

sitting with their colleagues in a cabinet, had become, he said, autocrats in their departments. The War Cabinet created at will new government departments. Real cabinet government, said Lord Lansdowne, "had disappeared altogether and with it the good sound doctrine of the collective responsibility of the government of the day."

The War Cabinet involved changes of method which were equally startling. The old cabinet was a gathering, informal and confidential, of ministers to discuss public affairs with the Prime Minister and with each other. We do not formally record decisions, even the most momentous, arising from a casual meeting of friends. Every one present understands the topics discussed. All that is said is confidential and, among gentlemen, what is agreed upon in such a way will be binding. The cabinet had been a gathering of this kind. There was no secretary, no minutes were kept of the business transacted, no notice was given to the members of the business for which a meeting was called. A score or so of gentlemen came together, each of them occupied with important matters, each of them probably anxious to have on his business the counsel and decisions of the Cabinet, no one of them, except possibly the Prime Minister, knowing what business must be settled. The meetings were secret. No one might divulge anything that happened. Except on very rare occasions no one not a member sat with the Cabinet to give counsel based upon expert knowledge. The Prime Minister was supposed to remember all the decisions reached, with no written record to confirm or correct his impressions. It was, indeed, the custom that he should send a private letter to the King informing him of the business done. But this letter was for the King's eye alone and was not available for proof of what the Cabinet had decided. The inevitable result was that at times few really knew what the Cabinet had done. Members had often a completely wrong impression of the result of their deliberations. Such defects, bad enough in time of peace, were likely to prove ruinous in time of war. The need of change was urgent.

A cabinet of five may be as inefficient as a cabinet of a score if the right men are not found to serve. Granted the insight and driving power of genius, a cabinet of one might be better than a cabinet of six. Napoleon Bonaparte was his own cabinet. There was no magic in a small cabinet. Everything depended upon the members. Not only was it important that they should be able; it was also necessary that they should be free from other cares.