ANDREW MARR:
Events tend to move fast after an election defeat, as you will have spotted, and no sooner had Ed Miliband announced his resignation than the bookies started taking money on who's going to succeed him. We will find out more this week about the timetable for Labour to choose its new leader and those rules that Lord Mandelson was talking about. But everyone seems to agree that the party needs to take a good hard look at itself, what it stands for, how it wins back key supporters, and as we heard, one of the people hoping to shape that debate is Chuka Umunna. He's written a hard-hitting piece in today's Observer, and he's with me now.
Welcome.

CHUKA UMUNNA:
Morning, Andrew.
ANDREW MARR:
Good morning. Now, you heard what Lord Mandelson was saying, are you happy with the way the rules are going to operate inside the Labour Party for the leadership campaign?

CHUKA UMUNNA:
Well, Ed, one of Ed's good great legacies was to reform our party and we've put in place a series of new rules and reforms that opens out the party and provides up with the opportunity to grow the party during a future leadership contest, so the NEC will apply those rules and we will hear what the timetable is that they set out.

ANDREW MARR:
Now you said in the Observer, it's quite a hard-hitting piece, you said the Labour Party had hunkered down on its 35% strategy and that was a disaster. Was that really what people were talking about internally at the time?

CHUKA UMUNNA:
Well, first of all, it's worth saying I think that Ed grew in stature and led a courageous campaign, I think in many respects we had the most positive campaign in the face of an onslaught from certain parts of the media but a very negative campaign on the other side. This loss, our failure to win, is not because of the efforts of our fantastic candidates and activists, I saw them, I spent much of my time in English marginals, it's, in spite of their efforts that we lost and of course we've lost some fantastic candidates.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So why did it happen?

CHUKA UMUNNA:
Well, I think first of all we've got to understand this, so, and draw the right lessons. There will be some who may argue well, but for what happened in Scotland and of course the results in Scotland were terrible for us, we would have won, let's be clear, we had a very bad night in Scotland but David Cameron's majority was won in England, it was, the progress and
success there that put government out of view for the Labour Party, and let's not forget that of course they're going to make these changes to the boundaries, which will make the challenge in England and Wales even greater, but in terms of why we lost, in my view the Labour Party succeeds and does best when it marries together its compassion for people who can't provide for themselves, for the vulnerable, the poor, with others' ambition and drive and aspiration to get on and do well, and I think in many respects we often had a message which spoke to for example people who were struggling on zero hours contracts, it was right that we tackled that, on the national minimum wage et cetera, but for if you like middle income voters there wasn’t enough of an aspirational offer there, so that was obviously a key issue and I think also...

ANDREW MARR:
(over) ... as well?

CHUKA UMUNNA:
Well, I was going to come on to that, because I also have always argued that ultimately we're a Labour Party, the clue's in the name, it's about ensuring that people have got good fulfilling work, and in the same way that I don't think you can argue that you are pro-business if you're always beating up on the terms and conditions of the people who make business what it is and..

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And take ....

CHUKA UMUNNA:
... represent it. That can...

ANDREW MARR:
(over) ...that was the impression, wasn’t it, you gave?
CHUKA UMUNNA:
Well, at times, sometimes, but equally you can't be pro the kind of jobs that we want to see unless you're backing the people that create them. Now, the irony is in some ways that our policy agenda was thoroughly pro-business but at times sometimes people got the impression that it wasn’t, and also of course our economic competence, which I'm happy to speak about...

ANDREW MARR:
(over) ... let's just stay on the business side because you were Business Secretary, did you actually...

CHUKA UMUNNA:
(over) I wish I...

ANDREW MARR:
Shadow Business Secretary. Did you argue hard enough in the kind of inner cadres of the Labour Party against this impression that the party was giving and anti-business, anti-aspirational message, everyone says it now but you were there at the time, did you do enough?

CHUKA UMUNNA:
Well, I think ultimately look, I think Ed was too hard on himself when he said all the responsibility for the failures in the last...

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Not my question.

CHUKA UMUNNA:
... let me answer the question. And I don't think it was all of the fault of Ed. This was a collective failure on the part of all of us who were in the front line and whilst I've always made the argument I've just made to you, in terms of the collective message that we were
giving, it sometimes gave the impression at times that we weren't with the wealth creators, and you've got to be with the people who create wealth in our country because they're the people who create the jobs.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Did you fight that 35% strategy, hunkering down over your core voters when that was discussed in private?

**CHUKA UMUNNA:**
Well, I was never told that there was specifically a 35% strategy, but if you looked at the offer, that is a conclusion that people were entitled to reach, and I think that...

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) And were you worried about it and did you talk out about it, did you argue with colleagues about it?

**CHUKA UMUNNA:**
Well, as I said, look, I'm not into attributing blame here and as I said it's a collective failure and I accept my responsibility for that, but look, one of the big strengths of the Labour Party is actually we're the big tent people, we are the people who have got people all over the country in different regions and parts...

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) For many, for the many not the few except it's only the few that voted for you and many didn’t.

**CHUKA UMUNNA:**
We can't have a message that says anybody is too rich or too poor to be part of our party, what the Labour Party does well is build a big tent of people of different backgrounds, creeds, colours, races, religions, economic circumstances, and it's when we have an offer that is big tent and appeals to a lot of people, that's when we win.
ANDREW MARR:
The last time you were in government, did you spend too much?

CHUKA UMUNNA:
Well, on the economic competence point, and you're right to answer, ask the question, look, going into the crash, should we have been running an albeit small and historically unremarkable deficit, of course we shouldn't. The idea...

ANDREW MARR:
(over) You should not have done, so actually...

CHUKA UMUNNA:
(over) We should not have run...

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And so... Why would the party, why would neither of the Eds, asked again and again and again, ever say that, ever apologise for it, that was a huge mistake, was it not?

CHUKA UMUNNA:
In part, part of the reason, I suppose, there has been a struggle around dealing with this issue is while at the same time we shouldn't have been running that small and historically unremarkable deficit, it is ludicrous to suggest, as the Tories have been, that it's because of overspending on the part of the Labour, Labour government.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) But you could have said all of that a year ago, you could have said, or Ed Balls could have said all of that a year ago and perhaps you would have had a better election had you done so.

CHUKA UMUNNA:
Well, look, we've got to learn the lessons and learn from the mistakes, and let's not beat
around the bush on this, the facts are we inherited a debt to GDP ratio of 42%, we got it down to 37% before the crash, during the Tories’ 18 years in government beforehand they had had a deficit of 3.2%, it had been an average of 1.3% during our time in government, the reason that we had the big debt and deficit issues coming out of the crash was because of the banking crisis, it wasn’t because we were spending too much on schools and hospitals in my constituency in Streatham and beyond, and we needed to nail that, but also there's another very important part to this, is that in terms of illustrating that we took deficit reduction seriously, I think in some quarters there was a nervousness about making the progressive case for balancing the books for fear of being portrayed as being austerity light, and what I'm very clear about, there is nothing progressive in spending more on your debt interest repayments, paying off city investors and others...

**ANDREW MARR:**
(over) Every year...

**CHUKA UMUNNA:**
.. than on housing, than on schools, it is not a progressive thing to be doing that, and we should have said that more clearly, in my view.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Now, you’ve made a very clear statement today and in the newspaper, we assume therefore that you're running for the Labour Party leadership.

**CHUKA UMUNNA:**
Well, look, I think it's too early for that at the moment.

**ANDREW MARR:**
That's the old politics.

**CHUKA UMUNNA:**
Well, it might be the old politics but there isn't even a timetable at the moment, but I certainly
intend to play the fullest part I can in rebuilding our party and ensuring that we have a proper debate that we now need to have to make sure we win, and by the way, Andrew...

ANDREW MARR:
(over) that sounds very close like a yes, all I'm saying is maybe we're in a stage now after this election defeat where straight answers to straight questions.

CHUKA UMUNNA:
Yes, and I will answer that question and will give a full answer to that question when we know what the timetable is. But let's be clear, this Labour Party is a fantastic party, we're down but we're not out, and look, the scale of the defeat is of 92 proportions but there is no reason why we shouldn't get back in in 2020, I don't buy what I've been reading in some of the papers this morning, this idea that somehow this is a ten-year rebuilding project, absolutely not, we can do this in five years if we make the right decisions now, and present that aspirational and compassionate case to the British people which we're so good at, we can do this.

ANDREW MARR:
You're thinking about it, aren't you, I can smell it. I can smell it, you're thinking about it. Yes? You said of course yeah.

CHUKA UMUNNA:
Well of course were thinking about the future of the party, but look, let's be clear, you can change the leader but unless we get the message right we're not going to win and I think we can't shy away from some of the arguments perhaps we should have had before now, because unless we face up to them, how do you do deliver progressive values in a fiscally cold climate? How do you do it when technology is changing everything? And how do we make sure that we can pay our way in the world when we're facing more international competition from the likes of India, China, and others?
ANDREW MARR:  
Would you like the Labour Party to settle the leadership question quickly or let it drag on for a few months?

CHUKA UMUNNA:  
I think the rules were changed to open out the party and build our movement and so we need to allow time for that to happen.

ANDREW MARR:  
Chuka Umunna, for now thank you very much indeed.  
[end]