

a secretary is known to have been appointed to the Committee on Reconstruction and Development in January 1918, no written records of the deliberations of these committees have survived except where, in view of the requirement that the committees report to Council, recommendations emerged as formal Minutes or Orders. Another innovation was the appointment in 1916 of two members of the House of Commons as, respectively, a Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Militia and Defence and a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs. For a short time in 1918 there was also a Parliamentary Secretary for Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment.

These interesting developments in the machinery of the executive in Canada were no doubt influenced by what had taken place in this field in the United Kingdom during the War. There, various devices of the Cabinet committee nature, with advisory experts, had been used from soon after the War started. Records were frequently kept of decisions and they were communicated to the departments concerned. Some of these devices were not successful and when Mr. Lloyd George succeeded Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister, one of his first acts was to establish an entirely new type of body, a small War Cabinet made up of Ministers who, with one exception, had no departmental responsibility and were able to meet almost continually to make rapid decisions when necessary.

Another British innovation of pronounced and lasting effect provided the War Cabinet with a secretariat. In effect this was an extension of the secretariat for the Committee of Imperial Defence and for the War Committee of the early war years. Under the new Secretary to the Cabinet, agenda and documents were prepared and circulated, records kept of deliberations, decisions sent out for action, secretaries provided for committees and constant liaison kept with departments.

This organized approach to Cabinet business, so different from what had been the practice for many years, of private, informal meetings of the Cabinet without any written record except for a personal report by the Prime Minister to the Sovereign, proved its worth. With a return to the normal Cabinets of prewar days in 1919 the Secretariat was retained as it had become too valuable to discard—but not without some opposition from those accustomed to earlier practices—and is now a characteristic part of the British Cabinet system.

In Canada, although the prewar customs came back, thinking on reforms of the central executive evidently continued, influenced by United Kingdom practice and Canadian war experience. In 1919 a report of a special committee of the Senate on the Machinery of Government under the chairmanship of Senator McLennan stressed the need for reorganization of the Canadian Cabinet, particularly by a reduction in the number of Ministers and, to relieve the burden on Ministers so that they would have more time to deliberate as a policy making body, by providing them with Parliamentary Assistants and—as was then British practice—with a Cabinet Secretariat to expedite the carrying on of public business. The Secretary to the Cabinet would be responsible for such things as keeping what notes were desirable, for preparing and circulating agenda and information on items in advance and for communicating decisions to Ministers. It was also hoped that any revision of ministerial business would include the reform suggested by Sir George Murray, i.e., that a special and small committee of Ministers take over the passing of formal Orders in Council.

No firm steps were taken to put these recommendations into practice but Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King, then Prime Minister, tried out in peacetime the experiment of a Parliamentary Under-Secretary for a year in 1921-22. Later he had an item placed in the estimates of the Department of External Affairs to provide for a salary for a Secretary to the Prime Minister (he was also Secretary of State for External Affairs at the time). In speaking of it in the House of Commons in April 1927, Mr. King explained that it was an executive assistant he had in mind, filling a position corresponding to that of a deputy