

Ministers Reflect

Mark Garnier



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Biographical details

Parliamentary history

2010–present: Member for Wyre Forest

Government career

2016–18: Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Department for International Trade)

Mark Garnier was interviewed by Daniel Thornton and Tess Kidney Bishop on 13 March 2018 for the Institute for Government's Ministers Reflect project.

Mark Garnier reflects on being a minister in the new Department for International Trade, having voted Remain in the EU referendum. He talks about foreign visits, Theresa May's style of government, the Ministerial Code investigation, and the shock of leaving government.

Daniel Thornton (DT): Perhaps we can start at the beginning, when you first got the call to become a minister. Can you tell us about that day?

Mark Garnier (MG): It was just after the election of course. So everybody was sitting around by their telephones hoping maybe to get a job. Then the call came and it was Gavin Williamson, Government Chief Whip at the time. He has a slight sense of humour so he rang and it said: "Number 10 switchboard, the Government Chief Whip for you." It came through and he said: "Oh hi, Mark, I was just wondering if you could come along and do a supper club for me in my constituency in a couple of weeks' time?" I said: "Yes, Gavin, I'd be delighted to come along to that. Anything else?" So he said: "Yes, we want to offer you a job as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at International Trade," which of course was one of the new departments.

I'd been on the Treasury Select Committee for six and a half years at this point, so I kind of thought that if I was going to get a job in government, it might be in the Treasury. But actually it was an exciting new department. Liam Fox was the Secretary of State, who I knew but our paths hadn't crossed a great deal before that. Greg Hands was the Minister of State, who I knew quite well from the Whips' Office and operating in Parliament. So I thought: "It's exciting, it's new, there's no track record." I didn't know anything about being in government at all, apart from what I'd seen from the backbenches.

It was an interesting opportunity and apart from anything else, it's also a very clean and exciting part of this whole Brexit process. On the one hand, you've got the slightly glum bit, DExEU [Department for Exiting the European Union], which is the divorce lawyer separating from the EU. Then we're the country's Match.com. We're the ones that you go out and swipe right for relationships with the US or Brazil. So in that respect, it was a very optimistic department.

I think anybody would be excited about getting into government for the first time. I was very excited because it was a commercially-facing department rather than a public service department, and with 27 years in the private sector as an investment banker and a hedge fund manager, business and finance and economics is what I understand. So it was a great opportunity to go in and do a job where I could play to my strengths.

DT: How was the new department being set up as you arrived?

MG: It was coming together. I was fresh to this, but the essential bare bones of the department was UK Trade and Investment, UKTI. UKTI was a very bipolar organisation because in the UK it was operated by BIS, [Department for] Business, Innovation and Skills. BIS looked after the UK side and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office looked after the overseas footprint. It was run by Catherine Raines as a slightly standalone organisation.

We had a new Secretary of State. We had Martin Donnelly, who was a Permanent Secretary, brought in for a temporary basis, who was one of the most sensible people I've ever come across and actually very welcoming and very kind. Quite a Europhile as well, which was going to be interesting given the task that was presented to us.

So we started off with UKTI and then brought in various other things. Defence and Security Organisation, DSO, was brought in. Export Licensing was brought in, which was partly my responsibility. We had the Great campaign, which was also brought over from Downing Street into our department. Then UK Export Finance, which is another interesting one. So it was basically bringing together these various bits of government to try to make it into one organisation that actually had a very simple objective.

It was quite interesting when you look at what's the objective of the department. A lot of people were turning around and saying: "This department doesn't have a function until we come out of the Customs Union and therefore can do trade deals." The trade policy piece is absolutely part of it, but the really important point is when you look at our current account deficit which is running at over 5% of GDP – for a G20 economy that was a really bad thing. You could identify that we had a fundamental problem with our international relationships and that had been reflected in the current account deficit.

So what we did was focused on our one score: how do we reduce that current account deficit and get more foreign investment coming in? How do we boost our exports? How do we actually take over quite a big challenge, which is not necessarily finding the demand for British goods and services overseas, because there's a massive amount of demand for it, but is actually getting UK businesses to think more internationally? That was the bigger problem that we had, more of a domestic problem than an international problem. That's not to say we can't improve every part of it.

There was quite a big strategy being set up in terms of what is it we're trying to do, who are the partners we should be working with in terms of Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, CBI [Confederation of British Industry], IoD [Institute of Directors] etc. There was all that sort of stuff to go on.

So whilst the critical mass of people was there through bringing together bits and pieces, and we had to find ourselves an office and stuff, there was then 'What's the

strategy, which bit of government are we responsible for?’ There was a little bit of turf war. Ministers like to travel and if you turn around and say “Don’t worry, we’re doing all the travelling bit, we’re off to Shanghai, you can stay at home,” there’s a little bit of friction. On a more fundamental basis, we were trying to identify what it was we were doing. It was essentially trying to define what constitutes that entire cross-border piece. The cross-border piece is anything that’s overseas.

This was particularly important when it came to relationships with the new BEIS department [Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy] which had just picked up the Industrial Strategy bit. I was Minister for Investment, and looked after a number of economic areas. Anything that brought inward investment into the UK was incredibly important. But if you’re bringing inward investment into the UK, ultimately BEIS is the one that is creating the policy that makes that business environment right. To a certain extent, we were the salesforce but they were the policy writers. Obviously we reflect back but we weren’t taking responsibility for policy in terms of the Industrial Strategy. We’d be part of it but not driving it. So there was a certain amount of friction. This would manifest itself, for example, when an international company is about to divest out of the UK because they’ve just got worried about something or other. There’d be an urgent question about it and BEIS would say: “That’s a DIT [Department for International Trade] thing.” We said: “No, no, no. We bring them in, you’ve got to keep them. You can do the urgent questions.” So that type of thing was going on.

You then obviously got this same problem doing export promotion. I think the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was slightly miffed about having lost this trade brief. Some of their ministers could see trade as having been part of their portfolio and, of course, it no longer was. So they were a bit confused about that, and then some of them would pick up on certain areas, like financial services, that they’re keen on.

So there were various sorts of early friction. But I think by the time I left the department after about 19 months, those were pretty much resolved. The defining parameters of the department were there. The other problem was always going to be overseas, because you have the ‘One Government Overseas’ policy. That’s something which, if you’re working in Ulaanbaatar, is blindingly obvious because there’s only five of you there, so you can’t have great demarcation and turf war. Having said that, you do get certain frictions in some countries. But by the time I left, they were being run pretty well. We got a new Permanent Secretary, Antonia Romeo. Liam [Fox] had settled down very well with his vision of a global future, and I think, all in all, it was in a very good place.

DT: Different secretaries of state run their ministerial teams in different ways. What was the pattern of meetings and co-ordination with the Secretary of State?

MG: I'd never even been a PPS [Parliamentary Private Secretary]. So this was brand new to me. We had lots of meetings going on. We had very clear demarcation between what were department meetings and what were political meetings.

Liam was hugely accessible the whole time, I think that's an important point. You could always send him a text and he'd catch up with you or would have a conversation. He's a very easy person to get hold of and very sensible about if you want to have a conversation about certain things. He's good. Plus, his spads [special advisers] were just outstanding. His Principal Private Secretary was incredibly good. They were incredibly accessible, incredibly easy going and got on with everybody within the department, which I think is also a very strong feature of how Liam runs his office.

We would put aside Tuesday mornings for a ministerial meeting; the first half of which was department, the second half of which was political. That would bring everybody in. The Permanent Secretary would be there, various heads of departments as relevant. It would be minuted properly. You'd have all the PPSs and the whips and everything else. We would just go through the various stuff that needs to be talked about, the various issues. It would be straight after Cabinet, so Liam would give us a quick read out of what went on in Cabinet that was relevant to us. Then, after an hour or so, we would go to a political meeting, as appropriate, which wasn't that often actually. We would always have one, but they invariably lasted not terribly long. That was how we'd run that.

Liam was very good also at engaging with backbenchers in terms of what's going on. He has these regular meetings with backbenchers for sort of educating them. There's one coming up about the World Trade Organization, there's one about UK Export Finance, about what we do overseas. There was a lot of that. Of course, as ministers we'd get together with backbenchers. He'd also do regular events where groups of backbenchers were invited to his private office in Parliament just to engage with backbenchers. He's very good at that general engagement piece. Every time that was done, all of us ministers would go along and join him.

But in terms of the actual running the department, it was this one strategic meeting a week, plus any other conversations we needed to have. And it worked well.

DT: You mentioned Martin Donnelly was a Europhile, and indeed still is, but also a very experienced Permanent Secretary. How did you find working with him given his perspective on these issues?

MG: Had I bothered to read a bit more thoroughly about him, then I would have picked his perspective up! It was an interesting department even when you look at the ministers. Liam, of course, was very much in the Brexit campaign and campaigned very hard. I was a Remainer, so was Greg Hands. I think Mark Price was also a Remainer, he'd come over as a former trade minister under the old regime. So we were all pretty much committed Remainders, with the exception of Liam.

What struck me about Martin Donnelly, though, and actually all of the civil service is, their level of extraordinary professionalism. I've been asked this question on many occasions: is there a blob of Remainders within the civil service trying to force the country to stay in the European Union, in the Single Market? I don't know what established departments work like – I've only ever worked in one department – but it was unquestionably the case that everybody from Martin Donnelly downwards was absolutely dedicated to delivering the Government's agenda, and there was no question at all of people trying to say: "This is a problem."

The areas that I looked at were things like financial services and the automotive sector. Two really, really heavily involved in this Brexit debate. To make life really easy for financial services, the simple answer is to stay in the Single Market where you have passporting, then you have nothing to worry about. With the automotive sector, which is 10% tariffs on finished goods and 3.5% on parts and components, you have an interesting situation where actually we can probably do a trade deal which doesn't have tariffs but the frictions at borders could be catastrophic for the automotive industry. So the easiest thing for them would certainly be to be within a customs union, and certainly within the regulatory regime which covers automotive. The argument is full Brexit, fully outside it, and certainly from the point of view of the department, in order to be able to do those trade deals in the future, we would have to be outside the Customs Union and the Single Market. So those are three contradictory elements already.

I made it perfectly clear what my political leaning was to all my civil servants. They didn't necessarily make it clear back what view they had. Where we would have a discussion about Brexit, sometimes I would sort of roll my eyes and sort of say, "Well, the answer of course is to not to come out," and they'd laugh and say, "Well done, minister, how jolly amusing," in a polite civil servant sort of way. And then we'd get on with the process of trying to work out what the system is that you need, which was mainly with DExEU.

But nonetheless, if you take one side of this argument as I did and we lost – and let's not beat about the bush, we put our case forward, we talked about all the disasters,

people looked at it and 52% of them said, “Actually, we’ll live with that and we’ll come out of it” – you’ve got to get on and deliver it. I don’t want to speak too much about our other ministers, but I think the view of most people within the department was one that I took which was that you may not want to be in this position but you’ve got to deliver it. There are two things that you have to do, one of which is if you’re going to deliver Brexit, just get on and do it properly. You can’t be half Brexit, half in. You’ve got to either be fully in and do it properly like we did before, or come out completely because you don’t want to have some sort of hybrid which just upsets everybody. That’s the first thing.

The second thing is if you are someone like me who spent all their time arguing about why Brexit would be a dangerous thing to go through, that it would be a very economically disruptive event, then you are acutely aware of the risks that are run and therefore can operate in a way that tries to mitigate those risks. At the end of the day, not a single one of us wants our constituents to go bust or be evicted from their homes in order to prove that we were right about the economic crisis that was going to unfold after Brexit. So what we have to do is just quietly steady the horses. Make sure businesses are still investing into the UK. And ensure that we don’t come out and say anything stupid and start running around saying the world’s going to end and the moon’s going to crash into the planet because of Brexit. We’ve got to be mature and sensible about this and get on with it.

When it comes to all those civil servants, like Sir Martin, who were at the top of this, I sense that they completely bought into that. There was a much wider, bigger mission ahead of us that was more important than the personal views of whether we should be in or out of the Single Market or the European Union or whatever it happens to be.

DT: For the automotive sector, obviously BEIS has a certain responsibility and has the Automotive Council. Can you talk a bit more about how liaison with them worked? What was it you were looking for from them, in the Industrial Strategy, or otherwise, to help you do your job?

MG: On a functional basis, there was a thing called the AIO, which is the Automotive Investment Organisation. I’m not entirely certain about the history, but this was essentially the organisation that was charged with building up, for example, the tier one downward supply chain into the UK. They were very successful. They got it from 35% of supply chain up to about 42%, or 43% I think. So they were the ones actually getting out there and doing all the work with businesses, but the policy piece was being done by BEIS. The key to this though was the Automotive Council and that was run by BEIS. So Greg Clark [Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy] was the Chairman but I had a seat on that as well, and three of my AIO people were on that. That was an extraordinarily useful way of doing this. There is a similar type of structure of these organisations for the financial services. The AIO would basically be keeping in touch with all of the supply chain, keeping in touch with all the OEMs [Original

Equipment Manufacturers] and the car manufacturers and making sure that we were getting all the stuff we needed. This would be fed back into BEIS.

For the Industrial Strategy, we were looking at a very basic functional level at how we look after things like the automotive sector. Then at the other end of it, it would go through the ministerial office and be looked at to make sure that we were strategically saying the right things. It's really important. When I was in my 20s and 30s, I travelled the world pitching for business as an investment banker and you take with you a pitch book to say: "This is what we do." Then in my 50s, I was travelling the world pitching for business as a G7 trade minister and you similarly have to have a pitch book: what is it that you're selling the world about your country. So it's incredibly important that this Industrial Strategy was seen as the country's pitch book and that was how I saw it. It got not a huge amount of coverage here in the UK, but overseas it was absolutely brilliant. We should be really grateful to Greg Clark for what he did pulling that together. It's a very, very important document.

DT: So co-ordination worked pretty well from your point of view. Were there differences of perspective between BEIS and DIT?

MG: Inevitably there are. Inevitably you're going to get one or two differences but there was meeting and matching at lots of different levels, right down to the bottom, and that seemed to work. You're not going to get everything you want in it, but bear in mind it isn't our book, it's their book. But no, I thought it worked very well.

The final bit that I really was involved in was ministerial engagement. We went through it. Each of us had a chance to put our views forward and then we corporately got together and said: "This is what we think. Does everybody agree this is what we should say?" By the time we got to that top end of it, it was more to do with language and how it's presented.

At the end of the day, I think it was a very, very good thing. We were very keen to translate a broken down version of it into lots of different languages. This is something we were going to be taking out on more meetings and saying: "This is why you must invest in the UK." Be it a satellite company or an automotive company or a high-tech company of any description. It's got a very good story to it.

DT: You're a former investment banker, you know the financial services sector very well. It must have been a great help to you in discussing these issues. How did you find the relationship with Treasury as compared to the relationship with BEIS? I used to work at the Treasury and...

MG: That must mean you're a severe boffin.

DT: I'll just smile politely at that point.

MG: It was interesting actually because I was on the Treasury Select Committee for all this time, and also had been on the Parliamentary Commission for Banking Standards. So I had quite an extensive track record engaging one way or the other with the Treasury world. I certainly met some of these individuals through Treasury Select Committee meetings, but I suppose I hadn't met them on an informal basis.

There's an organisation called the Financial Services Trade and Investment Board, also known as FSTIB. FSTIB is run by the Treasury and brings together lots of different organisations, banks, bodies, Lloyds of London, that kind of stuff, all come together to share their views. I think it was Charles Roxburgh [Second Permanent Secretary to the Treasury] who suggested that I go on this board, being part of that international piece, and it was quite a useful thing. I would meet with Charles Roxburgh, not frequently, but we would come across each other and get on well. We would do a number of things together between Treasury and DIT. That seemed to work quite well.

I would from time to time drop by Katharine Braddick [Director General, Financial Services at HM Treasury] and have a conversation with her. I always felt it was the right thing to do. She was very busy and it was me initiating the meeting, so I would go to her rather than have her come to me, which apparently for a civil servant that's a slightly peculiar thing if a minister goes around to see you. But she is a busy and important and sensible person and I was seeking out her views rather than just imposing mine on her. I found we had a very good working relationship and I was really pleased by that.

Simon Kirby, when he was the City Minister, he and I did a lot together, meeting banks and people about Brexit. Steve Barclay, when he was City Minister (it was quite a quick turnover, I think we're on our third City Minister since June last year, which is not a brilliant thing). But Steve Barclay had been a compliance officer, so he understood the regulatory side of things very well. I was in front office, so I understand markets much better than perhaps he does and he understands regulation much better than I do. It worked well together as a double act. We went on economic and financial dialogues [EFDs]. I went on the Brazil, China and India EFDs with the Chancellor, and we definitely had a role to play there. This was not tokenism. All in all actually, it worked extraordinarily well. Duncan McCourt, who's the Chancellor's spad, is also somebody I've done a lot of work with as a backbencher. He used to work for Andrea Leadsom and we did some work together.

So I was very happy that the relationship with Treasury was a very healthy one and I never felt at any point that Treasury were being sniffy about those in trade which is us. It worked very well.

DT: So your previous experience in banking and on the Treasury Select Committee were very useful in this role in terms of the relationships you built and the perspectives you developed.

MG: Yes, without a shadow of a doubt. The Banking Commission was a big thing. I regularly see all sorts of people from the London Market Group on the insurance side of things and all sorts of different stuff. I was always very happy to meet them. You've come in on the day when I'm going off to have lunch today with the senior official at DIT who looks after the financial services, David Bartlett, who's a secondee from Standard Chartered Bank. I know him very well indeed. Compared with a lot of backbenchers, who have very wide diversity of experience, it's one area that I am very confident at. Treasury and DIT, certainly when I was there, were working very well together and it seemed to make a lot of sense.

Tess Kidney Bishop (TKB): What about the relationship with Number 10? How open was that? How often were you talking to them?

MG: Me personally, not at all. The relationship with Number 10 was very much handled between our spads and Number 10.

What I can say without any question whatsoever, was the relationship between the rest of government and Number 10 was absolutely transformed straight after the June election last year. As a backbencher and on the Treasury Select Committee, I was regularly doing a lot of media and going on Channel 4 News, *Newsnight*, or whatever it happened to be (actually trying to duck *Newsnight* while Jeremy Paxman was there. With Jeremy Paxman there you're on a lose-only sort of opportunity, so I didn't do that). But I was amazed by the control that Number 10 had on ministers in terms of stopping them going out, stopping them having an opinion. You couldn't do anything without checking it with Number 10, and if I ever went to a public-facing event, there was a phalanx of press officers sent along by the department. If I ever wanted to go and have a conversation with the press, there were people diving in and saying: "No, no, the minister didn't mean that." It's ridiculous. It's like something out of *The Thick of It*. It was crazy.

I can remember after a bit asking a few people who'd been around for a long time: "Is this normal?" They said: "No, no, this is not normal at all." You put intelligent, thoughtful people into government and then you turn around and say they're not intelligent and thoughtful enough to be allowed to speak for themselves. It was completely crazy. We were basically absolutely maximum clampdown on what we were allowed to say and think and our broadcast to the wider world.

Then of course after the election last year, it changed completely and there's a much more intelligent response to this. Ministers were given much more respect to actually think for themselves, which was quite remarkable.

DT: You're talking about the departure of Fiona Hill and Nick Timothy [Theresa May's former joint Chiefs of Staff] essentially?

MG: Fiona and Nick absolutely, yes. It seemed to completely change. I never spoke to either of them, I've no idea what they're like. Obviously I'm reading Tim Shipman's book at the moment about the whole thing, but I had no idea what was going on. I'm sure they're very clever people and they wouldn't have got to the position where they were, were they not clever people.

Somebody not so very long ago said to me sort of: "Well, that's politics, isn't it? Politics is tough." Having been in a department which is business-facing department, if you come up with a patronising comment like that, then actually people just turn around and say: "This is why politics is absolutely no good for us at all." If you're in business, you look at a whole lot of different metrics and parameters. But you understand how the world around you works. Businessmen can control probably 80% of what goes on. A businessman will appoint their senior management team on the basis of their experience and their knowledge, and their ability to be able to do the job. Those are the main parameters they'll use. If you happen to meet other criteria, that's fine. But you have to have a business that works properly. But when you have somebody saying in politics, "Well, the performance of my government is not as important as the presentation of my government," that's quite tough. Presentation is important, but what you're essentially doing is turning around to the business section, the economy and saying: "You have to do it the way we think but we don't have to reflect, or indeed set an example, to you of how you should run your businesses." You get that disconnect and the more you disconnect the way you run a government from the way people run their lives and their businesses, the more of an alien creature politics is going to be seen as and the more disconnect you get. So it's a really interesting tension, I think, that goes on.

Going back to your original question, Number 10, as a centre of government, is trying to do lots and lots of different things. This is not a particularly 'this government' or 'the last government' or 'the Labour government' problem, it's a general problem. It's trying to engage with the country in one way or another so it says, "The latest fad is we must do X, the next fad is we must do Y," completely forgetting how people lead their lives and how businesses work. Creating a sort of hybrid model that they think people will appreciate is simply bonkers.

One of my colleagues who is very wise on this made a very interesting point about how it's more important that we have people from very diverse backgrounds. He said: "You know we've done some polling on this; anybody who's an MP is seen as an elitist." It doesn't matter what your background is. You are seen as being something so peculiar that it doesn't matter if you're an Old Etonian MP or if you're a grammar school MP or if you're a secondary modern MP. Just being an MP, just being one of 650 people out of 65 million chosen to "tell us what we've got to do with our lives" – that makes you an

elitist. So mucking around trying to make it reflect society – and you’ve got to try to reflect society by the way – but you can overdo it. That’s sometimes, I think, where Number 10 misses the point of “let’s not forget who it is we’re representing and how people view their lives.”

TKB: You mentioned a few foreign visits you did with the Chancellor and you did lots on your own as well, with the department. Can you talk through what those visits were like?

MG: Yes, it was quite interesting. We went to lots of different places, and there’d be different drivers motivating them. So some of them would be, there’s an event that we need a minister to speak at and can we have a minister come over and do it? A lot of it would be supporting British businesses, and I went on a number doing that. For example, I went to Tel Aviv with the London Stock Exchange to try to persuade Israeli businesses to list in the UK, I went to the Monaco Boat Show to help the British marine industry basically sell more British marine services in Monaco. The boat show was frightfully glamorous, but there are 36,000 people who work in the British leisure marine industry. There’s a lot of people who are selling these boats to rich people, not all of them are rich. You wouldn’t necessarily go to a country just for one specific reason and come back again. I would really enjoy doing as much as I could. So you would pack it in.

Your typical day would start off with a breakfast meeting at 7:30/8:00am, then you go off to a series of meetings during the day. Inevitably you’re tired, you’re jetlagged and all the rest of it, so I would try and have what’s referred to as ‘box time’ for about an hour in the mid-afternoon when I feel slightly sleepy. Then you’d have an hour off, maybe an hour and a half off, mid-afternoon when you could just gather your thoughts. And then you’d get back onto it again and you’d probably finish about 10 o’clock at night after a dinner. So it’s pretty intense, but it’s tax payers’ money, so you’ve got to pack it all in, as long as you don’t end up killing yourself through exhaustion. There’d be 15- or 16- hour days but that’s good.

There was one trip which I organised with a specific goal in mind, and I did this more in the way I’d done it as an investment banker rather than necessarily as a politician going in flying the flag. This was a space mission to America in January last year. I worked with the UK Space Agency and our own people in the department. The idea was to go out very specifically to meet as many US space businesses as possible and try to persuade them to invest into the UK and get their feedback on things like Ofcom licencing of spectrum for satellites and that kind of stuff. That was three or four days solid of just going off and meeting space businesses. It was really interesting and we were potentially solving the rural broadband issue by getting huge satellites to shift over to Europe and be able to deliver broadband. There is more money coming to the UK as a result of this in the space industry. But that was very much driven by my motivation derived from 17 years as an investment banker where you’re going out and you’re flogging stuff on a hard sell basis to another individual.

But it was really, really hard work. Fascinating – you get to go around the world and see all sorts of different countries and different cultures and see where the opportunity is. If I wanted to finish on one particular point, the point I would make is that actually the demand for the British brand overseas is absolutely phenomenal. Speaking as somebody who is very much a firm Remainer, were we to have this referendum again tomorrow, then I would vote Remain again because I think there are a lot of opportunities and I think we can change Europe from the inside. But we don't have that luxury so what are we going to do? My firm belief is we have to get out there. Having met all these people around the world, met businesses in America and Mongolia and these amazing, diverse economies... The bottom line is as long as we can get our head around becoming more international at a domestic level, if our own businesses want to go out there, we have a phenomenal opportunity. This opportunity is not just about us being able to sell stuff to the rest of the world, it's the rest of the world seeing how we can do a trade deal with one of their potential partners and seeing that they can actually do things better by working through the UK than they can by going direct to that other country. For a US manufacturer wanting to sell to India, it would be maybe worth their while to set up a manufacturing plant in the UK because we have a better deal with India than the Americans do. So there's a lot of opportunity ahead of us.

I think DIT is a department which is absolutely at that cutting edge and it seemed to be well run, it's being looked after properly, it's now been given its head by a reformed Number 10 and I think that we've got a great opportunity out there, so let's seize it with both hands.

DT: You mentioned there were tensions with the Foreign Office early on because they lost the trade brief. When you were doing these visits, how did co-ordination with them work and how were you supported?

MG: It was fine. It was very interesting actually because, depending on where you went, sometimes you would pick up a bit of a tension between the ambassador and the guy in charge of DIT out there, or woman in charge of DIT. But that was maybe once or twice and I must have been to 30 or 40 countries, so it wasn't a big deal and I think it was more a personality clash than a structural clash.

The idea of 'One Government Overseas' works extraordinarily well when you get overseas. I went around to big embassies in the US and little embassies in Ulaanbaatar and you go to these various different places and you come away with the fact that they are a happy family of people who are working hard. You've got locally-employed staff as well as people who are posted overseas, and the British people who are employed as locally-employed staff, so there's a bit of a hybrid. Essentially you've got the ambassador who kind of runs it, runs the payroll and all this kind of stuff, and then below that you've got the various different pieces. You've got the consular services, you've got the diplomatic services, and then you've got the economic services and that's run by DIT. But they're all sitting in the same room, they all go off to the same

bars after work and chat to each other and they fall in love and marry. It's great. It's kind of a nice happy family. There's no demarcation and no razor wire separating one department from the other. They seem to get along fine with each other and in that respect it works very well 99 times out of 100. Where it doesn't, it's just usual personality clashes more than anything else.

DT: It's obvious that your background in investment banking was very helpful to you in the work you were doing. What did you find surprising about being a minister and what do you wish you'd had in terms of preparation for that?

MG: I can remember sitting in the very first meeting we had with all these private secretaries and various people had come along, and I was thinking why had I turned down being a PPS? I think being a PPS, a Parliamentary Private Secretary, is a very important job to do because it makes you familiar with the process of how these departments work. I had no idea at all. So I was slightly wrong-footed when I first arrived.

It's a very strange transformation of life. When you go from being a candidate to winning an election, your life changes very dramatically. When you become a minister, it's not quite as dramatic but nonetheless it's still the same thing. Suddenly you're in the select group of 110 people or so who run the country. As a junior minister, you probably don't run the country, you are there to do all the work, but you're not necessarily doing that much of the policy stuff – that tends to be the Cabinet. But there's a very human level, a little bit of help to keep people's feet on the ground.

Some people get slightly carried away with their own self-importance. At the end of the day, you are part of a team, your team is your private office and the people around you and those people who support you. It's very easy for ministers to think they are the gods and “of course you should drive around in cars with flags on the front” and all this kind of stuff. Actually, all you are is a visible face of quite a big team of civil servants. Just getting over yourself is quite an important point, making sure that you don't let all this go to your head. Everybody has their own style, but to me it was very important to look after the staff before anything else for the simple reason that if they weren't good or well supported, then I would be completely crap at my job because you need them behind you. And you are, as I said, the public face of this. You've got to take difficult decisions and it's a high-stress job, but nonetheless you've got to get that. So I think the guidance on how to work with staff could be better. Bear in mind, an awful lot of people have never run businesses before or done senior jobs who come into this, so that's really important.

The second thing is getting a proper understanding of how the process of decision making works. This can be very difficult to find. You're learning a lot of stuff: what is a cabinet write round, what is a COBRA [Cabinet Office Briefing Room A] meeting? I had one fairly early on and I was like: “This is terrifying.” It was with a Cabinet minister and it

was her first COBRA meeting as well. It was about the Olympics. We came out and we started confiding in each other, saying: “God, what is this all about?” Of course, the next one is absolutely fine. It’s just a very new experience. You’re stepping off one conveyor belt onto a much faster one and it’s just adjusting to the different pace and the different level of decision making. To understand how all of this stuff works, it is definitely worth taking ministers off and saying: “This is what a write round is, this is what a COBRA meeting means, this is what it’s all about, this is how you should behave yourself, this is what security means.”

There’s a lot of interesting points about the fact that you are handling a lot of confidential stuff and how do you work to make sure you don’t slip something unbelievably confidential into an anecdote at an after-dinner speech. This has very significant implications. Clearly you just cannot do it but, human nature being what it is, you’ve got to get that right. Help and guidance on how you do that is part of it. So there are lots of different sort of elements. Sometimes media training wouldn’t be a bad thing. Also allowing ministers to have the space to make these decisions. Give them the basic tools to then go off and be creative in their own way. It’s a big role for the Institute for Government.

DT: Indeed. Did the civil service give you the guidance you needed in terms of security, how COBRA worked, what a Cabinet write round was and all that sort of stuff? Did anybody sit you down early on and say: “Here are a few things you really ought to know, minister”?

MG: No. My PS [Private Secretary] at the time was an astonishingly good bloke. They all are, every member of my staff actually was incredibly good and I regret not having any of them with me now for lots of reasons. So the first Cabinet write round came and my PS said: “This is a Cabinet write round and this is what it does.” He was very gentle and explained it. I said: “Goodness, Cabinet write round! This must be really important.” Obviously, it goes on the whole time, so you just have to get it in perspective. He was very helpful.

The COBRA thing was slightly different because it was not a major crisis, it was just making sure that the Olympics ran well in terms of protection of the British subjects who were in Rio. It was a fairly relaxed, brief thing to go through. But I thought: “Why am I going to this? What’s this thing?” An official was coming along, but I think she wasn’t entirely clear either. People who really know what they’re talking about are very clear about it and very supportive, but I think she was a bit confused as well. And it was also in August, we’d just started the [parliamentary] recess, so there weren’t that many people around. I just wasn’t too sure what I was supposed to be doing whilst I was at that meeting and I think if somebody had come along and said, “You’ve got to identify exactly what you’re trying to get out of a meeting or what you’re trying to contribute to a meeting,” that would have been helpful. I subsequently went to another one or two,

about something different, and it was very clear what we wanted to get out of it and so you know what your contribution is going to be.

COBRA stands for Cabinet Office Briefing Room A. So you go into that room and it's quiet, the whole thing about it is a bit odd. But it's just a meeting room, there's no more or less than that. It's got some pretty good technology in it, so you can have screens and you can see people across the other side of the world. Beyond that, it's just like sitting round a table in Portcullis House or a board room anywhere. But you've got some of the finest brains in the country contributing to this.

Years and years ago, I was having lunch with Mark Carney and this was just a one-on-one lunch. We were chatting about housing debt or something, and I was thinking to myself as this very talented individual was speaking, this is an individual who has been an absolute winner from the moment he could walk and talk. He's absolutely brilliant at everything he does. He's a very good ice hockey player. He's just a really talented individual. And he's here as the Governor of the Bank of England because of all that behind him. I'm here because I delivered a few more leaflets than the other guy did at the last General Election and I managed to get myself on the Treasury Select Committee. And there's something which has always struck me about this.

There's a really interesting dynamic between politicians and civil servants. Those civil servants have got to the jobs they're in through decades of hard work, and going through this continual process of evaluation and comparison with their peers until eventually they become the Permanent Secretary or they become heads of department or whatever. You may have a disagreement about whether that process is absolutely perfect, but these are really brilliantly talented people. You go into these meetings with people who are the heads of different organisations and they are only there because of their achievement. And politicians, to a certain extent, bypass all of that. To be a politician, you need to have passion and have a fundamental caring for your community, and you can't do it unless you really do care very much about the world around you, but you don't have to be qualified to do that more than go through an electoral process. You then find yourself as a minister in government and you haven't got the same experience as them. You could have been in that post for a few days or a few weeks. You may not be interested in the post you've got, there are plenty of ministers who are in a post they have no interest in. They've been misallocated. But you've got to ultimately take a decision with all of those other people around you.

How do you use that advice of those people, who are frankly cleverer than most ministers and most MPs? That is something which you need a lot of guidance in. How do you recognise that this person is not trying to undermine you? It's just that they really do know a lot more about this sort of stuff than you and are trying to advise you. They are actually extraordinarily gentle. I mean, if I was a civil servant, I wouldn't have the patience to be able to do it. I'd think: "Why have I been given this crazy, stupid minister in front of me when I know far more about the role? How is it possible that

they can be making the decision?” But they are extraordinarily good in how they deal with ministers. That’s not to say by the way, that all ministers are dim. There are some really talented ministers out there and I’ve been amazed at how good some of them are. It’s a different skill set that you need. But nonetheless it’s a very interesting challenge between where you’ve come from and how you’ve got to the position you’re in and I’m not sure it isn’t easier to become a minister than it is to become a senior civil servant.

DT: That’s an interesting question. There’s a theme in what you’re saying that it’s important ministers get over themselves. How can ministers do that? What advice would you give to ministers beyond getting over themselves?

MG: Humility is a great asset for anybody, particularly in politics. Understanding that you’re just another geezer who’s coming along and doing your best and you don’t have some God-given right to be there, to look down on people and be pompous. You’re just part of a team. You must remember that you are part of a team. How you train somebody to do that, I have no idea. Because by the time you get to the job your character is pretty well defined and you can’t change people’s characters. Having said that, the bright sunlight of scrutiny means when you do do something slightly foolish, you get to read about it all over the newspapers. I’m thinking particularly of the former Labour minister who had a 10-page memo about how he liked his coffee, which the civil servants took straight round to the press. He had a bit of a rough time over that. So that teaches you how to get over yourself pretty quickly when you’re reading about it in the *Mail on Sunday*. But it’s a difficult one. I think you just have to have the right character and I suppose, ultimately, people who are bad tempered and difficult will be found out and those who aren’t will carry on.

I come back to this point I made earlier, which is when you come back to the dynamics of how you get to become a minister, the parameters are not those that people in business would recognise. It’s not about skill or ability, it’s about something else. And that’s a pretty strange way of creating a government. You don’t want to have your government, or any organisation, that’s running something pretty important like the fifth biggest economy on the planet made up from strange decisions.

Particularly in light of having been sacked in the recent reshuffle, you spend a lot of time reflecting over this type of stuff. Inevitably somebody in my position will be thinking about it from a particular viewpoint, whereas other people will think: “This is a fantastic way of doing it, look at me, I’ve got a job.” But we all eventually lose these jobs and you come out of it at the other end with a different perspective. If you’re bad at your job, you get sacked. But when you get told, “You’re doing a really good job, we’re really pleased with you, you’re getting on with everybody else but you just don’t look right,” it’s a bit of an odd thing to be told in your exit interview with the Prime Minister.

DT: So I used to work in Downing Street and as part of that I used to work...

MG: You should have said that before we started.

DT: Not under this government. As part of that, I used to work with the Cabinet Office on Ministerial Code investigations. I'm interested to hear your perspective on being subject to a Ministerial Code investigation? How did that work for you?

MG: The first thing is your perspective on this is going to depend on what the outcome of it was. I was absolutely cleared of any breach of the Ministerial Code, so I'm reasonably relaxed about it. What I would say is this is not a process that anybody who has had anything to do with the legal system would find in the slightest bit familiar. It was very, very strange. It was almost a fireside chat with Sue Gray [Director General, Propriety and Ethics Team and Head of Private Offices Group]. Sue Gray, by the way, I thought was an intelligent, pragmatic and sensible person, and I sort of got how it was being done. There were certain things that she was looking at and she was asking about. A certain amount of it, I think, was optics; how does this look and then what is the crime.

There's absolutely no question whatsoever that what I had done with this Secret Santa shopping expedition eight years ago was not something that was breaching the Ministerial Code. But given what was going on at the time, I think there was a requirement to be seen to be setting a slightly higher bar. So the higher bar was to make sure that I hadn't behaved inappropriately with any of my staff since I'd been a minister, because that then would be in breach of the Ministerial Code. I was hugely relaxed about this because there'd never, ever been any question of that. So she explained this and we talked about what had happened at the time.

What was interesting was I sort of said: "Look, there is a wider context of what happened all those years ago and would you like to meet people who were working in my office at the time who would be prepared to come forward as witnesses?" She said: "No, we don't want to have anything to do with that at all, we have no interest in that." I thought okay, fair enough, because it wasn't part of the Ministerial Code. She could only look as far back as the day I became a minister. So I do see it from that point of view. But had I been found in breach of the Ministerial Code because of something that came as a result of that, whilst the technicality of the legal thing is probably quite clear, not to be able to bring any witnesses forward is quite a challenge.

The second thing is that you don't have anybody acting as an advocate on your behalf within the system. It is literally you and the Cabinet Office without any legal representation. That doesn't have to be a highly-paid lawyer, you could just have an intelligent friend acting on your behalf to make sure the process is being done properly.

Finally, the third point is a report is written, but we never get to see the report. I never asked to see it. I didn't think it was necessary because I was found not to have had any breach.

I did chat to somebody who was pretty good on law, completely informally. I thought I may as well find out what they thought about it. And they said: "It's difficult because you're trying to find a pragmatic answer to this sort of stuff. But at some point some minister is going to lose a brilliant job as a result of this process and if it's challenged legally then the Cabinet Office is going to have a difficult problem trying to justify itself." This was just over a coffee and we were talking about something completely different, it just came up. This is not proper legal advice, I must stress that this is no more than chit chat, but it is an interesting point. If you are going to have these Ministerial Code enquiries, is this something that people in the wider society would recognise as being a proper process? If you have a system that people don't recognise, then it creates another separation between society and the political system. That's something which Sue Gray's replacement will have to think about. It comes back to all the staffing arrangements in Parliament, which are also hopeless and nobody would recognise that either. So there's a lot of this type of thing. Can the man on the bus look at a Cabinet Office enquiry and say, "I recognise that as being something that looks like arbitration," or "When I got sacked from my job I could go along and have an industrial tribunal on this and I recognise what's going on." If they can recognise that, then it's a fair system. If they can't, it just puts politics and government further away from the people we're seeking to represent. That's one of the fundamental problems we have with this. Plus, if somebody does challenge it, in any sort of formal way, it will be interesting to see what happens. I mean, there are no notes taken, the report may even be a verbal report, who knows? I'm sure it isn't. But will this come up in 30 years' time, who knows?

DT: Are you calling for it to be professionalised?

MG: I'm not calling for anything. My starting point was I was fine, so it depends on your view point. However, were I to find myself in the position of being Cabinet Office Secretary of State or Prime Minister, where you have to rely on this, then I think it would be incredibly important to put it into some sort of recognisable structure. If I had to take responsibility for it, I wouldn't be happy taking responsibility for it in its current form and would change it to something better. You don't have to go completely bonkers over it. You've just got to make sure that it is robust and stands up to scrutiny, and that there is the option for people to bring forward witnesses and all the rest of it. And proper record keeping as well.

TKB: You mentioned how big a shift it was becoming a minister. What are your reflections on what it was then like leaving government?

MG: Very disruptive. It's pretty brutal. One element of it was that I just wasn't expecting it. Obviously I had those troubles last year but at the end of it, it was absolutely fine. For various different reasons, I was expecting to have no reshuffle at all. So I was reasonably relaxed. Bear in mind, I found myself on the Monday, when there were all these terrible headlines in the *Evening Standard* about the reshuffle "omnishambles" in terms of the Cabinet. That wasn't going particularly well.

I was winding up on the Customs Bill, so I found myself at 10 o'clock at night at the dispatch box finishing off, looking forward to helping take a bill through. I had a chat with various people afterwards, and then I was in my car at 11 o'clock at night and the telephone rang. I thought it was my wife ringing who'd been watching this, so I said: "Hi, darling, how are you?" And they said: "Actually, Mr Garnier, it's Number 10 switchboard here. Can you come and see the Prime Minister at twenty to nine tomorrow morning in the Parliamentary Office?" I said "okay". You kind of know that it's not good news when you get asked to the Parliamentary Office but I thought given the undertakings that had been made before, this must be something else. You can't quite believe it. Had there not been any other stuff, then I would have realised what was going on, but I was quite confused.

So I wandered in. You have a chat with Gavin Barwell [Theresa May's Chief of Staff] first. I said, "Am I being sacked?" and he said, "Yeah you are." So at least you're not going in to see the Prime Minister completely cold. It's very strange. You go into the Prime Minister's office, there's a table down the middle, there's a sort of L bit to it with a couple of sofas and a coffee table, and she was sitting there. So I sat down and she's obviously prepared a few words she's going to say. You know: "You've done a very good job and this has nothing to do with last year but we need some ministers to make way for a younger and diversified group of ministers and you've been one of the ones selected to make way." By the way, I was replaced by a whiter, older bloke than me... Anyway, she leads with this, and I was slightly taken aback. It's quite an interesting thing because, as I was sitting there glaring quite angrily at the PM [Prime Minister], I was conscious that it was her there talking about what she saw her government doing and there was Gavin Barwell as well. But outside were three heavily-armed security officers. So if you do kick off and get carried away at the wrong moment, somebody might come in and slot you with a nine millimetre. So you have got to be on your best behaviour!

But I was absolutely furious about it, really, really angry, because of actually the whole of the business with the previous year.

There were two elements to it. I can absolutely say without any hesitation at all, it was the best job I've ever had in my life. It played absolutely to every skill that I'd developed in 27 years in the private sector as an investment banker. I was meeting businesses, talking about how to make them richer, as an investment banker and as a trade minister. It was everything I could do. I also specialised in global emerging markets, and whilst the US is not a global emerging market, I was very familiar with this international type of thing. I had civil servants who I hugely respected and just thought these were the cleverest people I'd come across in all my working career. At every level I absolutely loved it. It was a job that I was just so happy with and felt so confident at. This was not just, "I hope I get promoted up to something different because I'm not quite happy with this." It could not have been a better match. So at that level I was absolutely gutted to have lost that.

At a subsequent level, I was doubly gutted because as a family we'd had the previous three months with all this stuff in the press. It had been incredibly difficult for the family, and of course we'd got over Christmas. This was something which we'd got past and it was tough. It is difficult for kids. On the Tuesday, my kids went back to school. I saw a copy of the *Evening Standard* and the big headline was "Theresa May continues omnishambles reshuffle," or something, it was an incredibly bad headline for her. And the splash line underneath was "Sex toys minister shafted." So of course, on the Wednesday, the press was talking about this. My daughter had started a new school in September, and was having a bit of a tough time with it. The same for George, my youngest son who's only 10, but he's slightly too young to properly understand it. So I feel hugely angry that it was the Prime Minister's decision to put my family back into that position. And I have to hold her 100% responsible for that. That was a decision that she made, and she must have known that it would cause yet other problems and to prolong, and that is something which she has to take responsibility for. I feel very, very angry and cross about that.

The trouble is you've then got to reinvent your career. It's only been a couple of months since that happened. It's a difficult one. I'm hoping something in the pipeline might come along, but it's trying to work out what you're going to do with your time. You start off your career as a backbencher, you set the target of being a minister, you get on to select committees, you do all that. You go along and you're the Toady in the Chamber, we've all seen the sketch writers. You stand up and say, "Is it right that my Right Honourable Friend as Chancellor of the Exchequer is so fantastic he should start wearing his underpants outside his trousers and a cape and an S on his chest?" and all that kind of thing. You go through all that and then you come out at the other end of it. A lot of the reason for doing that is because you ultimately want to become a minister. If you feel that your future is behind you in Parliament, then it's quite a change of life and you've got to think about this. I don't like to think that my ministerial career is now behind me. I would hope to do something else. But it's slightly frustrating.

There'll be a new prime minister along at some point. We've no idea when but inevitably there will be a new prime minister. That prime minister could of course be a Labour prime minister, in which case you have to think very carefully about the whole thing. I've spoken to several other ministers who lost their jobs, some of them some time ago, some of them more recently, and they were saying you go through this process, a Kübler-Ross model of the five stages of grief. You're angry, you're disappointed, you think perhaps it was a mistake, they didn't mean to sack me. It goes on and on like that and eventually you come to terms with the fact that your ministerial career is behind you and you've just got to get on and do other stuff. You've got to work out what it is you want to do and it is strange.

I'm two months into it and I'm trying to figure it out. I've been meeting up with a lot of financial services people. I didn't go back on the Treasury Select Committee although I stood for election for it. But in a funny sort of way, I'm not disappointed not to have

been re-elected. There's a young guy who's got a career ahead of him and it's right to let him get his lead. The other thing is you can't go back to where you started and try to retrace your steps and hope you can reinvent it. You've got to think more imaginatively. But inevitably we all ask ourselves that question, how long do you want to be a backbencher for? Some people are perfectly happy being backbenchers for decades. But if you're ambitious, if you want to get on and do things, you have to think very carefully about potentially having a third career doing something else completely different. Time marches on. There's a big Venn diagram at home with lots of different options and what fits together. But it's a question of just getting on and trying to find a role to play in Parliament without getting bored, and much more importantly, without getting bitter and twisted. You've got to be positive, you've got to be upbeat. You've got to get out and about and get the stuff off your chest and get on with making a contribution.

Let's not forget, before we're ministers and before we're anything else, members of the Treasury Committee or whatever, you're representing, in my case, 98,500 individuals living in Wyre Forest. They have got to have somebody who is competent and able to do it, to make sure that their life is better as a result of my being their MP. We can get slightly ahead of ourselves when we become ministers, thinking we're far too important to look after constituents, but do you know what? Mrs Miggins' smelly drains may not sound like a big problem to me, but to her it's the biggest thing in her life. If we don't go and help resolve that problem, or whatever it is people have, then they're being let down by their electoral representative and we must never forget as ministers or past ministers, that's our first and foremost duty.

One of the first things Liam Fox ever said to me, back when he was Chairman of the Party years ago, was: "You have to be absolutely clear about what your loyalty is. Your loyalty first and foremost, before anything else at all, is to your constituents. They're the ones who employ you, they're the ones who voted for you, and they're the ones that you must look after. Number two is your loyalty to your country and you've got to think about the national picture. Only when you've satisfied those two things can you then be loyal to your party." It was an interesting bit of advice which I've never forgotten.

DT: You mentioned earlier that you turned down the opportunity to be a PPS. Why was that?

MG: The reason I turned it down was because, as I understood it, you couldn't be a member of a select committee and a PPS at the same time. That was certainly the case back in 2010. I never bothered to find out if that guidance had changed and in fact, it

had. It was changed so that you couldn't be a PPS in the same department. But I hadn't realised that. I was offered the PPS, they never even said what the PPS was for, but I got a call saying: "If we offered you one, would you accept it?" I said: "Not if it meant coming off the Treasury Committee." I wanted to stay on the Treasury Committee, so that was that. But that was the reason I turned it down. Had I realised you could do the two things, they weren't incompatible, then I would have done it. There are PPS jobs and PPS jobs of course. But you would never turn down one for the big four: Prime Minister, Chancellor, Foreign and Home Secretaries. It does give you the opportunity just to figure out how the bigger stuff works. There's an awful lot of running out and buying the cheesy moments for the minister's drinks party in his office and all that kind of stuff. There's a bit of low grade stuff going on, passing notes and all the rest of it. But the experience it gives you as being an apprentice, learning how these things work, is second to none. I suspect if you spoke to someone like Sajid Javid, who was a PPS very early on and minister very early on, he would be quite strong about how useful it is to do it.

DT: What advice would you give to a minister working on Brexit?

MG: The Brexit ministers have got a ferociously technical job to do. What you need to do is get your head around some really contradictory and complicated legal elements. I'm not sure that as an individual you can. It's impossible to be able to think so comprehensively about these various different issues. So I think as a Brexit minister, your most important job is to work out who your advisers are and where you can get separate, impartial advice. In something like Brexit, there are so many emotive feelings out there. They've got to deal with this problem of the Northern Ireland border, and the Gibraltar border as well, which is incredibly difficult and contradictory to what we want to get out of Brexit. None of them are legally trained, so they've got to work out very carefully how to get their advisers, and make sure their advisers are true advisers and not ideologically motivated. They've got to be very sensible people. I'm not sure how they're going to be able to resolve this but who knows.

DT: What preparation do you wish you'd received before you became a minister?

MG: I go back to the PPS thing and just more technical guidance on what you're expected to do as a minister, having a lesson in that. You could probably spend a week just going through that technical side of things. Before you even start on the briefings of your department, you've got an awful lot of stuff to get you up to speed. Having been a minister now, you don't have to worry too much about that. As you move on, you can pick up the brief a lot quicker without having to learn the process of stuff.

You get some extraordinary questions when you first arrive: "How would you like us to address you, minister?" Simple things like that. I was surprised about that at the beginning, I never really thought about it. In the end, I came to the conclusion that the job of being minister is nothing to do with me. It's nothing to do with my skill or

anything else, but it is part of the Government, and as a result, the status of it needs to be maintained, not for my sake but for subsequent ministers' and other ministers' sake. So that when we're in public, in a place where it seems appropriate that a minister should be referred to as 'minister', then that would be the right thing to do. But if anybody called me minister in my private office I didn't like it, frankly. It wasn't my thing at all – call me Mark.

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