AM: This big victory of yours clearly changes things for the Labour Party, what is the major thing that it changes?

JC: Well, I’ve been elected by a very substantial majority of the membership, supporters and affiliates, I think that is an indication that the members want our party to challenge the government on austerity and change to go in the direction of saying we want a more equal and decent society in Britain, and that’s what we’re going to campaign on. So we started yesterday by announcing we’re going to do an education campaigning day next Saturday about grammar schools and 11 plus.

AM: You said to the Observer newspaper yesterday that because of the huge membership this has to be reflected much more in decision making in the Labour Party. Now, the Labour Party has a pretty Byzantine, complicated and largely behind closed doors way of making policy at the moment. Are you saying then that you’d like the big decisions to be taken by an open vote of the mass membership?

JC: It’s a pretty good description of the way things have often been done in the Labour Party, if I may say so. What I want is a more open party, and we need to look at democracy and involvement of members and supporters in all aspects of party decision making. So I have asked the National Executive to look at the ways that we democratise in bringing more members into decision making, policy making coming from the grassroots, and greater trade union membership involvement in it. Because there’s a lot of thirst for change out there, people want to see things done differently.
AM: So if somebody watching has joined the party relatively recently, supported you, is part of this big new mass membership, they might was a direct say themselves, through their local party in, I don’t know, policy over Trident or nationalisation, whatever it might be. Are you saying that you agree those people should have a bigger voice?

JC: What I want is more power for members, more power for supporters in order to ensure that we get policies that do have support throughout the whole party. Take, for example, anti-austerity strategy. Yes, we’re opposed to what the government’s overall economic strategy is, but it’s also a question of what you invest in, how you invest in it, which railways you upgrade, which roads you change, which broadband you bring in which new industries you support. And there’s a whole lot of skill sets out there that we need to utilise.

AM: Just going back to the original point, will those members get big majority voting in those big decisions? If you’re a new Labour Party member will you get a vote in the decisions of the Labour Party?

JC: You of course will through your local party. I would like to take that in a way that people could participate much more. Much more online policy development, much more online consultation as well. So we have sort of real time discussions.

AM: Big, exciting conferences where there are votes on the floor and you don’t quite know how they’re going to go, I dimly remember those from the past but we haven’t seen them for a very long time.

JC: You were excited by them, weren’t you?

AM: I enjoyed them hugely. I’m a journalist, of course.
JC: Yes the party conference, I think, needs to move much more to the centre of concluding our policy debates, and people can then see what discussions we’re having, and I think that’s actually a healthy thing to do. Surely a conference ought to be representative of members and their feelings.

AM: You’ve had a great success inside the party, but it’s as nothing to the challenge of becoming Prime Minister. If you want to be a successful socialist Prime Minister in this country you can’t do that unless you have a parliamentary party at your back who supports you. I know there’s lots of argument now about deselection, what that means and doesn’t mean, but in the end doesn’t that mass membership, with their views, deserve to be represented properly in the House of Commons, and don’t you, if you’re ever going to be a socialist Prime Minister, need to have the support at your back that you don’t have now?

JC: I’m reaching out to all our MPs. Having lots of discussions with them. Very talented people we have. There are some differences of policy opinion, yes, but there is also actually, there’s a great deal of unanimity about it. Look at the campaign we’re mounting on selection in education. Look at the campaign on the NHS, on workplace benefits, all those issues. Actually the party’s quite united.

AM: Well, they walked out of your Shadow Cabinet and then there was a very vituperative leadership campaign. Terrible things were said on all sides. People said awful things about you –

JC: Really?

AM: They certainly did, I have a list of them.

JC: You’ve only got half an hour on the programme.
AM: I’ve only got half an hour on the programme. But people like Tristram Hunt and others, they surely now have to shut up, they can’t carry on saying the kind of things about you and your leadership and your general uselessness, which is the word they use when they’re being polite, now that you won a second leadership campaign.

JC: Well, the big advantage of this is that I have never said anything personal about any of them. I don’t use that kind of language and I don’t think anybody else should either. And so let’s move on.

AM: Let’s move on.

JC: Let’s move on, and that’s exactly what I said in my welcoming speech yesterday.

AM: Move on, but keep your lips a little bit tighter.

JC: Move on and discuss policies, where you agree or disagree, put your contribution into that policy debate, put your contribution into what we do in parliament, into representing the people that have sent us there, put your contribution into making our party and our movement stronger. We have a massive membership, that surely is something everyone should be pleased about.

AM: You’ve rather dismissed in the past the idea of de-selection of MPs going on around the country, but there are two things I need to ask you about. One, it is already happening, there are places, Wallasey, near here, down in Hove, there are moves to remove, as it were, Blairite or centrist MPs or candidates, people who are perceived to be that. Is your message to CLPs don’t do that, that is actually perpetuating the divisions and fights already started?
JC: My message is concentrate on policies, concentrate on campaigning, concentrate on getting out what we’ve got to put across as a message. My message to our MPs and parties is make sure that you agree on those policies and get out there and do it. But I have to say this: that we are going through, unfortunately, a boundary change, every constituency boundary’s going to be changed. Two million voters will be unrepresented in the new – they will have votes but they won’t be represented in the calculations for the new constituency boundaries, so they’re very unfair. And therefore a new selection will have to take place in every single constituency where the sitting MP with a substantial geographical coverage to the new area will automatically be shortlisted.

AM: Do you want to see most of those MPs reinstated as Labour candidates, or would you like to see a Labour Party, after this process, that is more representative of your kind of politics?

JC: Listen, I wish them well. The relationship between and MP and their constituency is a complex one. It’s not necessarily all the policy tick-boxing exercising, it concerns the relationships to the community, the effectiveness of representation, and all those issues. Let’s have a democratic discussion, and I think the vast majority of MPs will have no problem whatsoever.

AM: Let me put to you something that Lord Mitchell, who has just resigned from the party in the Lords, has said today. He said first of all that he has to go because he thinks Momentum, Corbyn’s people, he says, ‘have the Labour Party by the throat,’ is his expression. But he then goes on to say something quite disturbing –

JC: Has Lord Mitchell ever met anyone in Momentum, has he ever spoken to anyone in Momentum?
AM: I haven’t asked him, I have to confess. But he also says this, and this goes back to, I know, issues in the past. He says, ‘I think it’s very difficult if you are Jewish and you support Israel to be a member of the Labour Party.’ That’s disturbing that he thinks that isn’t it?

JC: It’s unfortunate he would say that, because it’s not a fair comment. And I would hope that he would reflect on that because clearly there are diverse views within the party on issues in the Middle East, but there’s absolute unity in the part of opposing any form of anti-Semitism, any form of racism in the party. That is very clear.

AM: Let me move on to big policy issues. You said there were two areas particularly that you singled out you wanted to take to the Tories. One is Brexit and one is the economy and austerity. Let me ask about both of those. When it comes to Brexit do you accept that all of those people, many of those people who voted to leave the EU did so because they were worried about the scale of migration. Boris Johnson was saying that this country has been mainlining on too much migration for too long, and that therefore there has to be a cut in the number of migrants coming into this country.

JC: It’s quite hard to keep up with Boris Johnson’s changes of opinion actually. And so that’s the latest opinion of Boris Johnson?

AM: That’s the latest opinion, but I stick with my question. Free movement of people, does that have to end, in your view?

JC: I think if we have a market arrangement with Europe, then there’s going to be a demand by Europe, that’s absolutely clear, particularly by Germany, saying that has to include the rights of people to work in different parts of the European Union and Britain, which will then of course be outside the European Union,
be a part of the market. There is also the question of the British people working in Europe, and two million British people have made their homes in Europe as well. And so - if I can just conclude the point. The other issue, which is the one that caused the most concern is the undercutting of wages and conditions and the impact of migration on some communities. So the migrant impact, trying to deal with that, but also the question of the undercutting of wages, bringing people in on lower than local wages, destroying local conditions. So for example, in Lincolnshire there is a average wage rate that is considerably lower than the rest of the country, and that applies in other place.

AM: I bet that infuriates a lot of people, many of whom are Labour voters, all around the country – but can I return to the basic question is going to be – and this is an argument inside the government too, about hard Brexit or soft Brexit. In other words, do we accept we don’t have access to those markets and we have a real turn of the tap off on immigration, we have the end to free movement. At some point you’re going to have to say, yes, I accept there has to be an end to free movement, or no, I don’t accept that and I’m going to argue in favour of free movement. So which is it?

JC: If you go for hard Brexit, which there are some elements in the government want to, then there is a huge hit going to be taken on manufacturing industry in Britain because the European market which they rely on extensively, 70 per cent of British exports go to Europe, are going to be hit very, very badly. And if their vision is of Britain, of a sort tax haven offshore from Europe, with great levels of inequality and also less manufacturing industries, I’m not sure that’s something that’s very appetising for most people in this country. But if they want a deal with Europe, if they want a deal with Europe, which does contain those markets, which does include – there isn’t this undercutting
process, that there is some equality across Europe. But I’ve been trying to...

AM: So you wouldn’t go for hard Brexit?

JC: Yes. And I have been reaching out by meeting members of the Party of European Socialists, many of whom are in government all across Europe, so we have some kind of agreement on what sort of future economic relationship we have with Europe. It’s the key question. If we don’t have an economic relationship.. where are the new trade arrangements? Britain hasn’t negotiated a trade treaty for 40 years.

AM: Can I ask you about the other big controversy at the moment in this area, which is that ministers have said that parliament is not going to be told how those negotiations are going, none of the detail, until it’s all over and the deal is done. Do you think that is democratic and sustainable?

JC: No, I don’t think it’s democratic and I don’t think it’s sustainable at all. This is a huge political issue. It’s the most significant economic issue facing Britain in my or your lifetime. And I think at the very least parliament should be fully informed and told. So we’ve set up a Brexit team led by Emily Thorneberry, our Shadow Foreign Secretary, that is meeting obviously regularly here, is demanding information and all that from the government, but is also meeting in Brussels, meeting our colleagues all across Europe and have invited leaders of socialist parties and trade unions and others from all over Europe to come to London later this year to have a full conference on how we will work with them to ensure that we accept the result of the referendum, we understand the result of the referendum, but we build a strong economic relationship with Europe in the future. That surely is what a responsible opposition should do. It’s a shame the government can’t do the same.
AM: Let’s carry on talking about the economy then. At the heart of your economic proposals post-austerity is a 500 billion pound infusion into the British economy. That is an eye-watering sum. To give people a sense, it’s about 70 per cent of everything that the government spends in this country in one year. So it’s a huge –

JC: Wouldn’t be done in one year of course.

AM: Of course. But it’s a huge increase in borrowing and I know interest rates are low at the moment, but they go up as well as down. Have you any calculations on how much British taxpayers are going to have to spend in interest rates if you do this?

JC: It will be an investment that brings in greater tax income, cos you grow the economy, you get greater tax income. We’ve had six years now of austerity in Britain and we’ve had six years of austerity that has reduced wages, reduced living standards for many people, cut public services in many places and has not results in the economic growth that the government predicted. We’re saying invest in order to grow.

AM: How did you come up with 500 billion?

JC: A calculation based on the rough needs – it’s obviously approximation when you get to large things.

AM: It’s not just a nice round figure?

JC: It’s not a nice round figure but -

AM: It is a nice round figure.
JC: Well it’s a nice round figure but shared out across the whole country it gives you the infrastructure you need on railways, gives the infrastructure you need on broadband, gives you the investment you need in developing high tech, sustainable industries in Britain which this government is patently not doing. We’re losing our inventions elsewhere because we don’t have a banking system that’s prepared to invest in them.

AM: Now this is very much the kind of language that was used by previous Labour governments, funding the NHS and all sorts of parts of the infrastructure system for a long period of time and we know how that ended. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown poured money into the British economy and then came the crash and the British people decided they could not be trusted because they had spent too much, instincts were still borrow and borrow and borrow. And here you are coming back saying much the same thing.

JC: The crash was not caused by government investment in services in Britain. It was not caused by –

AM: The Labour Party was punished for it.

JC: Well, it was not caused by the number of nurses or teachers we have in Britain. It was caused by a deregulated banking system that was investing in subprime mortgages in the USA and there was a contagion because of it. Since then the banking regulation does require them to have sufficient capital assets to protect them against that and there’s much tougher regulation on the banking system. Maybe it should be even tougher. There’s a good case for that. But it was not government expenditure that caused the crash.

AM: For whatever reason the idea is deeply rooted in British voters that Labour governments borrow and spend too much. Are
you not taking a huge political risk by ‘doubling down’ as the Americans would say on that?

JC: We’re saying invest to grow. Invest in housing – put it this way. We’re spending 9 and a half billion every year, 9 and a half billion, get that figure on subsidising the private housing market. On the private rented sector through housing benefit payments to tenants who have a right to access those benefits. If those people were in social housing, council housing, the cost would be infinitesimal compared to 9 and a half billion, and we would have that money to invest in building houses which in turn creates jobs all down the supply chain. Isn’t that’s a sort of virtual circle?

AM: Can I ask you a slightly philosophical question about capitalism. Two different views of capitalism on the left generally. One is that this is a source of great dynamism, entrepreneurialism, creates big ideas, creates wealth. It also creates inequality and waste and a social democratic government has to deal with the inequality and clear up the waste, but basically celebrates capitalism. And the other view is actually no, capitalism is a system driven by greed and individualism, hugely destructive and in the end we want to replace it with a socialist system. Which side are you on?

JC: Well, you put it in a very stark way. I think there has to be a mixed economy. I do think there is a huge role for the public in running public services, obviously, like the NHS instead of privatising them. I do think there’s a very important role for the state in investment in industry to ensure we have a strong manufacturing base as Scandinavian countries and Germany does. I want to see a system where we produce what we need for people that need it, rather than the greed of those who don’t need it.

AM: In the old days on Merseyside there was lots of talk...
JC: Out here.

AM: Out here of nationalising the top 100 monopolies, you’ll remember it well...

JC: Was that 170 I think it was.

AM: 170.

JC: No I’m not up for that, I never was up for that actually. What I do think is that we have to have public control over key services, health, education, transport. That we have to have a government that’s prepared to invest in the economy and participate in the way that successful manufacturing economies do have a role for the state in developing manufacturing industry. It’s not a bad word.

AM: You have used the word ‘nationalise’ the NHS properly. That’s the NHS properly nationalised.

JC: Yes.

AM: Now does that means that those private companies which take an example at random, are doing glaucoma operations more cheaply and more effectively and faster than the current NHS can manage should be banned? Or why should the NHS stop buying those services?

JC: I think the NHS is better served if it does the services itself, inhouse –

AM: Always, always?

JC: Well, you and I have obviously used the NHS every – in fact probably every viewer on this programme has used the NHS, and
we also recognise the dedication of those staff. When you bring in a barrier between the local hospital and a contracting company to do some services it actually often ends up more expensive.

AM: Right at the beginning of - right.

JC: We have an NHS dominated by a culture of contracting out services.

AM: We only have an NHS because Nye Bevan did a series of very important deals to found it, of which the most controversial was allowing British doctors who were against the NHS to carry on doing private business. Now there’s a proposal at the moment that the money that they earn from private work should be published and that’s controversial. But would you go further, would you say British doctors working inside the NHS should not be moonlighting doing private work as well?

JC: Most of them actually only do NHS work actually. The vast majority of GPs don’t do any private work and in many cases...

AM: Quite a lot do.

JC: ...and in many cases their surgeries are actually owned by the NHS. Their buildings are owned by the NHS and they are contracted to the NHS and indeed in many places there are actually salaried GPs working. I’ll tell you what, a lot of salaried GPs tell me they prefer it that way.

AM: So that’s not an answer to the question is it?

JC: No it’s not an absolute on it because I want to see an NHS that does provide for all and obviously you have discussions with the doctors on how they go about doing things, but the - I’ll tell
you this – the dedication of the junior doctors and others shows just how determined they are to save and support the NHS.

AM: Quite a lot of people who would agree with you about that and about some of your economic ideas are nevertheless worried about your ideas on defence. You want there to be a minister for disarmament in the Cabinet and a peace minister as well.

JC: The same thing actually.

AM: Same thing. So this peace and disarmament minister, if you were prime minister and the terrible things going on in Aleppo were carried out under your watch, would you be sending a peace minister to Aleppo? Would they be talking to the Russians? What would this peace minister be doing?

JC: I’d be totally engaged with trying to bring about urgently a ceasefire and I recognise this recent ceasefire’s collapsed and that is tragic beyond belief. I would have engaged with the Geneva talks from the very beginning, engaged with Iran, Saudi Arabia and everybody from the very beginning on this to try and bring about political settlement. Look, the lessons of Iraq, the lessons of Libya, Chilcot and the Select Committee Report on Libya indicate that we haven’t done things as well as we might. There has to be a political engagement. There has to be an engagement which deals with the issues at source for a political solution.

AM: Mostly, when I ask you a sentence beginning do you agree with Tony Blair, I know the answer, but in this case I wonder whether you agree with Tony Blair when he said this weekend that he agrees that the prosecutions and the criminal investigations against British troops in Iraq and Afghanistan are unfair and have put too much pressure on people who went out here under difficult circumstances and he’s agreed with David Cameron, Theresa May and others that this should be stopped.
JC: I have spoken to a number of soldiers that have served in Afghanistan and Iraq and I recognise the awful conditions that they were asked to serve under and the difficulties they had with that, but I do think there has to be a recognition that we’ve signed up for international law on the behaviour of troops. America are going through the same experience as to do other European countries even though they’re not signed up to the International Criminal Court, so I think there has to be investigation. Saying never to prosecute I think would be a step too far.

AM: Absolutely. Talking about terrible things that happen in war I was discussing with Boris Johnson this attack by the Russians on the UN aid convoy. Twenty people were killed, aid workers completely innocent. Was that a war crime?

JC: It sounds awfully like it to me. Absolutely terrible what happened there because the aid convoy was there because there had been an agreement on it, it was there because we were moving towards a ceasefire which would bring about some relief to that people going through such a terrible situation, and it’s unthinkable what they did on this, but there’s also of course the question of playing our part in trying to help the refugees from Syria and not just leaving them in camps but actually trying to make sure we bring about a political settlement to allow a return, but also we don’t leave people stuck in camps for years on end.

AM: Do you think the defence budget should be higher or lower than it is at the moment?

JC: I don’t think it should be any higher. I think it should be efficiently used but I also think the defence budget should also be used where necessary so that Britain is very good at actually giving aid and comfort during emergencies. Look at what we did
during the Ebola crisis and other things. I think defence establishment can be quite helpful in that sort of area. And listen to what Clive Lewis has to say about that this week.

AM: Looking ahead, you’ve said in the past that you would think the defence budget should be lower and the reason I ask that is putting Trident to one side completely, a lot of military people in this country say that we are simply not well prepared for any kind of future threat in Russia or anywhere else. We need to spend more on conventional forces, tanks, soldiers and all the rest of it.

JC: I think the issues are of cyber security. The issues are of terrorism and security that goes with that and random attacks and that is not the same thing necessarily as having huge land based defence forces. I do think you have to look at what security is about but you have to look at it in the terms also of the political objectives you face, or deal with all around the world to try to bring about political solutions to what look like intractable problems. We’ve been through a period of putting a lot of money and a lot of troops in a very dangerous place and we’ve lost a lot of troops as a result of that. I think we need to reflect on that.

AM: Do you support the increase in size of MI6 at the moment?

JC: Um. I don’t necessarily think that’s particularly necessary. I think we have – there has to be obviously security for everybody but I’m unclear as to why they want to be so much bigger.

AM: One final tax and spending question if you like. You’ve talked about paying for getting rid of tuition fees by raising Corporation Tax, where is it now and where it should go to pay for that?

JC: Corporation tax is amongst the lowest of the OECD countries. It’s much lower actually than the United States. I think it should go up to the sort of 20% area that it was at before.
AM: It’s 20% now.

JC: Putting it down, the government’s plan is to reduce.

AM: They want to bring it down to about 17, so it stays at 20%, you think it should go higher?

JC: Not much higher but I do think we have to recognise that we are well behind the curve of most European countries on the way that we treat our students in higher and further education. The fact that we leave students in massive debt and the fact for the first time this year for many, many years the number of working class youngsters going to university is beginning to reduce. We’re turning our universities in a direction of the elite rather than in the direction of everybody. That to me is not just sad, it’s wrong and unnecessary and wasteful.

AM: We all remember the dramatic overnight phone calls with Hilary Benn and what followed. Would you like to see Hilary Benn back on your Shadow Cabinet?

JC: He wants to become the Chair of the Select Committee on Brexit.

ENDS