Rachel Withers (00:32)
Hello and welcome to Cut Through Crikey's spin-free analysis of Australian news, politics, and power. I am your fill-in host, Rachel Withers, and today I am joined by journalist Michael Sainsbury to discuss a long read he's written for Crikey, in which he speaks to a number of voters who are planning on voting for One Nation, voters who are not quite what you might expect. Michael, welcome to Cut Through.

Michael Sainsbury (00:55)
G'day Rachel.

Michael Sainsbury (00:56)
me.

Rachel Withers (00:57)
No worries. Thanks for joining us. look first up, this piece, who did you speak to? Where did you find them? And what were you hoping to get to the bottom of?

Michael Sainsbury (01:06)
Let's take that from the bottom. The

Rachel Withers (01:08)
Ha ha ha

Michael Sainsbury (01:10)
find out the group of people between the 6 to 8 percent that One Nation has tended to poll and vote over the last 30 years and the 25 to 30 percent and who are those other people?

Michael Sainsbury (01:22)
They're not the rusted-ons, they're not the true believers. It's obviously a wide group of people and indeed I found a reasonably wide group of people.

Michael Sainsbury (01:31)
I found them through just contacts of my people I know that kind of lean that way or might know people, people in the country. of a networking thing really.

Michael Sainsbury (01:41)
One thing often led to another. would have been quite interesting to keep going, but there's only so much time.

Rachel Withers (01:46)
Yes. Well I mean the people you you found r they're quite a mixed group. and as you write in the piece, they don't match the redneck caricature that's followed Pauline Hanson.

Michael Sainsbury (01:55)

No, the old redneck

Michael Sainsbury (01:56)
Bogan lives in regional Australia. In fact,

Rachel Withers (02:00)
Yeah.

Michael Sainsbury (02:00)
most of these people I spoke to didn't live in, some had, but most lived in. There's a couple of people in Wentworth, for instance.

Rachel Withers (02:07)
Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Michael Sainsbury (02:08)
A couple at Maloola Bar, lovely lady at Manly, and

Rachel Withers (02:12)
Mm-hmm.

Michael Sainsbury (02:12)
a young bloke who's got a building company in Moss Vale where he

Michael Sainsbury (02:16)
ended up because it was a bit expensive in the city so they've moved to the country although that's not as he said the cheapest part of the country.

Michael Sainsbury (02:23)
there's good work around there there's people with money

Rachel Withers (02:26)
think these are not the image most people conjure when you say one nation voter. But, with one nation sitting at twenty-eight percent in the polls now, clearly there's a lot of them who don't fit the stereotype. but they are nevertheless being drawn to one nation in some of the biggest numbers we've ever seen. What is

Michael Sainsbury (02:43)
Trisecto.

Rachel Withers (02:44)
drawing them to one nation?

Michael Sainsbury (02:46)

probably the biggest thematic was just dissatisfaction with politics as usual.

Rachel Withers (02:51)
Hm.

Michael Sainsbury (02:52)
And we've seen that variously over the years come and go with starting with Australian Democrats.

Michael Sainsbury (02:57)
And there've been a bubble of right-wing parties who've never really kind of gotten much traction apart from once in Queensland. And it's mainly been Pauline Hanson.

Michael Sainsbury (03:06)
Interestingly, I think, and this is the new recent change with the Green leadership, we started to see a of a surge there too. So I think there are people looking on that side as well as the other yeah, dissatisfaction with politics as usual. is the immigration strain and obviously since COVID, there were massive numbers coming in and that's been easy to weaponise by Murdoch media and other mainstream media.

Michael Sainsbury (03:30)
I think there's a sense as well from a lot of them that, smaller interest groups and identity politics have taken over because interest groups are very well organised and they make themselves heard.

Michael Sainsbury (03:42)
And I think it is a general feeling the majority of Australians, if you like, haven't been represented in where politics has gone in the last five years.

Rachel Withers (03:52)
I think what's what's interesting to me is that this anti-major party sentiment has been kicking around a long time. I mean, we saw

Michael Sainsbury (03:59)
Yeah.

Rachel Withers (03:59)
it, you know, the 2022 poll was huge for independence and Greens, the 2025 election, not so much. but then you go right back to Pauline Hansen's last surge in 1998 when she did quite well in Queensland and then had a crack at a a big federal campaign.

Rachel Withers (04:18)
It all fizzled though. Hansenism had a moment, people were sick of the major parties, and she went away and then she came back. But it's was quite stagnant for a while.

Rachel Withers (04:27)
why right now is it accelerating like this? And do you think it's gonna be different to the nineties?

Michael Sainsbury (04:31)
Yeah, look, I think there's

Michael Sainsbury (04:33)
a couple of reasons. And one of the people I spoke to made a very salient point, I think, about

Michael Sainsbury (04:38)
people saw what the government can do and the control that it can have. depending on where you were, obviously you're in Victoria, Rachel, but even everywhere. And one of the guys I spoke to was a fireman who had led the anti-vaccine.

Michael Sainsbury (04:52)
campaign down there.

Michael Sainsbury (04:53)
Now he's not some hippie anti-vaxxer, he's just a bloke from Bondi who seems to be, was a pretty much a Labor voter and just decided he didn't want to be forced to do that and that

Michael Sainsbury (05:06)
As time goes on, we'll see COVID as a real tipping point for a of things. You've also had the rise of obviously Trump and Farage and you can see there's right-wing parties rising across Europe. it's a kind of thematic across the West at the moment. we can't be immune to that. The reasons behind that, know, there's immigration obviously, but I think there's the rise of corporatism.

Michael Sainsbury (05:27)
corporates that a lot of the protests in France, if you look deeper, is about that as well as

Michael Sainsbury (05:33)
immigration. So there's just a, it's almost like a perfect storm if you like.

Rachel Withers (05:37)
yeah. it does feel like the past year especially it's it's all just mm mm.

Michael Sainsbury (05:40)
And I think, of course, social media, Rachel. I mean, you just

Michael Sainsbury (05:43)
cannot divorce the insidious nature of social media and the way algorithms work and the fact that everyone's on their phone and people are just getting information and misinformation from places they never, ever got it from. And again, that's kind of since COVID in a way. it's all

Rachel Withers (05:59)
Yeah.

Michael Sainsbury (05:59)
sort of happened. And that happened during COVID, people were looking at their phones. So if you roll all that up.

Michael Sainsbury (06:05)
a moment that a lot of things are fed into.

Rachel Withers (06:07)
It's interesting you mentioned that this is happening all around the world. We're a bit late to the party in many ways because, you know, we've the UK already had Brexit, the US already had Trump. but then of course last week we saw a massive repudiation of the Trump movement, the MAGA movement in the US midterms. I was wondering w what was your impression of how one nation voters are similar and dissimilar to Trump voters?

Michael Sainsbury (06:31)
you look at what's happening in America, that Trump managed to stick together an amazing sort of coalition, particularly the second time around. and, know, he was staring down bad economic times, to fix a whole lot of stuff and it didn't get fixed. what the pollsters like to call the Latinos.

Michael Sainsbury (06:48)
young men, even sort of men, went across and have all come back now. them and you don't solve the problem and they walk away again. So in a way, maybe we don't find out until One Nation gets some sort of power.

Michael Sainsbury (07:03)
While they're still just promising things and unable to deliver, it's kind of in a safe place.

Rachel Withers (07:10)
did these voters that you spoke to have strong views on Trump? did they see parallels?

Michael Sainsbury (07:15)
I didn't really go there much actually, and it didn't really come

Michael Sainsbury (07:19)
was very, the regular Australians, the normal Australians, the Australia for Australians thing, it was very locally focused.

Michael Sainsbury (07:29)
we saw what happened in the last election when Peter Dutton tried to move too close to Trump, people ran.

Rachel Withers (07:33)
I get y

Michael Sainsbury (07:34)
And

Michael Sainsbury (07:34)
maybe the fact that Pauline Hanson isn't this kind of mesmerising demagogue that

Rachel Withers (07:40)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (07:41)
Donald Trump is, that Nigel Farage can be, she's almost the anti-that.

Rachel Withers (07:45)
Yeah, it's it's really interesting. There's this through line throughout speaking to these people in your piece, and I I think you're writing a follow-up about it, about One Nation being real people, as opposed to the Labour and coalition MPs who who people see as, people who haven't been out in the real world, they've only been political staffers and now they're politicians. But Hansen has managed to maintain this idea of

Rachel Withers (08:11)
being a real person, even though she's been in Parliament and on T V for thirty years.

Michael Sainsbury (08:17)
Yeah,

Michael Sainsbury (08:17)
and taking government money and, who knows what happened when she went to child, but there was also some issues around that.

Rachel Withers (08:22)
how did these people why do they still view her as a real person whereas someone like Anthony Albanese is not viewed as a real person?

Michael Sainsbury (08:29)
a lot of is that she hasn't she hasn't changed was a clear

Rachel Withers (08:33)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (08:33)

message. She hasn't changed. The other parties have changed. I didn't change. Labor changed. I didn't change. Liberal change. That that's very common for the people that were quite engaged with various political parties. And most of them were the young young bloke Jack Priest wasn't so much. But

Michael Sainsbury (08:50)
know, the parties have changed, me, but Pauline hasn't changed. There's

Rachel Withers (08:54)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (08:55)
that kind of feeling that there's a stability there that they don't see with the major parties, which is interesting.

Rachel Withers (09:02)
Yeah.

Rachel Withers (09:03)
when you mentioned the fact that some of them were ex Labour voters and some of them were ex Liberal voters, did was there a difference? Or were they both kind of just e disillusioned and epox on both your houses? Like was there

Michael Sainsbury (09:14)
A little

Michael Sainsbury (09:15)
bit. I think in a way that think the two people I spoke to that would definitely, had come from working class backgrounds and they're, know, one of them is father, grandfather's communist, you know, that real

Rachel Withers (09:23)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (09:25)
old school.

Michael Sainsbury (09:26)
And I think, you know, in Australia, Labour is much more of that. I think

Rachel Withers (09:30)
Mm,

Michael Sainsbury (09:32)

the Liberals are a party that have, because they've been abroad at church or whatever, they haven't really represented anyone except them obviously.

Michael Sainsbury (09:40)
obviously the elites,

Rachel Withers (09:41)
Ha ha.

Michael Sainsbury (09:42)
but people, it's easier to move in and out of the Liberal Party.

Rachel Withers (09:45)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (09:45)
Moving out of the Labor Party is a big deal.

Michael Sainsbury (09:47)
And so I think that the people who had been Liberals, would, you know, under a different leader, you know, might move back. But I think...

Rachel Withers (09:53)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (09:55)
The Labor people have deserted and the leadership, it would take a lot for them to come back. Whereas

Rachel Withers (10:03)
yeah.

Michael Sainsbury (10:03)
it might only take Angus Hastie.

Rachel Withers (10:10)
Andrew Hasty, but I like I like Angus Hasty as a as a summary of the Liberal Party right now.

Michael Sainsbury (10:10)
Andrew Mason.

Michael Sainsbury (10:16)
Then again, one of them, I think a couple of them had mentioned that, yeah, he'd be good except Ben Roberts-Smith. I mean, that's

Rachel Withers (10:23)
Yeah, yeah.

Michael Sainsbury (10:26)
how that's been weaponised is a little bit beyond me and probably another conversation.

Rachel Withers (10:30)
Yeah.

Rachel Withers (10:31)
I mean I think I think the Labour voters in particular are a phenomenon we're only just starting to grapple with for ages. It's been, one nation have been

Michael Sainsbury (10:40)
Yes.

Rachel Withers (10:40)
destroying the coalition. But Labour is now on the ropes everywhere.

Michael Sainsbury (10:44)
Yeah,

Michael Sainsbury (10:44)
and look, I think that that hasn't probably been picked up as much. think everyone thought it was mainly Libs and not many Labor people. I think it's much stronger than that. And when I spoke to the young bloke who's a builder, he said that the Traders he knows, none of his colleagues would vote Labor, none of They might vote

Michael Sainsbury (11:02)
One Nation, they might vote for the Libs or the Nats, but none of them.

Michael Sainsbury (11:07)
Again, that's core Labor Party vote from yesteryear, I guess

Michael Sainsbury (11:12)
just one other thing, Rachel, couple of people mentioned the rise of the Teals had kind of opened their eyes to the fact that a third political force or whatever was credible because I think the Teals have done such a good job of being...

Michael Sainsbury (11:26)
in the public eye and proposing different things. Obviously we've had Helen Haynes, you've got Edward Spender on tax, you've got Monique Ryan on health stuff.

Michael Sainsbury (11:34)
So I think that they've gone, okay, it is possible and that's helped One Nation.

Rachel Withers (11:40)
Yeah. Well I was fascinated. You had a man named Keith who worked in the mines and as a pilot and he was kind of a a liquor spender one nation voter.

Michael Sainsbury (11:49)
Yeah,

Michael Sainsbury (11:49)
yeah. He said, look,

Michael Sainsbury (11:50)
I like a Lebra Spender. She I think she represents Wentworth well. She's got original thoughts. She wants to have, she likes her tax policies. He

Michael Sainsbury (11:58)
said, and he said, look, I need to vote tactically. One nation aren't going to win Wentworth, but I put them first in the Senate.

Michael Sainsbury (12:04)
was another.

Rachel Withers (12:04)
some would consider those opposite

Rachel Withers (12:05)
ends of the spectrum, but he clearly sees them as as of the same, yeah.

Michael Sainsbury (12:08)
Yeah, and I

Michael Sainsbury (12:10)
think the electorate is sophisticated and people do vote tactically and again I think that can get lost in the big sweep of what when you look at a poll

Michael Sainsbury (12:20)
we've seen it in elections when you see the results in the lower house and then you go woo upper house interesting particularly with our

Rachel Withers (12:27)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (12:28)
very low percentages we can end up with people like Ralph Bather

Michael Sainsbury (12:32)
they probably voted liberal in the lower house and they probably hate Ralph Babbitt and somehow they ended up voting for him.

Rachel Withers (12:38)
look, I wanna I wanna move on to think the elephant of any one nation conversation, which is race. you know, it's it's not a not necessarily a huge part of this piece, but how how do these subjects of yours grapple with the fact that it's a party that many people see as as racist and led by someone who who says terrible things? Did they acknowledge it? Did they deny it? Did they just sort of wave it away?

Michael Sainsbury (13:01)
Well, they sort

Michael Sainsbury (13:02)
of, I mean, I didn't, again, I didn't really want to start an argument about racism with people because you, I can guarantee you if I asked any of these people were they racist, they would say, absolutely not.

Rachel Withers (13:11)
Course.

Michael Sainsbury (13:13)
You know, I know other right wing people, including my parents, who say we are absolutely not racist. And now I easily point out times when they're being racist, but

Rachel Withers (13:20)
Mm-hmm.

Michael Sainsbury (13:21)
such a waste. It's such try and have a conversation about.

Michael Sainsbury (13:24)
But a lot of them acknowledge that Pauline Hanson says outrageous things or they don't like some of the racist stuff she puts out, but they're prepared to hold their

Michael Sainsbury (13:35)
Because the dissatisfaction with business as usual, with the uni party, whatever you want to call it, runs so deeply.

Michael Sainsbury (13:43)

that you are prepared to hold your nose. And if you think about any voter when you vote for a party, there's a whole lot of stuff you don't like about the parties you vote for, usually. But you've got it on balance, go, well, that's the way I want to go. Even if it's only, ultimately it's only a 51-49 choice.

Rachel Withers (13:59)
I was struck there was one woman named Jill who was your manly older lady who it's a very teal area.

Michael Sainsbury (14:04)
Yeah, volunteer book plug, yeah.

Rachel Withers (14:07)
yes, and but she she used to love Abbott and she's now gonna vote one nation. But sh she was saying she sort of was a bit a bit anxious to admit it to people sometimes.

Michael Sainsbury (14:16)
said, look, in my area, she said all the women vote teal.

Michael Sainsbury (14:20)
And she said, you know, as soon as you tell them that you're about voting one night, she said they just, she said their voice changes, they look at you differently. You know, it's not like in the olden days, you voted Liberal or Labour, you just say, OK, well, that's it's fine, let's and have a beer. There's a sort of an added opprobium, if you like, in some people are much more judgy.

Rachel Withers (14:41)
it almost suggests that that she is worried about the social judgment that is ascribed to voting for this party. Yeah. Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (14:47)
Yes, absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

Michael Sainsbury (14:51)
And she said, look, just go out to lunch and we don't talk politics because it's not worth anyone's while.

Michael Sainsbury (14:56)
Which is, that's maybe that's just an older, more mature way of dealing with political differences. Whereas when I talked to Jack Priest about, I said, did the boys in the pub talk about politics much? He said, yes, they do, quite a lot. But it's all generally one way.

Rachel Withers (15:11)
Well.

Michael Sainsbury (15:12)
And if you're in a social setting and you know it's all going to be one way, then you'll talk about it.

Rachel Withers (15:17)
one of them did acknowledge, I think, that Pauline Hansen you know, targets minorities. I think I think Keith maybe actually called that evil, which I thought was quite strong.

Michael Sainsbury (15:25)
Yeah, yeah, yeah, was the Asians, now it's the Muslims.

Rachel Withers (15:29)
Yeah, but but he used the word evil in one of your quotes in the piece. And

Michael Sainsbury (15:32)
Yeah, he did. Yeah, he said that's evil,

Rachel Withers (15:46)
he's gonna vote for the party anyway. I how do

Michael Sainsbury (15:47)
Yes.

Rachel Withers (15:48)
they did you get a sense of how how people square that circle of of

Rachel Withers (15:52)
On the one hand, some of the things she d does could be perceived as evil and yet

Michael Sainsbury (15:57)
Yeah, I did get a sense that people a couple of people mentioned that wish that it wasn't Pauline Hanson's One Nation.

Michael Sainsbury (16:36)
And indeed,

Rachel Withers (16:36)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (16:36)
look, they are definitely, even though it's official name of the party, look at all the branding, she's not on

Michael Sainsbury (16:42)
figured out that it's not a good look.

Rachel Withers (16:44)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (16:45)
No one wants anyone to own a party. And I think some of them would be much more comfortable if she was more of a

Michael Sainsbury (16:53)
more of an American's figure.

Rachel Withers (16:54)
unfortunately that is very much her party, but you're right,

Michael Sainsbury (16:57)
Yes!

Rachel Withers (16:57)
that they don't the the the orange, the one nation logo down here in Victoria you're not seeing her face. yeah, it

Michael Sainsbury (17:03)
You say you're not saying it first?

Rachel Withers (17:05)
No, no, we're seeing one nation signs but not her face. So you're right that it's in some ways the one nation phenomenon is a little bit separate to the Pauline Hansen phenomenon.

Michael Sainsbury (17:13)
Yes, think increasingly it is, particularly as they start running lots of candidates in elections and you've got, you've got Warren Pickering down there, we've got Mike Newman up, there are other people have been, apart from Mr Ashby, other people have been allowed to take a leadership role. And I think kind of that started with Barnaby a bit, right?

Rachel Withers (17:34)
Did these voters have any take on Barnaby or was it really

Michael Sainsbury (17:37)
Yeah,

Michael Sainsbury (17:37)
a couple of them did. asked about Barnaby. Look, I think they see him as sometimes a bit of an entertaining figure. There was the guy in Dubbo who had recently been to a big lunch and he said Barnaby told some terrific stories and Barnaby does tell good stories, you know, you get

Barnaby at lunchtime, it's good. But again, I think some of that is also about, Barnaby, the party changed, so Barnaby moved.

Rachel Withers (18:03)
mm. He stayed the same, the nationals changed.

Michael Sainsbury (18:03)
And there's a whole conversation

Michael Sainsbury (18:06)
we can have about the Nats and the fact that one was able to use to be farmers and they kind of did, right? And then they switched to kind of much more being mining lobby.

Michael Sainsbury (18:16)
live in the country and people are a little bit in two minds about the Nats for that reason already.

Michael Sainsbury (18:21)
And so again, One Nation presents itself as an alternative.

Rachel Withers (18:26)
Yeah. So interesting though when when Barnaby Joyce himself is an accountant. But anyway, I digress.

Michael Sainsbury (18:31)
Yeah, I I remember, I remember

Michael Sainsbury (18:33)
leading Barnaby years ago when he first came into, into the Senate for Queensland. And I was doing some stuff around telecoms in the bush. And, he was just a nice review boy from the country. was an accountant, right?

Rachel Withers (18:48)
Yeah, yeah. Both both he and and Hansen have a real authenticity label that just seems to stick no matter

Michael Sainsbury (18:54)
Yeah.

Rachel Withers (18:55)
no matter what. look, I want to talk about something else that these voters expressed, another doubt, which was in One Nation's ability to actually govern. some of them said they don't think they're gonna be able to do it, but they're voting for them anyway. I then I think Jack, the small building business owner, said.

Rachel Withers (19:12)
is throwing caution to the wind.

Michael Sainsbury (19:14)
Yeah, he

Michael Sainsbury (19:15)
said caution to the wind and think he characterised it in, know, when you're 18, you don't care about anything, start, you have a kid, you get involved in politics and you look at the system, you think it's a bit broken and the people run the system aren't going to fix it.

Rachel Withers (19:30)
So what are they hoping a a one nation vote is going to achieve? Is it about sending a message so that someone else then fixes it? Or what what's the what's the outcome if you don't think they can fix it?

Michael Sainsbury (19:38)
I honestly don't know

Michael Sainsbury (19:40)
hard when you people like you and me who've writing about and looking at politics for long

Rachel Withers (19:43)
Yeah.

Michael Sainsbury (19:44)
time. People, there's only a certain amount places that people will go. I mean, maybe if we look back at the Australian Democrats and the history of them, being quite successful. But then when they finally use this oomph a little bit to do the GST.

Michael Sainsbury (20:02)
was the beginning of the end for them.

Michael Sainsbury (20:04)
Well it's almost with these parties it's they're often people want them to force change but then they might not necessarily agree with the change that they bring.

Rachel Withers (20:12)
Mm.

Rachel Withers (20:13)
Mm mm. And once they're a player in the system, they're politicians instead of real people. Yeah.

Michael Sainsbury (20:17)
That's right. And which of

Michael Sainsbury (20:19)
course Pauline is and always has been.

Rachel Withers (20:22)
She fortunately for her, she hasn't shown up and done a lot of actual legislating. So she can say she hasn't really been doing

Michael Sainsbury (20:26)
No, no, no, it was just a bad idea.

Rachel Withers (20:28)
that bit. I wanted to talk a little bit more about how we as journalists actually go about reporting on one nation. You know, obviously we need to listen to everyone, but you know, I think a lot of crikey readers would would think that these voters that that you've spoken to are are overlooking the racism.

Rachel Withers (20:46)
And that they shouldn't be normalized in such a way. and I think these are quite normal people. are we at risk of know, handling one nation voters with kid gloves and focusing too much on the normal ones?

Michael Sainsbury (21:01)
what we need to do is understand who they all are first.

Rachel Withers (21:04)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (21:05)
When it isn't, it isn't our job to people who vote for.

Michael Sainsbury (21:07)
and I think that it's been very easy for people to dismiss One Nation voters as a group. until you can understand people, how can you then start to try and convince them about things?

Michael Sainsbury (21:17)
if you see them as this monolithic group of people who all think like Pauline Hanson, which obviously they don't.

Michael Sainsbury (21:23)
against it's for the other political parties to try and understand these voters and go, OK, they've got genuine grievances in many cases. How do we deal with them? Do we think it's, you know,

you've got to make choices about who you decide you want to try and pick off. that's without understanding it. You can't deal with

Michael Sainsbury (21:40)
you look at what's happened in America and you look what's happened in the UK and Germany and France, the more you poke a populist party from the outside, the stronger they get. Yeah. And the

Rachel Withers (21:50)
yeah. And I we we do we do have examples just from the last decade, yes.

Michael Sainsbury (21:55)
mainstream media can write as many scandals stories about One Nation and put it on the front page. Not going to do any good. It

Rachel Withers (22:00)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (22:01)
might pick a few people away here and there. But you know, if people have got the shits with

Michael Sainsbury (22:05)
politics as usual and the major parties telling them that the party that they've chosen is shithouse these things. What about the other ones?

Rachel Withers (22:14)
I mean, it's interesting you say

Michael Sainsbury (22:14)
with it.

Rachel Withers (22:15)
about the the media because I I would imagine a lot of One Nation voters also don't trust the media anyway.

Michael Sainsbury (22:22)
certainly from my personal experience and Jill, I watched, whatever they call it now, News 24, Star News. And

Rachel Withers (22:29)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (22:30)

my kids say, are they telling you what to think? And she said, no, they just reinforce what I already think.

Michael Sainsbury (22:34)
But, you know, we all, for Rupert for 11 years, so I understand.

Rachel Withers (22:39)
Well,

Rachel Withers (22:40)
we do all like to read and listen to what we already agree with.

Michael Sainsbury (22:43)
Yeah.

Michael Sainsbury (22:44)
another one of the guys, Ken, I he only reads the Richardson report, Richardson letter, which came out of the Larry Pickering report.

Michael Sainsbury (22:51)
I confessed I had not heard of it. And I jumped on

Rachel Withers (22:54)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (22:54)
and it was, yeah, it's very like the Larry Pickering thing apparently was handed across. And that's, literally, that is his sole source of news. So.

Michael Sainsbury (23:01)
It's difficult when people don't have a broad selection of inputs we've got a media here that's very, very dominated by one company.

Rachel Withers (23:08)
This is true.

Michael Sainsbury (23:09)
and

Michael Sainsbury (23:09)
other one is catching up.

Rachel Withers (23:10)

the the thing is though, we still do need to exist in a world of of facts, right? I the the line between fact and opinion can be murky. But some of the things that that One Nation voters say or or some of these voters say, I would say are factually incorrect, such as that, you know, Pauline Hansen's willing to own up to her mistakes and

Michael Sainsbury (23:31)
Yeah.

Rachel Withers (23:31)
she's the only honest one. I mean, what is the role of journalists when

Rachel Withers (23:35)
When presented with an opinion about a politician that isn't necessarily true.

Michael Sainsbury (23:39)
trying to tell people that they're wrong, it's a very

Rachel Withers (23:42)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (23:42)
hard thing to do in a way that will get them to listen to you.

Michael Sainsbury (23:48)
You

Michael Sainsbury (23:48)
just say to someone, they say, well, you I said, well, yeah, this is not true. And they might just say, well, I think it is. you know,

Michael Sainsbury (23:56)
we've kind of, again, we've moved into this weird world where people talk about alternative facts.

Michael Sainsbury (24:01)
people have, as you say, not only just blurred the line, they've completely confused what a fact and an opinion is. Well,

Rachel Withers (24:08)
Yes.

Michael Sainsbury (24:10)
is not what I think.

Michael Sainsbury (24:11)
In relation to a factual inconsistency, I don't think that therefore I can dismiss it. This

Rachel Withers (24:17)
Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Michael Sainsbury (24:19)
is a very weird and difficult world we live in.

Michael Sainsbury (24:22)
I'm all for putting facts up against people and saying, about this? What about this? then you start getting into the what about is and what about, what about those

Rachel Withers (24:29)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (24:30)
people over there? You you talked about dealing with people on the right wing. There's people on the hard left wing who have some very unattractive ideas as well.

Michael Sainsbury (24:38)
it's, it's more about how do you deal with populist opinion, I think.

Rachel Withers (24:42)
Yeah, yeah. And look, I'm not necessarily even thinking journalists should push back against a subject. There's no point getting into an argument with them. But but when it comes to quoting them

Michael Sainsbury (24:50)
No, that's a pain in the...

Rachel Withers (24:52)
listening to them and trying to understand what's driving the One Nation vote, but then what what do we have a obligation to put in print, I suppose, or, you know, in a podcast about what is true and mm.

Michael Sainsbury (25:04)
Yeah, and again, I think it depends

Michael Sainsbury (25:06)
what you're trying to do. In this instance, what we're trying to do is understand why.

Michael Sainsbury (25:10)

minute you start getting into any sort of a political discussion or policy discussion, You've stopped trying to understand why and you started having an opinion. But

Rachel Withers (25:18)
Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Michael Sainsbury (25:20)
I think there's a state, there are stages to it and,

Michael Sainsbury (25:23)
And as I said to a lot of these people, I would be very keen to go back and talk once the Victorian election is over, a lot of them live in New South Wales, start talking about New South Wales election and what they think

Rachel Withers (25:30)
What?

Michael Sainsbury (25:33)
about things there because Labor government in Sydney is a very different Labor government to the Labor government in Canberra. what, boy, does Chris Mims like to tell everyone?

Rachel Withers (25:41)
Yes.

Rachel Withers (25:45)
And they're both very different to the one we have in Victoria for the next

Michael Sainsbury (25:48)
Yeah.

Rachel Withers (25:48)
two weeks or so. look, I I think you've done an excellent job of helping us better

Michael Sainsbury (25:54)
you

Rachel Withers (25:54)
understand this, phenomenon and and the One Nation voter's mind with this piece. I just wanted to finish by wondering pondering perhaps what what would happen if one nation

Rachel Withers (26:09)
i gets in and implodes or, has a bunch of defections or gets in and doesn't actually have the impact people wanted it to have. Where do you think current One Nation voters will turn, or do you do you think they'll turn away completely?

Michael Sainsbury (26:24)
Look again, I think you've probably got a whole bunch. You've got the original Rastodons. I think that group's probably gotten bigger.

Michael Sainsbury (26:31)
take a case who votes for Allegra Spender. the Teals had an upper house list, maybe he'd think about that. know, you've got

Rachel Withers (26:38)
Mm,

Michael Sainsbury (26:39)
Chris, who's in Bondi, who has joined the Jared Ranick's party, the Libertarians.

Michael Sainsbury (26:44)
Which, you know, that's somewhere else. You know, there are other smaller parties.

Michael Sainsbury (26:48)
But yeah, smaller parties will, be a part of the landscape. And I hope they are. It's much more democratic,

Michael Sainsbury (26:53)
you look at systems like New Zealand and Germany, where they have it's much more representative. If you get 5 % of the vote, you start getting seats.

Michael Sainsbury (27:00)
look at New Zealand, it's interesting actually, because they don't have a right-wing populist party. got Act, which is, not the same.

Michael Sainsbury (27:08)
It's much poorer

Rachel Withers (27:09)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (27:09)
of a a libertarian thing, but they've got a bunch of much other smaller parties that they do

Rachel Withers (27:14)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (27:15)
get a say, and

Michael Sainsbury (27:16)
every government they have is a coalition of three or four parties. Maybe that's...

Rachel Withers (27:20)
Mm. So perhaps in a way that's

Rachel Withers (27:21)
diverted the need for a one nation style. Hmm.

Michael Sainsbury (27:24)
Yeah, I think so. Yeah, although it hasn't in Germany. Germany's there,

Michael Sainsbury (27:27)
you know, there's latent stuff everywhere. And look, I think the other thing I want to say about Pauline Hanson particularly and One Nation in an environment where we have social media and people feel as though they can speak up and say things they couldn't say because they say them online and they start saying them offline is that these parties give people permission

Michael Sainsbury (27:48)
to say things that that's quite bits out loud. And then that can get locked into the discourse and is that a good or a bad thing? a more febrile sort of democracy with a broader range of points of views. I mean, that's arguably that's what we want, but it's much more difficult.

Rachel Withers (28:07)
hm. Well, we might be about to find out. my final question, you know, having spoken to people who were, you know, pretty solid Labour and Liberal voters who are now have have given up on those parties, do you think it's it's even possible for the major parties to win back people like Jill and Keith?

Michael Sainsbury (28:26)
right now in Australia, think it's easier for the Liberals.

Michael Sainsbury (28:30)
think we talked about this earlier, Rachel, the top of the liberal party. He's got the most elitist people you can imagine. Angus Taylor, Jane Kim, Jim Wilson, right? If they can change that, it

Rachel Withers (28:40)
Mm.

Michael Sainsbury (28:40)
look a bit more real, in this environment, I think that they would have a better.

Michael Sainsbury (28:45)

I'm not sure what the Labor Party can do at the moment, because if you look at the

Michael Sainsbury (28:50)
look at the Deputy Prime Minister, and the front bench, they all kind of look a bit the same. Everyone knows that Tanya Plivosec's run a race and Penny Wong's run a race, there doesn't seem to be a woman in there that's been promoted properly or is good enough.

Michael Sainsbury (29:05)
another good woman, I think would be useful for the Labor Party, particularly in light of what's happened with the Teals.

Rachel Withers (29:10)
Okay. Well, big memo for Labour, I think, through this piece and this podcast. Michael,

Michael Sainsbury (29:15)
yeah, it

Rachel Withers (29:15)
thank you so much for for joining us and for writing this excellent piece.

Michael Sainsbury (29:19)
Thanks Rachel, I really enjoyed it.