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## British War Cabinets

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# MICHIGAN LAW REVIEW

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## BRITISH WAR CABINETS.

**D**URING the progress of the present world war there has been a remarkable series of developments in the British Cabinet and ministry, involving not only many changes of personnel but also fundamental alterations in the constitution of the Cabinet and its relations to Parliament. An analysis of these is not only of interest as an important phase of the history of the war, and the evolution of political institutions; but is also of value in dealing with problems and proposals for governmental reorganization in the United States.

### THE LIBERAL CABINET

At the outbreak of the war a Liberal Cabinet was in office, with the Rt. Hon. Henry H. Asquith as Prime Minister. But the position of this Cabinet differed from that of the conventional description of British institutions, in that the Liberal party did not have a majority in the House of Commons. Indeed the two leading parties—Liberals and Unionists—were practically equal in numbers. But the Liberal Cabinet was ordinarily supported by the minor parties, the Irish Nationalists and the Labour members.

Several Cabinet changes took place on the declaration of war. The Prime Minister was temporarily serving as Secretary of State for War; and this position was promptly given to Lord Kitchener, the best known military commander in the country, but a man without experience as a Cabinet member or in active political work, and not identified with any political party. This appointment involved a departure from established customs in two respects,—in admitting to the Cabinet a non-party member, and in placing a military officer at the head of the War Office.

At the same time two members of the Cabinet and one under-secretary resigned, because of their objection to taking an active part in the conduct of war. These were Viscount Morley, Lord President of the Council; John Burns, President of the Local Gov-

ernment Board; and C. P. Trevelyan, undersecretary of the Board of Education.

Outside of the ministry, Ramsey MacDonald resigned his position as chairman of the parliamentary Labour Party, because his views on war were in conflict with the attitude of his party in supporting the war policy of the government.

While the Cabinet remained substantially a Liberal Cabinet, a party truce was promptly agreed to, on the basis of postponing action on controversial party questions. A letter from Bonar Law, leader of the Opposition Unionists, to the Prime Minister, assuring him of the support of his party, was published. The customary methods of parliamentary opposition and criticism in the House of Commons were thus suspended; and for some months the chief and almost the only parliamentary criticism of the government was that voiced by individual members in the House of Lords.

Under these conditions a large amount of emergency legislation was rapidly passed in the six weeks between the declaration of war and the adjournment of the regular session on September 18; and this was further supplemented at an adjourned session later in the year 1914, and at the sessions in the following years.

Early in the session of 1915, action was taken which emphasized the control of the Cabinet over the proceedings in Parliament. On February 3 the government proposed a resolution taking the whole time of the House of Commons for its measures until further notice. "This drastic proceeding was accepted almost as a matter of course. But it deserves to be noted as a prominent landmark in parliamentary history. For though the so-called 'parliamentary initiative' has often fallen into practical desuetude, this is probably the first occasion in the history of any Parliament in which it has been formally surrendered for an indefinite period."<sup>1</sup>

Another significant change in procedure at this session was that the enormous votes of credit for war purposes now absorbed the ordinary estimates for the army and navy. In every previous war, including the Napoleonic wars, the votes of credit have represented roughly the difference between war expenditure and normal peace expenditure. But the army and navy estimates were now dispensed with altogether, except for 'token' estimates of £1000 for each vote and £100 for each appropriation in aid, as a matter of form; and both normal and abnormal expenditures were to be met out of votes of credit.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Political Quarterly*, No. 6 (May, 1915), pp. 144, 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 146-7.

As the session of 1915 continued, evidence of uneasiness and dissatisfaction appeared both inside and outside of Parliament. The Cabinet still received general support, and there was no open attempt to force its retirement. But the policy of the Cabinet lacked stability and certainty. "Where the people looked for leadership, they found the old inclination to wait and see."<sup>3</sup> "In the all important matter of munitions, the Government confused and irritated the House by alternate complacency and panic; in the matter of liquor they embarked on an ill-considered venture, which led to inglorious surrender; in the matter of alien enemies they were forced into a reversal of policy by popular effervescence. These mishaps did not bring about the change of government, but they went far to convince the doubtful that a change was inevitable."<sup>4</sup> The resignation of Lord Fisher as First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, on May 15, brought to light the internal difficulties of the Government; and helped to precipitate the crisis.

No formal action in Parliament preceded the change of government; and what took place in private and informal conferences will not be fully known for some time. But it has been understood that the Unionist leaders informed Mr. Asquith that they could no longer maintain their attitude of restraining criticism unless important changes were made. As an outcome, a reorganization of the Cabinet was agreed to, Mr. Asquith remaining as Prime Minister, but with the admission of a number of Unionist and Labour members, forming a Coalition Cabinet. The Irish Nationalists were also offered representation; but declined to serve so long as Home Rule for Ireland was not put into effect.

#### THE COALITION CABINET

When formally constituted the new Coalition Cabinet consisted of 12 Liberals, 8 Unionists, 1 Labour member and Lord Kitchener, a total of 22 members, an increase of 2 over the old Cabinet. The new positions were the newly created Minister of Munitions and Lord Lansdowne, as Minister without portfolio. Unionists were assigned to a number of important departments: A. J. Balfour became First Lord of the Admiralty; Bonar Law, Secretary for the Colonies; Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India; W. H. Long, President of the Local Government Board; and Edward Carson, Attorney General. Liberal members were shifted to different

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<sup>3</sup> *The Times History and Encyclopædia of the War.* V, ch. 90, p. 319.

<sup>4</sup> *The Political Quarterly*, No. 7 (March, 1916), p. 122.

posts: Lloyd George was transferred to the new Ministry of Munitions; Reginald McKenna became Chancellor of the Exchequer; John Simon, Secretary of State for Home Affairs; Lord Buckmaster, Lord Chancellor; Lord Crewe, President of the Council; Lord Selborne, President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries; and Winston Churchill was given the sinecure post of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In February, 1916, an addition was made to the Cabinet, by creating a new Ministry of Blockade.

A Coalition Cabinet of this kind was something new in British political history. There have been coalition cabinets before; but they had been only partial, and none had gone to the extent of absorbing nearly all the chief political leaders of the different parties, representing 88 per cent of the House of Commons, and thus eliminating the organized Opposition. Mr. Asquith, writing to the Chief Liberal Whip, said of the new arrangements:

"The transformation implies a temporary abandonment of the system of party government which has ever since 1832 dominated our political arrangements and which I hold to be, under normal conditions, the best adapted to our national requirements. \* \* \* There is one reason and one only which could justify or explain such a new departure—a clear and urgent case of national necessity."<sup>5</sup>

The general result was, however, called by one writer a combination of Front Bench politicians rather than a national Cabinet in the wider sense. But the same critic considered it a definite and most necessary step in replacing party government by a government for war. It was undoubtedly stronger than the preceding Liberal Cabinet; but it was "too much to expect that it would show itself permanently more efficient than its predecessor." Its membership "was limited to the politicians, and party considerations were still the basis of its composition;" and "it was likely to suffer, even more than its predecessor from its own unwieldy bulk, which necessarily hampered the swift decisions of a Cabinet in time of war."<sup>6</sup>

Such a sweeping reconstruction of the Cabinet and Ministry, under the established law and practice, would have necessitated a considerable number of bye-elections, to permit the newly appointed Ministers to retain their seats in the House of Commons. But as there was general agreement that it was inadvisable to hold elections, an act was passed suspending the law which prevented members of the House from accepting office.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Times History and Encyclopedia of the War*. V, ch. 90, p. 316.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 314, 320.

Later, as the statutory limit for the duration of the House of Commons, under the Parliament Act of 1911, approached, a bill was introduced and passed extending the life of the existing House for a few months; and similar measures have subsequently been enacted from time to time, so as to avoid a parliamentary election during the war. Local elections have also been suspended in the same way,

The Coalition Cabinet promptly gave evidence of a more energetic policy, in measures for the creation of the new Ministry of Munitions and the Munitions of War Act, and in the administrative conduct of the war. But disappointments as to the successful progress of both military and diplomatic affairs led to gradually increasing dissatisfaction and criticism. Paradoxically the disappearance of any formally organized opposition was followed by more openly expressed opposing, not enough to be formidable, but troublesome guerilla attacks, from a small group of doctrinaire Radicals and avowed Socialists. Moreover the growing feeling of unrest was much broader than the avowed opposition.

It was urged that the Coalition government was defective because of the size of the Cabinet, its composition and the character of the Prime Minister. Members of all parties acknowledged that the Cabinet was too large for the most effective action. "A body of 23 men of very unequal ability, tired by their departmental labours, and meeting every few days for a couple of hours, was, indeed, an impossible machinery for making war."<sup>7</sup> As early as September, 1915, the London *Times* advocated a smaller Cabinet, meeting every day, and relieved from departmental detail.

In fact the traditional working of the British Cabinet system had already been altered in important respects. The public suspected that specific problems were referred formally to Cabinet committees and that the active direction of affairs was in the hands of a small group within the Cabinet. But there was no definite knowledge of the extent of the control of the Cabinet over its committees or over the *de facto* directing group.

#### *The War Committee*

On November 2, 1915, the Prime Minister announced that since the beginning of the war there had been something like fifty different committees and advisory bodies formed out of the Cabinet, though sometimes with outside assistance. Of special importance had been

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* X, ch. 163, p. 328.

a fluctuating body to which, by the consent of the Cabinet, questions of state and questions of strategy had been delegated. This War Committee was now to be established on a more formal basis and to be limited to five or six members, including the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for War, the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Minister of Munitions, the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This committee should have a staff of naval, military and diplomatic advisors and have the general direction of war measures. The Cabinet at large was to be kept informed of its decisions and to be consulted before any new departure in policy was undertaken.<sup>8</sup>

This announcement gave some satisfaction, as a step in the right direction, though criticized because the committee was composed of department heads who would be occupied with departmental problems. Two members of the Cabinet resigned: Mr. Carson, because he was not satisfied with the Balkan policy, and Mr. Churchill, as he was omitted from the war committee.

In June, 1916, the size of the war committee was increased to seven by the addition of Lord Curzon,—at the time when Mr. Lloyd George became Secretary of War and Mr. Montagu succeeded him as Minister of Munitions. The balance of parties in the committee was thus preserved. In practice the Cabinet almost automatically ratified the decisions of the committee; but the committee itself gradually expanded by the presence of official advisors and ministerial visitors until it became almost as cumbrous a body as the Cabinet.<sup>9</sup>

Further dissatisfaction developed with the acknowledged failure of the Dardanelles expedition and the internal conflict in the Cabinet on the question of compulsory military service. A preliminary step in this latter direction had been taken by the passage of the National Registration Act in June, 1915. But the first compulsory service act, for unmarried men, was not introduced until January, 1916. This led to the resignation of Sir John Simon, Home Secretary; and for a short time the active opposition of the Labour and Irish Nationalists in Parliament appeared probable; but the Labour Ministers were persuaded to withdraw their resignations, and the Nationalists adopted a neutral policy of inaction, since the measure was not to apply to Ireland.

Proposals to extend the application of conscription developed further disagreement in the Cabinet, and when a compromise measure

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<sup>8</sup> *The Political Quarterly*, No. 8 (Sept., 1916), p. 104. Cf. *The Committee on Imperial Defence*, p. 482.

<sup>9</sup> *The Times History and Encyclopedia of the War*. X, ch. 163, p. 354.

was presented at a secret session of the House of Commons on April 25, so much dissatisfaction was disclosed that the proposed bill was withdrawn and a more sweeping measure introduced early in May.

The hesitancy and delay in dealing with this and other problems led to a growing demand for a more positive leadership in the government. As one writer stated: "A coalition government above all others should avoid the appearance of sectional and merely departmental activity. In other words the Prime Minister should show beyond the shadow of a doubt that he is the active director of affairs. It is therefore unfortunate that he seemed during these few weeks to withdraw himself from the eye of the House of Commons."<sup>10</sup> But it should also be noted that the principle upon which the coalition was based called for a general agreement on all important questions of policy; and to have forced a decision against any considerable minority would have involved a reconstruction of the Cabinet.

In spite of these difficulties the Coalition Cabinet continued in office, with minor changes, for a year and a half, until December, 1916. Its record has been summed up in these words: "The Coalition government proved in almost every sphere of war direction and war administration that it was stronger than its predecessor, but not strong enough, that it acted more swiftly, but yet acted too late, that its measures were better adapted to the needs of the time than the measures of the first year of the war, but yet were almost invariably half measures."<sup>11</sup>

#### THE LLOYD GEORGE WAR CABINET AND MINISTRY

Towards the end of the year 1916 there was another general reconstruction of the British Cabinet and Ministry, involving not only numerous changes in personnel but fundamental alterations in the structure of the Cabinet and in its relations to the House of Commons.

As in the case of the reorganization of May, 1915, the change was not preceded by any formal vote of the House of Commons; but it was the result of criticism outside of Parliament and internal disagreement within the Coalition Cabinet. Dissatisfaction had been growing more acute on a number of important problems, including the most effective distribution of "man power," the reorganization of the admiralty, more active control over shipping, and questions of food production and control. The *London Times* became more

<sup>10</sup> *The Political Quarterly*, No. 7 (March, 1916), p. 146.

<sup>11</sup> *The Times History and Encyclopedia of the War*. X, ch. 163, p. 325.

active in demanding a sweeping reorganization in methods of administration.

Within the Cabinet the crisis developed on the question of administrative reorganization. Plans were proposed for reducing the size of the war committee and giving it more definite authority, without the need for consulting the whole Cabinet. This might have been agreed to without a general recasting of the Cabinet but for the specific proposal that the Prime Minister should not be a member of the war committee. It was inevitable that Mr. Asquith should not agree to this; and when an attempted compromise failed, Mr. Lloyd George resigned. This was promptly followed by the resignation of Mr. Asquith, which necessarily involved the whole Cabinet.

On Asquith's resignation, the King first turned to Mr. Bonar Law, the recognized leader of the Unionist party, as Mr. Asquith was of the Liberal party. But in a short time Mr. Law reported that he could not form a satisfactory Ministry. Mr. Lloyd George was then called on; and after two days presented his proposed Cabinet and Ministry, which then took office.

#### *The War Cabinet*

In the new ministry the most striking feature was the disappearance of the traditional Cabinet of department heads, and the creation of a distinctly new type of War Cabinet of five members. This took over the active functions of the former war committee; but instead of being subordinate to the Cabinet, was to be the superior directing body over the whole group of ministers. This War Cabinet was composed of Mr. Lloyd George, the Prime Minister; Lord Curzon, President of the Council; Lord Milner and Mr. Arthur Henderson, Ministers without portfolio; and Mr. Bonar Law, Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons. Only the last named held an important administrative office; and this cabinet of five were to give their entire time to the general problems of the war.

Executive power and responsibility were thus concentrated in the small body of five men, in place of the unwieldy Cabinet of 23 administrative officers who were also active leaders in Parliament. But this was accomplished by attempting to separate the functions, formerly combined in the Cabinet, of executive control, both from the active leadership of Parliament and from the immediate direction of administrative action. The Prime Minister ceased to be the active leader of the House of Commons, and attended but rarely. In a few months Bonar Law retired from the War Cabinet, leaving no

member of that body whose regular attendance at the House was to be expected.

The concentration of authority seems to have been generally approved; but there were differences of opinion as to the form, and as to its effect in the future. One writer remarked: "Everyone expected a much smaller Cabinet; few imagined that he would cut it down to Five. Twenty-three was a monstrosity, for which there was no excuse and no palliation save that the party politicians could not bridle their ambitions. A Cabinet of Five can be justified only as a temporary war measure, and leaves the perpetual problem of Inner and Outer Cabinet untouched."<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, another observer has written: "The time imperatively calls for government by a single man, assisted by the ablest experts. \* \* \* The idea of governing a country by a committee of men who must be unanimous in all their decisions, whether they number twenty-three or five is monstrous. After all joint responsibility in accordance with Cabinet fiction means irresponsibility. Twenty-three men, and even five men, cannot think and resolve alike in all matters. \* \* \* Although it may be thought that a war committee of five able, honest, energetic men, who are equally determined to win the war, is an ideal body for exercising the supreme control, a dictatorship \* \* \* is inevitable. \* \* \* The logic of events must place the conduct of the war into the hands of a single man, although his supremacy may be disguised by giving him a number of colleagues, who in reality should be his subordinates. War government by debating society is gone probably forever."<sup>13</sup>

In connection with this feature of the new War Cabinet, notice may be taken of the nature of changes in some of the other countries. In France there has also been a small war committee or council created; but this has been composed of the heads of the administrative departments most directly involved in the conduct of the war; while parliamentary commissions have actively cooperated with the Cabinet. In Germany, where the Chancellor has been nominally the sole minister, but whose authority has apparently been limited by the decisions of the heads of the military departments, there have been some steps taken towards at least the form of consultation with the Reichstag and a committee of that body.

Besides the concentration of authority, it may also be noted that the new War Cabinet, unlike the former Cabinet and like the war committee, while meeting in private, appears to have formal records

<sup>12</sup> Auditor Tatum, in *Fortnightly Review*, Jan., 1917, pp. 42-3.

<sup>13</sup> Politicus, in *Fortnightly Review*, Jan., 1917, pp. 22-3.

taken of its proceedings, and has also its own staff of assistants and experts, distinct from those of the administrative departments.<sup>14</sup> Difficult problems may arise when the recommendations of these staff advisers of the War Cabinet conflict with those of the administrative departments. Will the staff advisers of the War Cabinet be more important than the Ministers?

### *The Ministry*

The formation of the new War Cabinet did not abolish the ministerial positions at the head of the administrative departments. But it materially altered the status of the ministers; and other important changes were made in the constitution of the ministry.

In the matter of party representation both the War Cabinet and the Ministry preserved the form of a Coalition. In the War Cabinet, Mr. Lloyd George was a Liberal, Mr. Henderson a Labour member, and the other three were Unionists. In the larger ministry, the number of Unionists and Labour members was increased; and while there was a considerable number of Liberal ministers, none of the most prominent Liberal members of the Asquith Cabinets remained in office. Moreover there was a significant appearance of men of business rather than parliamentary experience, some of whom could not be definitely assigned to any of the regular parties. The new government was thus a coalition including more than party elements.

On the other hand, the organization of the new ministry was followed by the reappearance of a formal opposition. Mr. Asquith and his leading supporters took their seats in the Opposition benches, where their attitude towards the government has been similar to that of the Unionists towards the Liberal Cabinet during the first period of the war.

While the new Cabinet was much smaller than the old, the new Ministry was larger. A series of new Ministers was appointed, and provision was made later for new departments, and a considerable addition was made to the number of parliamentary secretaries, both in the old and new departments. The new ministries included ministers of Labour and Pensions, a Food Controller and a Shipping Controller. An Air Board was also created, the Presidency of which was, however, assigned to the under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Later additional ministers of National Service and Reconstruction were appointed.

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<sup>14</sup> There were 40 paid members of the Secretariat of the War Cabinet. *Parliamentary Debates*, 1917, Vol. 91: 598.

Altogether the new ministry formed a total of 88, nearly double that of pre-war ministries. Of these 60 were members of the House of Commons, 23 were members of the House of Lords, and 5 were not members of either House.<sup>15</sup> The influence of 60 salaried officials of the ministry as members of the House of Commons may well become an appreciable factor in controlling a majority of votes in that House to sustain the government.

The declining importance of the House of Commons is further indicated by the lack of attention given to it not only by the members of the War Cabinet but also by the ministers. This is indicated by the number of ministers not members of either House, these departments being represented only by undersecretaries. But even the ministerial members of the House have often been absent. It was pointed out that during the debate on a Consolidated Fund Bill, there was no one on the Government Front Bench except a Junior Lord of the Treasury and later the Chief Secretary for Ireland.<sup>16</sup>

Under these circumstances attendance and interest in the proceedings of Parliament have declined. Important bills have been discussed on behalf of the government by comparatively unknown men. The most prominent speakers have been former Liberal ministers, formally in opposition, who after presenting their arguments do not appear on the division lists. The second reading vote on a New Ministries Bill (to establish the Ministry of Reconstruction) was carried by a vote of only 92 Ayes to 30 Noes.

More than one British writer has publicly called the new governmental arrangements a constitutional revolution. The general results have been summed up in these words, by Sidney Low:

"For the ministerial and administrative Cabinet collectively responsible to Parliament, officered and recruited entirely from the Parliamentary circle, intimately related to the House of Commons, framed on rigid party lines, and conferring with absolute secrecy, we have a Cabinet which is not a Ministry and a Ministry which is not a Cabinet; a Cabinet which directs but does not administer; a Ministry which has exchanged collective responsibility for individual responsibility; a Cabinet which has a very loose connection with the House of Commons, and for some purposes is virtually independent of it; which stands outside our party divisions; which admits to its confidential deliberations representatives of all the great States of the Empire as well as those of the United Kingdom; and which

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<sup>15</sup> Herbert Samuel, in *Parliamentary Debates*, 1917, Vol. 96: 1609.

<sup>16</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, 1917, Vol. 92: 1337.

still holds private, but no longer in the strictest sense secret, meetings.

"Like most revolutions it is really the result of a long process of evolution. \* \* \* The Inner Cabinet had long existed in a more or less unacknowledged form. Mr. Asquith regularized the Inner Cabinet and gave it definite status as the War Cabinet, and he made a step towards abolishing the secret conclave by providing this committee with a secretary.

"Parliamentary control had persisted in form, but had been sensibly relaxed. The war which conferred quasi-autocratic authority on the Executive diminished it still further; and the formation of the Coalition reduced it to a shadow. This also went far to release the Cabinet from the party system and paved the way for a government in which that system is ignored."<sup>17</sup>

Still another constitutional development of first importance, not only for the government of the United Kingdom but for the loose aggregate of British governments vaguely styled the British Empire, was the sessions in the spring of 1917 of what was called the Imperial Cabinet. This was from one point of view an expansion of the War Cabinet formed in December, 1916; but in other respects may be considered to have developed from an earlier cabinet committee on imperial defense.

#### *Committee on Imperial Defense*

In 1895 a national defense committee of the cabinet had been set up, with the Prime Minister as chairman. In 1904, after the South African war, this was reorganized by the Balfour administration as a committee on imperial defense. As reconstituted this consisted of the Prime Minister as Chairman; the Secretaries of State for War, Foreign Affairs, India and the Colonies; the Chancellor of the Exchequer; the First Lord of the Admiralty; the Chief of the General Staff; the First Sea Lord; the Directors of Naval and Military Intelligence, with Viscount Esher and Field Marshal Lord Nicholson. Other high imperial and colonial officials were called into the council as occasion required. Records were kept of its conclusions and of the reasons on which they were based.<sup>18</sup>

The establishment of this committee was formally approved by the House of Commons. While it in no way limited the responsibility of the Cabinet as a whole, it provided machinery by which the military policy of the country might be, so far as possible, contin-

<sup>17</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, Feb., 1917, pp. 214-5.

<sup>18</sup> *Constitutional Year Book*, 1916, pp. 20, 67.

uous, and based upon the authority of the most competent experts.

Sessions of this committee were held during the Imperial Conferences of 1909 and 1912; and in the latter year Mr. Asquith explained its organization to the House of Commons. The full committee met on an average six or seven times a year. There were four permanent committees in constant session: on home ports defense, on overseas defense, on the co-ordination of action at the outbreak of war, and on air matters. There were also other committees on internal and overseas transport, wireless telegraphy, maintenance of commerce and censorship in time of war. After this statement another sub-committee was organized on possible invasions or raids.<sup>19</sup>

This committee had been active in formulating military policy and making plans and preparations for war. With the outbreak of the present war, its activities increased, and its membership tended to enlarge. A list of those who usually attended the meetings in 1915 includes, besides those noted above, the Minister of Munitions, the Lord President of the Council, the permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Second Sea Lord of the Admiralty, the Chief of the Admiralty War Staff, the Director of Military Operations, the Inspector General of Overseas Forces, and Admirals Lord Fisher and A. K. Wilson,—making a total of about twenty.<sup>20</sup>

From its membership this committee must have dealt to a large extent with questions of administration and the execution of policy.

#### *The Imperial Cabinet*

Some steps taken earlier in the war foreshadowed the Imperial Cabinet of 1917. In July, 1915, a meeting of the Cabinet was attended by Sir Robert Borden, Prime Minister of Canada. In March, 1916, a Cabinet meeting was attended by Mr. W. M. Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia, who had come to Great Britain, after recent conferences with the prime ministers of New Zealand and Canada.<sup>21</sup> These two isolated, and apparently unpremeditated incidents prepared the way for the more general admission of representatives of the dominions to the Cabinet.

In December, 1916, after the formation of the Lloyd George Cabinet and Ministry, the British government invited the governments of the overseas dominions and India to a special war conference, in connection with which there should be held a continuous series of

<sup>19</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, 5th series.* Vol. 42: 1385; *The Political Quarterly*, No. 5, pp. 67-8.

<sup>20</sup> *British Imperial Calendar, 1916*, p. 365.

<sup>21</sup> *The Times History and Encyclopedia of the War.* X, ch. 163, p. 341.

meetings of the new War Cabinet, of which for this conference the prime ministers of the dominions should be members.

The Conference was held during March and April, including representatives from Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand and South Africa, and also from India. All the self-governing dominions were represented, except Australia, where a parliamentary election required the presence of the leading ministers at home. The Secretary of State for the Colonies presided; and other ministers and permanent officials of the United Kingdom attended, but not the Prime Minister nor other members of the War Cabinet. This Conference considered political and commercial matters of joint concern; its proceedings were reported and, in part, made public; but like previous Imperial Conferences it was only an advisory body with no positive authority.<sup>22</sup>

During the same period, meeting as a rule on alternate days to the Imperial Conference, were held the sessions of the Imperial War Cabinet. This included the Prime Minister and the other members of the War Cabinet; the Secretaries of State for India and the Colonies; and also Sir Robert Borden, Prime Minister of Canada; Wm. Massey and Joseph Ward, Premier and Finance Minister of New Zealand; Sir Edward Morris from Newfoundland; General Smuts from South Africa; and the Maharajah of Bikanir and Sir S. P. Sinha from India. The representatives of India and the dominions were not merely witnesses and advisers, but in effect ministers without portfolio, deliberating under the privy councillor's oath.

No official report of the meetings of the Imperial Cabinet has been published; but it was announced that at the final session the Prime Minister proposed that meetings of an Imperial Cabinet should be held annually, or at any intermediate time when matters of urgent imperial concern require to be settled. "The Imperial Cabinet will consist of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and such of his colleagues as deal specially with imperial affairs, of the Prime Minister of each of the dominions, or of some specially accredited alternate possessed of equal authority, and of a representative of the Indian people to be appointed by the government of India."<sup>23</sup>

In the concluding resolutions of the Imperial Conference, it was voted that the readjustment of constitutional relations of the British governments should be postponed to a special Imperial Conference to be called after the war; and "that any such readjustment, while thoroughly preserving all existing powers of self-government and

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<sup>22</sup> Sidney Low, in *Nineteenth Century*, August, 1917, p. 234.

<sup>23</sup> J. B. Firth, in *Fortnightly Review*, August, 1917, p. 197.

complete control of domestic affairs, should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth and of India as an important portion of the same, should recognize their right to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern and for such necessary concerted action founded on consultation as the several Governments may determine."

These developments mark important steps in the reconstruction of the Constitution, both of the United Kingdom and what has been formally called the British "Imperial Commonwealth."

So far as the United Kingdom is concerned, it indicates a further departure from the collective responsibility of the Cabinet to the House of Commons. The connection of the House with the new War Cabinet is but slight. The House did not vote Mr. Asquith out; nor did it vote in Lloyd George and his associates. But if the House of Commons has been losing control over the Cabinet of the United Kingdom, how much less likely is it to control the new Imperial Cabinet? How can the British Parliament be the final authority in deciding policies which will be framed and executed in part by statesmen in no way responsible to British or Irish electorates? It would seem to be impossible for a national parliament to exercise effective control over what in effect will be an international executive.

In the direction of imperial organization, the new Imperial Cabinet is established as the corner stone of the new system. And it has been recognized both by those opposed and those in favor of an organization based on the federal idea, that the steps taken signify that the development is proceeding on lines away from the plan of an imperial federation.

Nevertheless the problem remains as to how the Imperial Cabinet shall be held responsible and to whom.

The formation of the Allied War Council in the autumn of 1917 marked another change in political institutions of the highest importance, with significant effects on the workings of the several allied governments. But an international agency of this kind lies outside the scope of this study; an analysis of its actual and probable results belongs rather to the field of international problems.

In operation the new British War Cabinet and Ministry has appeared to be more active and aggressive than the Coalition Cabinet. The creation of new ministries showed an attempt to meet the pressing problems of the war by new administrative machinery. Some

effort was made to deal with the troublesome question of Ireland; the problem of parliamentary reform was taken in hand, and the bold decision to call an imperial cabinet marked an important step towards a more effective organization of the Empire.

At the same time there has been evidence of internal difficulties and some criticism of the new machinery; and a number of changes have been made in the War Cabinet and also in the Ministry. In May, 1917, Mr. Henderson, the Labour member in the War Cabinet, was replaced by Mr. Barnes, while the former was on a mission to Russia; and after his return differences with his colleagues led to the definitive retirement of Mr. Henderson from the government. It appeared that even before the critical point had been reached, Mr. Henderson had not been freely admitted to meetings of the Cabinet; but his resignation emphasized the continuation of the principle that the members of the Cabinet must be unanimous in their public expressions.

On the other hand the resignation of Austen Chamberlain as Secretary of State for India (in July, 1917), on the adverse report of an investigation into the first Mesopotamian campaign, indicated that outside of the new cabinet the individual responsibility of ministers was tending to replace the collective responsibility of the group. Several important changes in both Cabinet and ministry were made at that time. Mr. Bonar Law retired from the War Cabinet, though continuing as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Sir Edward Carson was transferred from the Admiralty to the Cabinet—changes which further weakened the connection between the Cabinet and the House of Commons. Several other changes were made in the Ministry, including the return of Winston Churchill to office as Minister of Munitions. More recently additional changes have been made, both in the War Cabinet and the Ministry.

In Parliament Mr. Law has not proven a supreme leader; and on several occasions Mr. Asquith, from the Opposition bench, has demonstrated his continued leadership of the House, and has saved the government in critical situations.

The meetings of the Imperial Cabinet involved a considerable addition to the group of five, which had been supposed to be an ideal number for securing prompt and effective decisions. After the other colonial ministers had departed, General Smuts, the representative from South Africa, continued to attend sessions of the War Cabinet; and this gave rise to question in the House of Commons as to his status in the government.

Practical experience also indicated that it was difficult, if not impossible, to divorce general policy from questions of administration.

Lord Curzon admitted in the House of Lords that most of the time of the War Cabinet was occupied in the adjustment of internal disputes between the ministers. New departments, boards, commissions and committees continued to be established, until the total number was more than 300;<sup>24</sup> and it became evident that the multiplication of such agencies raised as many problems as it solved. Questions arose as to the jurisdiction of the Food Controller and the President of the Board of Agriculture. The Ministry of Munitions became in large part an extension of the former labor conciliation department of the Board of Trade. Yet a new Ministry of Labour was created. The Director of the new department of National Service resigned because he had nothing to do. The reconstruction committee practically abandoned its problems; and the proposed new Ministry of Reconstruction was generally ridiculed.<sup>25</sup> The creation of new departments, indeed, involved a process of decentralization which contrasted with the policy of centralized control which the War Cabinet was supposed to typify.

In the conduct of the war, no broad and coherent policy and no effective means of systematic control over the numerous departments seem to have been developed. Nor was there, until the end of 1917, any approach to a clear definition of satisfactory terms of peace.

A well known writer views "with some misgiving the recent arrangements by which the Cabinet is to a great extent cut off from the great offices which carry on the several branches of the actual government, and by which a secretariat is interposed between the supreme governing committee and those offices."<sup>26</sup>

Criticism arose in some quarters because the Cabinet did not confine its attention to war problems. But the unwieldy multiplicity of ministries, departments, and other agencies badly needed some balance wheel; and the more serious defect was that the Cabinet did not prove a sufficiently effective agency of control.

The problem of administrative organization is not one to be settled by any simple principle or catchword of centralization or decentralization. It involves a careful and systematic division of functions, and arrangements for effective co-ordination and correlation between the different agencies.

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<sup>24</sup> See Lists in *Parliamentary Papers*, 1915, Cd. 7855; 1917, Cd. 8741; *Liberal Year Book*, 1917, pp. 148-165; *The Nation's Business*, Nov., 1917.

<sup>25</sup> *New Republic*, XII, 90-92 (August 25, 1917).

<sup>26</sup> Spencer Wilkinson, in *Nineteenth Century*, Jan., 1918, p. 45.

## ASQUITH MINISTRY AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury.....*H. H. Asquith*  
 Lord President of the Council.....*Earl Beauchamp*  
 Chancellor of the Exchequer.....*David Lloyd George*  
 Ministers without Portfolio.....

Lord Chancellor .....*Viscount Haldane*  
 Lord Privy Seal .....*Marquess of Crewe*  
 Minister of Munitions .....

## Secretaries of State:

Home Office .....*Reginald McKenna*

Foreign Affairs .....*Sir Edward Grey*  
 War Office .....*Earl Kitchener*

Colonial .....*Lewis Harcourt*  
 India .....*Marquess of Crewe*

First Lord of the Admiralty.....*Winston Churchill*

Chief Secretary for Ireland.....*Augustine Birrell*

President of the Board of Education.....*Joseph A. Pease*

President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries.....*Lord Lucas*

President of the Local Government Board.....*Herbert Samuel*

President of the Board of Trade.....*Walter Runciman*

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.....*Edwin Samuel Montagu*

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Names in Italics are of members of the Asquith Cabinets. Those in small capitals are of members of the new War Cabinet.

<sup>1</sup> Held same position in Asquith Ministry.

<sup>2</sup> Resigned in May. Position vacant until Henry E. Duke was appointed in July.

<sup>3</sup> Resigned in May. Position vacant until reappointed in August.

## COALITION MINISTRY

JUNE 3, 1915.

## WAR MINISTRY,

DECEMBER 19, 1916.

<i>H. H. Asquith</i> (L).....	DAVID LLOYD GEORGE (L).
<i>Marquess of Crewe</i> (L).....	EARL CURZON (U).
<i>Reginald McKenna</i> (L).....	BONAR LAW (U). <sup>4</sup>
<i>Marquess of Lansdowne</i> (U).....	VISCOUNT MILNER (U).
.....	ARTHUR HENDERSON (Lab.). <sup>5</sup>
.....	GEORGE N. BARNES (Lab.) (May, 1917).
.....	SIR EDWARD CARSON (U) <sup>4</sup> (July, 1917).
<i>Lord Buckmaster</i> (L).....	Sir Robert B. Finlay (U).
<i>Earl Curzon</i> (U).....	Earl of Crawford (U).
<i>David Lloyd George</i> (L).....	Dr. Christopher Addison (L).
<i>Edwin Samuel Montagu</i> (L) (June, Winston Churchill (July, 1917). 1916) .....	
<i>Sir John A. Simon</i> (L).....	Sir George Cave (U).
<i>Herbert Samuel</i> (L) (Jan., 1916)...	
<i>Sir Edward Grey</i> (L).....	Arthur J. Balfour (U).
<i>Earl Kitchener</i> <sup>2</sup> .....	Earl of Derby (U).
<i>David Lloyd George</i> (L) (June, 1916) .....	
<i>Bonar Law</i> (U).....	Walter Long (U).
<i>Austen Chamberlain</i> (U).....	Austen Chamberlain (U).
	Edwin Samuel Montagu (L) (July, 1917).
<i>Arthur J. Balfour</i> (U).....	Sir Edward Carson (U).
	Sir Eric Geddes (July, 1917).
<i>Augustine Birrell</i> (L) <sup>1, 2</sup> .....	Henry E. Duke (U).
<i>Henry E. Duke</i> (U) (July, 1916)....	
<i>Arthur Henderson</i> (Lab.).....	Herbert A. L. Fisher.
<i>Marquess of Crewe</i> (L) (Aug., 1916)	
<i>Lord Selborne</i> .....	Rowland E. Prothero (U).
<i>Earl of Crawford</i> (U) (June, 1916).	
<i>Walter Long</i> (U).....	Lord Rhondda (L).
<i>W. Hayes Fisher</i> (U) (July, 1916)..	
<i>Walter Runciman</i> (L) <sup>2</sup> .....	Sir Albert Stanley (U).
<i>Winston Churchill</i> (L).....	Sir Frederick Cawley (L).
<i>Herbert Samuel</i> (L) (Nov., 1915)...	
<i>Edwin S. Montagu</i> (L) (Jan., 1916)	
<i>T. McKinnon Wood</i> (L) (June, 1916) .....	

<sup>4</sup> Bonar Law resigned from the War Cabinet and was succeeded by Sir Edward Carson, but continued as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

<sup>5</sup> Henderson, while on a mission to Russia, was replaced by Barnes, but never returned to an active part in the War Cabinet.

Secretary for Scotland.....	<i>T. McKinnon Wood</i>
First Commissioner of Works.....	<i>Lord Emmott</i>
Attorney-General .....	<i>Sir John A. Simon</i>
Minister of Blockade .....	_____
Food Controller .....	_____
Shipping Controller .....	_____
Minister of Labour .....	_____
Minister of Pensions .....	_____
Air Board .....	_____
War Trade Department .....	_____
Ministry of National Service .....	_____
Ministry of Reconstruction .....	_____
Postmaster-General .....	<i>C. E. H. Hobhouse</i>
Under-Secretaries of State:	
Home Office .....	<i>Ellis Griffith</i> <i>Cecil Harmsworth (Feb., 1915)</i>
Foreign Affairs .....	<i>Francis Dyke Acland</i> <i>Hon. Neil Primrose (Feb., 1915)</i>
Colonial Office .....	<i>Lord Islington</i>
War Office .....	<i>Harold John Tennant</i>
India .....	<i>C. H. Roberts</i>
Parliamentary Secretaries: to the Admiralty.....	<i>T. J. Macnamara</i>
Board of Education .....	<i>Dr. Christopher Addison</i>
Board of Trade .....	<i>J. M. Robertson</i>
Local Government Board .....	<i>J. Herbert Lewis</i>
Treasury .....	<i>Percy Illingworth</i> <i>John W. Gulland (Feb., 1915)</i>
Financial Secretary to the Treasury.....	<i>Edwin Samuel Montagu</i> <i>Francis Dyke Acland (Feb., 1915)</i>
Parliamentary Secretary to Munitions Department.....	_____

- T. McKinnon Wood* (L)<sup>1</sup>.....*Robert Munro* (L).  
*Harold John Tennant* (L) (June, 1916) .....  
*Lewis V. Harcourt* (L).....*Sir Alfred M. Mond* (L).  
*Sir Edward Carson* (U).....*Sir Frederick E. Smith* (U).  
*Sir Frederick E. Smith* (U) (Oct., 1915) .....  
 \_\_\_\_\_.....*Lord Robert Cecil* (U).  
*Lord Robert Cecil* (U) (Feb., 1916).  
 \_\_\_\_\_.....*Lord Devonport* (L).  
 \_\_\_\_\_.....*Lord Rhondda* (L) (June, 1917).  
 \_\_\_\_\_.....*Sir Joseph Paton Maclay*.  
 \_\_\_\_\_.....*John Hodge* (Lab.).  
 \_\_\_\_\_.....*George N. Barnes* (Lab.).  
*Arthur Henderson* (Lab.) (Nov., 1916) .....  
 \_\_\_\_\_.....*Viscount Cowdray*.  
*Maj. Baird* (July, 1916).....  
 \_\_\_\_\_.....*Lord Emmott*.  
*Walter Clive Bridgeman* (U) (July, Assist.—*Capt. Visct. Wolmer* (U). 1916) .....  
 \_\_\_\_\_.....*Neville Chamberlain*.  
 \_\_\_\_\_.....*Dr. C. Addison* (July, 1917).  
*Herbert Samuel* (L) .....*Albert Holden Illingworth* (L).  
*J. A. Pease* (L) (Jan., 1916).....  
  
*William Brace* (Lab.).....*William Brace* (Lab.).  
  
*Lord Robert Cecil* (U).....*Lord Robert Cecil* (U).  
 Additional—*Lord Hardinge*.  
*Arthur D. Steel-Maitland* (U).....*Arthur D. Steel-Maitland* (U).  
*Harold John Tennant* (L)<sup>1</sup>.....*J. Ian Macpherson*.  
*Earl of Derby* (U) (June, 1916)....  
*Lord Islington* (L).....*Lord Islington* (L).  
*T. J. Macnamara* (L).....*T. J. Macnamara* (L).<sup>2</sup>  
 Additional—*Earl Lytton* (U).  
*J. Herbert Lewis* (L).....*J. Herbert Lewis* (L).  
*Ernest George Pretymann* (U).....*G. H. Roberts* (Lab.).  
*William Hayes Fisher* (U).....*William Hayes Fisher* (U).  
*John W. Gulland* (L)<sup>3</sup>.....*Lord Edmund Talbot* (U).  
*Lord Edmund Talbot* (U).....*Capt. F. E. Guest* (L)  
 (Mar., 1917).  
*Edwin Samuel Montagu* (L).....*Sir S. H. Lever*.  
  
*Dr. Christopher Addison* (L).....*Mr. Kellaway* (L).  
 Sir *Worthington Evans* (U).

Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Agriculture.....	Sir Harry Verney
Financial Secretary to the War Office.....	Harold Trevor Baker
Junior Lord of the Treasury.....	John W. Gulland (went out Feb., 1915)
Junior Lord of the Treasury.....	W. Wedgwood Benn
Junior Lord of the Treasury.....	William Jones
Junior Lord of the Treasury.....	H. Webb
Junior Lord of the Treasury.....	Walter Rea (Feb., 1915)
Junior Lord of the Treasury.....	Cecil Beck (Feb., 1915)
Civil Lord of the Admiralty.....	George Lambert
Solicitor-General .....	Sir Stanley Buckmaster
Paymaster-General .....	Lord Strachie
Assistant Postmaster-General .....	Capt. Cecil Norton
Parliamentary Secretaries: to the National Service Ministry.....	_____
Air Board .....	_____
Food Control Ministry .....	_____
Minister of Pensions .....	_____
Shipping Controller .....	_____
Minister of Blockades .....	_____
Minister of Labour .....	_____
Assistant Under-Secretary Foreign Affairs.....	_____
Scotland:	
Secretary for .....	<i>T. McKinnon Wood</i>
Lord Advocate .....	Robert Munro
Solicitor-General .....	Thomas Brash Morison
Ireland:	
Lord Lieutenant .....	Earl of Aberdeen Lord Wimborne (Feb., 1915)
Chief Secretary .....	<i>Augustine Birrell</i>
Lord Chancellor .....	Ignatius J. O'Brien
Attorney-General .....	Jonathan Pim
Solicitor-General .....	James O'Connor



## Ministers of the Royal Household:

Lord Steward .....	Earl of Chesterfield
Treasurer .....	Capt. Hon. F. E. Guest
Comptroller .....	Lord Saye and Sele
Lord Chamberlain .....	Lord Sandhurst
Vice-Chamberlain .....	Hon. Geoffrey Howard
Lord in Waiting .....	Lord Herschell
Lord in Waiting .....	Lord Allendale
Lord in Waiting .....	Lord Stanmore
Lord in Waiting .....	Lord Ranksborough
Lord in Waiting .....	Lord Granville
Lord in Waiting .....	Lord Acton
Captain of Gentlemen-at-Arms .....	Lord Colebrooke
Captain of Yeomen of Guard .....	Earl of Craven
Master of the Horse.....	Earl of Granard

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If an outsider may venture an opinion, there is need for a still more radical reorganization of the British administrative system, affecting not only the Cabinet, but the numerous ministerial departments. The number of main departments should be reduced; and the less important services organized within one or the other of the main departments. For example, it might be well to combine the ministries of foreign and colonial affairs. There could be a single ministry of military operations, embracing the army, the navy, the air service, and the munitions service. A comprehensive ministry of home or internal affairs might absorb the functions of the Home Secretary, the Local Government Board, the Board of Agriculture and the Food Controller. A ministry of trade and commerce could take over the work of the Board of Trade and the Shipping Controller.

If the number of main departments were thus reduced to ten or twelve, many of the conflicts between what are now distinct minis-

Lord Farquhar (U).....	Lord Farquhar (U).
James F. Hope (U).....	Col. James Craig (U).
Charles Roberts (L).....	Sir Edwin Cornwall (L).
Lord Sandhurst (L).....	Lord Sandhurst (L). <sup>1</sup>
Cecil Beck (L).....	Cecil Beck (L).
Lord Herschell (L). <sup>1</sup> .....	Lord Herschell (L). <sup>1</sup>
Lord Allendale (L). <sup>1</sup> .....	Lord Kenyon (L).
Lord Stanmore (L). <sup>1</sup> .....	Lord Stanmore (L). <sup>1</sup>
Lord Ranksborough (U). <sup>1</sup> .....	Lord Ranksborough (U). <sup>1</sup>
Lord Valentia (U).....	Lord Valentia (U).
Lord Hylton (U).....	Lord Hylton (U).
Lord Colebrooke (L). <sup>1</sup> .....	Lord Colebrooke (L). <sup>1</sup>
Lord Suffield (U).....	Lord Suffield (U).
Earl of Chesterfield (L).....	Earl of Chesterfield (L).

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tries could be settled within the department. A Cabinet of workable size could then be set up, including the ministers at the head of each of the main departments, with the Prime Minister as the general director of the whole system. Such a Cabinet might combine the advantages of centralized control aimed at in the Lloyd George government with those of the old Cabinet system, which linked the central council with the administrative services and with Parliament.

Such an organization would also lend itself to the further development of imperial organization. The five or six ministers dealing with imperial problems could sit with the colonial premiers and a representative from India in an imperial cabinet which would also be small enough for effective results; while imperial conferences held from time to time with more representatives from the overseas dominions would form a deliberative agency for the consideration of larger questions of policy.

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