

[Transcript] The News Agents / The Government's Ship Idea

Now, look, we're very good at telling you when we've done well. You might have seen that the news agents hit 24 million downloads and climbing yesterday. But I think it's also important to admit when we screw up and on Monday, when I was away, Lewis and John were in charge, this happened.

Yeah. And the one person who sort of fell for it and then thought, I'm not having anything to do with it, was Gavin Williamson. So when you're even outwitted by Gavin Williamson, you're in a pretty rough state of affairs.

Gavin Williamson. Millions of you got in touch. Well, one or two anyway, to ask why Gavin Williamson had been seemingly stripped of his keenly earned, richly deserved, knighthood. He hasn't, of course. John, what would you like to say?

I'd like to say I am very sorry, Sir Gavin. Lewis. I'd like to apologize to both Sir Gavin and Lady Williamson for this shocking breach. It was a breach. And let's be honest, in doing that, we took away from him his just desserts, something that he's worked for and earned his entire political career. And I know John and I, we've reflected on it. Full of remorse.

Let's put it down to human error, something with which Sir Gavin is all too familiar.

We'll leave it there. No disciplinary required at this point.

Thank you.

Welcome to the news agents. Actually, let's do it funnier than that. Welcome to the news agents.

The news agents.

It's John.

It's Emily.

And it's Lewis.

And we are all together in news agents HQ. And later in the podcast, we're going to be talking about reparations on when to pay them. The Guardian newspaper has announced this morning that it's going to pay 10 million pounds because of its slave owning past a couple of hundred years ago. But we're also going to be talking to an old colleague of mine who discovered that her family owned slaves, a thousand slaves in Grenada. And her family have decided to come together and pay a hundred thousand pounds to the government there for education programs as part of this reparations movement. And we'll be discussing the wisdom or otherwise of all of this.

But we're going to start, I think, by talking about ship ideas and cruise ships.

And it's very important the announcement there to get the P right.

You have to be so careful.

You don't want to make more mistakes.

You don't want to make any more mistakes. Otherwise, our listeners will be back and wrapping our knuckles. But the thing about the housing of asylum seekers on cruise ships is that every time it lands, everyone gasps. But it has been mooted as an idea. I counted about 12 times. I mean, not just in this country, but as we know, it goes on with Ukrainian refugees in Scotland in Amsterdam. It doesn't make it in Sweden, in New York. People talk about housing asylum seekers on ships or ferries or barges or whatever you want to call floating vessels. I think vessels was the generic term today. And every time it gets people talking about something that almost certainly will never happen, at least in this country. Here's the immigration minister in the comments.

Faced with the scale of the challenge, we must fundamentally alter our posture towards those who seek to enter our country illegally. This government remains committed to meeting our legal obligations, to those who would otherwise be destitute. But we're not prepared to go further. Accommodation for migrants should meet their essential living needs and nothing more, because we cannot risk becoming a magnet for the millions of people who are displaced and seeking better economic prospects. Many of our European partners are struggling with the same issue. Belgium, Ireland, Germany and France are having to take similar steps and the UK must adapt to this changing context.

Well, let's just look at the past. Britain had a floating jail, Her Majesty's prison, The Weir, which was sold in 2005. After eight years of holding prisoners, Chief Inspector of Prisons denounced it as unfit for purpose because of the lack of access to fresh air and exercise. And then, as you say, Emily, loads of other examples of where you've said what we're going to do is we're going to house all these people on ships, boats and barges. 2010, there was a Tory proposal to reintroduce prison ships that would ease Britain's overcrowded jails. That sparked a furious row in the Conservative Party. Summer of 2022, during the Tory leadership

campaign. Who can forget that? Rishi Sunak proposed putting illegal immigrants on cruise ships moored around the country, but was warned it could be illegal under the Human Rights Act. And so it has gone on, not just in Britain, but in other places in Europe as well.

I mean, Rishi Sunak did it when he was Chancellor in 2020. Priti Patel when she was Home Secretary

in 2021. Each time, it's like a little Loch Ness monster. It raises its head and then somebody goes, it's probably illegal and it's too costly and it goes back under the waves again.

And I always wonder whether what we should do is try and draw a line between when that is said and proximity to a local election.

Or any kind of election.

Or any kind of election at all. Because it seems to me there is quite a correlation, because I'm going to throw you a big hunk of raw red meat for you to salivate over.

Davey launched the Lib Dem local election manifesto today. And I think the Conservatives probably did it, but just in a slightly different manner.

Emily's already said it, it's never going to happen. And if it is going to happen, it is definitely never going to happen within the next year to 18 months before the next general election.

It is certainly not going to do anything in the short term or even the medium term to address the enormous numbers of people who need accommodation, who have arrived and you can disagree and you can argue about why they're here and what sort of asylum seekers they are and whether they're refugees or not, but they have to be put somewhere.

But everyone would agree with that. And they are certainly at no point going to end up on a boat, either in a port or anywhere else. And when Dominic Raab, who was doing the rounds this morning and was asked on LBC and in other places as well, well, have you got any barges or any ships in mind?

Where are they? The government, if you're proposing this sort, the government obviously you must have a few in mind or be ready even to think about purchasing. Answer came there

none.

No answer because all it is, is optics. And I think you have to see everything that is going on at the moment. It's all linked, whether it's about the barge or whether it's about the nitrous oxide stuff very early of the week, the antisocial behavior stuff that the government knows that much of this stuff, nitrous oxide accepted, it can't be done within the next year to 18 months before the next general election.

I think partly we, because the last general election doesn't seem in some way so long ago, I don't think the public have quite woken up to the fact that we're going to have a general election within 12 months or so. But the politicians most definitely have. And you have to see everything that's happening at the moment with regards to crime through that prism. Because weirdly enough, both the Labour Party, crime and immigration I should say, through that prism, because both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, funnily enough, both think that those issues are going to be huge issues for the next election. And the narrative for them is very much up for grabs that both sides for different reasons are weak.

And that's what you've got to think about when you're seeing all of this stuff on both sides, anti-social behaviour and immigration asylum seekers this week.

I think it's also a way of drawing people's attention to something they know is a problem and then saying something must be done, right? It's a very loud, rallying cry of something must be done. But as you heard from the generic clips in the Commons today, he very carefully talks about the use of military bases as a starting point. Now that's not going to make a couple of his own colleagues particularly happy. One of those military bases, and to be frank, they are more often found in Tory constituencies than Labour or other constituencies. It's hard to put a military base in Lewisham. It's hard to do it in the middle of a city.

James Cleveley's seat in Essex and Braintree holds RAF Weathersfield. He, we understand, shares the concerns of locals there. And RAF Scampton, which is the other one that is being suggested, is actually home to the Dambuster Squadron and Nigel Farage. Can we fade up the music? We need to fade up the music there, please. Dambuster, speak to you. Thank you.

And Nigel Farage is championing a petition to stop it being turned into a massive asylum centre there. So you've already pissed off a couple of fairly senior Tories on this front by talking about military detention centres. So you're talking about the ships or cruises or barges or whatever. And I'm going to read you a headline here, which is thousands of migrants to be housed on luxury cruise ship with Swingpool on board. This is a headline from the Express. It said they could be getting a taste of luxury treatment as desperate officials look to house them in a £65,000 a day cruise liner at a cost of a masses £65,000 a day.

Now that headline from the Express was written on February the 19th of 2016, right? This debate has been raging for so long. And arguably, I mean, let's not forget three, four months before the Brexit referendum. But every time this lifts its head as an example, it is to get people saying something must be done, but not this. Yeah. And I think this exposes one of the central contradictions of the Rishi premiership. Because on the one hand, Rishi Sunak has committed himself and very adroitly and adeptly at saying we are going to underpromise and over deliver. And his performance before the liaison committee, he showed that he was across detail. It was kind of a million miles away from Boris's appearance where it was on Bluster and blah, blah, blah. But he showed attention to detail. And it was technocratic

and it was a bit dull. But it was kind of working, but working. Yet on this issue, migrants, small boats, barges, airfields, it's all about optics. It's all about over promising and under delivering again, because that seems to work. And I do think that this one issue on the boats is where you can't quite reconcile everything else that Sunak is seeking to do. Although it's difficult, right, politically, because on this, if you overpromise and underdeliver on this, this issue, which is so politically charged and really does wind up a big part of his voter base, that's a problem. I mean, you mentioned the liaison committee yesterday, John. I mean, Sunak had to row back just in that from the suggestion that any of the Rwanda flights were going to happen this summer, right, something that both he sort of denied it, but something certainly that both the Home Secretary and he himself had hinted at in the past. So already that unwinding, and I suppose this is the potential critique just politically, never mind in terms of the policy, but it is a little bit too tactical and not very strategic, because if you do overpromise and underdeliver, well, where is that going to get you? Because although there isn't much time to the next general election, there is enough time, there is adequate time for voters to get the sense and something Labour can exploit on, that something was promised and it hasn't happened. So the rationale behind this, presumably in most of the public's mind, is what we can't carry on using hotels. We know there are something like 400 hotels being used to house some 51, I think it is, 1000 asylum seekers. So in the public's mind, they think, oh, well, we can't carry on using hotels. They've got to find a permanent place.

It is expensive.

It's expensive. It's £6 million a day and people want to carry on having their weddings and using their hotels and all the rest of it. So we have to find an alternative. What we didn't quite understand until Yvette Cooper maybe pointed this out in the Commons is that the hotels will still carry on being used. This is the overflow and it is most likely to cost exactly the same if not more.

Instead of speeding up asylum decisions, they're just going to cancel them. So that means more people in asylum, accommodation and hotels and more flim flam headlines that just don't stack up today, it was barges. And it turns out there aren't any desperate to distract everyone from the damage they might want to do to the Danbusters heritage. Instead, they start talking about ferries and barges. Three years ago, they said the same thing. Last summer, the Prime Minister said it would be cruise liners. The Home Office civil servants said ferries would end up costing more than the hotels they're already spending so much money on.

So instead, the immigration minister has been sent round the country with a copy of Waterways Weekly trying to find barges instead. And going back to the earlier point about strength and weakness, I mean, Robert Jenrick, the immigration minister, accused Yvette Cooper of being weak or Labour being weak on this week about our borders, week about immigration, week about hotels, you know, about a million times. And they are just determined to try and seal that narrative. And we've talked on the podcast before about Kirstama trying to label exactly the same tag around Rishi Sunak's neck. It's sort of like two muscle men on a beach kicking sand in each other's face at the moment. And it's sort of pretty unedifying.

But this also goes down to broader failures of policy, right? Why is it that we've got

this hotel problem now we're talking about barges? Well, part of the reason for that is Emily's already alluded to that this is about overflow. The asylum system is so bust. It is so broken. 160,000 people are waiting to have their asylum, their asylum application processed. And until it is processed, you can wait for years. And until it is processed, you can't access the labour market. You can't basically get somewhere to live with your own accord, not legally and properly anyway, you can't get benefits, you can't integrate or become part of society, nor can you be deported on the other side of things. So in the meantime, you've got to have somewhere to put them. And then there's another failure, right? Which is that we haven't got enough houses. We haven't got enough accommodation. There's no council accommodation. It hasn't been built for a long time.

But nor do they want this to be a problem that is solved. They really want to find a solution that speeds things up, that gives people houses, doesn't make it more attractive to come.

Yeah, if we just go back to Afghanistan, there's an extraordinary thing yesterday where the government are basically saying that the people who came from Afghanistan in 2021 are going to have to leave the hotels that some of them have now been in for going on for two years, maybe 18 months, two years. And, you know, the London Council's got together yesterday and said that they're very concerned that there was just nowhere for them to go. The government is saying they're going to have to leave these hotels and there's just nowhere for them to go. And so it just goes back to those two bigger failures, which the government doesn't want to talk about, which is the asylum system's bust and the housing system and social housing system is completely bust as well.

I think that, you know, we talk about the broader policy failures. You're right to bring it back to these poor bastards who've come over from Afghanistan. They have helped British forces. The reason they're in this country is they've probably been helping the British Army as translators in all sorts of different ways. And they are over here now and they are thinking, okay, I'd like to kind of start to build my life. I've got my kids in local schools. Am I going to have to move them? And they are trying to comprehend how they are caught in this party political battle with all sorts of headlines flashing around just because there are local elections coming. And they are kind of useful chaff to throw up at this particular moment. I mean, it must be really awful.

Really awful. We should say that the Afghan asylum seekers are not the same people that the government's talking about putting in military detention centres all on the boats.

They are actually trying to house the Afghans that they brought over. But even then, and I think Dominic Raab was asked this morning, very specifically by our former colleague Justin Webb, what happens if somebody who the government should be helping, a former Afghan pilot wants to come in via an illegal route because there aren't any legal routes open to that person without putting their life in danger? There was no answer to that.

There are no more safe routes except for three countries and many people, even from Afghanistan, cannot get here safely. So you're back to square one. If you don't actually tackle the root cause of how you're going to deal with the asylum problem, you're never going to find enough barges floating in the sea for them.

We've got to have an honest conversation. We just don't have it.

We'll be back in a moment talking about reparations and talking to my former BBC colleague, Laura

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Trevelyan, whose family have spent £100,000 in Grenada towards making good what their family did in the 19th century when they owned a thousand slaves.

This is the news agents.

The Guardian made news this morning, not surprising in itself. Newspapers are meant to cover news,

but this was news about the Guardian itself and its decision that it was going to pay £10 million to make good on its owner's history back in the 19th century and the links to slavery. And it is that very live and divisive debate about when you should pay, if you should ever pay, reparations for past wrongdoing.

Yeah, and it's not a new debate, it's worth saying. I remember talking to Professor of Sociology, Kahindi Andrews, when his book came out back to black about reparations. And his argument was basically that the West is built on racism, not in an abstract or historical way, but basically through genocide of millions of native people in the Americas in the 15th and 16th century that paved the way for the enslavement of millions of African people. And when I started talking to him about reparations, he quoted Malcolm X and he said, if you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, that's not progress. If you pull it all the way out, that's not progress. And he says places such as Britain won't even admit the knife is there until you have not only pulled it out, recognised it and started to heal, you've still got an absolutely massive knife wound. And I guess it's that sort of knife wound that you've been talking about with Laura now.

Exactly. Now, Laura and I first worked together in the 1990s at Westminster. For the last eight or nine years, we were together in the United States where she was working as a BBC journalist as well as me. I had no idea about her family background. It turns out that the Trevelyan family owned a thousand slaves in Grenada.

In the Caribbean.

In the Caribbean. And her family came together when this information came out and thought, we need to do something about it. And I spoke to Laura last night.

Laura, we've known each other for, I think, probably 30 plus years.

Yes.

First at Westminster, last sort of decade or so in the US.

Yep.

I never knew anything about your family and the background of their relationship to Grenada and the fact that your family had slaves. I mean, what an extraordinary thing that you have done and you've given up your journalistic career. How do I describe you now?

Joining the Caribbean's fight for Apparatory Justice, John, which may seem unlikely as we've known each other for that long, you probably never had me pegged for being an advocate.

No. And so it'll obviously been a journey to give up journalism, which you were extremely good at and your natural home for you, to do this. And I just wonder what the journey was, what were the moments?

Well, it started in about 2016 because University College London published this database of all of the British slave owners that got compensation when slavery was abolished in 1834, which might seem strange that the slave owners were compensated, but that was the only way to get it through Parliament back then. And so this database came out about three years

later. One of my cousins emailed said, oh, Laura, typed in Trevelyan. Never guess what I found. We were compensated the equivalent of three million pounds in today's money when slavery was abolished. We owned more than a thousand slaves in the Caribbean on Grenada. So I was shocked. And I put it into that category of a bit too difficult to deal with. And then we were in the States during Black Lives Matter. You remember, you covered all those protests. So dramatic. And then, you know, because we're journalists, I had to confront the fact that if the legacy of slavery in the States was black men being brutalized by police, what was going on in the Caribbean? What was the legacy? So I had to find out. And the BBC last year let me make this documentary in which I went to Grenada and tried to find out more.

And you came to the view that reparations do work because there is a debate over whether reparations work or whether they should be used or whether future generations can be held responsible for the activities of their ancestors.

Yeah. I mean, my conclusion was guided by the Caribbean's reparations commission and every island that's in Karakon, which is the intergovernmental organization, they've set up their own reparations committees and they have a 10 point plan. And in Grenada, the people I met on the committee said, Laura, it will be so powerful if your family can apologize because in the Caribbean, it's like a void. We don't know our history. We know our ancestors were kidnapped from West Africa, dumped in the Caribbean. If you come forward and say, oh, we were slaveholders on these six estates, which by the way, well known in Grenada, that will enable people to know their history, first of all. And then secondly, if you can do something about it, and as you know, we've donated more than 100,000 pounds to education funds in Grenada, then that's also accepting responsibility for what your ancestors did. And that's an important step forward. And we were persuaded over the course of a year through talking to different people in the Caribbean, that this is what we should do. And I felt, you know, as a journalist, you're asking difficult questions of people of all the time. If you believe in speaking truth to power, you have to do that to yourself too.

And did you ever worry that you're going to get accused of tokenism on one side of the debate and a ridiculous overreaction on the other?

You know how it will be received or you can anticipate how it will be received. And when we were in Grenada, the reaction was extraordinary. People were hostile. Some people were definitely

hostile because people had many questions. Why are they doing this? What's in it for her? Why are they here? But overwhelmingly, I found the reaction was positive. And one woman came up to me and said, I feel like a burden that I didn't even know I was carrying has been lifted because you've come forward. And now I'm joining the dots of my past. And one woman came up to me and said, the St. Cloud estate where your family owned slaves, my father never, his family never moved from St. Cloud. That must mean that your ancestors own mine, but not in an accusatory way. And I, oh my gosh, I always wanted to know where I came from. And now you're, you've turned up here in the Caribbean and thank you. Do you think there will be other people who will be joining you, other families who've got their own links to whichever Caribbean island it may be?

Oh, this is what is exciting about it, John, is that since our apology in Grenada, our

public apology and seven of us went as a family to do that. I've been contacted by quite a few families, British families with links to Jamaica and Barbados where their ancestors own slaves saying, if you can do it, how did you do it? How did you apologize? What did you think was a good use for money? So I think that's encouraging. And I think, you know, we met with Sir Hillary Beckles, who's the chair of Caracom's reparations commission, the author of a seminal book called Britain's Black Debt on the Economics of Reparations. And he said, there's been a deafening silence from slave owning families. And if you can come forward and set an example, that will be powerful. And I believed him and I think he's right.

What do you say to the charge that this isn't going to make any real difference in Grenada, £100,000, but it makes the Trevelyan family feel nice and warm inside?

I mean, for sure, it's absolutely a legitimate complaint. And I guess it depends how it turns out, doesn't it? Do we just retreat having made our very public apology a month ago and given some money? Or are we in it for the long haul? And more than 104 family members signed that letter. And my hope is that this is the first step. There's so much that Grenada needs. We're sitting here in central London with all these incredible museums around us. Grenada has a very small national museum that's been closed for years because of termites, which is just reopening now. And the Caribbean deserves to have museums which are on a par with us. And so this is something else that I would want to lean into as well, is that the importance of libraries and museums for places like Grenada.

You and I have very different family histories. If we're talking about the 19th century, my family were fleeing pogroms and leaving their shtetl in Eastern Europe, in Poland, on my dad's side, Russia on my mother's side. But I have no sense that those people in Poland owe me anything or that I need reparations as a result of what's happened in my life generations on. It's just joining those dots that I think I find problematic.

Well, if you think about the Caribbean, John, so in Grenada, I went to a classroom in Grenada and I asked the girls, are you descended from slaves? Every single girl in the classroom lifted up her hand. If you think about what happened in the Caribbean, which is that people were kidnapped from West Africa, dumped in the Caribbean, slavery ends, they're left with nothing. All of the wealth comes here. Britain's industrial revolution is to some degree fueled by the money from slavery. And then by the way, slave everything, families like mine actually get money for the loss of their property as the enslaved are termed. It's really without parallel as a system of wealth extraction, and it's left the Caribbean with a legacy of underinvestment. And so now there's a very specific Karakom 10 point plan and a plan that Dennis O'Brien of Digicel has put his own money into something called the repair campaign to build on Karakom's plan, to have a Marshall plan of investment for the Caribbean where the former colonial powers pay for that over 25 years. So this is a specific plan which is repaying Britain's black debt, as Sir Hilary Beckles has called it.

So reparations for slavery, where else should there be reparations?

Well, I guess that I'm focusing specifically on the Caribbean because it's such a straightforward connection, I guess. Yeah, but I just wonder where the limits are of reparations because everybody can find things that have been done wrong. And are they entitled to reparations because of what happened to their great-grandmother or a great-grandfather

or whatever it happened to be? For sure. And that's, you know, that's the argument from the right is where does it end. But I guess, you know, the original example of reparations is post-war Germany paying reparations to Israel because of the Holocaust. So the argument goes that slavery was a crime against humanity and that's why the concept of reparation specifically is one that's applicable. But the Israel one is not quite analogous, is it? No, it's not analogous. Because it happened immediately afterwards. There was a direct relationship between the reparations that were paid and the people who had sort of been responsible for them. It was within a generation. This we're talking multiple generations with you. As you said, we're talking the 1820s, 1830s, 1840s.

Yes. But part of the issue is that because the Caribbean was so far away, in Britain, people didn't realise the impact of slavery. And, you know, we were taught at school that William Wilberforce abolished slavery and Britain was really wonderful for having abolished slavery, not the extent to which Britain participated in the slave trade. You know, the Royal Family too. The Royal Africa Company shipped slaves from West Africa to the Caribbean. The Duke of York, who became King James II, the enslaved were branded with the initials DY. That's not something that was taught in British history. And yet it has a direct contribution to the Caribbean today. But I take your point, you know, there is a separation of generations.

Have you reached out to the Royal Family?

I've been writing lots of columns, but yes, I would be honoured to meet with the King or to meet with Kate or William, who I think, when they went to the Caribbean last year, they saw the strength of feeling that they were met, yeah, with protests. I mean, the Caribbean after Black Lives Matter.

So, to my question, have you did a brilliant swerve there? When I said, have you reached out to the Royal Family?

No, no, I haven't. I haven't. I haven't, no. But I certainly would be delighted to talk about.

Have the messages come back via intermediaries or anything about what you're doing?

Not from the Royal Family, no. But I would say there is an awful lot of interest, you know, because, John, you've been to the Caribbean, you know, China is all over the Caribbean, investing in roads, in infrastructure. And I detect that there is political concern in Britain about the way that China is entrenching itself in the Caribbean. China's not a democracy. These are democracies in the Caribbean. They're former British colonies. Why are we seeding strategic influence to China? It doesn't make any sense at all. Surely it should be the former colonial powers that are doing the investment and not China. So I think there's a political opportunity there, for sure.

Laura, lovely to see you. Thank you so much.

Thank you, John.

This is The News Agents.

John's First Minister is a day old, well, you know what I mean, Hamza Yousef has been in the job a day and he's already walked into a kind of unnecessarily complicated political battle which involves a sort of demotion of the woman he only just beat, Kate Forbes.

Yes. So Kate Forbes, who he beat by 52.1% to 47.9%, which, as we said the other day, is close enough to the dreaded ratio that curses this country of 52-48. Everything ultimately

is all drawn back to that. She obviously ran a very close run for his money, particularly impressive given that virtually the whole of the SMP machine, the establishment of the SMP, the ministers and so on, were all supporting him. And yet he just about eaked out of victory. It was expected that she would get a reasonably senior job as a result in his new cabinet, but she was offered the role of Minister for Rural Affairs, which, I mean, it is a little bit like, I mean, obviously, no disrespect to rural listeners, but it is a little bit like, you know, the old joke about being sent to Northern Ireland in British government circles, again, no disrespect to Northern Irelanders either, but this is just how the sort of politics works and it's talked about.

I guess the point is she had the second biggest job in government as the finance minister. Exactly. And it's a demotion.

Yeah. Why would you do that to somebody you'd only just beat?

Yeah. And so she has refused and she says, says that she's going to spend more time.

Another classic political well-worn cliché. She's going to spend time with her family.

That said, of course, she has just had a new baby. So, you know, I suppose in her cases is literally true, but nonetheless, yeah, it's an interesting development.

It's an end goal, really.

And it also just kind of, Hamza Youssef, there was a glow that lasted until he did that.

Immediately, the attention is on splits in the SMP, which I would think that Kirsten was saying, well, actually, yes, I will have another whisky. Thank you. That would be lovely.

Yeah. Poor a big one.

A big gulavan.

Exactly. Because this is another gift when they thought that if the party establish itself settles down, hits the ground running to use the time-worn phrase, he has not hit the ground running.

Actually, he's done what Liz Truss promised to do. Hit the ground.

Well, the point as well is that for the first time in a way that with the SMP, we have just not been accustomed because there have been such a sort of Bayermouth, such a unit, such a monolith, that, do you like that? Bayermouth unit, monolith, it's nice.

Very much so.

Imagine the wall.

It's sort of got wings in my mind now.

Did you hate the Tesseract before you came in?

Always, John.

As you know, always.

But we have been so accustomed to them being such a unit. Of course, they've always had divisions, but they've not been obvious before, that are so obvious, usually, with Labour or the Conservatives.

The factions haven't been on display. They now really, really are. And instead of bringing that in and trying to internalise it and just try and put a bit of a lid on it, his action has meant that she is just there. She's the queen over the water in Scottish politics.

Do you know what I think as well, though? I think it shows you how vicious politics is. Like, he hasn't even been in the job for a day. You get elected to the head of your party and then suddenly you are head of a state, essentially. You're head of Scotland

in one day. And actually...

But it was clumsy.

Yes. I'm not denying it was a clumsy move, but I think it's a reminder of just what it must be like to be parachuted straight into that top job, straight away.

He's only 37 and 38. The thing is as well, though, he was never...

Even younger than Lewis Goodall.

No one's younger.

Oh, he's way more older than me, thank you, Lady Maitlis. We've been talking about it.

He's five years older than me. That's a bunch.

No, go. Take that out, then. He's not younger than me.

No, no, no. Keep it in. I want that bespurchment on the record. No, but the other thing is, in a way, it was always going to be the motion, though, I suppose, to sort of defend him a little bit in the sense that there was no way he was going to leave her as finance minister, which is basically the second most senior. Because, as the campaign showed, they have a fundamental disagreement on the economy. She is much more economically liberal than he is. He does represent that economic and political continuity.

The S&P is a sort of economically and political social democratic force in Scotland. She wanted to go in a very different direction, so there was no way he was going to leave her there.

What you normally do to the person that you don't trust in your government or in your cabinet is make them foreign secretary. It is tricky with Scotland, but this is exactly what happened to Hillary Clinton with Barack Obama. It's exactly what happened to Boris Johnson with Theresa May. You give somebody a very prestigious job that means they have to be away a lot of the time and leave you to your kingdom.

Anyway, this behemoth Leviathan unit will be back tomorrow. See you then. Bye. Bye.

This has been a global player original podcast and a Persephoneka production.