20. The Cabinet and the Presidential Staff

United Press Photo

THE Cabinet and the presidential staff, along with a varying number of other individuals and small groups, make up the President's family of direct advisers. They are pictured in Figure 37 as they will be discussed in this chapter. Since time immemorial, the executive chief has possessed a body of advisers or counsellors. Where government is primitive and the state small, the counsellors group around the ruler as relatives, co-warriors, or as a council of elders. Where government is complex and the state large, the same small groups persist but a large body of officials also develops. American government, of course, was never, save among the Indians, of the first type. Rather, it began as a somewhat complex organism and has become increasingly complicated. To carry out the various governmental operations the executive has needed expert advice from people trained in these operations. Examples here include those men in the Bureau of the Budget who are specialists in the financial affairs of the different agencies of the government. The executive also requires the advice as well as the obedient services of the men who directly manage the numerous operations. The heads of the Departments illustrate this type of adviser.

Furthermore, the various agencies of the government become themselves representatives of newly arisen economic and social interests, such as farmers, businessmen, and industrial workers; and the President keeps informed of group needs through his agency chiefs. The Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare is the national spokesman for, among others, some of the most vocal and potent lobbies at many State capitals—the vari-

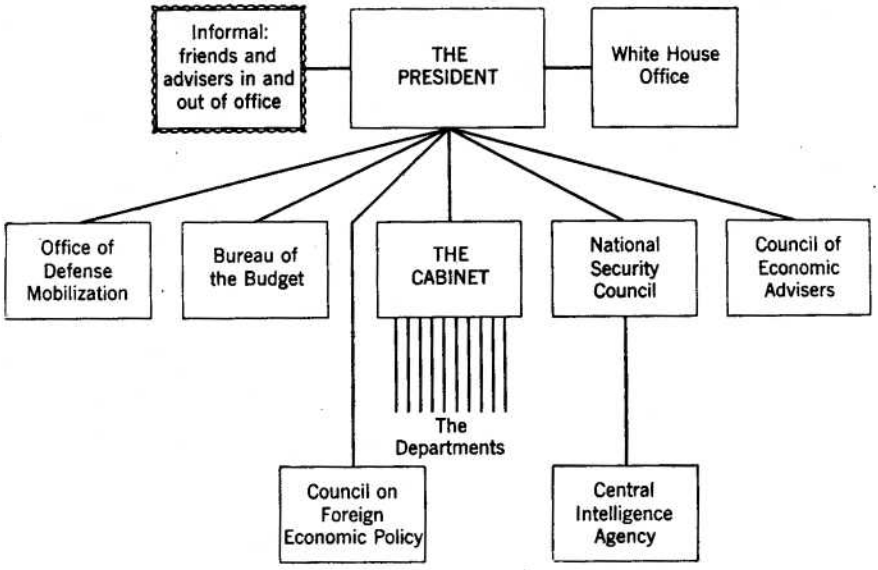


Figure 37. The President's Family of Direct Advisers.

ous organizations of public elementary and secondary school teachers. On the other hand, giving an economic or social grouping access to the executive commonly entails, in the near future, new government functions in behalf of that grouping. The creation of the Department of Commerce, with its chief in the Cabinet, soon brought the vast information resources of the executive branch to the assistance of the business community, as a stimulus to domestic and international trade.

TWO GREAT EXECUTIVE REVOLUTIONS

The history of counsellors to the executive over the last 800 years, throws into sharp light an important problem of politics in America and the world today. Congress itself is the living descendant of a group of executive counsellors that goes back to the late Middle Ages. Although it bears as remote a resemblance to its ancestors as modern man does to the first recognizable human beings, it has sprung from the ancient practice of the king to summon to his court the nobles and high clergy (as in the ancient House of Lords) and the commoners (as in the first House of Commons) to lend aid and advice. Gradually these advisory bodies came to give mandatory "advice." Finally, in a series of revolutions beginning in England in 1640 and continuing there, in America, in France, and elsewhere, the legislatures came to be the primary law-making bodies. Through this evolution the king became a subject. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in fact, may well be called the Age of Legislatures.

Amidst the first series of revolutions grew the second series, quietly, persistently, and after 1914, strongly. The second series threatened the first,

A Meeting of the Cabinet, October 25, 1954, the First to be Viewed by a Television Audience.

although in fact it was of the same type save that it was 800 years younger. This comprised the development of executive counsellors in the new executive that had grown from the new, supreme legislatures. The new institution in America was the President and his executive staff; in France and England it was the Prime Minister, the cabinet, and the department heads; in Italy, Mussolini and the Grand Council of the Fascist Party; in Germany, Hitler and the Nazi chieftains; and in the Soviet Union and other communist states, the Central Committee of the Communist Party. These new executive leaders, even in their weakest form, now share, and threaten to embrace more of, the powers of the legislature. The fact that these new groups are not called legislatures does not prevent them from making laws. The fact that sometimes they are called "non-partisan" does not deter their members from acting in all other respects like politicians.

It would be tempting but hazardous at this juncture to distinguish who among the presidential counsellors are devoted to policy, and who are concerned with administration. No such categorical distinction is possible, for the two fields are closely intermingled. For instance, the cabinet gives advice on the framing of policy, but its members are also deeply concerned with administrative problems. Moreover, the Executive Office of the President was designed with an eye to easing his administrative chores; yet it makes outstanding contributions to the framing of policy.

THE CABINET

Origins

The Cabinet had its origins during President Washington's first term. The Constitution makes no provision for a Cabinet; however, its authors surely were aware that the President would want to surround himself with a body of competent advisers. Perhaps they expected that he might ask counsel of the Senate. At that time a small (twenty-six members in 1789) deliberative body, the Senate was somewhat analogous to the upper houses of the colonial legislatures, which had on occasion provided counsel to colonial governors. Finally, it possessed executive powers, in that it could accept or reject both presidential appointments and treaties with foreign nations. However, the Senate displayed resentment at Washington's efforts to consult with it in the senatorial chamber. The Supreme Court, too, might have been expected to yield counsel; however, whereas certain colonial courts had rendered advisory decisions, the Supreme Court refused to do so, and restricted its decisions to actual cases at law.

Thus rebuffed, Washington turned to the heads of the executive Departments for a consultative body. The President was already constitutionally empowered to seek their opinion, in writing, concerning the affairs of their respective Departments (Art. II, sec. 2, cl. 1). Calling upon these departmental chiefs in a body for their advice required at most only a slight expansion of this constitutional grant. The practice of terming the body a "Cabinet" seems to have developed about the year 1793, and to have continued from that date to the present. However, the Cabinet was not

mentioned by name in a statute until the twentieth century. Even the Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1953, which laid the foundation for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, did not use the word; it provided simply for the establishment of an "executive Department" under a "Secretary." Thus the Cabinet is an important part of the American government that is not founded specifically by the Constitution.

Choice of Cabinet members

The choice of Cabinet members is almost entirely at the ultimate discretion of the President. The Senate seldom questions the President's nominations; and it has no control over his dismissals. It might almost be said that the chief prerequisite for Cabinet members is that they be satisfactory to the President. However, there are certain broad considerations which modify his selections.

Party Attachment: In the first place, the Cabinet nearly always consists entirely of members of the President's party. In the very first Cabinet, President Washington underwent difficulties from the clashes between his Antifederalist Secretary of State, Jefferson, and his Federalist Secretary of the Treasury, Hamilton. Washington's experience, and the demands of the party system, laid down the general principle that Cabinet members should be solely of the President's party. However, there have been exceptions to this principle. Shortly before the election of 1940 President Roosevelt enlisted two Republicans, Henry Stimson and Frank Knox, in his Cabinet as, respectively, Secretary of War and Secretary of the Navy. Roosevelt's intention in this case seems to have been to make bipartisan the formulation of American policy toward the war in Europe, and at the same time to cut the ground from beneath Republican opponents of the presidential foreign policy. Then, in 1953, President Eisenhower named a southern Democrat, Mrs. Oveta Culp Hobby, as the first Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. Her appointment was probably aimed at rewarding the many southern Democrats who had voted for Eisenhower, enabling him to capture the electoral vote of several southern States, among them Texas.

Other Considerations: In the second place, Cabinet members are commonly selected so as to represent the different factions of the party. President Wilson named as his Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, who led the Populist, free-silver wing of the Democratic Party. Third, Cabinet members are usually chosen in such a way as to represent the various regions of the country. President Eisenhower's original Cabinet included two men each from New York and Michigan; one each from Ohio, Oregon, Utah, Illinois, and Massachusetts; and Mrs. Hobby, from Texas. By contrast, on January 1, 1941, four of the ten members of the Cabinet hailed from New York State; indeed, Franklin Roosevelt was often accused of naming too many Easterners to his Cabinet. Probably the extent to which each of the above two considerations will prevail depends somewhat upon how much control the President exercises over his own party and how large his popular and electoral majorities were; a President who is politically powerful dares be rather insensitive about the demands of factions and regions.

In the fourth place, Cabinet appointments may be rewards for faithful party service or for major contributions toward campaign expenditures. The multimillionaire W. Averell Harriman could probably thank his gifts to the party coffers for his post as Secretary of Commerce under President Truman. It must be borne in mind that Cabinet members receive no salary as such; they must seek compensation in intangibles such as prestige and influence, which can be great. However, as Department heads they each receive an annual stipend of $25,000. Frequently the Postmaster Generalship is awarded to the national party chairman, as in the cases of James Farley, Robert Hannegan, and Arthur Summerfield. Too, the President may choose for a Cabinet position an individual notable principally for being a close friend of the President, as F. D. Roosevelt apparently did in naming William Woodin Secretary of the Treasury. Moreover, certain special qualifications are attached to some of the Cabinet posts. For instance, the Attorney General must be a lawyer; the Secretaries of Commerce and of Labor must not be disagreeable, respectively, to the major business interests and to the major labor organizations.

Experts: Finally, Cabinet positions are offered with growing frequency to experts in the work of the Departments. Secretaries of Agriculture Henry Wallace and Ezra Taft Benson each were closely affiliated with farming. President Eisenhower's first Secretary of Labor, Martin Durkin, was President of the AFL Plumbers' Union. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had had more than three decades of experience in diplomacy prior to his appointment to the Cabinet. Even the tradition of Postmasters General was broken in 1947 by the nomination of Jesse Donaldson, who had been in the career postal service for many years.

The evidence of a changing composition of the Cabinet can be read in a few statistics prepared by Mr. Richard Fisher at the Hoover Institute and Library of Stanford University. Between 1889 and 1921, 27% of the Cabinet members belonged to professional organizations such as the American Bar Association. In contrast, about 45% of the Cabinet members since 1921 belonged to such organizations. A similar rise has been recorded in their membership in community service and fraternal organizations. The proportion of Cabinet officials who had held lower federal appointive positions was 18% for the period from 1889 to 1921, but about one-third since that time. However, the percentage who had once been congressmen declined from 35% to 18% in the two periods. Moreover, the number of Cabinet members who had once held State and local office also declined after 1921.

The trend toward choosing experts rather than politicians as Cabinet members illustrates the acceptance of the notion that the government is to play an affirmative role with respect to American life. At the same time, the choice of experts tends to diminish the ability of the Cabinet to provide counsel on broad policy questions; for by their very training experts are apt to have political views limited to the area of their especial competence. Moreover, Cabinet members rarely continue in office under a succeeding President, even of the same party. In fact, a Vice President

rising to the presidency usually disposes fairly quickly of the Cabinet that he has inherited; for example, before the end of 1946 Truman had replaced all of Roosevelt's appointees except Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal. Finally, Cabinet office carries with it pressures, conflicts, and personal inconvenience to the extent that the average term in office of Secretaries between 1933 and 1948 was forty-nine months. Between 1948 and 1952, it was 42.5 months. Hence the Secretaries' expertness hardly has time to take effect; the Departments therefore must look instead to the permanent subordinates who can carry on despite changes in regime.

Functioning of the Cabinet

Precisely how the Cabinet functions, and exactly how much it can accomplish, are matters at the will of the President. From Washington to John Quincy Adams, Presidents tended to give considerable respect to Cabinet opinions. Andrew Jackson, however, found the principal source of his advice elsewhere, in his "Kitchen Cabinet." Jackson's immediate successors placed varying reliance upon their Cabinets. Franklin Pierce seems to have had great dependence upon his, for it was the only Cabinet that survived a presidential term intact. But Lincoln, Johnson, and Grant had major disputes with members of their Cabinets. Wilson, who held the British cabinet system in high honor, attempted to manage his Cabinet in that pattern. Harding was the last President who depended a great deal on his Cabinet. Presidents since Harding have relied mainly upon other sources for counsel regarding general policy. However, President Eisenhower has shown considerably more deference to Cabinet opinions than did his two predecessors.

The American Cabinet must be carefully distinguished from European Cabinets. In Europe the Cabinets are accountable more or less as a unit to their legislatures; on the continent, they usually can be unseated by an adverse parliamentary vote. Prime ministers are little more than the equals of other Cabinet members; in France the overthrow of the Cabinet by the parliament may produce a new Cabinet in which the new Prime Minister was previously a Cabinet member, whereas the past Prime Minister still holds a powerful ministerial portfolio. By contrast, American cabinets are totally the creatures of the President; he may dismiss individual members as he chooses. At the same time, American Cabinet members are not responsible to anyone but the President. Congress can discharge a Cabinet member only through conviction following impeachment.

At its meetings the Cabinet deals with two different levels of business; and the nature and role of any given Cabinet depends upon which of these levels tends to be emphasized. Cabinet members, after all, perform two roles. First, they are part of an advisory body to the President; and second, they are chiefs of the executive Departments. In its functioning, then, the Cabinet may present advice respecting the general policy of the administration; or it may discuss the operation of individual executive Departments. In their first role, Cabinet members operate more or less collectively; in their second, they operate as individuals. In general, the

trend has been toward a greater stress of the second type of function; for little by little the Cabinet has been losing significance as a unit for providing advice on questions of broad policy.

This condition has arisen to a considerable extent from the fact that the Cabinet has become in late years more a body of specialists than a group of seasoned politicians used to dealing with all kinds of political and social questions. This change has already been noted above in the figures on the backgrounds of secretaries.

Secondly, the Cabinet has become decreasingly representative of the whole executive branch of the government. Under President Eisenhower, Cabinet meetings are attended not only by the traditional Department heads but also, occasionally and on invitation of the President, by the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission, the Director of the Council on Foreign Economic Policy, the American Ambassador to the United Nations, the Assistant to the President, and the Director of the Budget. The Vice President, too, frequently attends Cabinet meetings. Yet there is no spokesman for the great quasi-judicial bodies such as the Interstate Commerce Commission, nor for government corporations such as the Tennessee Valley Authority. Furthermore, it is precisely those bodies and their chief personnel which in late years have often been productive of important plans and policies. These proposals must be delivered to the President and the public through channels other than Cabinet meetings. Hence the President must rely for policy counsel upon numerous individuals and groups outside his Cabinet.

Moreover, the Cabinet has become too large for intimate give-and-take discussions. Cabinet meetings, therefore, do not often generate the fundamental ideas under which the government operates today. At one of these meetings, which take place at the White House every Friday morning, there may be a rather perfunctory discussion of broad policy issues. Too, an individual member may submit for debate a departmental project, so that the Cabinet may collectively examine its possible effect upon the whole administration, and on the administrative program as well. But in the recent past it has been much commoner for members to seize the opportunity to have a private conversation with the President regarding administrative problems, while other members have chatted among themselves or dealt with other concerns.

Whatever new policy departure the President may sketch, the Cabinet has no control over presidential plans; the President may carry on his projects in the face of unanimous Cabinet disapproval. Cabinet votes are not officially recorded, and in the past no minutes have been kept of Cabinet meetings. The President is at liberty to deal with the Cabinet as he chooses. Some Presidents, notably Lincoln and F. D. Roosevelt, have found it desirable to enliven Cabinet meetings by telling funny stories. It is reported, however, that Eisenhower's Cabinet meetings show considerably greater decorum. But it is probably safe to predict that, barring a continued drive by the President to strengthen the Cabinet, it will decline as a policy-framing organ.

President Eisenhower has endeavored somewhat to reinvigorate the Cabinet by having major policy statements issue from Cabinet meetings rather than from the White House Office. Furthermore, he created a new post, Secretary to the Cabinet, in 1954. The Cabinet Secretary now keeps a central record of proceedings, and follows through afterward to see that Cabinet decisions are made known and their effects reported upon in subsequent meetings. He also prepares an agenda for each Cabinet meeting and distributes copies among the Cabinet members.

A few words may be inserted here, however, about the Bureau of the Budget, apart from its later treatment, for it is quite close to the President. Besides its great and detailed financial tasks, its Director and his associates are constantly consulted by the President and other leaders of the executive branch regarding the need for changes in the organization of the government and the desirability of increasing or decreasing emphasis upon certain operations of the government. These features of the work of the Bureau need surprise no one, for its vast knowledge of the innumerable financial details of the state puts it in an unmatched position for giving advice to the President on what he can and cannot do regarding many areas of policy.

THE PRESIDENTIAL STAFF

General structure

The formal presidential staff consists of a group of agencies loosely associated under the direct supervision of the President and known as the Executive Office of the President. It was created by Congress in 1939 primarily to lessen the enormous administrative burdens of the chief executive, to provide new bodies to assist the President in the formulation of policy, and to improve the means for executing and administering the presidential programs. The organizations making up the Executive Office have been subject to frequent experimentation and change; they include (1) the White House Office; (2) the Bureau of the Budget, which controls the fiscal planning of the government; (3) the Council of Economic Advisers, which supplies the President with information on economic affairs; (4) the National Security Council, which plans foreign policy and which has an important subordinate office, the Central Intelligence Agency; (5) the Office for Emergency Management, which is a mere shell of an organization for wartime preparedness; and (6) the Office of Defense Mobilization, which continuously organizes and plans economic resources for war. Of these six bodies, all but the first have distinct relationships with specific functions of the government, and are consequently discussed elsewhere in the book, in the context of those functions.

The White House Office

The White House Office is designed to carry out many administrative functions directly attached to the Office of the President. Authority for the formal creation of the Office was granted by Congress in 1939 pursuant

to recommendations of the President's Committee on Administrative Management in the Government of the United States.

However, Congress at that time empowered the President to make any or all of numerous modifications in the Office; it has in fact seen many changes since 1939. The nucleus of the White House Office comprises six presidential assistants, three of them "special" and three "administrative." These assistants provide liaison between the President and the various agencies of the executive branch. They relieve the President of seeing many people whose problems are not so important as to merit his direct attention. The White House Office also contains a Press Secretary to deal with the media of publicity; military, naval, and Air Force aides, to advise the President with respect to the armed forces; the Economic Adviser to the President; the Physician to the President; the Special Counsel to the President; and a large secretarial staff to handle relationships with Congress and the public.

Under President Eisenhower the leading personage in the White House Office is the Assistant to the President, an office established by the President. The powers of the Assistant actually are as great or as small as the President may decide. Under a weak President—should he see fit to continue the office—the Assistant conceivably might gain a position roughly analogous to that of the Carolingian *major domo* under the last Merovingian rulers of the Frankish Empire in the eighth century; in other terms, he might become the real power behind the throne. In any case, he holds an office in which he can bring great influence upon the presidential policy; hence his appointment may be a matter of considerable intraparty maneuvering about the President. However, he is subordinate to the President, and may be dismissed at the latter's discretion.

The relationship between President Eisenhower and his Assistant, Sherman Adams, former governor of New Hampshire, may also be compared with that of an infantry lieutenant to his platoon sergeant, in which the latter assumes the more distasteful obligations, especially those of partisan political significance. For example, it was Assistant Adams rather than President Eisenhower who in 1954 asked the resignation of the controversial Dean Clarence Manion, Chairman of the Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, who had publicly supported issues that Eisenhower had opposed, and who was associated with a faction of the Republican Party that had opposed the nomination of Eisenhower. Had Eisenhower, not Adams, asked Dean Manion's resignation, the action might have led to more disturbance within the Republican Party than it did.

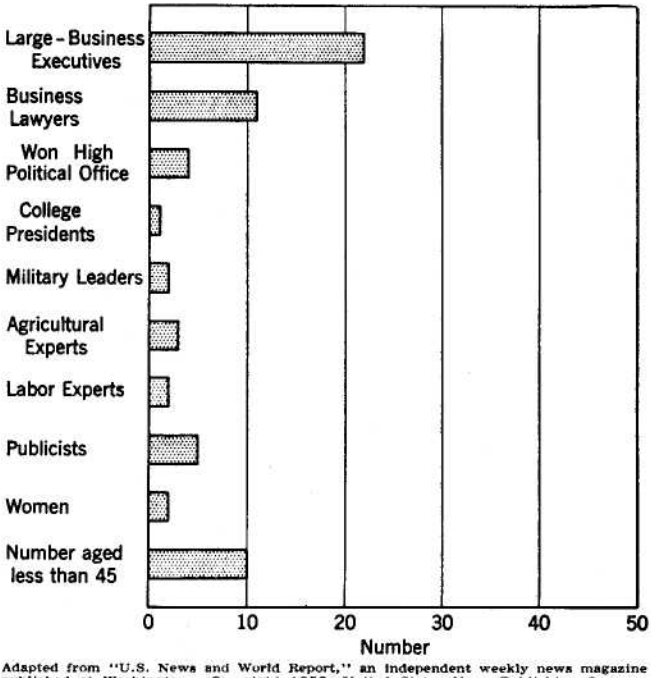
OTHER PRESIDENTIAL ADVISERS

The freedom of presidential choice

The President has almost complete freedom to select whatever advisers he may wish apart from the Cabinet and his Executive Office. Many chief executives throughout the world have been, and may still be, isolated from affairs by a clique that rules in the executive's name; one outstanding

example of such a regime in modern times was that of the aged President Hindenburg in pre-Hitlerite Germany, in which the governing policy appears to have been almost completely dictated by a cabal surrounding the senile Field Marshal. Even the American President is to some degree the captive of his office and his party.

However, it would be idle to attempt to insulate the President wholly from the political world about him, since it would be almost impossible to sever all his channels to the outside. Few Presidents, if any, would allow themselves to be denied the morning newspaper. Consequently many Presidents, sensing that the counsel furnished by their traditional and formal advisers was inadequate or unsatisfactory, have utilized this freedom to go outside their official families to seek counsel. The nature of the source to which the President may turn will depend largely upon circumstances and to a great extent upon the very personality of the President himself. President Eisenhower appears to have employed so-called "stag dinners" at the White House to obtain counsel from private individuals. The *U.S. News and World Report* in its issue of February 4, 1955, stated that altogether 555 persons had attended thirty-eight of these gatherings. Among the 555, 294 were businessmen; eighty-one, administration officials; fifty-one, editors, publishers, and writers; thirty, educators; twenty-three, Republican Party leaders, and smaller numbers of scientists, artists, sportsmen, old friends from military days, heads of foundations or charities, farmers and farm leaders, union officials, church leaders, Eisen-



Adapted from "U.S. News and World Report," an independent weekly news magazine published at Washington. Copyright 1953, United States News Publishing Corporation, January 30, 1953, pp. 21–23

Figure 38. Eisenhower's Fifty Chief Assistants.

hower relatives, and State and local officials. It is instructive that following publication of this article the identity of the White Houses guests was ordered henceforth withheld. In general, as Figure 38 shows, President Eisenhower has favored leading businessmen for official appointment as well.

Individual friends

Some Presidents have resorted to individuals and confidential advisers; two noteworthy cases of this practice were Colonel E. M. House under President Wilson and Harry Hopkins under F. D. Roosevelt. Whereas Colonel House occupied no significant post in the executive branch, he was a constant spring of advice, especially regarding foreign policy. Harry Hopkins did hold important offices, such as administrator of the Works Progress Administration and Secretary of Commerce; however, for some years his influence pervaded so many aspects of the government that it will probably never be established to what degree the elusive—and to some people sinister—personality of Hopkins directed American foreign and domestic policy.

"Kitchen Cabinets"

Other Presidents have had recourse not to one but to several friends outside the government. This sort of presidential council was first publicized under President Jackson, whose group of behind-the-scenes councillors won the name of "Kitchen Cabinet." In recent times, Presidents Harding and Truman have availed themselves of kitchen cabinets, the former's consisting of elements from the so-called "Ohio Gang" and the latter's of friends (journalistically termed "cronies") from Missouri.

Additional advisers from the executive branch

The President may also create an advisory group from government officials who are not Department heads; or he may bring such officials to collaborate with Cabinet members. President F. D. Roosevelt resorted to both these expedients. One of his better-publicized innovations was the so-called "Brain Trust," which provided many of the social, economic, and political concepts fashioning the early New Deal. Its members—Raymond Moley, Rexford Guy Tugwell, Adolf A. Berle, and others —were generally imaginative young Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries in the executive Departments; but for a time, from their positions as "idea men," they overshadowed their departmental superiors in the President's councils.

Legislative advisers from Congress

In recent times many observers have recommended that the President take counsel more frequently with members of Congress. President Truman, who as a former Senator was well acquainted with many congressmen, often entertained leaders of Congress at the White House. Under various recent Presidents, but especially under President Eisenhower, whose

relationships with Congress are considerably less personal than Truman's, there has developed a form of legislative-executive cooperation that bids fair to become a permanent institution. For instance, the practice under President Eisenhower has been that every Monday morning the Republican leaders of each house convene with the President to discuss new legislative proposals. For specific matters the committee chairmen and Cabinet members involved may also be invited. Democratic Party chieftains may also come, to give their reactions. Continuation of this practice may bring the executive and legislative branches much closer together than ever before. At the same time, this agency may enable the President to place even greater pressure upon Congress to enact his program.

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

1. Why does a counselling group grow up around an executive?
2. Does the history of executive power help explain the theory that leadership of a revolution always springs from the bosom of the old leadership?
3. Why do you think the Constitution did not provide specific presidential advisers or staff (even the vice presidency being considered a quite separate office)?
4. From the *United States Government Organization Manual* (current issue), the *Encyclopedia Britannica Yearbook*, or some other source, find who compose the present United States Cabinet. Read their brief biographies in *Who's Who* or in an article (consult the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*) published when they were appointed. Suggest, in each case, the major reason why each may have been appointed to the Cabinet.
5. What are some of the different modes in which various Presidents sought counsel?