BRIEFING NOTE – JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

'At a time when I looked out of my regimental cradle and was thrilled by politics, Mr Chamberlain was incomparably the most live, sparkling, insurgent, compulsive figure in British affairs. Above him in the House of Lords reigned venerable, august Lord Salisbury, Prime Minister since God knew when. Beside him on the Government Bench, wise, cautious, polished, comprehending, airily fearless, Arthur Balfour led the House of Commons. But "Joe" was the one who made the weather. He was the man the masses knew. He it was who had solutions for social problems; who was ready to advance, sword in hand if need be, upon the foes of Britain; and whose accents rang in the ears of all the young peoples of the Empire and of lots of young people at its heart.' – **Winston Churchill**

Joseph Chamberlain was born 8 July 1836.

Chamberlain was taught by his mother to read and sent to school at 8.

Sadness from the death of the youngest child, 'Little Frank', led to move of Chamberlain family from home in Camberwell to 25 Highbury Place in 1846.

Chamberlain was sent to Birmingham at 18 to work at a screw factory owned by John Nettlefield, who had married Chamberlain'S father's sister, Martha Chamberlain. He took rooms in Edgbaston and walked half a mile to work each day (9am to 6pm). He started at the bottom and was then promoted to the commercial side of the business.

Chamberlain successfully targeted French and Irish markets, tailoring the products to local custom. Chamberlain was noted for combining holidays with sales visits and returning with a pocket book of orders. Cashier commented: 'Money was made very rapidly after Mr Joseph came'.

Chamberlain joined the Edgbaston debating society – and was involved in their Rifle Corps.

Chamberlain founded and was treasurer of a local Benefit Club to provide for workers in difficulty.

Chamberlain married Harriet Kenrick in 1861 – both were 25 – honeymooned in Penzance.

Beatrice was born.

Chamberlain's sister married William Kenrick.

Friday, 16th October 1863, Austen Chamberlain was born. Harriet became ill on Sunday and her condition rapidly deteriorated. Chamberlain told to prepare himself for the worst. On Tuesday Harriet said: 'Well, I have had a very happy life, and I am perfectly happy whichever way it is'. On Wednesday Harriet was delirious and she died just after midnight.

Chamberlain did voluntary work as a Sunday School Teacher (education was an issue to which Chamberlain attached great importance throughout his life).

Chamberlain became interested in politics as he recalled: 'They were great meetings in those days, 1858-66. The men poured into the hall, black as they were from the factories … the seats then used to be removed from the body of the hall, and the people were packed together like herrings.' Chamberlain regarded 1868 as the start of his political career. He was an active member of the Liberal Party.

Chamberlain said of the House of Lords: 'They represent – some of them – the oppression of feudal lords in times gone by, when people were expected to be grateful for being ruled by an aristocracy. And in the second place they, or some of them, represent the wealth acquired by the possession of land in the vicinity of great towns – like Birmingham or Manchester – which has enriched its proprietors without care or labour on their part. And lastly, they represent – and very imperfectly too in many cases – the intelligence and acquirements of ancestors long since dead who unfortunately had been unable to transmit to their descendants the talents by which they had risen (loud laughter and cheers). It was of such men as these that the greatest member of the House of Lords who ever sat in that body, **Lord Bacon, related that it was customary to say in his time that they were like potatoes – the best part was underground** (cheers and laughter).'

Chamberlain married Florence Kenrick (his first wife's cousin) in 1868.

Chamberlain elected as a Birmingham councillor in 1869.

Chamberlain (Nonconformist) opposed to government proposed education reforms.

Chamberlain's father died, 24th January 1874, during election campaign. Chamberlain stood as a Radical in Sheffield. Chamberlain lost (only 1,600 short of winning having polled 11,053) in the face of 'Beer-and-Bible Alliance' in favour of the Liberals.

Chamberlain retired from business in 1874 to concentrate on public life. His firm, Nettlefield and Chamberlain (Chamberlain made a partner in 1869), had been extremely successful, taking over rivals and expanding production with its own iron mills. When Chamberlain joined the firm England's output was 70,000 gross per week, and by 1874 the output of Nettlefield and Chamberlain had increased to 90,000 per week itself. The old cashier said: 'We shall never see another man like Mr Chamberlain'.

Chamberlain became Birmingham mayor for the Liberals in 1874 (having acquired a reputation as getting things done) after vigorously contested municipal elections. Chamberlain's organization of the campaign key. Chamberlain said: 'We have given the Beer and Bible Tories a smashing defeat – polling 291,000 to their 195,000'.

Birmingham did not have income from investments (e.g. from land, docks, waterworks, etc.) that other cities had. Chamberlain maxim: **'All monopolies which are sustained in any way by the State ought to be in the hands of the representatives of the people, by whom they should be administered, and to whom their profits should go'.**

Chamberlain persuaded the council to buy out the gas monopoly and negotiated with gas companies personally. Chamberlain took chairmanship of gas committee. Gas prices were cut and profits increased and used by the council. A municipal colleague at a Ratepayers' Meeting commented: 'The works were enormously increased, the expenditure was rigidly controlled and at the same time the condition of the workmen was materially improved … **I consider Mr Chamberlain the most able negotiator I have ever met. He always discerned the line of least resistance and advanced along it ... There was no guess-work in his methods; he secured good information, carefully prepared his plans; and, in a word, knew exactly what he wanted and how to get it.'**

Birmingham's water service, for its 300,000 inhabitants, only ran on 3 days a week. Half the population relied on surface-wells, the majority of which were either tainted or seriously polluted with drain water. Dreams of updating the water supply had been unrealized and the water suppliers were greedy in claiming compensation, especially if wells had to be closed. Chamberlain had unanimous support of the council. Death rates of preventable diseases, especially of children, were high and increasing. Chamberlain stated that he had personally witnessed drains connected to wells. Chamberlain wanted all the wells closing as being sources of small-pox and fever. Chamberlain argued: 'Many of the most experienced magistrates of this town have told me that of all their duties the saddest is that of registering convictions against poor people brought up at the instigation of the Water Company for stealing that which is one of the first necessities of life. They might almost as well be convicted of stealing air.' Other towns and cities owned their water supply. Chamberlain declared that all profit should go in reduction on the price of water. The Water Company agreed to sell when it was plain that there would be a compulsory purchase if necessary. The water supply was improved and cheapened.

Birmingham's slums were described as 'unfit for human habitation' by medical officers; Chamberlain described them as 'unfit for a dog to die in'. Chamberlain took advantage of Disraeli's Artisan's Dwelling Act to clear the slums, and declared: 'So long as there is this canker at the root, morality is an empty name, and our civilization is a thing to scoff at …'. Chamberlain showed that death-rates in poorest districts were double those in better off areas. Chamberlain said: 'We bring up a population in the dank, dreary, filthy courts and alleys … we surround them with noxious influences of every kind, and place them under conditions in which the observance of even ordinary decency is impossible … It is no more the fault of these people that they are vicious and intemperate than it is their fault that they are stunted, deformed, debilitated, and diseased.' Chamberlain's plans involved the purchase of around 50 acres of property and were agreed, albeit with opposition. The city centre of Birmingham was transformed, with a large increase in ratable values.

The outcome of Chamberlain's reforms are demonstrated by the fall in death-rates:

Streets	Average death per 1,000 for 1873-75	Average death per 1,000 for 1879-81
Lower Priory	62.5	21.9
Rope Walk	42	24.9
Bailey Street	97	25.6
Balloon Street	45	No population
Potter Street	44	28.8
Russell Street	55	19.1
Princip Street	46	13.2
Aston Street	40	15
Tanter Street	47	22
Average	53.2	21.3

During one council meeting, a Tory Alderman insisted that an event in question had occurred in 1849. The majority of the council disagreed and insisted that it occurred in 1859. An argument ensued. Chamberlain, as chairman, restored order and joked: 'Surely, gentlemen, it is no unusual thing for a Tory to be ten years behind the times.'

Newspapers were excited by the prospect of a royal visit by the Prince and Princess of Wales to Birmingham, given Chamberlain's republicanism. Large crowds turned out. *The Times* reported: 'Whatever Mr Chamberlain's views may be, his speeches have been admirably worthy of the occasion and have done the highest credit to himself. We have heard and chronicled a great many Mayor's speeches, but we do not know that we have ever heard or chronicled speeches made before Royal personages by Mayors, whether they were Tories or Whigs, or Liberals or Radicals, which were couched in such a tone at once of courteous homage, manly independence and gentlemanly feeling – which were so perfectly becoming and so much the right thing in every way as those of Mr Chamberlain.'

In February 1875, Chamberlain's wife, Florence (who had already four children, Neville, Ida, Hilda and Ethel), gave birth to a child. The doctor remained all day and at 4.30pm came downstairs to confirm all was well. At 5pm Florence fainted and died. The child died hours later. Both were

buried in the same coffin. Of Florence, Chamberlain wrote: 'She shared every thought and plan I had – there is not a fibre in my whole being which has not been roughly torn asunder. You can judge how desolate and solitary I feel and how dark and difficult my future life seems to me.' Chamberlain's mother died in September 1875.

Chamberlain elected to Parliament in June 1876 and resigned his mayoralty. The council was grateful and intended to celebrate his achievements. Chamberlain wrote: 'They are going to have a statue (fancy!) and a fountain and a Chamberlain Square, and the Lord knows what. All this is good for the party, and good for municipal institutions which are daily becoming of more importance and more honoured.'

Chamberlain diagnosed in 1876 as having attacks of gout, and was advised that the cause was the civic hospitality he had been enjoying. Chamberlain wrote that 'it is a highly respectable disease, and must tend to raise me in the eyes of the Tories'. Both Disraeli and Palmerston had also had it.

The Birmingham Liberal Party was reorganized into a caucus, with each ward having a committee, which sent delegates to the Central Committee known as the Four Hundred, and then the Six Hundred. The Central Committee in turn sent delegates to the Central Executive (of more than one hundred people), out of which a Management Committee of eleven was formed. This structure gave the Liberal Party a very effective campaign machine that encouraged tactical voting in different wards. The Tories dubbed this as 'Caucussian'.

Gladstone, the Liberal leader, was somewhat nervous to be told to expect a crowd of 10,000 for a speech he was due to give at Bingley Hall, Birmingham. The crowd turned out to be 30,000 – the largest ever for a public meeting in Britain.

Liberals win all three Birmingham constituencies in election in March 1880, contrary to Tory expectations. Chamberlain appointed to Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade.

Chamberlain responded to attack upon him by Lord Salisbury in March 1883, in a speech saying: 'Lord Salisbury constitutes himself the spokesman of a class – of the class to which he himself belongs, who toil not neither do they spin (great cheering), whose fortunes, as in his case, have originated by grants made in times gone by for the services which courtiers rendered kings (renewed cheers), and have since grown and increased while they have slept by levying an increased share on all that other men have done by toil and labour to add to the general wealth and prosperity of the country ….'

1884, Chamberlain failed to get his Merchant Shipping Bill accepted (the Bill was withdrawn), despite a subdued 4 hour speech to a hushed House of Commons, setting out, ship by ship, the way in which shipowners were over-insuring their ships and making significant profits by wilfully allowing those ships to sink. Chamberlain described the effect of the law: 'Buy your ship as cheaply as you can: equip her as poorly as you can; load her as fully as you can; insure her as highly as you can; and send her to sea. If she gets to the end of her voyage you will have made a very good thing of it; if she goes to the bottom you will have made a very much better thing of it.' Crew members were being killed in the sinkings ('coffin ships'). At Chamberlain's insistence, a Royal Commission was set up and most of his proposals were gradually introduced by following governments.

Chamberlain subsequently stated to JL Garvin that during his time as President of the Board of Trade that he became increasingly doubtful of the merits of free trade – a policy or **'free imports without free trade'**. The permanent Secretary in the Department, Sir Thomas Farrer, maintained: 'Chamberlain is not a sound Free Trader.'

In October 1884, Chamberlain spoke of the House of Lords at a public meeting: 'I have no desire to see a dull uniformity of social life. I am rather thankful than otherwise to gentlemen who will take the trouble to wear robes and coronets and who will keep up a certain state of splendour which is very pleasant to look upon (hear, hear). They are ancient monuments (loud laughter), and I should be sorry to deface them (laughter). But then, gentlemen, I don't admit that we can build upon these interesting ruins the foundations of our government (hear, hear). I cannot allow that these antiquities should control the destinies of a free empire (cheers).'

1884-85 witnessed the rise of the Mahdi in Sudan. Gordon, who had been sent to Khartoum to organise the Anglo-Egyptian withdrawal from Sudan, was killed and his severed head wedged between branches in a tree to be pelted with stones by all passers-by.

Merriman, former minister in the Cape Colony, said in a newspaper in December 1884: 'The great obstacle in the way of the maintenance of the Colonies is the Colonial Office. Excellent, smooth-speaking officials no doubt every man of them; but collectively their influence is a bane to the Empire. You will never get any good done in the direction of the unity of the Empire, or the federation of the Colonies, until you revolutionise the Colonial Office, and put men at the head of it who make a business of their work instead of dawdling over it in the ineffective fashion with which you are so well acquainted both in your foreign and colonial affairs. So far as I have seen there are only one or two business men in the whole company. Mr Chamberlain, for instance, is a workman. He would put the thing through if he had it in hand. This is at least my impression of him.'

Spring 1885, Cabinet split over Chamberlain's proposals for Ireland. Chamberlain and Dilke, his colleague and fellow Radical, expected to resign. Gladstone announced a policy of coercion in Ireland, without reform. Dilke resigned, followed by Chamberlain.

July 1885, Gladstone made a speech advocating Irish Home Rule.

September 1885, Chamberlain said in a speech: 'The great problem of our civilization is still unsolved. We have to account for and to grapple with the mass of misery and destitution in our midst, coexistent as it is with the evidence of abundant wealth and teeming prosperity. It is a problem which some men would put aside by references to the eternal laws of supply and demand, to the necessity of freedom of contract, and to the sanctity of every private right of property. But, gentlemen, these phrases are the convenient cant of selfish wealth.' In the same speech he rejected trying to deal with a duplicitous Parnell (Irish nationalist leader). In a letter to Gladstone, Chamberlain wrote: 'For myself, I would rather let Ireland go than accept the responsibility of a nominal union.'

November 1885 general election, Liberals won all 7 Birmingham seats. However, Liberals remained the largest party but short of an overall majority; the Irish nationalists held the balance of power.

December 1885, Gladstone announced that he was prepared to create an Irish Parliament. Chamberlain commented that Gladstone 'proposes to "nobble" us in detail' regarding opponents within the Liberal Party.

Speaking at the National Liberal Club, Chamberlain said: 'No one attaches more importance than I do to the union of the Liberal party. No one is more willing to make greater sacrifices in order to secure that unity; but **there is one thing I will not sacrifice, and that is the union and integrity of the Empire**. Our great leader has said … that in his opinion the widest possible local government should be given to Ireland which is consistent with the unity of the Empire and the

supremacy of Parliament. To that declaration I unhesitatingly accord my support, but beyond that I am not prepared to go … I am not willing to sacrifice the unity of that Empire which has so great a past and which I firmly believe is destined to have a great future.' This prompted loud cheers.

Gladstone was dismissive of Chamberlain's desire to become the Colonial Secretary ('Oh! A Secretary of State!'). Chamberlain said that he was prepared to resume his position the Board of Trade, but wished for a change. Chamberlain appointed as President of the Local Government Board.

15 March 1886, Chamberlain sent letter of resignation to Gladstone over Ireland policy. 26 March 1886, Chamberlain and Gladstone clashed in Cabinet. Gladstone determined to give Ireland a parliament completely separate from the remainder of the United Kingdom, rather than create a federal union. **Chamberlain said: 'Then, I resign'.**

Birmingham caucus now against Chamberlain. Chamberlain manages to win caucus members around. During a speech in Birmingham to the Two Thousand, **Chamberlain pointed out: 'You would justly despise and condemn me now if, for the sake of private interests and personal ambition, I were false to my convictions and disregarded what I believe to be the vital interests of my country.'** His speech was greeted with loud cheers. Caucus management splits. Chamberlain and other senior members resign from the Federation and the Caucus headquarters moved from Birmingham to London.

Gladstone was unyielding, in part, due to his need to curry favour with Parnell.

Government lost vote in the House of Commons, by 30 votes. Chamberlain voting against the government. Parnell said of Chamberlain: 'There goes the man who killed Home Rule.' Irish nationalists shouted 'Traitor! Judas!' at Chamberlain.

Gladstone called a general election for July 1886. Unionists won with a majority of 118. In 5 of the 7 Birmingham constituencies Chamberlain's Liberal Unionists were uncontested; the remaining 2 constituencies were won by the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives (one each, in a pact). Cries of 'We are seven'.

An issue arose as to what the Conservative government would do with the Radical Chamberlain? The Prime Minister, Salisbury, recommended to Queen Victoria that Chamberlain be sent to the USA to negotiate a settlement of a Fishery dispute. The Queen replied: 'It is a wise measure in many ways'. Chamberlain relieved to be off to Washington and to be out of Westminster.

At a speech in Toronto at a Board of Trade dinner, **Chamberlain said: 'I should think our patriotism was warped and stunted indeed if it did not embrace the Greater Britain beyond the seas – the young and vigorous nations carrying everywhere a knowledge of the English tongue and English love of liberty and law. With these feelings, I refuse to speak or to think of the United States as a foreign nation. They are our flesh and blood'.**

A treaty was agreed with the USA regarding fishing. A Washington journal commented of Chamberlain: 'Never has there been such a diner-out and a giver of dinners in this town as the gentleman who is going back in a few days to his seat in the House of Commons. To him chiefly is it attributable that the present winter has been the greatest season for dinner parties that Washington has ever known. And they have been gay and enjoyable feasts, too, for the Honourable Joseph has his wits about him and does not ask any odds from the keenest of Yankee combatants in a contest of wit and persiflage, any more than he needs to do in dealing with

matters of State'. After his final speech in New York, there was loud cheering and a waving of handkerchiefs.

While in the USA he had met Miss Endicott, and he maintained correspondence once back in England.

In a letter dated 20 March 1888, Chamberlain wrote: 'Things are very mixed in Birmingham and will want much attention. The old organization is lost to us.' In a letter dated 23 April, Chamberlain wrote: 'My new organization is going like wildfire.'

In November 1888, Chamberlain quietly travelled to the USA and married Mary Endicott in Washington (she was 23 and he was 51). At a meeting in Birmingham when Chamberlain arrived back with his wife, his friend CE Matthews made a speech: 'Sir, we welcome the man who for many years has so closely identified himself with the public and the private life of Birmingham, who has served in his own person every honourable office and has endeared himself to thousands of our people by numberless instances of thoughtfulness, generosity and goodwill … Madam, you have not come amongst strangers … "Dear lady, welcome home".'

Chamberlain succeeded in his ambition to introduce free education, and this was accepted by the Conservative government which introduced passed a Bill in 1891.

In May 1990, Chamberlain told Colonel George Denison, a Canadian Imperialist, at a private meeting to discuss Imperial Preference: 'I have listened with great interest to all the points you have brought forward, and I shall study the whole question thoroughly for myself, and if after full consideration I come to the conclusion that this policy will be in the interests of the country and the Empire, I shall take it up and advocate it'.

In response to proposals for Home Rule for Ireland in October 1891 from Gladstone (set out in a speech in Newcastle), at a speech in Wales, Chamberlain said: 'It is an absurd programme, an impracticable programme, and therefore a dishonest programme. It is a programme which begins by offering everything to everybody, and it will end by giving nothing to anybody … If we are going once more to put the Constitution in the melting-pot, let us get up a good fire. Let us go in for something worth having, and let us have a redistribution of seats. Let us do away with those absurd anomalies and with the greatest anomaly of all – that which gives to Ireland in proportion to population a representation 20 per cent better than it gives to England, Wales and Scotland.'

In the 1892 general election, despite making gains, the Liberals failed to win as they had expected. In Birmingham, the Unionists held all contested seats, with Chamberlain increasing his majority to 4,000, and further won another 3 in neighbouring Walsall, Wolverhampton and Wednesbury. In neighbouring counties of Warwick, Worcester and Stafford, the Unionists held 30 of the 39 constituencies. Chamberlain had made 20 speeches in 3 weeks – all of which were in the Midlands apart from one in Manchester. **Chamberlain's dominance of the Midlands was against the national trend towards the Gladstone Liberals.**

Chamberlain appointed Colonial Secretary, as he wished. The then Miss Flora Shaw wrote in *The Times*: 'The change at the Colonial Office was marvellous; it was a total transformation; the sleeping city awakened by a touch. Everyone in the department felt it, and presently everyone in the Colonial Service felt it to the farthest corners and the loneliest outposts of the Queen's Dominions. Before it had been the leisurely and sleepy place – such a thing as a Colonial Minister standing up to a Prime Minister or to a whole Cabinet in the interests of his Department never had been known. One little detail shown the difference. Good Lord Knutsford had been irreverently

called by his subordinates “Peter Wiggy”, but they called his successor “The Master”.' Chamberlain said: 'I regard many of our Colonies as being in the condition of undeveloped estates, and estates which can never be developed without Imperial assistance … Cases have already come to my knowledge of colonies which have been British Colonies perhaps for more than a hundred years in which up to the present time British rule has done absolutely nothing.'

One of Chamberlain's first tasks as Colonial Secretary was to wage a small war. King Prempeh of the Ashanti in Kumassi (in what is now Southern Ghana) had ignored British government requests to make payments owed, breached treaty terms, had disrupted British trade, continued trading in slaves and was making human sacrifices. Chamberlain wrote in October 1895: 'The attempt to excite English sympathy for the King of Ashanti is a fraud on the British public. He is a barbarous chief, who has broken the Treaty, permitted human sacrifices, attacked friendly chiefs, obstructed trade, and failed to pay the fine inflicted on him after the war; and the only proof he has ever given of civilization is to be found in the fact that he has engaged a London solicitor to advocate his interests.' The military intervention was swift and successful.

Uitlanders (British expatriots living under Boer rule) outnumbered the Boers at least 2 to 1 in the Transvaal, paid 90% of the tax revenues, were subjected to adverse monopolistic practices and impositions, were restricted to poor educational facilities and had no say in the running of the government.

Chamberlain acquired the title of 'Moatlhodi' (the man who rights things) after settling a territorial dispute on behalf of the Bechuana chiefs, who had travelled to London, with Cecil Rhodes's Chartered Company.

On hearing of the Jameson Raid (December 1896), into Boer South Africa, Chamberlain said: 'If this succeeds, it will ruin me. I am going up to London to crush it.' Chamberlain telegrammed the High Commissioner: 'Leave no stone unturned to prevent mischief.' Cecil Rhodes cabled Miss Shaw: 'Inform Chamberlain that I shall get through all right if he supports me but he must not send cable like he sent to High Commissioner in South Africa. Today the crux is, I will win and South Africa will belong to England.' Jameson had acted on his own initiative, although Rhodes supported him once the escapade was under way. The High Commissioner issued a proclamation condemning the raid.

The Jameson Raid, consisting of 470 men, was a fiasco and they were easily surrounded and forced to surrender. They were so incompetent that the cutting of the telegraph to the Transvaal capital was botched by a drunken trooper cutting a wire fence instead (or so it is alleged). Germany came out in strong support of the Boers.

Rhodes and Chamberlain met after the raid in a meeting in which 'Rhodes had shown a great amount of common sense' (diary of Sir Harry Watson, Chamberlain's principle private secretary). In the House of Commons debate following, Chamberlain said: 'I am not going to pronounce upon Mr Rhodes, but I say it would be an act of ingratitude if we were, even now, when suspicion hangs over him, to forget the great services he has rendered (cheers). I believe he is capable of great service still … even if he has done wrong in the past, he may do a great deal to repair that wrong, and recover the confidence and gratitude of his fellow citizens.'

As a parliamentary enquiry loomed, Rhodes spread insinuations about Chamberlain's involvement in the raid. However, no evidence was produced at the time (subsequent documents which surfaced were inconclusive).

Of 'these people' Chamberlain privately remarked that 'bigger blunderers never existed'.

Chamberlain wrote: 'It is impossible now to resist the conclusion from this and other communications from the same source [Hawksley] that there was a deliberate plot to commit the Colonial Office involuntarily and by partial confidence to a general approval of Rhodes's plans, and then to use this afterwards as a screen for the whole conspiracy.' Chamberlain further minuted: 'They are a dishonourable lot from top to bottom.'

Rhodes (nicknamed the 'Colossus'), after a nervous start on the first day of the enquiry (1897), fortified by stout and sandwiches while giving evidence, dominated proceedings and overawed the committee. Rhodes returned to South Africa without disclosing certain missing telegrams.

1st March 1896 Italian army overwhelmed by dervishes at Adowa in Abyssinia. Italians asked for assistance. Kitchener led Anglo-Egyptian army into Sudan.

In November 1896, Chamberlain asked for reinforcements for the South Africa garrison due to the Boer arms being built up. The War Office disagreed. Nothing was done.

In 1897, with yet another dispute with Spain over Spanish tariffs against Gibraltar, Chamberlain wrote in a departmental note: 'I am (as usual) for extreme measures. I would like to say to Spain, if you do not open the Custom House in a week we will abolish all our anti-smuggling restrictions and we will not bother about the importation of arms into Cuba.' The Spanish settled.

Summer 1897, Colonial Conference.

2 September 1898, Kitchener beat dervishes at the Battle of Ombdurman. Khartoum retaken. Chamberlain said to a New York reporter: 'That settles it for all time. Gordon is avenged.'

September 1898, Fashoda incident, when French tried to link up their West African territories with the Nile and Abyssinia – thus blocking British presence on the Nile. Salisbury sent a dispatch to Cairo (the words in italics were underlined by Chamberlain): 'I request that you will inform the Sirdar [Kitchener] that it has become clear that the French Government will not instruct M. Marchand [the French commander at Fashoda] to leave Fashoda. They expect that Her Majesty's Government will purchase his departure by large concessions of territory. *This Her Majesty's Government will not do*.' After a long stand off stretching into 1899, with the threat of war, the French backed down and a territorial settlement was reached covering north Africa.

June 1890, collapse of the Bloemfontein conference between Kruger for the Boers and Milner (High Commissioner) for the British Empire. Boers immediately placed an order for more weapons, including artillery.

By 1899, the two Boer republics expected to be able to field 50,000 troops, with another anticipated 40,000 Boer troops from the Cape Colony. Britain had only 9,000 regular troops in South Africa. The army appointed, in late autumn 1898 General Sir William Butler as army commander in South Africa. Chamberlain complained: 'But what is to be said of those who without consulting the Minister chiefly responsible sent to South Africa the one man most unfitted by his history and character to occupy an important post there at the present time?' Butler was a committed Irish nationalist and sympathetic to the Boers, as well as being hostile to Rhodes. Eventually Butler was transferred.

Chamberlain demanded reinforcements for South Africa and wanted 10,000 troops to be sent. Of the War Office, Chamberlain wrote in August 1899: 'I understand that the W.O. which a few months ago was boasting that it could send off two Army Corps in less time than transports could be obtained to carry them – has now convinced itself that it cannot place *one* corps in Natal in less

than 4 months – but this time could be shortened to 3 months if we are ready to spend immediately more than a million sterling in necessary preparations!! Then I suppose we shall be ready "to the last button". They are hopeless and it will be a mercy if they do not land us in a catastrophe.'

October 1899, Boers issued an ultimatum then invaded Natal. Pretoria issued an appeal for all Boers to rise up against the 'treaty-breakers and robbers' and to create a 'Free United South Africa'. Now the War Office wanted another 35,000 troops sending.

British forces in Natal forced back to Ladysmith. Boers lay siege to Kimberley (where Cecil Rhodes was and he sent messages that they were desperate and in danger of being forced to surrender), Mafeking (where Baden Powell-Powell was conducting a spirited defence) and Ladysmith. Chamberlain wrote to the Duke of Devonshire: 'Do you remember Lansdowne telling us … that modern guns required elaborate platforms and mountings which took a year to consolidate? The Boers apparently find no difficulty in working their "Long Tom" without these elaborate preparations. On the whole I am terribly afraid that our War Office is as inefficient as usual'. Boer forces made progress deep into British territory, including the Cape Colony.

After a series of military blunders and defeats, the worst point being 'Black Week', with attempts to relieve Ladysmith being beaten back and further defeats at Magersfontein, Stormberg and Colenso. Lord Roberts appointed Commander-in-Chief in South Africa. When some were becoming dispirited about the war during Black Week, Queen Victoria interrupted them: 'I will tell you one thing. I will have no depression in my house' and told Balfour: 'Please understand that there is no one depressed in this house; we are not interested in the possibilities of defeat; they do not exist.' The Dominions mobilized forces to help. Canada and Australia ultimately sent 30,000 troops. New Zealand sent more forces in relation to its size than both Australia and Canada.

Ladysmith was relieved, as was Kimberley, where Major-General French, commanding the relief force, was greeted by Rhodes with glasses of iced champagne, and eventually Mafeking.

Chamberlain told the House of Commons: 'Sir, we shall have in this war before it is over an army of colonials called to the aid of Her Majesty who will outnumber the British army at Waterloo, and who will be nearly equal to the total British force in the Crimea … What other nation in the world could have put 180,000 men into the field 7,000 miles from these shores – a volunteer army – in so short a time? Where else could the transport have been found for such a large force, working with such precision, such speed and such safety? **Our colonies, repelled in the past by indifference and apathy, have responded to the sympathy which has recently been shown to them. A sense of common interest, of common duty, an assurance of mutual support and pride in the great edifice in which they are all members, have combined to consolidate and establish the unity of the Empire.'**

In 1900 the Khaki election swept the Unionists back into office. Winston Churchill was newly elected for Oldham.

In 1900 Chamberlain said in conversation: 'I have always believed that if Gladstone had been ten years younger in 1886, he would never have made the mistake of taking up Irish Home Rule. I do not want to live until my judgement fails. My doctor warned me lately that he would not give me another ten years to live if I continued to drink champagne with my dinner. When I asked him how long he would give me if I gave it up, he said "an extra five years at least". But I told him I would rather take the ten years and the champagne!'

In January 1901, Queen Victoria died. Chamberlain, who in earlier days as a Republican had been

very unpopular with the Queen before becoming a favourite, was the last minister to see her. He made a note in which he recorded that she was 'looking much better than I expected with bright eyes and clear complexion. Her voice was distinct as usual and she showed not the slightest sign of failing intelligence. She spoke about the War, regretting its prolongation and the loss of life which this entailed, but said earnestly, "I am not anxious about the result". Her chief concern was as to the proposed enquiry into the conduct of the War, which she said could do no good, would lead to recrimination and might lower the Army in the eyes of Foreign Nations. When I said that the enquiry had been promised in Parliament and reminded Her that the refusal of an enquiry had brought about the fall of Lord Aberdeen's Government in the time of the Crimean War, she said emphatically "I do not want that, of course". She proceeded to ask whether, if it could not be abandoned, the enquiry might not be postponed, and I replied that this would be reasonable in view of the fact that the war was not yet over. She desired me to repeat Her views to the Cabinet at its next meeting – which I did on January 18th … **She was most gracious and when I took leave Her last words were "I am very glad to have had the pleasure of seeing you" ... I should not have known that She had been ill from Her appearance.' The Queen died a fortnight afterwards.**

In August 1901, at a demonstration, of the Irish nationalists, Balfour quipped: 'We will neither sacrifice our Empire to the Boers nor our Constitution to the bores.' Of the Liberals, Chamberlain quipped: 'Fifteen years ago they were a great and powerful and a united party, and they were led by Mr Gladstone. Today they are a Rump and they are led by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.' Of the Irish nationalists, Chamberlain said: **'Great Britain is strong enough to be contemptuous of this toyshop treason which takes advantage of our toleration in order to shout for the Mahdi or King Prempeh or President Kruger or anyone else with whom we may happen to be engaged in hostilities ... It is my conviction that the nation is taking note of these proceedings. I think they expect that the Mother of Parliaments will know how to defend herself against these attacks – attacks by men who come to us in numbers altogether disproportionate to the wealth, to the intelligence and to the population which they represent.'**

Britain was (and still is) much criticized about the introduction of concentration camps in South Africa to deny the Boer fighters local support. The death rates in the camps was high. In June 1901, Miss Emily Hobhouse highlighted the situation. The government sent out a committee of ladies with Mrs Fawcett as chairman. That committee reported the poor sanitation, pollution, lack of a proper water supply and disease that plagued the camps. Also the Boer women had insanitary behaviour 'to an extent which would probably not be credited except by those who have seen it'. There was a further shortage of doctors and nurses. The camps were therefore placed into civilian control and hence became Chamberlain's and Milner's responsibility, and they quickly took steps to rectify matters. In October the death-rate had been 344 per 1000. By January 1902 it had fallen to 160 per 1000, and was down to 20 per 1000 by the end of the war (well below the normal death-rate in South Africa).

In March 1902, Chamberlain wrote regarding Rhodes's death: '[Rhodes] was a great man in his way and not unhappy in his death. Nothing can take from him the credit of having kept Rhodesia for the British Empire, and posterity will think of this long after they have forgotten the mistake of the Raid.'

Speaking in Birmingham in January 1902, Chamberlain said: 'I cannot appreciate the position of those who, inflamed by party passion, are not content with fighting the battle here at home on fair and reasonable lines but most go out of their way to impute methods of barbarism to our soldiers in the field – to imply His Majesty's Ministers, who are Britons like themselves, can by any possibility be guilty of deliberate cruelty and inhumanity, and who laud the Boers while they

slander the Britons, and then profess to be astonished and surprised at the growing hostility of foreign nations. They have helped to create an animosity which we all deplore.'

In the run up to the launch of the Tariff Reform Campaign, Chamberlain very successfully dealt with the economic plight of the West Indies. What was once one of Britain's prized possessions had experienced economic collapse. Firstly, slavery had been abolished which undermined the running of the plantations; then the era of free trade commenced, which meant that the preferences had been abolished; then there was the imposition of high tariffs by European countries, followed by export bounties to subsidize sugar beet exports in direct competition with the more efficient West Indies sugar plantations. By the end of the 19th century only 10% of Britain's sugar imports came from the West Indies. The West Indies economies collapsed, investment ceased and plantations were abandoned. The British governments had refused to act as to do so would break their commitment to free trade. Of Dominica, Chamberlain said in parliament: 'We have never made a single road to open up the territory, and at present it is just as distant from all profitable cultivation as though it were in the centre of Africa. When I contrast what we have done with what the French have done in the neighbouring colonies, I confess the comparison is not to our advantage.'

In 1896, France doubled her sugar bounties, and other countries followed suit. Chamberlain, realizing that the commitment to free trade precluded immediate action, asked for a Royal Commission to hold an enquiry. The Cabinet agreed. The Commission unanimously found that the sugar bounties were the cause of the West Indies' predicament, but disagreed over the solution and so recommended some expenditure to ameliorate the consequences of the bounties. The government faced a choice of either dealing with the bounties or else providing funds to try and treat the consequences of those bounties. Chamberlain wrote to the Cabinet in November 1897: 'The bounty-system is indefensible, and it is absolutely wrong that the United Kingdom should profit by the ruin of its oldest colonies.' Chamberlain argued for countervailing duties to threaten the European countries to end the bounty system. The Cabinet preferred to provide funds to soften the ruin of the plantations rather than confront the bounty system. Chamberlain told parliament that, in his opinion, the government should 'secure the natural condition of ordinary competition which it is an effect of the bounty to destroy'.

Although defeated, Chamberlain secured significant funds for the West Indies, which were invested with full control by the British government. Two-thirds of the grants were used to eliminate the islands' deficits. Of the remainder, and subsequent grants, were used for land redistribution, road construction, improved cultivation measures including tropical fruit trade, subsidized steamer services, and improved wireless and cable services between the islands.

However, the problem of the export bounties remained and also affected Mauritius, which was under control of India. Chamberlain prompted the Indian government to impose countervailing duties on sugar and Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, agreed. The Cabinet did not object and the duties were imposed.

Meanwhile the sugar exporting countries were beginning to baulk at the expense of the export bounties, and were concerned that the Indian duties on sugar might herald a change of Britain's tariff-free import policy. Germany, France and Austria-Hungary agreed to make limited reductions in their bounties and a conference was arranged by Belgium which took place in December 1901. The other countries were keen to know from the British delegation what Britain's stance would be. That delegation was evasive due to a Cabinet split in London, with Chamberlain insisting on retaliation and Hicks Beach, the Chancellor, insisting with equal force that there be no retaliation and welcomed the cheap sugar imports. Lansdowne wrote: 'Beach makes no secret of his belief that it will be a misfortune to us if the bounties are got rid of'. Hicks Beach condemned the idea of

countervailing duties, even as a threat, as being 'a policy which leads straight to general retaliation on foreign protective duties, and to protection to our home industries'. Hicks Beach was an ardent *unilateral* free trader.

As the Cabinet deadlock continued (unknown to the conference), on his own initiative, Lansdowne telegraphed the British conference delegates that, in the event of the conference failing, Britain would take measures in response, although she was not prepared beforehand to set out what those measures would be. At this point, the export bounty countries started fretting of what might happen, and agreed to discontinue to bounties, in return for which Britain agreed not to give preference to sugar from her Colonies. Sir Charles Bruce, the Governor of Mauritius, commented that 'the energy of Mr Chamberlain achieved the impossible'.

In November 1902, Chamberlain embarked in his tour of South Africa. All parties in Birmingham ditched their differences and combined to give him a send-off. In addition, after a 3 hour event in the Town Hall, Chamberlain emerged to a cheering crowd of tens of thousands, to whom he raised his hat. 4,000 torch-bearers from the Naval Reserve and the Warwickshire Imperial Yeomanry lined the route.

Chamberlain received a very warm welcome in Durban, South Africa, from where he began a tour of South Africa by rail and wagon, including the Natal, the Transvaal, the Orange River Colony and the Cape Colony, ending in Cape Town. The tour included meetings and speeches.

On visiting Kimberley, Chamberlain attended the Sanatorium (a hotel built by De Beers) where Rhodes and his party had been during the siege. At a banquet in the evening of the following day, Chamberlain paid tribute to Rhodes: 'It would be ungrateful of us to forget the man who sleeps now in the Matoppo hills and whose name will always be identified with this town'. Chamberlain continued: '[Rhodes] was not infallible, he made mistakes what at this time I do not care to dwell upon, but he was a great Englishman. There was nothing mean or petty about him. He had great ideas. He was careless of many of those things which attract the ordinary man. Careless of those things in the way of luxury and the pleasures which wealth can purchase. But he was ambitious of power because he believed that he could use it for the benefit of South Africa and for the advantage of the Empire. Mr Rhodes gave a new state to the Empire and he has imprinted upon South Africa his own large conception of its future destiny … the union of South Africa in one great free state under the British flag. That was the desire of his life.'

Although Chamberlain received a warm welcome in Bloemfontein, there was a confrontation with two defeated Boer generals that lasted 2½ hours in front of a crowd of Boers. Mrs Chamberlain recorded that 'It was interesting and instructive to watch the faces of the Boers, many of whom obviously lost faith in their leader, who was rolled over and flattened out again and again by the hard logic of the Colonial Secretary; but he still persisted in a way that lost him the sympathy of his friends.'

At his last evening in South Africa, Chamberlain made a farewell speech (receiving a loud ovation as he rose) alluding to the decisions taken and reforms being introduced. He said: 'The time of parting has come … The play is over, the curtain has been rung down, and here I stand in front of the footlights of that great theatre of South Africa, which has been the scene of so many an eventful drama, to say to you a few words of thanks … I have crowded into the last two months, work and impressions which might have been expanded into years. The labour has been unremitting.' He continued: 'The first need of the country is development. You want more capital, more confidence, more population, better communications, energy and enterprise everywhere. Above all, South Africa needs the best capacity of all of its children. There are great questions which loom in the near future and upon which your prosperity and position depend … You have to

make preparation for that ultimate federation of South Africa which is destined, I hope in the near future, to establish a new nation under the British flag, which shall be daughter in her mother's house and mistress of her own … Your fate is in your own hands.'

A *Daily Telegraph* correspondent wrote: 'Six years ago there was no name more execrated by one half of he population of South Africa than that of Joseph Chamberlain. At the outbreak of the war the odium had risen higher by several degrees. On Feb. 25, 1903, this same statesman left Table Bay, not merely covered with the praises of his own people, but followed by the respect of those who had been his foes.'

Chamberlain embarked on his journey back to Britain to find that he had been betrayed by Cabinet colleagues, some of whom were intent on frustrating any potential move towards Imperial preference.

The end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century witnessed the demise of the old certainties which had dominated Britain since the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo. Britain's economic supremacy was no more, as others, in particular Germany and the USA, at first caught up with, and then overtook Britain industrially. Free trade was no longer a guarantee of economic success, and Britain's policy of unilateral free trade extended no further than tariff-free imports, as all other leading economies were protectionist. Britain's long-term economic decline had begun.

The economic decline was recognised by many and denied by others, including an establishment that did not wish to contemplate change or any deviation from the policy of unilateral free trade.

The Boer war had been a major shock for a Britain that found itself isolated and with few friends. Germany had supported the Boers. Germany had also exploited its industrial might to begin the construction of a new navy of powerful battleships. Even the Royal Navy was now challenged.

The Dominions of New Zealand, Australia and Canada were keen to establish preferential trade arrangements with the mother country. They had been spurned. They persisted with their desire to forge a preferential trade relationship and wanted Imperial preference. They had loyally rallied to Britain's cause in the Boer war.

The Victorian era had been a golden period for Britain. The death of Queen Victoria was another blow.

As the practical Chamberlain arrived back in Britain to be confronted with the machinations of the free traders, and his enemies; with the success of the African tour behind him; the experience of the sense of Imperial patriotism during the Boer war; his desire to develop the Empire; with the clamour for preferential trade around him; with the evidence of Britain's economic decline; with his own view that free trade was not necessarily in Britain's interests; and with a determination to preserve Britain's position in the world; then once again, Chamberlain unsheathed his sword to lead the Tariff Reform Campaign.

This campaign split British politics apart in a titanic power struggle between the Tariff Reformers, who were determined to reverse Britain's economic decline, and the Free Traders, who were determined to preserve Britain's policy of *unilateral* free trade.

A full account of the Tariff Reform Campaign is given in *The Ponzi Class: Ponzi Economics, Globalization and Class Oppression in the 21st Century* (available from Amazon, Kindle or direct from CreateSpace) in the chapter 'Joseph Chamberlain and the Tariff Reform Campaign'.