

## [Transcript] The News Agents / The Radicalisation of the Conservative Party

What does conservatism look like in 2023? Well, I've just emerged from a fringe event where the speakers were Jacob Rees-Mogg, Miriam Cates, David Frost, very much the right of the party, talking about refinding, restoring true conservatism to this party of theirs. It is a massive swing to the right and it's taking this party in a very different direction to the one you might have seen here a decade ago. Welcome to the News Agents. The News Agents. It's John. It's Emily. And it's Lewis. And it's really interesting. You go to the conference hall itself and there are people anemically clapping and it all seems sort of fine if a little low key. You go off the centre of the floor into the parties and Rishi Sunak, who has been seen as a technocratic, decent, honourable, slightly bland Prime Minister, he attracts visceral hatred that I could not believe from a certain section of this party who feel disaffected, disillusioned and dispossessed at the moment. And that is despite the fact that as we've discussed on the show before, Sunak is giving them much to everything that they want. It will be a misunderstanding to think of this conference in a sense as two conferences split ideologically, like between a group of pragmatists on the one side led by Sunak and a group of more ideological zealots on the other side. There have been conferences where it's been like that and the Theresa May was a bit like that, for example. But it's not really like that. Like we were saying on the show yesterday, you go into the conference hall and it's not as if you're hearing from all of the different cabinet ministers who go up there and make their speeches, you know, very composed, dull, technocratic speeches. They're all up there using so many of the tropes and kind of language that we associate more with the kind of radical right and with the kind of culture wars right, you know, talking about a bit of statues, talking about, you know, like we're saying yesterday, the politicisation of speed limits, all of these quite niche things. And yet despite that fact, despite the fact that on policy terms, Sunak has given them so much more of what they want that he is far more right-wing in so many ways compared to Boris Johnson on green issues, HS2, whatever it is, they still hate him and they still dislike him. Late last night I was talking to somebody on the right, proper right of the party and they were indignantly telling me that Rishi Sunak was trying to make out he was right-wing but he wasn't really and he said they've done loads of polling and they see it actually what people want and now that they're pretending the real Rishi is right-wing, he's not but he sees this is what people want and that's why they think there is room to get him to cut HS2, to get him to cut taxes, to get rid of inheritance tax, all the stuff that obviously the right of his party putting pressure on him. But I think it's interesting that the video that is doing the rounds this morning from last night, perhaps we can give you a little taste of it here, is the dancing Nigel Farage, Pretty Patel, to Can't Take My Eyes Off Of You. And there is a certain sector of the party now who can't take their eyes off Nigel Farage. The global stand where we're broadcasting from now is probably about 25, 30 meters away from the GB news stand and GB News has one of its star presenters here, one Nigel Farage and wherever he goes you see this huge crowd following him as if he is the Conservative Party leader. At the moment there was a bit of a hubbub, I decided to go over and see what was going on. There's a crowd

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that's gathered around a politician and at a party conference that normally means it's a cabinet minister

but it's Nigel Farage who is gathering bigger crowds at this event than anyone else. Let's try and get in and talk to one or two people who are here. Can I just ask you why you've gathered around Nigel Farage? Yeah it's Nigel Farage. Yeah, do you like him? No, but you know. So why are you

gathered around? Nigel Farage. Do you like him? Yeah, of course I do. Yeah? Yeah, very much. What do you think of him, Mr Farage? I'm not sure, I'm not quite as convinced as my son is. Yeah? Do you think he should be the Tory leader? I don't know, I think he's got too many views that probably wouldn't expand to Tory leaders but I think he's very good at what he does. Yeah? Okay, thank you very much. Nigel, I was aware of the story. Oh my god, you've even got the Donald Trump thumbs up. No, he got it from me. Nigel, why are you getting these crowds? I've no idea. Could it be because of ideas? You reckon? Yeah. What's happened to the Tory party? Is it that the Tory party has moved towards you or you've moved towards the Tory party? I haven't changed, I haven't moved for years.

I've been utterly consistent for 20 years on the things that I believe and I campaign for and interestingly a lot of my views are at the centre ground of public opinion and so what we're seeing is a wing of a Conservative party very much coming in my direction but it's only a wing of a Conservative party and that's what the great battle's going to be after they lose the next election. Which wing of the party wins? You're loving it, aren't you? You're reveling in this. I can just see your face. I enjoy life, whatever I do. No, you don't. When Coots debank you, you don't love that. Well, he probably did actually. Well, I just thought, why are they fighting me? But seriously though, there is something about what is happening to the Conservative party now where you think there seem to be a huge, look at the crowds that you're gathering because people want to believe in something and what they've had after 13 years of big state, high tax, mass immigration, they've got a social democrat party in number 10 Downing Street fighting another social democrat party at the next election. These guys want different ideas. You could equally argue that Brexit, which is your great signature policy, has been a bloody disaster. Could you? Yeah. Well, what have we gained? Oh, I think our standing in the world is very different, very, very different. Well, in the US, it's lower. In the Europe, it's lower. No, no, no. Yes, it is. No, no, no. The Orcas deal, the Pacific trade agreement, our leadership on Ukraine, whether you agree with it or not, are all things we could not have done as EU members. So on the global stage, big success. Domestically, well, look at the GDP numbers. We've grown more than Germany, about the same as France since we left. However, there's a lot of Brexit voters, very disappointed. Millions of businesses who thought red tape would get lifted. It hasn't happened. And the idea that we've got to control our borders has become laughable. So look, I'm disappointed in the delivery of Brexit, very disappointed. But we've still done it. The big constitutional leap has been made, and it's not going to get reversed. Thank you. It's probably not great for the Conservative Party in terms of its appeal to the wider election. But it is great for the Labour Party because they can make that link between Nigel Farage and Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss and Boris Johnson and take it right the way back to Cameron's call for the referendum and say, honestly, that was where this all started. You open the doors to a new kind of politics, a new kind of populist politics, and a new kind of arena for the right to inhabit. And if you've had enough of that, well, here we are. Look, I think it's time we call this what it is. And if you

talk to some of the more previously what you might say moderate people here, moderate conservatives,

cabinet ministers or whatever, they will talk in these terms. There has been a slow burn hostile takeover of the Conservative Party. And it started probably in about 2013 to 2014. We spoke so much

about the idea of a hostile takeover by the left of the Labour Party. The reason that stood out more is because there was a moment of realisation. It was the moment that Corbyn was elected within the Labour Party. What's happened with the Conservative Party is it has been done by increments, little by little, starting under Cameron, accelerating under May, Johnson, and now Sunak.

I just agree with that. You see, I don't think you can call it a takeover because the doors have been opened by successive Conservative leader. They have allowed this to happen because they thought that was their best way of staying in power, whether it was David Cameron realising that he had to give the referendum to people, allowing him, he thought, more time to win that and stay in power, or everything that's happened subsequently. Indeed. But the point is what I'm saying is that however the mechanism or the means that it's happened, it's happened. And that has profound consequences for British politics. And the differences, I think one of the differences between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party is that the right of the Labour Party fought it. They fought it and they were very good at it because they've had experience in it before.

The right of the Labour Party always fights. Arguably, actually, they were much harder than the left were. The left had had this sort of toughness and the steel that the right of the Labour Party had. They'd still be in charge now. The differences, and I was talking to a Conservative minister about this yesterday, the difference is that what you might say is that the left of the Conservative Party, frankly, has less guts and is a bit more like the soft left of the Labour Party. As you say, they appease, they give a little bit more and they give a little bit more. And if we just give them this, they'll go away and we can reach a happy accommodation.

It's never happened. It's not going to happen. And you end up in the situation that they're in now where, basically, it is for Argysz's party now. And in the sense as well, we should say that is a trend which is mirrored across Europe, right? We've seen the sort of ferragist type parties either take over or displace the more mainstream Conservative Party. That is what we see at this conference all around us.

And the other thing, you go back to Cameron, I mean, remember how Cameron described UKIP and UKIPPers as fruit cakes, loonies and closet racists. And you wonder how much of that has been translated now to his Conservative Party, post-Brexit, with this sort of gradual move to the right. In America, with Donald Trump, it was a dramatic and sudden takeover of the Republican Party. And it has been slower here. And look, there are still a lot of mainstream people in it. But, I mean, we were talking to a senior cabinet minister last night, and he was expressing the view, the concern, that this is what was happening to the Conservative Party. The UKIPP right of the Conservative Party is now much more mainstream than it was, which means, for Kerstama, that the centre ground looks pretty vacated at the moment. And whilst that sort of message might please delegates at this conference, how far does it reach out outside the hall? Because there is always two audiences for party conferences. There is the party faithful who turn up and come and give three days up of their life to be in Manchester and get wet. And then you've got the rest of who are watching it on the television

and thinking, really? There might even be three audiences here, because I think the audience in the hall is very different to the audience at the fringe, is very different to the audience in the rest of the country. One thing I'd say going back to your point about the sort of weakness, the sort of lack of muscularity of the centre, is partly because they are more, not so, but more wedded, I think, in their language to a fact-based description of the present. And one thing that started to creep in here, and we discussed it a little bit on the episode yesterday, it's a language that owes something to conspiracy theory, and it is an interpretation of things that people might be concerned about, so we are going to raise it. And we heard that in Mark Harper's speech yesterday, and we heard that from Claire Cortino, and earlier today I went to the Legatum fringe, and we heard from Jacob Rees-Mogg there, and Lord David Frost, and from Miriam Cates. She was talking

about family values, and explaining that she thought it was a broad description of the family, something we've dipped in and out of, and we've been talking about the new conservatives, and I caught up with her for a few minutes afterwards, bizarrely we actually attended the same school, me obviously like 200 years earlier, but we started talking about this move through the rhetoric of the party to saying things that simply are not true.

You've made a speech with a big emphasis on family today and marriage, you went out of your way to make that definition, families of all shapes and sizes, so let's spell that out, could it be a same-sex marriage in your view? I think all families that are raising children need support and help and encouragement and congratulation, because they are raising the future generation. Now as we've said, families come in all shapes and sizes, but what I am focused on is family breakdown, because before we get there, the families of all shapes and sizes, because you said a mum and a dad, could that be two women raising their children, could it be two men raising their children? So what I'm saying, just to be very very clear, is that the evidence shows that the best outcomes statistically are for children who have a mum and a dad who stay together throughout their childhood. Now I'm not saying that there are many many examples of excellent

strong families that come in different, like you say, two mothers, two dads, single mothers, whatever, adopted families that also have great outcomes, I'm not saying that at all, of course there are those cases, but as a politician we have to look at the general, you know what the statistics show, the best thing possible is for children to live with their biological parents for the whole term of their childhood. So I'm just going to say again, I am not saying that there are other many very successful families, but statistically that is the most likely to produce the good outcomes. Now we are the family breakdown capital of the western world, you know we have the highest rate in the OECD. As politicians we should be asking questions, why is that? It's not good for children, it's not good for parents, it's not good for the economy, it would be daft not to be intellectually curious about that issue. A lot of families might break down, not through divorce, not through any reason, if you're a kid whose parents died you don't want to be part of that statistic, you don't want to hear politicians spell out your life chances are worse off because you live maybe with your grandmother and your mum because you don't have a dad. I'm wondering how helpful it is for kids who are growing up like that to hear politicians in such a place of authority saying you're fucked. Well Emily I wouldn't use that language at all and I think I've been very clear that there are many children in different circumstances that are going to do well for all sorts of reasons, but this is the problem. But why don't you talk about that instead of the

breakdown that comes from the walls, you know that's what I'm guessing I'm talking about. I haven't said that, I've said that the best possible outcome for children is to be with their parents throughout the childhood and here is here is the issue that we have I'm afraid with the media and with the inability of politicians to be able to talk in the general. So it's our job as politicians to talk about policy making and to do that you have to look at the general. You don't make policy for the individual, you make policy for the general, it's the individual, the family's job to look after themselves and to make their decisions in their best interest and that is their freedom to do it. It's the politicians job to generalise. Now it's a very clear parallels with the immigration debate. So when Soella Braverman stands up and says immigration is too high everybody says but what about these immigrants that have contributed? What about these people? Of course there are many many individual immigrants who have contributed

in incredible ways to society that doesn't mean that we can't say in general immigration is too high and it's this inability to distinguish between the individual and the general that is stopping politicians from speaking freely about some very important issues. I get it and I think honesty is important but rhetoric is also important and something has started creeping into the language of some of your colleagues here and I'm going to quote Mark Harper who is the Transport Secretary talking about councils deciding how often people can go to the shops, Russian who uses roads and when and I think it was Claire Cortiniot that was talking about Labour trying to ban meat. Don't you worry about the responsibility that comes from this conspiracy theory laden language? You don't want to see your party use it do you? I just think that is a ridiculous premise for a question. People want truthful politicians. People like politicians who say what they think. Mark Harper is saying it's sinister when councils are trying to stop you going to the shops. Your premise to say, your premise of saying that this is conspiracy ridden language and that we've got to be careful with rhetoric. I think people want to hear politicians

say what they believe and if you look at the polls on who supports what Soella Braverman is saying or who supports strong families the vast majority of people believe that. It's the Westminster bubble that thinks it's rhetoric it's the common sense position that we should say what we think. If Mark Harper believes that councils are stopping people from going to the shops when they want should he be allowed to say that even if it's not remotely true? I haven't read his speech or heard his speech or read that so I'm just not going to comment on it. I just read it out to you. I mean just as a thought is it okay if I was standing for the Conservative Party and I said I believe 5g masks are giving us all cancer is it okay for me to stand up and say that because I believe it? I think people should know that you really believe that and then they can vote on you on the basis of whether you. We are going down a rabbit hole of course politicians should speak the truth but the problem is we're too often afraid to speak the truth because as I found out this week if you say something very anodyne and completely evidence-based like children who grow up with two parents are most likely to do well suddenly you're called all sorts of strange names and ists and a conspiracy theorist and someone who hates single-parent families. That's why we're debating it. I mean I hope you'll agree that here we're debating it and I'm trying to ask you what constitutes the family of all shapes and sizes that's what we've been talking about. I've said that. There are all types of families and all types of households but as a politician we need to look at the general in order to make policy. Last thought you've asked the church I think to

stop interfering in politics you've said maybe they should sell to politics and offer people free marriage instead. You know that bishops sit in the house of lords you know that the archbishop is a lord. I do think they perhaps too often interfere in politics generally but of course I understand that they have a constitutional part of our political life and they should remain there. I mean I'm very happy to be like oh I'm completely humanist I missed the joke I'm just double-checking. Should there be bishops in the house of lords perhaps that's one for Jacob Riesemont why don't you ask him. Thank you very much Merym Cates thank you thank you. And look Merym Cates if she keeps her seat which is potentially a little bit dicey doubt this will be a big figure in conservative politics and this new conservatism in the next parliament. I'll make you a bet both of you right if you want to take it. My bet is this Tories lose the election and at some point in that parliament led by whoever it is particularly if it's someone like Suella Braverman Nigel Farage joins the Conservative Party rejoins the Conservative Party and it's a moment of coming together of the new right within British politics. We should remember that Nigel Farage has stood for parliament not once not twice seven times right for UKIP though not for the Conservatives and I guess that would be a test of whether UKIP as a party is not established

or not popular enough to ever get an actual elected seat from scratch or whether voters still have an instinctive mistrust of Nigel Farage. Oh he'd win it under a conservative banner he'd win there's no doubt about it he'd win. Are you giving odds on the bet or are you just is it evens? Well um no I think well what do you want to give me John? No you give me three to one and I'll take the bet all right fine 20 quid okay 20 quid 20 quid can't wait can we put a date for the election on as well please. Oh not William Hill all right that's what I'm going to call you now all right like his money where all he's got a spivvy suit he'd pointed that out before he's got a spivvy suit and then he'll be back as our bookie. I'll tell you what I'll give you 10 to 1 10 to 1 on the head. It's great I can have one of those little bookies pencils and yeah exactly and everything. Lovely okay we're going to be back after the break talking HS2 and why Rishi Sunak has got himself into such an indecisive mess over what's happening next.

This is The News Agents.

We've also been trying to follow around Rishi Sunak and hear what he thinks and what his decision is

on HS2 and my bookies assistant next to me Lewis Goodall. I've been demoted I was the bookie a second

ago. Yeah you know I'm just bookies assistant. All right okay fine okay well call you William. My long tutelage. William Hill. Yeah Billy Hill. Paddy Power I suppose.

Is Rishi Sunak's been giving some interviews hasn't he? Yeah he's been giving a few interviews and has he not as many as perhaps some of our colleagues might have hoped for. Yes just on that he was meant to have been on LBC this morning and then Downing Street suddenly had Attack of the

Vapors or whatever and not just LBC it should be fair I mean if you go back to the media center just now in this conference everyone is talking about this kind of smoke cartoon smoke of fury by the editors because they've basically come up here sent their teams up here and have been told at the last minute by number 10 that due to errors or unforeseen circumstances or whatever it turns out the prime minister is not going to be able to give what is a traditional broadcast around with most of the major broadcasters he has done a few and found the time to do GB news

and

the Murdoch owned Times Radio of course so you know good for them. Generally when you've got something

to sell you run towards your interviews right you say guess what I've got something to sell and this is what I'm going to tell you. And this is the moment where you're meant to be setting out your stall. This is the story this is our story of what we're going to tell the British people coming into the next election and we're delighted to welcome you to Manchester and we want to tell you everything we're going to be doing and after the bloodbath of last year in Birmingham and Liz Truss's party conference and then all ending in tears afterwards you would think that Rishi Sunak would embrace the opportunity gladly except when you hear him now he is embracing the opportunity

previously he sounds so pissed off to be asking questions about what he's doing about HS2 or anything else but he doesn't lie. But that's the thing there is energy at the conference but it's not about him and it's not about his allies it's about everything as we were saying yesterday that's happening on the fringes of people who ultimately thinking about what happens when and if he loses and if you don't take this opportunity to sell yourself and put yourself forward then at what point are you going to do so this is his opportunity and as you say John when he's asked about HS2 in particular there's a sense of almost rage that anybody could ask him a question about something that isn't a private matter it's a matter about the biggest infrastructure project in the country. For example he was asked about it earlier on on BBC breakfast and sometimes I think you can

just tell he hasn't been a politician that long because he is unable to suppress his indignation at being asked about something that he doesn't feel he should be asked about. I'm not going to be forced into a premature decision because it's good for someone's TV program what I want to do is make the right decision for the country this is an enormous amount of people's money taxpayers money everybody watching billions and billions of pounds we shouldn't be rushed into things like that what people would expect from me is to take the time to go over it properly and make sure we make the right long-term decision for the country that's what I'm interested in doing I think that's what politicians should be doing I think that's what the country wants to see people who make the right long-term decision don't take the easy way out don't chase the headline and that's what I did with net zero I took the time to look at the facts see what was happening and then I decided that the approach we had in place wasn't right it was going to cost lots of your viewers five ten fifteen thousand pounds to meet targets that and we didn't need to do those things to meet those targets which are world-leading I didn't think that approach was right I set out a new change I answered lots of questions on why and I appreciate look got a lot of criticism for that decision but I think that's the right long-term decision for the country it's going to save your viewers thousands of pounds and we're still going to hit on net zero targets and they're still world leading it was interesting I was speaking to somebody just out of cabinet now who said the trouble is we don't know who he actually warms towards because it definitely isn't the broadcast media and it doesn't seem to be his constituents and it doesn't seem to be sort of grassroots party members and brackets the ones who didn't select him and it doesn't seem to be cabinet colleagues I mean there are colleagues obviously he gets on with well but there isn't a hub or a sofa if you like that he feels right home with and they were pointing to this partly what we were discussing yesterday where is his tribe where is his home at this point somebody who does have a drive

and a very clear sense of what he thinks should happen to HS2 is Jacob Riesmark yes it should be put out of its misery it should be humanely destroyed why because it's a vast waste of taxpayers money on a railway that doesn't do anybody any good and you think that the motorist should be prioritized over the passenger I think the motorist should be prioritized because it has the greatest economic good roads are economically much more beneficial than railways not just because

of passengers but because of transportation of goods and yes of course we should get rid of bottlenecks on the motorway system way ahead of railways it's much much better use of taxpayers money and you would like to see that money that was spent on HS2 go straight into tax cuts yeah I think that would be a very good idea I mean I think you could use that money to get rid of inheritance tax for example Jacob Riesmark then with a very clear vision for why you should use money that could be spent on HS2 to cut taxes including inheritance tax let's take all that to the mayor for the west midlands conservative mayor Andy Street a passionate and vocal supporter of HS2 a man who thinks he's come up with a plan when you hear Jacob Riesmark sort of leading conservative voice on the right talk like that what's your response I just think it's so unambitious Emily so really put out of its misery so we admit to the world that we can't even build a railway between London and Manchester or perhaps more importantly we admit to the world

that all those investors who've come on the promise of this was sold what's frankly now a liar disappointment so I just think no we've got to be better as a country than that but you agree that the funding's got way out of control that something that started at 30 billion is now looking at troubled out so that's right so please even the strongest advocate for HS2 like me is not saying just write the check as it now is so what I'm saying and it's an offer to the government yesterday with the support of lots of leading private businesses is get on and build phase one we're over halfway there already but then pause think differently about how phase two is going to be done get all the expertise in that does this around the world and reduce the cost to the state of doing this Andy do you think the decision has been taken because it looks like there was briefing that suggesting yeah we're not going ahead with phase two and yet every day we hear Rishi Sunak saying

look I just haven't made a decision yet we haven't made a decision yet what's going on so I take the prime minister at his word he says the decision has not been made so I believe that I think the honest answer is he probably was being incredibly heavily advised to take his decision probably as much as two weeks ago but what he's been forced to think about here is that all these business voices all these three ex-prime ministers umpteen ex-chancellor so many secretaries of state have all said you must hold the course so they've been forced to reconsider and that's why this offer in a very good constructive intent has been made and have you had any response to it not formally informally lots of disgust lots of sort of disgust I have not I have not had a proper response to it but when I hear the prime minister on the radio this morning say no discussion has been had and we know that our offer led the news last night I'm very certain it's been discussed so you're basically saying that private businesses companies could pick up what 50 60 billion pounds of investment of HS2 now you could really take it off the government's the state's books completely so I think those numbers are too high but let me explain what the offer is first of all for the first phase which looks to be about 40 billion pounds I think is where we're at that has got to be done as planned but for the second phase that what we do is three key things with the



private sector number one who is going to fund this in other countries around the world it's not the state that funds it with the capital cost sometimes it can be a private finance initiative or a public private partnership secondarily who's actually going to operate this operate the stations we're building the stations purely at the public cost if you go and look at a high speed station in Hong Kong or in Japan you don't see a railway station you see a commercial centre operated by the private sector with the station within it and then we're saying to the leading design and engineering companies how can we think about the specification the design of this the contracts to actually minimize the cost of building it so there's different parts of this private sector offer and we've got the best companies in the world saying they will help solve this problem for the government where does it leave you if the worst happens in your book and they don't go ahead with phase two well that has not been my thought John over the last few days

it's been very much no genuinely I have had to work very fast to put all this together that's what I've been spending my time on if we do not get agreement I cannot for the life of me think we why we wouldn't get this offer taken up there's frankly nothing to lose from the government's point of view then obviously I would think but at the moment we're concentrating on explaining why this is the right thing to do but you have seemed let's put it bluntly incredibly pissed off I'm very disappointed that we're in this case because I just cannot believe that this country isn't capable of thinking this look at what happens around the world not just the Chinese everyone talks about the Chinese but our compatriots in Europe they are all building high-speed rail because they understand that it drives the economies of the regions that are connected to the capital cities that's exactly the experience in France exactly the experience in Spain we have got to be able to do these complex things so whether you say pissed off I'm just vexed that we don't let this opportunity slip through our fingers be an incredible admission of defeat if we say we can't do it but the government does tell us repeatedly Andy that these are long-term decisions for a brighter future they do they're going to stand behind that and what could be a more obvious long-term decision than actually connecting the north and south of the country and bringing in investment on the back of it so your question has got a sort of sense of irony to it and I can see that as well why I think the why is that and I accept this from the Prime Minister and here and I've talked about it it was a good conversation he is genuinely concerned

about the cost and the value for money but my argument is don't throw away the objective the principle the promise to all these international investors you walk around Manchester you talk to the property consultants here they will tell you investments coming on the promise if we walk around the centre of Birmingham we can see the investments come don't don't fail on that promise okay but if the Prime Minister says I hear you on the investors yes I'm actually talking directly to all our millions of voters in the north who actually say I prefer to see something now that makes our lives easier than wait for something in 2035 in other words if the Prime Minister comes up with something that is better road networks better bus networks better in for intra-city rail networks and they can get that in the next five years why wouldn't he do so there's two points here actually first of all there's been lots of polling done by lots of organisations since this started be floated about two weeks ago dare I mention the times they've done a very good poll overwhelming number of people in Britain voters say we've started so we finish might not have been the right thing to do in the first place but people who've put up with huge disruption over the last

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10 years started so we finished and that certainly applies in the north of England and then the second

point is it is not right to say that people can have huge benefit in the short term on the back of this money the money that's actually earmarked for the Manchester section of this in the next couple of years even up to five years is very very small and also you do not do the same thing with an improved bus network in South Yorkshire and improved tram networking leads as you do as connecting the cities together both need to be done and that was always the proposition isn't there also a danger that if you promise something different that might take a few years why on earth would you trust them to deliver when you've already made a commitment that you're going to build a high-speed rail it's been supported by successive prime ministers that's absolutely true John four prime ministers have supported this and have examined it and stood by it and it's not just about voters trust actually the financial markets investors trust in Britain the word of the British government is that this is going to happen and you're right to a voter I don't know in Leeds the prospect of something a bird in the hand and bird in the bush almost and remember it takes years to get the sort of political agreement all the planning process is everything to get these big projects through and we're on the verge of doing this successfully when we're about to walk away it'll take ages to get any replacement in place Andy you're a mayor so this doesn't really matter to you but do you think the Conservative Party can win the next general election yes I do I think the Conservative Party can win the next generation very simply because the evidence the West Midlands is clear we've just had the local council election results in the West Midlands we didn't lose a single seat and that we have the council went bust that's different that's a Labour council went bust that's different you asked me how the conservative brand is doing in the West Midlands and the answer is well where people actually see conservatives delivering on the

ground they get re-elected and I also would put to you that thus far we have not tested the Labour opposition at all about what they are really going to do we're in that rather sort of phony war place and I genuinely predict that when they are put under duress we will see that they cannot deliver all the promises they make out and then we will be optimistic Andy Street grateful to you thank you so much for coming in thank you very much you know no wonder Andy Street has been going around completely and utterly frustrated over the course of this week I mean honestly this is a guy who along with other Conservative figures particularly in local government and the Metro mayors have been putting everything attaching everything all of their political reputation to the idea that the Conservative Party is serious about leveling up and what we got this conference we've got a conference which has been dominated by potentially almost certainly the closure of the biggest infrastructure project this country has ever seen which is predicated on the idea of leveling up what have you got former business secretary Jacob Rees-Mogg saying let's ditch the money and instead use it to fund cuts in inheritance tax which will benefit the richest three percent of households in the country I mean what are you going to do Emily bumped into Jacob Rees-Mogg in the hotel which we're staying and where Jacob Rees-Mogg is also staying which is the Radisson Edwardian and he's only staying there because there isn't a Radisson Victorian Radisson prehistoric more like this is the news agents anyway before we go we've got to tell you that someone came over to our stand just while we were sitting and it said is this Lebanese radio and we said Lebanese radio yeah

## [Transcript] The News Agents / The Radicalisation of the Conservative Party

oh it's got lbc they said they thought we were Lebanese Broadcom Corporation if only we are the Becca I'd like to be the Becca Valley bureau chief oh so would I and a message to our producers fine bunch from Daniel who came to see us at the stand and said do you realize that I try and leave work on time to coincide with the news agents on my commute and if it's 10 minutes late it really ruins the journey because you're not there but he also said if the podcast comes out of half past five yeah he stays at work an extra half an hour so really we're increasing productivity in this country it sounds like that hunt just needs to talk to us to get out and get the podcast out at nine every day growth coalition no growth our producers are actually we're the original they are increasing productivity every day by half an hour tear to my eye yeah goodbye bye bye the news agents with Emily Maitlis, John Sobel and Lewis Goodall this has been a global player original podcast and a Persephoneka production