

Genesis & Evolution of the Cabinet.

(Continued.)

PRIOR to the reign of Charles I. the cabinet was a small unorganized camarilla, and had not yet attained its distinctive title. Its members were selected from the Privy Council by the king. However, it had no power to take any resolutions of State, or perform any act of government. During the reigns of Charles I and Charles II, this small camarilla acquired the name of Cabinet, but did not permanently displace the Privy Council from its position of De Facto, as well as De Jure, the only authoritative body of advisers of the crown. The cabinet of Charles II was extremely unpopular, and, in derision, it was called a "Cabal"—a word formed from the initial letter of the names of the unpopular favorites, viz., Clifford, Ashley, Buckingham and Lauderdale.

The third step in the advance of the cabinet was the formation of a ministry, comprised of members of the predominating party. This change, which took place during the reign of William III, was the first to approach the modern type. The cabinet had now become De Facto though not De Jure, the sole supreme advisory council and executive authority in the State; nevertheless it still remained, as it remains to-day, unknown to the constitution. However, it was not yet a popular institution, and was regarded with distrust in many quarters, and the present system of ministerial responsibility, by the admission of its members to a seat in Parliament, came into vogue, only after surmounting great opposition.

At length, towards the close of the eighteenth century, the modern form of the cabinet was finally evolved, consisting, as H. D. Traill points out in his work, "Central government": (a) of members of the legislature; (b) of the same political views and chosen from the party possessing a majority in the House of Commons; (c) prosecuting a concerted policy; (d) under a common responsibility to be signified by collective resignation in the event of parliamentary censure; and (e) acknowledging a common subordination to one chief minister.

The executive may be said to consist of the sovereign and a cabinet composed of members appointed with the king's formal consent. All real authority is in the hands of the cabinet, though the government is carried on in the name of the king.