AM: (after quoting Farage) Were you pleased when you saw that tweet?
JA: I didn’t see that tweet. But–
AM: ‘Almost a proper chap.’
JA: Thank you for bringing it to my attention. I’m not quite sure what that means. You say Labour’s big argument was about the single market. Our big argument was with the government this week over the pay cap and their cuts to public services.

AM: Well, it would have been had you not had a hundred Labour MPs or thereabouts – 50, sorry – backing, with others, a motion which was against the views of the leadership. Where Nigel Farage may well have a point is that Jeremy Corbyn has been an opponent of the EU all the way through his career. He has been completely consistent on this subject. In 1975, voted against it. 1993, Maastricht Treaty, voted against that as well. Voted against the Lisbon Treaty. All the way through he has spoken and voted very consistently against the EU. Isn’t the truth that Labour is now an anti-EU party?
JA: No. Not at all. And the Labour Party campaigned to remain in the EU.
AM: Just, just a budge.
JA: Well, we were very enthusiastic in our campaigning, I was very enthusiastic. But we accept the result. The British people voted to leave and we have to accept that. The key thing now is what deal do we get, and consistently since last year we’ve been saying we want a deal that puts jobs and prosperity first, and we want a deal that maintains tariff-free access to the single market, which has the same economic benefits of the single market. The Tories have been all over the place with lots of different competing priorities for Brexit. Our number one priority has
always been jobs and the economy and the prosperity of British families.

AM: From your point of view, what was wrong with the motion against the Labour leadership?
JA: Well, we’ve got a Labour Party position which was in the manifesto that we’ve all just stood an election on.
AM: The manifesto didn’t make it clear whether you would stay inside the single market or not.
JA: No, no, no. But I think, as Keir Starmer said in very eloquent terms when he was on your show two weeks ago, what we want is a deal that puts jobs and prosperity first. We want tariff-free access to the single market. We shouldn’t get swept away in all the sort of constitutional arrangements about what that necessarily looks like. We’ve got to negotiate, or we’re calling for the government to negotiate a deal which maintains jobs and prosperity, allows us to have tariff-free access, allows us to have the same benefits. But what I think -

AN: But – I’m sorry, but you’ve got a leader and a Shadow Chancellor who are staunchly against the whole idea of the EU. They see is as bankers-ran, they see it as a capitalist conspiracy, and the reason I’m asking about this is so many young voters who came to Labour in this election partly because they were upset by the Brexit referendum result have been fooled in a sense. They thought they were voting for an essentially pro-European party, but actually they were voting for a party which is now led from an essentially anti-EU standpoint.
JA: If I may say so, in ever-so-gentle terms, it could be construed as a little patronising to say that young voters didn’t know what they were voting for when they voted for the Labour Party in this general election. The manifesto was very clear, that was a manifesto which the whole party signed up to, including Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell.
AM: Alright. I thought the manifesto was a fudge on that matter, but that’s my view. Can I ask, are you in favour of a second referendum still?
JA: I mean, I have mooted that in the past, but I don’t think that is a position that has broad consensus any more.

AM: So you’ve dropped that?
JA: Me personally?
AM: Yes.
JA: Yeah. I mean, that was something I speculated upon in a discussion such as this, in an interview, but clearly there’s no appetite for that either. Not that I can see.

AM: Alright, let’s turn to the other issue you said was really central, which is public sector pay and austerity. A lot of people watching this programme, you know, nurses, teachers, doctors, fire workers, policemen and so forth, heard Labour say that you would remove the public sector pay cap. What they want to know is how much extra pay they will get in percentage terms or rough terms under Labour.
JA: Well, we think the responsible thing to do is ask the Independent Pay Review bodies to make recommendations. So in our manifesto we allocated around four billion pounds for public sector pay. But we think the Independent Pay Review bodies should come up with a decision and government should accept that. But can I just say this? The reason why this is so important is not just our hardworking nurses and fire fighters deserve a fair pay rise, which is why we put the motion to the Commons this week. The Tories voted it down, despite what they might be saying in the newspapers today. But it also impacts on some of the workforce issues that we’ve got. For example, in the NHS we haven’t got enough nurses because people are leaving and there’s reports suggest that nurses are going to stack shelves because they won’t stay within the service. Let me just make this quick one –
AM: European nurses not coming in.
JA: And European nurses not coming in. That’s good. But you know, the NHS is spending something three billion pounds on agency work. So we believe if we can get these workforce issues under control in the NHS we’ll also save money on the agency bill in the NHS.

AM: Alright. Can I suggest that you can’t really hide behind the Pay Review Body recommendations, because they have made it crystal clear as is the case now that they operate in a kind of environment where an envelope is set by the politicians, set by the government. George Osborne says it’s going to be a one per cent pay freeze for public sectors, the Pay Review Bodies do the detail underneath that. And therefore Labour really has to tell people what kind of pay rise you’re proposing to offer.
JA: Well, you have actually just exposed the sort of mealy-mouthed response of the government now, because they’re saying wait for the Pay Review Bodies even though they’re the ones who are insisting on a one per cent cap. We’re saying to the Pay Review Bodies get rid of the one per cent cap and give a fair pay rise. Well, I think they should consider giving people a pay rise in line with earnings. But clearly –
AM: In line with earnings –
JA: - they’re not going to be able to overturn the 14 per cent loss that NHS workers have had over seven years. But they have to come up with responsible recommendations which we would accept.

AN: You would accept. So if they say that pay in the public sector should rise as pay in the private sector, in line with earnings as you’ve just put it, that has been costed by the IFS as requiring an immediate £6 billion a year now, rising to nine and a half billion pounds a year in the course of this parliament. That’s a lot more than you budgeted in your manifesto. You budgeted four billion.
JA: We budgeted four billion, but don’t forget we also think we will save money across the public sector more widely. For example, in 2015-26, 3.7 billion was spent on agency workers in the NHS, for example. We think we can bring that bill right down.

AM: Okay. One of the others points that’s been very, very clear this week is that Labour under Jeremy Corbyn has a new attitude, has a new feeling. He’s sacked those three frontbenchers, he’s pumped up, he’s got more authority that his past. Ian Lavery, who’s now very powerful in the party machine said that he thinks Labour has been a broad church in the past, perhaps too broad a church. Do you agree with that?

JA: I don’t really know what that means. The Labour Party has always been a broad church, and I’m not quite sure of the context of the interview, I’ve not seen it. But we’ve always been a broad church, we’ve always had different opinions. But we should remember that we are a united party now. We’re taking on the Conservatives over their cuts. By the way there’s big cuts also coming to the NHS, something called capped expenditure plans, which Jeremy Hunt has refused to give any details of. We in the Labour Party are going to be increasing the pressure on Jeremy Hunt on this over the next few days, asking for him to give details of cuts. But look, we are a broad church and we always have been.

AM: Very, very quickly, I think what Ian Lavery was getting onto was the fact that the left control the Labour Party now, and have a right to control the Labour Party after a very, very successful campaign, and if they want to impose a kind of new discipline of responsibility and authority led by Jeremy Corbyn they have an absolute right to do that.

JA: I think the point I suspect Ian Lavery is making is that Jeremy is now secure as leader of the Labour Party, nobody’s going to be challenging Jeremy. We’re not going to have the turmoil we’ve seen in recent years. The turmoil in British politics is now in the
Conservative Party, which today’s newspapers, there’s lots of different ministers saying that they want to get rid of tuition fees, they want more money for schools and so on, and actually it’s the Conservatives who are in a complete mess.

AM: Sounds to me rather as if you disagree with Ian Lavery on that point, but time is up.
(ends)