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Welcome to Media Masters, a series of one-to-one interviews with people at the top of the media game. Today I'm joined by Christopher Hope, chief political correspondent and assistant editor for the Telegraph. During his 16 years with the broadsheet, he has also served as their senior political correspondent and Whitehall editor. He's chairman of the Parliamentary Lobby and presenter of the Telegraph's *Chopper's Brexit Podcast*, which features interviews with top politicians and commentators, and analysis from their Westminster team. He is also a trustee of the charity Elizabeth's Legacy of Hope, which provides prosthetic support for vulnerable child amputees in Sierra Leone, Liberia and India.

Chris, thanks for joining me.

How are you, Paul?

I'm very well, thank you, yes. Trying to make sense of what the hell is going on. Can you make sense of it for me, please?

Well, I feel safe in this studio.

Yes, it's a safe space.

A subterranean studio in Soho. I think when we emerge, Brexit might have happened and we can all move on.

Absolutely.

What you reckon?

By the way, our listeners would never know this, but it's taken me about 11 goes to get that intro right. There'll be a hastily cobbled together edit which makes me sound great, but thank you for your grace there in getting me through that.

It's great to be here.

There was a lot of words in that intro, you've done a lot of things.

Well, I've been busy. I'm the longest-serving reporter at the Telegraph. I joined in 2003 on their business team.

Wow.

I wanted to get into politics, and got there about 10 years ago, and I've been doing it ever since.

Be careful what you wish for.

Quite. Well, it's never been more busy. I liken it to a kind of wartime and peacetime, and I don't use those words idly, in a sense that we do not know what's happening next. It does feel so existential, and whenever anything happens, whenever your listeners see something on TV and see a dramatic moment, me and my colleagues are about an hour and a half behind, we're following behind with our shovels, shovelling up the shit and writing about it. It's madness at the moment, and it feels existential, no one can really forecast what will happen this autumn. There could be a referendum call, there could be an election, there could be a Corbyn government...

Oh please, no.

There could be a Brexit or no Brexit. There's like five massive things that can happen, and all options are on the table. It's mad. But it's good for business.

It is. But on the other hand, one of our clients in California has just bought a winery and they can't do any deals with bringing their wine into the UK because the importers are shrugging their shoulders saying, "Search me, guv."

Part of the problem I think is companies like your wine importer, any big company, doesn't know what to do after October 31st, and that's really hard for a business when it's only two months away. So they're really worried that they're stockpiling. There's lots of investment they're sitting on, and certainly a Brexiteer would argue that as soon as we're out, then that should trigger all sorts of spending by companies. And once we're around the difficulty of leaving – and there will be difficult bumps in the road, as the prime minister says – it could be a lot better than the uncertainty at the moment. So just the uncertainty at the moment, and your winery friend is a microcosmic example of that.

I've had quite a few senior political journalists on this podcast, I've had the BBC's Europe editor, Katya Adler on, and I'm quite an interested and engaged person in the political process, and it frustrates me that I genuinely don't have a Scooby about what's going on. And the more I read into it, the less I know.

Yes, it is very hard. Ken Clark could be PM by November. I mean, he's 79 years old. He's on his…

Yes, but he wears Hush Puppies and he goes to Ronnie Scott's three nights a week. He's a ledge.

He likes jazz.

He does! Well, don't we all? Don't sensible, right-thinking people like jazz?

It is mad. I've never known anything like it really. People say, "Are you keeping a diary?" No, I'm not keeping a diary, because anything I know I write down in the paper. I can't see how it would add anything to it. It is really hard to forecast what's going on. But I mean, it's not coal mining, Paul.

No.

It's just a bit stressful. But it's not hard, physical labour. There are hard jobs out there which are really hard. This is just busy.

My wife jokes that I just send emails and make phone calls for a living. And actually, although she's teasing me, she's actually correct. That is literally all I do.

My phone usage on my iPhone is a disaster.

Oh, it is on mine too.

I try to lecture and my kids about it, and they look at mine and go, "Dad, look at yours."

Don't show them it. They can't know your hypocrisy.

Complete hypocrisy. But I do all my work on this phone.

Me too.

Because if you phone somebody from your landline and it's an unknown number, other people don't pick the phone up. They think it's a call centre trying to sell you insurance. It could be. But you have to use your phone because they know who's calling. So frankly, that phone is absolutely vital, annoyingly vital to this job.

There's a humorous website called The Daily Mash, which pretends to be a newspaper, and one of them last week, one of the headlines was "'Just popping round' now to be made a criminal offence'." I actually quite like that, because again, that's how society's changed. When I was a kid growing up, people used to just pop round.

I know.

And now you'd lock someone up for doing that. How dare they just call round?

I know a lot about The Daily Mash, because the two founders, Paul Stokes and Neil Rafferty were colleagues of mine at Business AM, which is the paper we helped found in Scotland in 2001. When Business AM folded, they went and founded The Daily Mash.

It's genuinely funny.

Which has recently sold for lots of money to someone else. It's like the American Onion, isn't it?

Yes, I love that as well. But you are right though, I do all of my work on my iPhone now. I used to have a laptop, and the only reason I used it over the last couple of years is our invoicing application ran on Windows. When it went to app, I literally just put my laptop in a cupboard and I've never opened it since. Why would I?

The harder thing is typing, so your thumbs get tired. And I prefer, for filing, as a journalist the Blackberry is the king, because you could feel the keys, you could file so quickly with your thumbs.

Yes, old school.

Old school, yes. But with this iPhone you can't really feel the keys when you're trying to type. So I do prefer using a laptop to type because I've got these big thumbs, they can't really hit the keys properly.

Is it me, and I don't want to sound like a taxi driver type thing, saying "it isn't as good as the good old days" type thing, but it seems to me that politics is quite unpleasant these days. That everyone on all sides of the debate seems to just be quite unpleasant. There's no one to inspire me on either side of the debate. I think the Brexiteers are loathsome, and I don't quite like the look of all these rabid Brexiteers, either. I mean, Andrew Adonis just seems completely unhinged. I used to respect him.

Yes, well before we talk about Adonis, I think you're describing social media, aren't you, by saying that?

Yes.

So imagine if we didn't have social media, how would you interpret the news? You may be a lot happier. You may just be watching Boris Johnson say things, and then Laura Kuenssberg talking about it on the BBC, or Robert Peston on ITV, because what you're describing is Twitter, I think. Twitter is like some kind of oil sump leading

straight from someone's brain onto a keyboard. I mean normally, I'm talking to you and I'm saying things which I want to sound good on this podcast...

You do sound good, if you don't mind me saying so.

And I want to be nice to you...

You're a nice human being.

I'm not saying what I'm really thinking about you right now.

You're quite a handsome guy, actually.

Although I am actually saying it! But the point is, because you're not articulating something to someone's face, it's almost as though you just go straight from the brain onto the keyboard without this filter, which is saying it, and that's why social media is so... and then the anger, the frustration you're describing. I know Adonis very well. I do this podcast called *Chopper's Brexit Podcast*, which you can come onto, not as good as your podcast, but doing our best to be as good as Media Masters.

You won't want me on. Honestly, we know that you're scraping the barrel if you have me on.

He was chairman of the Infrastructure Commission, he was a cabinet minister, transport secretary under Gordon Brown. He's a great man. He's a great man. He just is angry about Brexit, and this whole thing as made people get really, really angry, and it has divided the country. I think only now are the Tory and Labour party, three years later, moving into line with that result. And you're seeing it with the Tories are now a Brexit party, maybe even a hard Brexit party. And if you're not that you're out – witness Philip Lee shortly going maybe, Guto Bebb has gone, deselection processes starting against "Remain-supporting" ministers. And on the other side, you've got Labour, and Labour's moving towards being a Remain party. You've got Diane Abbott, Keir Starmer shepherding...

Over Jeremy's cold, dead hands, I would imagine.

… shepherding Jeremy Corbyn into the Remain pen.

Can't stand him.

So we are merging to...

Can't stand all of them, if I'm honest.

You can't stand them all? Let's leave your value judgments at the door, I can't go there!

I haven't got much time for Boris, if I'm honest. I would say a plague on all of their houses, largely. I've started to just become a generic…

You're grumpy, Paul!

Well, yes. And actually that brings me to my next point. Am I grumpy because the world has gone to pot, as my granddad used to say? And the question is, actually when you talked about Twitter, is it that people were always gossipy and judgmental and horrible, and Twitter's allowed them to reveal themselves – or is it actually this whole 'keyboard warrior' thing where people, like you say, we'd be polite but maybe we'd be rude to each other over Twitter for some reason? My mum brought me up quite well.

I find if you call out bullies if they're rude, they go, "Oh yes, sorry." You know, they think they're being clever when they say something, and then you point out, you say, you know, "I do my best and I was tired," or something. And then they go, "Oh yes, okay." And they back down straight away. They're all bold as brass, and you take them on and then they back down. But I tend not to look below the line or look too much into my notifications. I just report what I see and as I see it. And it's quite left wing, Twitter, frankly. The view is that Facebook's right wing, your parents are on it. And Twitter's a left-wing audience, so they tend to hate Brexit. So it makes me tweet more about Royal Yacht Britannia, Brexit 50p coins, Brexit stamps, you know? Make people be aware that Brexit's going to happen, probably.

I've read everything about Brexit and I'll just be honest, I don't know. There seems to be so many variables, and so many clever people on both sides, that I actually don't know the answer. Brexit *could* be amazing. I'm just being honest. It could also be a total horrendous apocalypse. And for that, for me, I feel utterly infantilised and completely powerless.

Yes. Good one there, Paul. I think you summarised the entire issue there in one monologue.

But it's...

Can we end the podcast now?

Of course we can, at any time, you're free to go. I'm a great fan of your writing, but you suffer from the same problem that the Ten O'Clock News has, and all daily paper journalists have, is that I already know the news before I open the Telegraph. So I'm looking for your take on it immediately, that first draft of history. You don't even need to waste time telling me what's happened, I know that. It's more about your immediate take on it, and I value your judgment of that. But sometimes it goes up and down day to day. How can you even tell what the medium or long-term trends are going to be?

It's all set, I think, by the top. There's no question that Theresa May was trying to please everybody. I mean, I was there when she came out as a Remainer, in I think it was March 2016. She gave a long speech in Westminster, a long, closely argued speech about why Brexit meant that, that, the security and the rest of it, and at the

very end, final paragraph, came out as why she's voting Remain. It was like a legal judgment from those long court cases, the final guilty or not guilty at the very end. And ever since then, I think, we were stuck with this person who always saw both sides of every argument, and never had a view on Brexit. And the problem with Brexit is, you're either in or you're out. You're either pregnant or you're not.

As my dad would say, it's like the clap. You've either got it or you haven't.

You've either got it or you haven't, and that is a problem with trying to half-do Brexit. Please the Remainers and please the Brexiteers. And what she came up with was this muddled deal with its Northern Ireland backstop that we're hearing about this week. It's just not Brexit. I've got to make a confession, I covered the election in 2010, for the Telegraph in 2015, the referendum in Scotland in 2016 and 2017...

How come you're still going? If I were you, I'd be in the nuthouse now.

I've got grey hairs, as you can see.

Are there pictures of you five years ago where you look 20 years younger?

I don't think I ever wrote about the single market and the customs union before the vote on Brexit day.

Jesus.

And the terms hard and soft Brexit were first used, I remember, by George Osborne two days after Brexit. He said on Twitter, "We need to pursue a soft Brexit." And I thought, "What does that mean?"

No one mentioned Northern Ireland during the debate.

Well, they went there, the campaigners went there and talked about the border. David Cameron went there for one visit, I think, from memory. I say guilty as charged that we didn't analyse what Brexit meant before Brexit. There's no question of that.

Is that because, like you and me and seemingly everyone else, even the Brexiteers thought they would lose?

No one thought they'd win, so... whether that makes a case for a secondary referendum... the problem with a second referendum is, how will that settle anything?

Best of three if they lose?

Well, quite. Jumpers for goalposts. Why not? It's hard.

Look, I'm angry and I'm looking for someone to blame. Is there some merit to the argument that Cameron didn't expect to win the election, so he thought he

could put the manifesto commitment in for the referendum to shoot the UKIP fox, unexpectedly won… I mean, I thought he was quite cosy in the coalition with Nick Clegg. He got all the flack, he was still prime minister, and it worked. He thought he'd have that again, he could negotiate the referendum commitments, straight out the coalition agreement in term two, and jobs a good 'un, we carry on. He unexpectedly wins, they have to call the referendum. And then of course he makes some ridiculous mistakes, like stifling the civil service's ability to even plan for Brexit, lest it leak. And everyone was utterly complacent, and then the electorate told them to sling their hook.

"Up yours."

I don't blame the electorate.

I can't fault any of that analysis.

Oh, thank you, can I have a job?

That's exactly what happened.

This is actually just a job application, the recording is not even live, honestly.

I'm pretty certain, we'll see... his book's out shortly. I'm sure he should come on your podcast. David Cameron's memoirs are out next month. In there, he'll probably say, I don't know, I think he'll say that no one thought we were going to win the election. That they managed to fight such a good election campaign in 2015 by taking out the Lib Dems in the south west of England, that they ended up with a majority, and then they're stuck with this in-out referendum which they pledged, because UKIP won the 2014 EU elections, because of that, they had to do something to deal with the UKIP threat. They put it into the manifesto, hoping they could negotiate it away with Lib Dems, and have five more years of yellow/blue government. That didn't happen. They went madly too early on the referendum. He gave himself, do you remember, until the end of 2017, do you remember that?

I do.

The idea being get it out of the way in the first half of the Tory administration. And then for some reason he went in June 2016, 15 months before he had to, he gave himself his own deadline, which he could of course delay anyway, with this emergency brake on immigration. That was the big thing.

Oh, that was horrendous, when he went to renegotiate our relationship and came back with a few staged...

That's it, the emergency brake was that period's backstop, the problem. And it was the idea of stopping immigration if it was overwhelming communities, was the idea. And it got a bad rap. It wasn't what everyone wanted, it's wasn't what his party wanted. They thought it was party management having a referendum. They had no idea it would end this way. Of course, the referendum itself is only advisory, because

Parliament is sovereign. That's true. And that's what Remainers say, and they're correct. The problem is that it was given a lot of import and importance by the politicians, by David Cameron and George Osborne. And everyone across the board said, "We will do what you say." You can't do that and then not abide by it.

The ballot paper said, "The Government will implement your decision." It did say that, in fact.

It didn't have to say that, you see, and it did.

It's almost like, have you ever seen those frustrating people when you ask for directions, and the first thing they say is, "Well I wouldn't have started from here." And you feel like saying, "Well we are here, thanks very much."

I was with Michael Gove and Penny Mordaunt on the pier at Bournemouth on the day before the referendum vote, on the Vote Leave bus. And I looked around, there was no one around us, there was like 20 people. I guess they told a few supporters we were going. But there wasn't any feeling of some big country on the march, some big moment about to happen. It felt like a bit of a… again, like a Tory party drama, soon to be ignored and we'll go back to talking about health reform, and defence spending cuts, or whatever we normally talk about in politics. And then lo, it came to pass. And I tweeted actually on that bus, I said, "If people vote tomorrow to leave the European Union, it will be the single biggest uprising against people's bosses, politicians, church leaders, celebrities, economists, the biggest uprising since the Peasants' Revolt. Since Wat Tyler did his bit.

Most of my friends have voted Brexit...

And it was re-quoted by American papers when it happened, because I simply didn't believe it's going to happen. And in a way, Paul, without being too Brexity about it, and no one knows how I voted in the referendum, but I think it's a bit moving, I think, that people felt, "I'm going to reclaim control of our lives from…"

Stick one on the establishment, is what my friends thought.

On the establishment, yes.

It wasn't necessarily just about Europe.

Yes, just saying, "My vote will count. I want to bring back all the control of everything to elected politicians. If they can't do it, they can get lost, next lot come in. Rather than worry about what officials tell us in Brussels, it's about elected people here." The sovereignty argument is the one which people like Jacob Rees-Mogg and Boris Johnson, particularly Boris Johnson, who's very soft liberally by the way, likes immigration, all that kind of thing.

I read his column every week, ever since he did it, I actually have a huge respect for Boris.

I've had to interpret his columns each week for Working on Sunday, when he used to write them.

Oh telling. I remember reading one of his columns a couple of years ago where he changed his mind on banning parents in cars smoking when their kids are in the car, and it was magisterial. First of all, ignore the, "I've changed my mind" thing, the U-turn thing, he genuinely thought about this and thought, "Look, I don't want to be telling parents what they can and can't do. But on balance we've got to protect the health of kids." I admired and respected that.

And that goes further; the law is about workplace. So in your studio here, I couldn't smoke because it's your workplace, to impose my smoke on you. That's why in cars, it's taxi drivers. So the idea that taxi drivers wouldn't smoke, and in pubs it's about the bar staff. Basically it's an employment regulation you're describing. And he was saying why should that apply to people's living rooms, for example? Or their cars, and the rest of it? And it's more of a, should pregnant women smoke? Because the rights of the unborn child are as paramount, you could argue, to the mother. Discuss.

Well, should fat people be continually allowed to eat as many sweets and crisps and pizzas as they like? Because they're going to get diabetes, hypertension...

That's a personal choice.

Exactly. But I, as a taxpayer, have to pay. These are very difficult issues.

Please read the Telegraph, listener, you'll see this debated daily.

Yes, below the line comments, it's great, isn't it? It's made worse in this seemingly perfect storm about Corbyn, just how disingenuous he is. Because he's clearly a Brexiteer pretending notionally to be a Remainer, because these people are in love with them as the absolute boy. But anyone who actually isn't blinded by love for him, which is of course all of his cult supporters, anyone can see that he's a Brexiteer.

Why clearly?

In what sense?

Why is he clearly a Brexiteer? He campaigned to remain.

Well every speech, I'm sure you saw a lot of his speeches, all of them were Brexit speeches, and then at the end he said, "So vote Remain." And then he called for Article 50 to be invoked the day after the referendum. I'm not a fan of Jeremy Corbyn. I think he's a rogue. He's a wrong 'un, he's a throwback.

He's elected legitimately Paul, you have to accept him.

Not by me, he isn't. No, I've resigned. 23 years.

Did you?

Oh, I'm a bitter ex-Blairite.

Okay, well with Corbyn, he thinks that Brexit is an opportunity for the left, of intervening in markets where you can't at the moment. Look at his policies, he wants to nationalise the railways – and by the way, that's something which a lot of Telegraph readers might support, that policy, but other things less so, certainly – water companies...

We actually, arguably, have a nationalised railway, it's just a series of regional monopolies anyway.

Yes, correct.

It hasn't worked.

Well, the idea is the wheel and track being divided, it hasn't really worked has it? So having...

Complete waste of time.

Yes, and that's coming back anyway under the Tories. But he wants to get more involved, force companies to recognise unions, and he sees Brexit as an opportunity, an interventionist opportunity, for Labour government. And that's why he's probably privately quite keen. And the chaos on the Labour side at the moment, with what on earth is their policy? It's not really clear at all. They want to have a referendum on Remain against a deal. Is that the Tories' deal or his deal? And he's not even clear what he'd do if he wins power. If he wins power, what do you do, Jeremy Corbyn? Do you negotiate a new deal? Will you do Brexit? Are you Remain? What are you? And the key narrative going into September, October with Labour is, "What on earth is Jeremy Corbyn's policy on Brexit?" Is it a Remain party? And I think at the end of the day they will become a Remain party. As I say, what is happening...

They have to do. I mean, he's the sort of Brexiteer leader, isn't he? And they prised it out of him. You can see that over the years they've chipped away at him, where they were steadfast in, "The British people have had their say, we've got to respect the vote." It was never policy to even support a second referendum. Then they have this ridiculous policy of constructive ambiguity, I just think that's morally reprehensible.

If you're the Labour party, 48% of the country voted to remain, 52% to leave. There's a big load of votes there on Remain, which why are you giving up that ground to the Lib Dems? One, trying to own Remain, and then try and pick off a few reluctant Brexiteers to win. And the battle of all these votes are fought in the middle ground, where it's 51/49%. So that's the logic behind it. But you know, he's been a

campaigner against things for so long. It's hard for him as a person, I think, looking at him. And I don't really know him very well. I met him once, probably.

I've met him once.

He doesn't want to talk to the Telegraph.

Well, why would he?

I've asked him why. Because I'll give him a fair listen. I've asked him on the podcast.

That was a criticism of him, genuinely, not you.

He thinks... no, but your point is right. He thinks, why should I, what's in it for me? You're the Telegraph. You're the Torygraph, you know.

He has a duty as an elected leader of the largest...

But also we have a lot of... it might surprise you at the Telegraph, we have people who read it who vote Labour, you know, who don't... who basically they sort of, I imagine when they read it, they look at the politics coverage and go, "Well that's what they say." And they look at the sport or the comment or the crossword, you know?

I want to be challenged, you know, I read the Telegraph I read the Times, I read the Guardian. When I'm reading certain columnists that I respect, it doesn't matter if I agree with them.

But David Cameron always spoke to the Guardian. Back in the day he always spoke to Nick Watt of the Guardian when he was there, now at Newsnight. And he always... and I think you need to not be... you know, recognise that there are people out there trying to report everything fairly, and will give you a fair hearing. And I'm always trying to say it to them, but... deaf ears.

Is it the problem though, on all sides, that everyone seems to be emotionally driven now, rather than... and vengeance and tribally driven, rather than...

Again on Twitter only, but yes.

Well, and you speak to people in real life then. I mean, is it like that, then? Is Twitter a reflection of that reality or is Twitter a complete distortion?

Twitter warps views. I mean, who's watching Twitter, reading Twitter? Politicians do it. Donald Trump, famously. Nigel Farage, particularly. Boris Johnson, less so. Farage always told me, he was surprised about how bad Boris Johnson was at Twitter. He's not really doing it. He sort of you know, he does... now he's prime minister, he's not using Twitter in a way that Trump uses Twitter. You know, today I think I saw on Twitter he's cancelled a visit to Denmark because he can't buy Greenland. I mean, that's the new world, isn't it?

He gazumped me. I was actually... I had a private initiative myself to try and buy Greenland.

Yes, we should raise money from this podcast now.

But Boris is incredibly popular. I mean, you've got the Sajid Javids of this world that have opportunistically decided they now love Boris. But he does have that impact. I mean, a lot of my friends and family in the north and people that always voted Brexit, they *like* Boris. There's a sense... in the sense that they felt that they liked Tony Blair or David Cameron. They felt like they were nice guys that were competent, that they could have a pint with. They didn't so much like Gordon Brown and Theresa May, because they were dour bureaucrat types.

Yes. What is it about Boris? I've been campaigning with him, or following him campaigning I should say, in Yorkshire and places, where you think you might get a tough rap. But actually, people beep the horn. You know, he inspires a reaction in a way Theresa May wouldn't. He makes people smile, he laughs, he's got something to say.

Is it because he's a card?

He is card. He's got a character. He's fun to be around. He's fun. Right? You want to have a drink with him. He'd be fun over the podcast now, he'd made you laugh. He'd say a funny word. I think he's just, he's interesting. He just, you know, he stops the traffic in a way other politicians don't. I've got a theory about who wins on politics at the moment. I think... you may park Boris Johnson, but it's the ones who appear to have integrity, who say what they think. Now, Jacob Rees-Mogg, right. How is he a thing? How is he, given his views where he sits on lots of policies, how has he done so well? For example, on abortion. He was on the TV sofa. He was asked, "Should a woman who is raped be allowed to abort the foetus if she becomes pregnant?" And his position is no, because he's Catholic...

He's a very strong Catholic.

... and life starts at the moment of inception. And he said that on the breakfast sofa, or the morning TV sofa. And you know, that would be... you know, you might think career suicide for a politician to have that view. But people have accepted it as part of his belief, because they know what he believes in. He's a Catholic who believes in that. And therefore that follows that he believes that. And I think with Nigel Farage also, you know, there's a kind of blokey-ness or an authenticity about him. And to a degree with Boris Johnson, there's an authenticity about him. I think the truer you are to yourself, the better you get on within modern day politics. And that's why people... even Corbyn, you know, he's true to himself, and that's why it works, I think.

It works for his base.

For his base.

I don't think he... I mean, Trump has motivated a base with the vagaries of the electoral college that actually got him into the White House. But I don't think Corbyn could do that because yes, he's inspired 600,000 lefties to think he's the absolute boy. But he's already lost a general election to Theresa May.

He has done, but with... he got so many votes though, didn't he? I covered that campaign with Jeremy Corbyn against Theresa May, and it was extraordinary just watching, going around with Theresa May, like in the old days, speaking in a big warehouse with people cluttered around the camera. And what was happening is reporters would be there and they were just on their camera phones, film round this empty space with everyone grouped around Theresa May. And those things would go wild on Twitter and almost expose the fakery of looking like a crowded room, because they've crammed everyone around the actual picture. And with Jeremy Corbyn it's much more organic. He would just go around the country and speak to large crowds. I mean, he would have a crowd in a hall, then outside. I remember the very end, he spoke on some cliffs in Great Yarmouth, and you know, he's looked like Moses. He said at one point, "I've had my critics." Then he raised out his arms, "But I forgive them." You know, like...

Jesus.

Like Jesus.

If you'll forgive the pun.

He's not like Jesus. But like a kind of Christ-like figure. And they would just, the way they did the... they just let the kind of let it run. Let all the people come out and campaign for him. And it looked great, and had a real feeling of momentum, but he didn't win. But he got loads of votes, and I think, you know, the big risk for the Tory party now is unless they can deliver a Brexit that's meaningful – and I'm concerned that is not, by the way, disinterring Theresa May's deal, which is the current idea and dropping the backstop, because there are other things in that deal which the Brexiteers will hate – and Nigel Farage will make hay with that. And he is just starting to say this week he fears there's a betrayal coming on Brexit. And that betrayal narrative could let Corbyn in at the next election. So...

But once he presses the B button on Boris, you know, as you've said, they're deselecting the Remainers. You've got an absolute uber-Brexiteer cabinet. You've got a Brexiteer prime minister. This is the most Brexity Brexit we're ever going to get. That would be a very strategic error if I think he did that.

If this lot can't do Brexit, Paul, it will never happen. I mean, Dominic Cummings is, if you're a Brexiteer, the best thing that's happened on Brexit in three years. Because you need this person at the top of it. And all the people running Number 10 now, and most of them have senior jobs in government, but not all of them, and most of them are people who know that the first line of their obituary is already that they helped lead the campaign to leave the EU in 2016, and they know that it's their legacy. So they've now got personal skin in the game in delivering Brexit in a way that Theresa

May, Philip Hammond and the rest didn't have. And that's why I think Brexit will happen on October 31st.

I've a friend of mine who's an MP still, a very good friend of mine, he was saying that he thinks the narrative might be that Brexit won't be the disaster that Remainers say. That it will cause serious problems, but we will get through it. And that kind of mitigation of certain disaster will be spun as a victory. Boris could then call a general election.

In May. May next year.

Absolutely. He could then get a huge mandate, a majority of 60, 70, and then we've got Boris Johnson as Prime Minister for 12, 11 years, because he'll get another term. What would then happen to Labour? Would Corbyn, having fought and lost two general elections at that point, wouldn't McDonnell take over? How is this going to play out?

I think that's right. I think if he delays until next May, you get two quarters in after Brexit. By the second quarter, you could argue companies start spending the money they've been sitting on, they've been holding back as a contingency. Hasn't gone as bad as they fear, they start spending. It's quite clear what the immigration piece looks like maybe, because that's... the control starts at the end of 2020, if we carry on with this idea of an implementation period. And that you know, by next summer could look a lot rosier. And Boris Johnson could win. I can't believe Corbyn would survive as leader.

Even Kinnock went after two.

Well, I think you go after two.

Let's hope so. Unless it's McDonnell, because he's...

The power brokers are Len McCluskey, no question at Unite, you know, so unions will decide who should go forward. So Becky Long-Bailey, Angela Rayner, you know, a female leader for Labour? A very good look against Boris Johnson, you know, as a man and all that. So I think I would look at that kind of person for lead. I don't think John McDonnell would be a leader. I think he's always the number two there.

And a very powerful number two at that.

Very powerful.

I mean, you mentioned earlier that you basically put in the paper everything that you know and see. You're not holding anything back for any memoirs or any kind of annual bestseller. Like Tim Shipman always does these kind of, you know, I'm a big mate of Tim's, but every year he'll bring out another book that's...

The Boswell of Brexit.

Exactly, yes.

Yes. Well I haven't got time. I haven't got time. I mean, I'm literally writing about 1,500 words a day. You know, I'm tweeting, you know. I actually go home, I can't face writing things down. I did, I wrote a book called *Conundrum* with Richard Bacon MP about how government spending goes wrong. It took about five years, because I was so exhausted, because I'm writing every single day. If you're on a Sunday newspaper, you're writing once a week and in a big way and it matters. But you may have more time to make notes and compile a book. On a daily paper it's impossible. Well, it's possible, but it takes ages. And it's exhausting. And what's the point at the end?

What's your personal relationship like with Boris? Like... and as the paper as well, because like when the BBC have a crisis, the BBC then cover the BBC's problems, and there's a BBC guy stood outside the BBC saying, "The BBC are saying this," and it's odd. And this, it's actually getting a little bit self-referential with the Telegraph, because you have such a strong relationship with Boris of course, with the column and all the things that you've done, how do you approach that editorially? Because he's not just another prime minister. He's someone that the Telegraph has helped create.

He's a former colleague now, of course. He stopped writing his columns a few weeks ago.

But he's Telegraph to his bones really, isn't he?

Yes, he is. I mean, he has a relationship with the Telegraph. I mean, I work in the lobby in the House of Commons. And it's my duty to try and treat it all as a... he's PM. He's Mr Johnson in copy, he's not Boris. And that's how we try and do it.

It's like Andrew Neil did in the leadership elections. Because obviously Andrew used to be his boss at the Speccie.

Yes.

And then there he's rightly giving him a hard time, so...

Well, you have to. I mean, I've never felt that I've got any extra… yes, of course we had his column on Sunday evenings coming in at six o'clock, and might give us a splash about, you know, some remark he's made or some controversial comment or a turn of phrase. But we get no special treatment about it. I mean, we got the column in advance, but nothing to explain it. No phone call from him to me. I mean, he never called the lobby office. I mean, it was… where I sit, I'm in a group of around six reporters reporting on politics for the Telegraph. He was just basically another politician. It's hard to understand that, looking in from outside.

I'm not a conspiracy theorist.

Well no, but I'm just telling you how it is. I mean you can believe me or don't believe me, but it's... that is it. He may talk to the editor a bit, I don't know that. Certainly my experience of him was really dealing with him like an MP.

Do you admire him?

I do. Yes, I think he's done... there are very few politicians who get two chances at being prime minister. He'd a chance in 2016 when he backed out, he blew it, didn't he, when he... Michael Gove said, "I can't support him," and then he basically said... okay, I was there in the room when he said, "And therefore, I'm going to withdraw."

I saw it live. I assumed he was building up to...

I was there. It was like watching the tide immediately go out and everyone, all the MPs around me who had come to support Boris Johnson, were in the wrong room immediately. And they think, "Bugger, I shouldn't be here." It's like the tide going out straight away and no one's wearing any swimming trunks. I mean, you thought, "Shit!" Because this guy who they thought was going to be the person who would make them... they would make prime minister and then would give them jobs in his government, they are on the wrong, the losing side. And what they hate being on is the losing side.

So why did they forgive him and give him another chance?

Because he's special. Because he is the Heineken candidate who does reach parts other candidates can't reach. He can punch out into the north. He can, you know, he can get away from the heartlands. He is unique. He has a way of communicating. He's different. He's fun. He's like Farage. I've done a lot of work with... covering Farage.

Is he...

He is like, Farage you know, you're with him. Farage likes to have... you'll be like having a coffee. He likes sitting outside. He like... and then you're having... he needs to have a fag. But he gets all this interaction with people all the time, Farage. The people want to say hi to him. Mostly positive. Not all, but mostly positive. Often it's, you know, it's builders, "'Right, Nigel." Taxi drivers, "'Right, Nigel," beep, beep. You know, and Boris gets that. And these guys, they riff off that kind of, they get stronger. They get these populist politicians, they just get stronger and bigger, the more reaction they get from real people.

I think... and we had Lynton Crosby on the podcast a couple years ago and he was saying that a lot of political communicators just sneer at the electorate. You know, they won't go into a working men's club and talk to real people. They don't read regional newspapers.

I hate that. I *hate* that. I sneer at nobody. I certainly don't sneer at our readers...

Of course not.

... who are marvellous. And anything they care about I get fully behind. So I do all my stuff about a new Royal Yacht Britannia, or the Brexit 50p. And I get sneered by Twitter for this. I don't give a shit! I literally don't care.

Do you block or mute or ignore? What's your strategy?

Don't care. Don't care, because I think my position on the Telegraph is helping these 300,000 readers that reads the paper, millions more online, understand the world, and help them out. And if they care about something I want to campaign for it. And if Twitter hates that, I just do not care about Twitter, I think it's... they are the people that matter.

What's it like in the lobby, then? Because you chair the lobby don't you? What does that involve?

I chair the lobby, because I've been in the lobby for 10 years. I volunteered to do it this year.

Is there a room, then? Do you have a desk?

There's a room with my name on the board. I'll show it to you one day.

Wow. I'd like that.

We have a lobby room, which is our place in Parliament, along with the press gallery. There are two jobs over where I work. One is press gallery chairman, and that's John Stevens from the Mail this this year. And he looks after all the interests of the reporters and how they interact with MPs, House authorities, that stuff. Passes you wear to get around. That's been going since about the early 1800s. And then my job as lobby chairman is to represent journalists in relation to the executive. So getting access from ministers and getting readouts. And then I chair a daily meeting at 3:45 in the afternoon, a lobby meeting, when we have questions in from journalists. They can ask the spokesman for the prime minister anything they want about anything in government. There's a morning meeting, which I don't chair. We have a twice a day meetings. That's the lobby. The name goes back to the House of Commons lobby, where as a lobby pass holder, as a lobby journalist, you can hang around and ask questions. And there are all sorts of silly rules like you're not meant to make notes in the lobby, and there's bits that, you know, it's slightly arcane rules. But the point is it's not a secret club. It more just describes what you do. And I've been very busy this year, I've been organising leadership hustings for all the candidates. Got 20 minutes each, and I try and open up the lobby to, not really to the big papers but the, you know, the guy from the Newcastle Journal or the or the Birmingham Post. Or the smaller... you know, the one-man band in the Commons trying to report all the politics. I try and help that person get access, know what's going on and help them do their job.

Because, and this is not a criticism of you, but it is criticism of the lobby. There are critics, you know Paul Staines, Guido Fawkes, who's been on this podcast, has criticised the lobby as being a kind of cosy insider system where kind of morsels are given to the hacks that play ball. Presumably you disagree with that characterisation?

That's utter bullshit. And what Paul knows is that he's describing modern day journalism, not lobby journalism. The lobby journalism, we have sources saying this because if you're given a briefing, you know, I haven't told you this, but I think that that's one MP told me that. If you read his Paul Staines' brilliant *Order, Order* website, you know, a blog, it's all there. He has the same standards of reporting that we do. He takes some things on the record, some things off the record. That's all it is. There's no club here. If he's concerned about getting a lobby pass, not having one, that's because the Commons authorities want to show that you have evidence that you report daily on politics. And if he wants a pass he should apply for one.

I think they do have one actually.

I don't know if they have one or not. Certainly a representative from Guido Fawkes was there at the hustings I chaired. And you know, he asked a question. So I have no problem. I mean, it's a mystique, and it helps people to rail against a conspiracy or a closed shop, and there just isn't one, and it isn't one.

Of course you would say that, wouldn't you? As someone there to uphold the conspiracy.

Well, there we are. I can't fight that.

Are you... well, it's a ridiculous question. Are you friends with any politicians? I mean obviously don't name names, but do you have any sympathy for them, on all sides? I worked in Parliament for many years myself. There's a lot of decent people there.

Yes. A lot of decent ones. Friend is a funny word, isn't it? Because the problem with, it's like a relationship between a dog and a lamppost, as I think someone once said. At some point, you know, you have to pee on it. At some point, with any politician, you have to cover it like a story. There are people who I've liked and have been upset because I've covered something that they've done, just completely what happened. I've had to say, "Right, well what would the reader want to know about that?" There we are, I'll report it.

You can't not cover it?

I can't not cover it, no. So I don't allow it to... I don't think I'd have friends who are politicians. I think I like ones who I get on with. I admire them. We get on well. You know, we share family stuff maybe over lunch. But I think they understand what is going on. And I'm useful to them, they are to me. There are some, I mean, no, I don't think I have any friends in that way.

And how does it work? Are you at the kind of Cinnamon Club having lunch? I mean I'll go for lunch with a client and they'll tell me a few things. And I'll know what's genuinely confidential and things that aren't. And things that I can maybe let slip. I'll just... of course you use your discretion.

Well, you just tuck things away. If you hear something often, you know you wouldn't rely on that person as a source, but you check it out with somebody else. Often most journalism is jigsaw journalism. So you hear a thought from somebody. "That's a good thought. He knows what's going on, but just double check he's not playing me, because he wants to get at somebody else, I'll see if that person knows. If they both heard it, then it's probably okay to go into paper." So you just double check and you try and work out... and that's why often ministers or MPs don't think they're the source of things because they've mentioned something in passing, which you've tucked away and squirreled away and then checked with somebody else and put in the paper.

And is... you know, we live in a kind of alcohol-free Parliament these days, or certainly less so. Was that the oldest trick, to just to get drunk with someone in the Red Lion?

There's a lot of that.

Is there still that now? Because your liver must be...

There is still that. But it's so intense at the moment I try and get home at... you know, we work long hours, 11, 12 hour days.

Yes. You've got family.

I've got a family too. So.

But it could happen just hovering outside the Red Lion, freezing cold in the middle of winter.

Yes. You do hang around in Strangers, or you do hang around in these places. Often I find though that after the second or third pint, the stories get more and more exciting, but within the morning they're worse and worse the drunker you get. And you make these mad notes on the train home thinking, "Oh, that's a brilliant story." Then in the morning you think, "What on earth am I writing down?" You know, "What is that about?"

Did you always want to be a journalist? How did you start this lark?

Yes, I've always wanted to be a journalist. Yes, I did my work experience on the Formby Times, where I'm from.

Big fan of it now. Still read it online.

Still read it.

Every day.

Yes. Formby.

Really big fan of Formby.

Formby.

Where is Formby, by the way?

It's north of Liverpool, south of Southport.

Ah.

I made tea for Matthew Kelly, who now edits the New European.

And Stars in Their Eyes was great as well.

And of course, "And now Matthew, I'm going to be a journalist."

Yes. "Tonight Matthew, I'm going to create the New European, a paper from nothing, in three weeks."

Yes. Yes. No, I've loved it. I've loved the idea of being first with the news or trying to have the first information. I've got an inquiring mind. I just, I've always wanted to be a journalist since I was about probably 15, 14.

What is it you like about it? Is it the thrill of saying news, disseminating it, being the person that tells the person that doesn't know?

It is that. It's getting the thing, getting the news first. And I've loved the way you can campaign on things that matter to people. You can change things. You can, you know, I just love the whole thing about it. I love being at the top table of information coming out, grilling people on behalf of a group that you feel you represent, who are our readers at the Telegraph and online, on the website, and I just think it's an absolute privilege. And I can't think I'd do anything else.

What's your relationship with people like Tim Shipman? Are you frenemies? Because you want the scoop as well as he does.

Yes.

So I imagine you get on and have a chat, but he's not going to tell you what he's planning for Sunday, is he?

Tim's a friend. I went to his wedding, I've known him for years. He helped develop my nickname Chopper, which is why I do *Chopper's Brexit Podcast*. But he's a brilliant...

I knew him quite well when he was at the Daily Mail as a deputy political editor, and we'd go into, yes, frenemy battles with stories. But at the end of the day, we're all... there's a small cohort of people, we are a small group of journalists, and we are against a massive machine trying to hold it to account, not least the MPs, but the government and all the other bits of the government. And there is an "old friend in love and war" feeling about journalism. I mean, the lobby is the last vestige of Fleet Street as it used to be, because there's a corridor called the Burma Road where we work on, and each room has got the Mirror, got the Scottish Papers, it's got the Daily Mail, it's got Bloomberg, the Telegraph, the Guardian, the FT. And you walk along it, and we're all rivals, but we're also on the same team trying to hold the bastards to account, trying to hold the man, put it to the man, and keep government honest, really. That's what journalism is about. And I think Fleet Street, it lives on in the lobby, in that sense. We go and get drunk together, and then it's all forgotten. And then we start to chat about it and gossip, but it's great fun.

I don't know whether this is a mystique that was undeserved, but when I was involved in politics over the years, when I was growing up as well, I assumed even if you disagreed over policy, that the government had a handle on things. And occasionally things would descend into disarray and there'd be a change of leader, whatever, and then stability would happen. But what concerns me is, I genuinely don't think the government really knows what it's doing now. And that's not a party political criticism. It's actually even more scary and more worrying that they're as adrift as we are.

I blame the internet. I think before the Internet happened, people just got on with their lives and they weren't really participating in the same way. I think that since the internet happened and Twitter, and everyone's got a view and everyone's tweeting and videoing everything, everyone has now got a stake in it. So they're engaged by it, and they're less willing to be told what to do by their political masters. And they're the political master, trying to work out how to interpret that and what to do with it. And I think it just caused rather a good and exciting havoc in our national life. And when I started out in journalism, I was at Cardiff Journalist School, I learned on a typewriter and used to file literal blacks. This was back in 1994, 1995. And I got my first mobile phone in the late 1990s, when I was in my late 20s.

One of those bricks?

It was a brick, it was a Nokia 3210 like everyone else had, which are fantastic phones.

Yes, I'd bring them back now.

I think that's what I want. I would have this technology to stop with Nokia 3210, texting, and Snake.

I'd go back to parchment and quill and carrier pigeons.

Would you? I think it's marvellous.

Yes.

I went on a holiday recently, and in order to relax, I de-teched. Now, I bought this watch, which is a Swatch watch.

It's good.

And I disinterred my old Apple iPod, iPod thing. And so that was my music, and my phone died, and the only way I can relax now is by just ditching my phone so I can't see any more notifications, WhatsApp updates. And then I finally physically relaxed. You feel yourself relaxing because you're away from this tech. And that's the future, de-teching on holiday.

What if something happened? Seriously, like Boris resigns unexpectedly or whatever? You're a senior political journalist. Can you tell your readers and your editor that "Yes, I was de-teching. I had my feet up and I had a lovely Piña colada."

SMS is on.

Ah, so you are available, then.

Available on SMS, but this is not the... because you're drawn into the... you've got your kids, you're drawn into the phone.

It's proportionate.

And you don't relax. And you come back exhausted because you've engaged with all the politics that you couldn't actually affect because you're on holiday.

Yes. So you are in contact, so essentially you've got the best of both worlds. If the shit hits the fan, someone will text you. But in the absence of that, you can actually relax and you've not got all those horrendous notifications.

Yes.

That actually seems a sensible balance.

And also the sad truth, the very sad truth, Paul, and I don't want to break it to you, is that we're not that important.

Speak for yourself.

But actually things will keep happening, being reported, if I'm not there. And that's really sad to know.

I present the 46th most listened-to media podcast in this region.

In your case, this podcast can only happen if you're here. I get that, but at the Telegraph I have to accept that if I am not there, the paper will still come out and look brilliant, and I have to accept that.

Yes, this podcast wouldn't happen, but in the best tradition of what the BBC says, other podcasts are available.

Are available.

Exactly.

Other podcasts are widely available on Apple iTunes. My experience of journalism is joining late, so I had this kind of traditional upbringing through journalism of trade magazines, local papers, seven jobs before I got to the Telegraph age 33. So I emerged on their business team in 2003, fully formed. I think it's a lot harder now for people joining papers, because they tend to come through the trainee route. And they are right in there in the white heat of these jobs in their mid-20s. And all their mistakes, which I made loads of mistakes, they're all made in full view on the Daily Telegraph, and it can be difficult for them to get used to that. And I don't want to sound like a hoary, old hand at this, but the old way into journalism is where you made your mistakes you had to make, you had to find interesting things to say about the world of printing or construction.

It honed your craft.

You had to find really interesting things to say that interested me, because I'm not a printer or a builder, about those areas, and then write them and communicate them. And the idea is trying to find news gold out of base metal. That is the heart of this game. And I think nowadays, people arrive at the national papers very young, or websites quite young, and they...

They lack news judgment.

Well, they lack the... this is not to any colleagues I know, but I think I feel about people that they need to get away from Twitter. That's not where... the real stories are not on Twitter. They're meeting people, they're developing those interpersonal skills to make someone tell you something. You know, "Share with me what you know," that kind of thing. That's hard. It's easy watching Twitter. But I don't blame anybody. I think there's so much more content required by so many more places that listen to it and watch it that it's harder to break off from the screen to go out and carve out time to make those things happen. But that is where the really big stories are. They're not on Twitter or social media.

They're out in the real world. What type of journalist, as you navigated your career, did you want to be? Because when you got to the telly, you were business. Did you always want to be a business journalist, or was it just that "I wanted to be a senior journalist," or did you want that?

I always wanted to be a political journalist.

So business was always a means to an end.

Means to an end. And when I was doing that...

"I'll get to the Telegraph, I'll do business, I'll kill the political team and make it look like an accident, and then I'll get their job."

Correct. Not kill anybody, but I would try to use business as a way in all the time.

Because business stories are human stories. They are politics.

Well, it's policy. I always go the TUC conference. I've done that for 20 years.

Better you than me.

And I ended up covering... I enjoy it, actually. And covering policy, and as a way into to doing political journalism. I'm the first journalist from my family. And the big frustration, in the old days you'd apply through the Media Guardian pages. And when I left journalists school at Cardiff, I had got 50 or 60 rejection letters. Immensely frustrating, because I knew I could do this job. I knew I could have a go at doing it well, and no one gave me a break. I didn't know anybody, and I felt my nose was pressed up against the face of the glass, and behind the glass is where I wanted to be. I finally got into a national paper age 33, after I was hired by Neil Collins, the city editor of the Telegraph. And then I've had various job offers since then, and when one of them came along I said "Well, I'll stay at the Telegraph, but I want to go into the lobby." And I became Whitehall editor. And that's how I got into political journalism.

I mean, Richard Sambrook is a very good friend of mine. He's professor of journalism at Cardiff University, and he says one of the biggest problems is that there's just not enough jobs. You know, that lots of people aspire to be journalists, and newsrooms used to be full of journalists, and now they're not.

Yes. I think that's not quite true. I think there are loads of jobs in different places. There are fewer jobs, maybe, than there used to be at the Telegraph on the paper, but don't quote me on this, but I think we do have as many journalists as we had when we were a newspaper, but across all the platforms that we do at the Telegraph, which is website, video, social. So there are actually more jobs in journalism, I would counter to Richard. But he may have done some work on this, I don't know.

I might be misquoting him for the worse. I apologise, Richard, if I have.

They're not in traditional media. They're not on the newspaper specifically, or in broadcast. I mean, the BBC is huge. Frustration I would have with rivals like the BBC is, I love the TV. I love watching their programmes. I love watching their news. But the BBC have online education reporters, online sports reporters who don't even appear on the broadcast side of it.

Well, the BBC News website is a behemoth.

It is. And my taxes, my licence fee, not a tax, a license fee, but if you don't pay it you're prosecuted, so still to a degree it's like a tax, is paying for someone else to eat my lunch, to do all the work I'm doing by reporting online for the Telegraph on a political side. And it's difficult, because we're trying to carve out our space and we've got a massive rival at the BBC. And they're trying to mitigate this. They're agreeing, they're doing some more work with local papers, and they're trying to help local papers. But the problem with the BBC is, it's so enormous, it's a challenge for non-BBC journalists.

What's Brexit like emotionally for you as a story to cover it? Are you excited as a journalist that you're covering politics at such an unusual time where anything could happen, and therefore I have to buy the Telegraph every day to find out what the hell has gone on?

Yes.

And it's very compelling. Or is it a bit like you watch so many car crash videos on YouTube that you get kind of fatigue, that you kind of...

It's a bit of the latter. You have to take a step back and think "Crumbs, what on earth is happening next, and how is it going?" And you lose track really of all the different... you've had so many resignations recently. I mean, this year certainly big things have been happening, but you forget, it's only in April that Gavin Williamson resigned over the Huawei leak from the National Security Council. He denied doing it himself, but he resigned, or was he sacked by Theresa May?

He was sacked.

He was sacked by Theresa May. I mean, there's so many big things happening, and it just seems that big things happen, and then they sink from view, and the next big thing happens all the time. And it is quite exhausting and wearying, but it obviously is good for the Telegraph in the sense that it means that people need to read us and find out what's going on and look at how we're analysing it and what we're saying about it. So it just is very, very busy.

The big question I want to ask, and I genuinely don't know the answer to this, is have things changed for good? You know, Trump might get re-elected to a second term, he might not, but there'll be another president after him. Will he be Trump-like? Has he poisoned the well of politics? Has Brexit changed everything so fundamentally that whether it happens or it doesn't, whenever it's settled, that things can never be the same again?

I'm not sure I agree with your term "poison the well". I think what Trump did was he listened to people and he offered a manifesto for people who previously felt they had no one to do what they wanted to do. The flyover states, the rust belt, he's offered up things which bothers them. Immigration. The wall is clumsy and looks dreadful to a

lot of people, but it's what Americans want to happen. Cut tax is what they want to happen. I mean, look at what he's doing in America, he's delivering on what his manifesto said. You may not like the way he does it, the way he talks about women.

He's clearly loathsome.

But people are willing to forgive him for that if he does what he said he would do for them. And they don't want a friend as president, they want someone who can deliver for them. And arguably that is the future. It's all very well having a left wing, middle ground, or left of centre, or even right of centre consensus that immigration is generally a good thing because it helps people get cheap builders for their conservatories, and, "I have a nice cleaner who's not that expensive," and the rest. But there are lots of communities in this country who have felt overwhelmed by new people arriving and taking their jobs, and it feels unfair to them. And they are the people who had their voices heard most by the referendum result, I think. And it has changed things. I'm not sure "poison the well" is not the right answer, I think it's more making the system more responsive to what people want.

Is there any willingness, though, on the part of the electorate to forgive politicians for things? Because I remember growing up that David Mellor resigned because he'd had an affair. There was the whole thing that, whatever her name was, he made love to in a Chelsea strip. And that was revealed to be false, but he still had to resign because he'd had an affair, and it cut to the heart of, could he be trusted or not? If he cheated on his wife, then he would cheat on the electorate.

Well, those old morals have changed, and that was started because...

Because look at Trump, it's universally agreed that he slept with the porn star after he'd married his wife, evangelical Christians support him even though he's a serial adulterer.

Because they're willing to forgive him for his personal things if he does things they want to happen that affects their everyday life. They will need to look beyond the person's personal life.

Is that a change?

I think it has changed. I don't think it matters if you're anything. I mean, clearly now, if you're gay, that matters not a jot. In the old days, back in the 1990s, it did matter if you were gay, for example. If you have extramarital affairs, not really a problem. The problem is often the cover-up or the hypocrisy. If you want to hide something, or you say one thing and do the other, those are the old things. But if you front up and say, "That was a mistake, I did that," it's fine. People forgive you very quickly in modern-day politics. And it has just changed, so the David Mellor situation, those stories still count, I think, because...

Because it's hypocrisy, isn't it?

It's hypocrisy. So it's telling you to do one thing, and then doing something else with your private life.

All right, so let's assume that what you're doing now is a kind of an emotional and political roller coaster. You're at Alton Towers and you're on the Nemesis. Whether the ride crashes or whatever, something's going to change, and eventually Brexit will have to stop, otherwise we'll all just kill ourselves.

It will stop. Yes.

What you going to do next?

What will I do next?

Are you just going to go on a long holiday? You just going to carry on in the job, or you going to...

I think Brexit, Paul, is a process, not a thing.

Oh, God.

So the Nemesis will finish.

You just ruined my day. And my life.

The Nemesis will finish. If I'm like on Jimmy Savile, I'm like those Cubs trying to have a meal.

I always thought Savile was a wrong 'un. Even as a kid, I thought, "I don't like the look of him."

Let's put Jimmy Savile to one side. But on Jim'll Fix It, when the Scouts had tried to eat some food on the roller coaster, it went all over their face. You remember that?

I remember it.

It's a bit like that at the moment. But the problem is, it's not going to end. So that ride did end for the Scouts.

You save the worst for last, then?

And they got off and they cleaned up. But I think when you keep on this, because we haven't even discussed fish. Not on this podcast, but also the rights to fisheries. So that's a big issue for a lot of people who voted. Brexit is control over our sovereignty over our waters and who fishes there. There are big issues to do with Brexit, we haven't even got there yet.

So Chris, out of what was a terrible family tragedy over a decade ago, you're a trustee, you've created this charity, Elizabeth's Legacy of Hope. Could you tell us about it, please?

Yes. Well, we started this in 2011, it helps amputees in the developing world, India and Africa too, who are often the most marginalised children in society over there, because they can't do anything to help run the home. It gives them legs, because there's no actual other support for them.

Incredible.

It started because it was a very sad tragedy in my life in 2007, in April, the 25th, when a bus went out of control where we were living in Mortlake, South London. And it hit my wife and her mum and our daughter on the pavement. My wife's mum was killed, called Elizabeth Panton. My wife was under the bus and she lost all of her leg in a degloving. And my daughter, age two, Pollyanna, lost her leg. She was thrown through the air, and it was cut off by a barrier there. And it did really completely change my life, and it has been a thing which we had to learn to live with. And I wrote about it for the Telegraph, and if you search my name, Christopher Hope, and bus crash, you'll see it on the newspaper. And it appeared two years after the accident happened, in an article in the magazine, and I put a lot of effort into it. It's about 6,000 words long, and when I did it with an editor on the magazine, they took out all of the adjectives which I had put into it. So it became a very tightly written piece, which was extremely powerful. At the end I said that my wife, so she started running to try and strengthen her leg. If you want to sponsor her, we're raising money for a charity, send in cheques. And it was on the Saturday of the MP expenses scandal, and I was busy in the bunker trying to work out what the stories were on MP expenses before we published. And it appeared on that Saturday, two years to the day since the accident, and the following Monday I had £200 in cheques, £400 pounds in cheques. The next day, £2,000. And that went on for two weeks, and the article itself raised about £80,000. And then we did a ball, a charity ball, and that raised more money. So we ended up taking half that money, with agreement with the other charity, and founding our own charity, in memory of Sarah's mum, called Elizabeth's Legacy of Hope. And since then we've raised about half a million pounds from private funds, not from the government or DFID money, to help people in the developing world, help children, particularly children. We have as many as 100 children we're supporting at any one time, and it's a privilege, really. I know I've always been extremely grateful to the Telegraph, because they completely looked after me. Because when your life falls apart and you're like that, and my wife was in one hospital, Charing Cross, her mother's body was there. My daughter was in Chelsea Westminster, I was in the office, my parents in Liverpool. I was literally on my knees trying to survive. And the Telegraph looked after me, and I can't thank them enough for that. So I feel tremendously loyal to the paper. I think it cared for me, and I want to help it, of course.

How's your daughter getting on?

Yes, she's 14, she's a busy dancer, and she loved dancing. Another thing is that the ballet world marked her down because she hasn't got a foot. So they gave her zero marks for below the knee dancing.

That is outrageous.

So I wrote about that.

Are they changing their policy?

No, they're not.

That's like something out of a farce or a comedy. They can't possibly do that in this day and age.

Yes. If you search my name and Pollyanna and ballet, you'll see the article online there. And Nick Gibb, the schools minister, tried to have a round table, but they refused to budge. But Pollyanna is now doing contemporary dance and is loving it. So for me, my professional life is always... I love it. It's a great honour. But the personal life has been a challenge. But we're 11, 12 years on from the accident. You know, what can I say? I mean, I do owe the Telegraph a lot for looking after me, but I think I've tried to use my ability to communicate what happened for good, and have raised all that money for charity. And I think it's been a journey.

Chris, I was in awe of you as a journalist before I got to know you. But just learning about this and seeing what you've gone through, I don't even know what to say. I mean, it's incredibly inspiring what you've done, and I'm obviously deeply sorry that that happened. But you've made the best of it and are helping other people. I don't think I can pay any more stronger tribute than that.

Thank you, Paul.