldn't be attacking her.
No, that's exactly not what I'm saying.
She was quite clear in the statement
after she was arrested yesterday,
that she believes completely in our innocence,

I support her on that.
Obviously it's potentially a long way down the line,
but if we do get to the end of it
and the former First Minister is charged,
maybe she ends up in court,
you've obviously given a very full-froated support to them,
would you end up feeling rather foolish?
I would feel incredibly like them.
Yes, I'd feel incredibly like them,
I've known her a long time.
I trust her implicitly, I trust Peter implicitly,
the two most honest people I've met.
And if I found that I was being sold apart,
then I would feel incredibly like them.
And foolish, yeah, of course.
Of course, all of this is manna from heaven
for the SNP's opponents.
For so long, they've barely been able
to even land the faintest glove on them.
And although there's loads of attention
on the Tory by-elections in England to come,
one no less important one is the likely by-election
in Rutherglen and Hamilton West,
after a likely recall position
on COVID rule-breaking SNP MP Margaret Ferrier.
Labour has already set up its campaign HQ in Rutherglen,
and I caught up yesterday
with Scottish Labour leader Anasawa right there.
When I took on the job two years ago,
people looked at us with sympathy,
and we were 32 points behind the SNP.
And at that point, we were just trying to persuade people
that the Labour Party was still relevant, it could survive.
And then obviously leading into the council elections,
making sure we got ourselves into second place
a year ago, we were at 17% behind the SNP.
And now poll shows between three to seven points
behind the SNP, that's good progress.
But nowhere near good enough,
we still want to do a lot more
because we want to be competing to win,
not just coming in a comfortable second place.
So things going in the right direction, absolutely.
But look, I have a lot of hard work yet to do

because this country's crying out for change,
and I want to deliver that change.
Does it worry you that despite everything,
despite the fact that the scandal has been known
for about a very long time,
the SNP is still on top of the polls?
Look, I think, look, it doesn't worry me.
I expected that to be the case, to be honest.
I mean, if you think about the last Scottish Parliament election,
the SNP was polling above 50% of the polls.
Nicola Sturgeon had an approval rating of plus 58
going into the last Scottish Parliament election.
So it's not a case of people see the wheels coming off the SNP bus
and they're automatically going to shift their support
from the SNP to Labour.
I think it's a much more longer term,
more harder work process than that.
There is no shortcut.
I think it's safe to say this is a very significant by-election
because it will set part of the frame
leading into the next general election campaign.
In terms of what it means for Humza Yousaf directly,
I mentioned before about the extraordinary high poll ratings
of the SNP, the extraordinary high personal poll ratings
that Nicola Sturgeon enjoyed.
I don't think the same can be said for Humza Yousaf.
He's seen as being incompetent.
He's seen as being untrustworthy.
And that's the pollster saying that, not me.
And he's seen as leading a dysfunctional government.
And I think in the face of that,
I think there will be real pressure on him.
But I think this is a party in decline.
I think they've got arrogant in government.
I think they've grown increasingly out of touch.
The easy part of politics is telling you
why the other political parties are wrong
and why they deserve to lose the harder part of politics.
And the one that I'm more interested in
is setting out that positive alternative.
And we're making progress in that,
but lots more work still to do.
And the by-election here, it must win for you, isn't it?
We're in it to win it.

One frame I would make though is,
before it used to be the Labour Party
that feared elections and the SNP that relished elections,
I think it's safe to say that we flipped the coin on that one.
It's now the SNP that feared elections
and Labour relished the election.
I can't wait for the next general election.
And I look forward to campaigning it with energy and enthusiasm.
And obviously, Humza Yousaf said
that he won't be suspending Nicola Sturgeon.
What's your reaction to that?
Do you think that he should?
Well, ultimately, it's a matter for the SNP.
It's a matter for him.
But I think if you look at previous incidents
there is precedent in the SNP
for them to suspend people in that situation.
I think if you look at incidents in our own political party,
we have demonstrated leadership by suspending individuals.
But I think there's something much wider here.
And that is whether he is strong enough
to show leadership or is he too weak to show leadership.
And the reality is this is the same man
who on the morning Nicola Sturgeon was arrested,
was talking about her and saying she was the best politician
that Europe has seen for the last 20 years
and that he talked to her often to get advice
and that she was in a really, really good place.
I think people will question his timing and judgment on that one.
Do you think that it would be better for Scottish politics,
the Scottish Parliament, more generally
if she just resigned her seat in Holyrood?
Well, ultimately, that's up to Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP.
Look, I think you've got to let the police investigation
take its course.
Everyone, of course, is entitled to due process.
And that includes a police investigation
or anything that may flow from a police investigation.
But I think there's a wider point here.
The last 48 hours in British politics,
whether that is what happened in Scotland or indeed what happened
across the UK, I think is a tipping point,
actually, in British politics and Scottish politics.
Two huge figures of the last decade of politics,

Boris Johnson across the UK, Nicola Sturgeon in Scotland,
two diametrically different characters,
it don't get me wrong,
but actually two politicians who fundamentally feed off division,
two politicians who feed off pitting community against community,
Scott against Scott, who further their own interest
by dividing communities,
I think there's a real sense that that kind of politics
needs to come to an end,
that we're not going to go have the us-versus-them politics
for till the end of time,
that an alternative is possible, unity is possible,
having politicians focusing on people's priorities is possible,
and now Labour is the only party now offering that change
both across the UK and here in Scotland.
The point that I put to Sawa there about the polls
is an important one, though.
Remember to keep it in mind when looking through
the barely-contained glee in the coverage of Scotland
and the SNP's neutral veils in many of the newspapers.
The SNP have taken a hit in its standing,
but they're still first in the polls despite everything,
which is pretty extraordinary,
although no new ones have been published since the arrest.
And support for independence isn't necessarily the same.
Moreover, support for independence isn't necessarily the same
as support for the SNP.
Take a listen to just a few voters I interviewed yesterday
in Glasgow's magnificent George Square.
I would still like to support the SNP.
You still will?
I mean, I, to be honest.
Why?
Because it's the Scottish party, mate.
For Scotland to be independent, that's what I think.
We should be independent.
So it doesn't matter, it's not about their leadership,
it's about independence.
No, it's about the movement, about independence now.
That's what I think.
Backment on to...
Mentally in what way?
I'm just...
Really shows, like, we can be told one thing,

but there's a lot going on, maybe behind the scenes.

Do you think it's going to damage the SNP?

No, I don't think so.

You don't think so?

No.

Well, it might make a dent in the SNP,

but it won't damage independence.

Why not?

Because I think the biggest majority of Scottish people want independence.

And that's bigger than the SNP?

Yes.

Because independence is bigger than Sturgeon or her party.

The constitutional question has become so embedded

in Scotland in the last 10 years,

so ossified in so many voters' politics,

that for many, the vehicle to achieve independence

may go up and down in esteem,

as might any particular person leading it,

but the aim, the dream, doesn't die.

Short-term, damage to the SNP is damage to achieve independence,

but long-term, with voter demographics the way they are,

with such support for independence among the young,

the union remains in trouble.

That is it from all of us today.

As we say, the news agents, USA is starting

and we'll be in your feeds tomorrow morning.

Go and search for it, news agents, USA.

From John in Miami, from me in London.

Wherever you are, enjoy the sun

and see you on two shows tomorrow.

This has been a global player original podcast

and a Persephoneka production.