

25, 1915, a coalition ministry was announced in which sat Liberal, Conservative, and Labour members. Mr. Lloyd George, as Minister of Munitions, inspired fiery energy in production. Beyond the British Isles, too, every possible stimulus was applied. When in July, 1915, the Prime Minister of Canada went to London, evidence of the urgent need of unity in work throughout the whole Empire was found in the taking of a new step. He was invited by Mr. Asquith to attend the meetings of the British Cabinet. There was no precedent for this sitting in the Cabinet of Great Britain of a Prime Minister who was at the head of a separate ministry overseas.

At the same time other precedents were going by the board. In 1915 the existing British Parliament prolonged its own life beyond the statutory term of five years and, in fact, continued to sit for eight years, until the election of December, 1918. A little later Canada took similar action. Meanwhile even coalition government was proving ineffective since it laboured under the cumbrous methods of the days of peace. The coalition Cabinet formed in Great Britain in May, 1915, contained twenty-two members. It was too large and met too infrequently to direct from day to day the vast energies engaged in the war. It tried the plan of giving to a small War Council of five members the direction of the war. This council was a committee of the larger Cabinet and reported to that body. The members of the smaller body with the Prime Minister as its head were most of them heads of departments. Their burden was too heavy. The summer of 1916, which saw the great offensive on the Somme, brought to Britain depression and disillusion, for it showed that not yet were the allies able to strike effectively at the military power of Germany.

It thus happened that the end of 1916 saw a startling change in British politics. On December 1, Mr. Lloyd George wrote to the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, urging that the conduct of the war should be placed in the hands of a small body consisting of four members. So far as the carrying on of the war was concerned this body was really to be the government. It was a bold innovation when Mr. Lloyd George insisted that the Prime Minister, with his many other duties, should not be a member of this committee. This action brought the fall of Mr. Asquith's government. On December 7, Mr. Lloyd George himself became Prime Minister, and Mr. Asquith and many Liberal members retired from the coalition government. On December 9 met for the first time the small War Cabinet now created to direct Britain's effort in the war.