EM: What would you do about Gibraltar?
CL: Well, the first thing we would do is to say that it shouldn’t be used as a bargaining chip in the Brexit negotiations. And frankly, I think it just demonstrates the reckless incompetence of this government that it didn’t see this issue coming, and that’s why, for example, I didn’t vote to trigger Article 50. We felt it should not be triggered at the time that it was, and certainly not triggered with no conditions. And if you compare that with –
EM: Specifically, if I may, on Gibraltar. I mean, one of your MEPs represents Gibraltar. I just wonder what your policy is on sovereignty, for example.
CL: It’s up to the people of Gibraltar to decide that entirely. I mean, it’s not for us to say that, I think it’s entirely for them to decide what they want in terms of going forward. But I think it certainly raises some questions that you have 96 per cent of them who have voted to remain inside the EU. It’s quite hard to see exactly how that’s going to work, just as it’s hard, I have to say, to see exactly what’s going to happen in Northern Ireland with a hard border there as well.

EM: You’re good Europeans. You see no merit in Spain’s claim at all?
JB: No. I mean, it’s up to the people of Gibraltar to make their wishes clear. They’ve done so in the past. They’re clearly doing so again. I think it’s pretty clear. Why would you?

EM: Well, here we are, all of us working on Sunday morning. I want to ask you, though, about one of the policies you’ve been floating at your conference. A three-day weekend, how’s that going to work?
JB: We really wanted to flag this up because we think that we need bold new ideas really for the country. We’re facing the 21st century, a very uncertain world with big pressures from corporate globalisation.

EM: We need more time off to think about ourselves?
JB: Well, you know what, when I was a kid we were told there would be all this wealth created, we’d have this great technological advance. You know what? What we’re seeing is just growing inequality? And we feel that people are being shortchanged. And we’re seeing a right-wing coup over Brexit which is taking us into an even more deregulated situation. We’re facing being a bargain basement corporate, yeah a right-wing - UKIP have said to the government, ‘jump’ and the government have said, ‘how high?’

EM: Did you catch the referendum result at all?
JB: We certainly did. But crashing out of the single market, crashing out of the customs union, we know that a third of environmental regulations won’t transfer across probably, according to the government, in the Great Repeal Bill. That’s not what people voted for, that’s not the kind of country that people wanted.

EM: Alright, so tell me where the three-day weekend fits into what many economists think is Britain’s productivity problem?
CL: I think there’s a lot of evidence that suggests that when people are exhausted their productivity goes down. And what we’re suggesting here is that we are now the sixth largest economy in the world, people are working ever more hours, getting ever more stressed, getting ever more ill health, mental health problems as well. What we want to do is take a step back and think what is the purpose of the economy? What kind of country do we want to be? And do we really want a future where all of us are just trying to work even harder so we’re bringing our
work with us every time we go home in the evenings, at the
weekends? You’re working now, I’m sure you’ve got your
Blackberry in your pocket.

EM: Well I wouldn’t call it work but I want to ask you about where
your work is going. Because there’s been an ebb and flow in
Green support down the years. Now, though, in the spectrum of
British politics you’ve got – if people want something of the left,
they’ve certainly got Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party. If they’re
frantically pro-EU they’ve got the Liberal Democrats saying come
to us. What’s your appeal?

JB: We’re the antidote to UKIP. We want to wipe the smile off
Nigel Farage’s face. We’ve seen in Europe, we’re hosting the
global Greens and we’re seeing how Green Parties right across
Europe are challenging the far right. And Labour are not doing
that. In fact, Labour have capitulated to UKIP triggering Article
50, really rolling over. And there needs to be a strong, robust
voice on the left that’s going to stand up. But it’s also about
putting forward bold radical ideas. You’ve got the Lib Dems, who
are opposing an extreme Brexit, we’re doing that. You’ve got
Labour who are opposing cuts, we’re doing that. But we’re going
one stage further, we’re providing a radical bold alternative that
faces the 21st century. Who would have thought 20 years ago
we’d have hundreds of thousands of people routinely using food
banks? Who’d have thought we’d have five million children facing
poverty, according to Save the Children? This is not the kind of
country that anyone wants. But no one’s really getting up and
getting angry about this. We are.

EM: I want to ask you about security. It’s less than a fortnight
since the Westminster Bridge attack in London. The police are
investigating what the attacker may have believed, which
organisations he may have thought were doing a good job. And
the Green Party website says your policy is still that, ‘it should not
be a crime to simply belong to an organisation or have sympathy with its aims.’

CL: What we’re absolutely clear about is that terrorism is an atrocity, any suggestion that that policy, that was written a long time ago for talking about issues around the ANC –

EM: It’s still relevant, it’s on your website.

CL: Well, it’s our policy as agreed by our conference, and that stays until it is modified at a future conference.

EM: So is this a bit embarrassing?

CL: I think the wording isn’t very helpful right now in the sense that it’s allowing people like yourself to interpret it to mean that in any way we are suggesting that those people who support something as appalling as ISIS will be –

EM: Well, if I come at it from another way, what about freedom of thought? What about freedom of expression in this country? Don’t you want to stand up for that even if it there are terrorist atrocities?

CL: I think that’s exactly the distinction that that piece of policy is attempting to make. In other words, freedom of thought is entirely permissible and it would be very scary if it were not. There’s a distinction between that and the kind of atrocities that we see at Westminster, and quite rightly people going after anybody that’s involved in that. That is without a question.

EM: But it doesn’t sound as if you’ve managed to square those two difficult problems.

CL: I think it does.

JB: When this policy was done, many years ago, it was about –

EM: It’s on a constantly updated website by the way.

JB: Yeah, but I mean, it was done several years ago, decades ago at around the time of the ANC. And when you’re thinking about groups that can be demonised by a very oppressive state, it’s important that you do balance that freedom of expression. We will unequivocally condemn those that are involved in hate crime,
those that are involved in hate action and that’s never up for
debate. But it is important that you balance it. Absolutely.
(ends)