

Cabinet Making in American History

Writing in the Sioux City (Iowa) Journal, Frederick J. Haskin says: Almost the first problem that confronts a president-elect is the choosing of the nine men who shall become his official advisers and act as the heads of the nine executive departments of the government. It is a task which calls for much thought, for upon it the success or failure of many administrations has depended. To find capable advisers and chief lieutenants and at the same time to meet the exigencies of politics has tested the resourcefulness of more than one president-elect. The pressure that is brought upon him in behalf of this or that person for a cabinet position often taxes his patience. President-elect Garfield wrote that he was so overwhelmed with such pressure that he had about reached that frame of mind where a multitude of indorsements was his best reason for turning down the candidate possessing them.

The day was when geographical considerations weighed strongly in the selection of cabinet officials. New England was considered as being entitled to one member. New York and Pennsylvania to one each, the south to one or more, the Mississippi valley to one or two and the far west to one. But, since the first administration of Cleveland, presidents have felt more and more free to ignore geographical considerations. In a number of instances they have drawn several members from a single state, as in the case of Root and Straus and Cortelyou, of New York; Wilson and Shaw, of Iowa, and Taft and Garfield, of Ohio, in the Roosevelt administration. In the Taft administration Illinois has two cabinet officers, MacVeagh and Fisher; Massachusetts two, Hitchcock and Meyer, and New York two, Stimson and Wickersham. These two administrations seem to be the only ones in cabinet history in which three states have had two-thirds of the members of the cabinet.

A number of presidents have had small groups of personal advisers known as "kitchen cabinets," the name originating from the story that Jackson admitted these advisers at the back door of the White House. Tyler had a "school master's cabinet," made up largely of Virginia educators. Roosevelt's group of favorites was christened the "tennis cabinet," from their fondness of that game.

GENERALLY SELECTED AS ADVISERS

But, in the making of their cabinets, a large majority of the presidents have selected men who could play the role of both personal and official advisers. Some of them have frequently appointed personal friends to important cabinet positions. McKinley first appointed his law partner, William R. Day, assistant secretary of state, and later elevated him to the premiership of his cabinet. It was charged at the time that he wanted to make a vacancy from Ohio in the senate so that he could place Mark Hanna there, so he appointed John Sherman secretary of state, in a sort of emeritus way, with Day as his understudy and heir apparent.

President Cleveland, in his second administration, surprised the country by appointing as his secretary of state a man who had lately been a republican and who had voted the democratic ticket for the first time that year—Walter Q. Gresham, of Indiana. There was considerable criticism of the appointment by democrats. It was not the first time that Cleveland had appointed a secretary of state which called forth a protest. When, in his first administration, he appointed Thomas F. Bayard, of Delaware, a senator from Virginia held up the appointment for a day, stating that Bayard was a better friend of England than he was of the United States.

AN EXTRA LEGAL BODY

The cabinet, as a body of official advisers who meet together with the president, has no constitutional existence, and scarcely any legal existence. It meets as such a body only because the president desires it, and sometimes, when its members are not in harmony, the president has seen them individually and not collectively, preferring thus to keep peace rather than to reconstruct his cabinet.

As such a body it did not always consist of the heads of the departments. In 1790 Washington wrote Lafayette: "Many of your old acquaintances are associated with me in the administration of the government. By having Mr. Jefferson at the head of the department of state; Mr. Jay, of the judiciary; Hamilton, of the treasury, and Knox, of war, I find myself well supported by able coadjutors who harmonize extremely well together."

When the British, in 1790, wanted to march Canadian troops across United States soil, from Detroit to the Mississippi, Washington obtained his advice from his three secretaries, the chief justice and the vice president, but did not consult the attorney general. The first cabinet meeting held was when foreign complications arose in the 90s. Madison, Jefferson and Randolph called the heads of the departments "the cabinet," but Washington did not. Hamilton called them "ministers." The first time they were officially designated "the cabinet" was in a resolution in the house in the days of Andrew Jackson's quarrel with congress. The first time the word appears in the statutes is in 1907.

Hamilton, as secretary of the treasury, meddled in the affairs of the departments of state and war. He and Jefferson differed so greatly that Washington pleaded with them to exercise "mutual forbearance" and "temporizing yieldings" for the sake of peace. Jefferson wrote that he and Hamilton were "daily pitted in the cabinet like two cocks," but when he talked of resigning Washington told him he was needed to preserve the necessary check upon himself and Hamilton, and thus to keep things in their proper channel.

During the administration of the elder Adams he complained that his cabinet was more under the influence of Hamilton than of the president. He said Hamilton was "a physician who undertook to prescribe for a president, senate and house of representatives, all admittedly desperately sick, without being called." He and Washington quarreled over the appointment of three major generals, and Washington threatened to resign his commission as lieutenant general if Adams didn't do as he wished. Adams' cabinet sided with Washington.

Jefferson would not hold cabinet meetings, although he was importuned by members of his official family to do so. When Andrew Jackson came into power the question was raised by Attorney General Wirt, of the old administration, whether or not the old cabinet ought to resign. He wrote to ex-President Monroe about it and that gentleman thought the cabinet ought to remain. But when Jackson came in the cabinet went out in a hurry. Jackson followed the example of Jefferson in having no cabinet meetings, and the quarrels in his official family, both personal and political, were responsible for many changes.

Van Buren tendered the navy portfolio to Washington Irving, and Polk had George Bancroft, the historian, as his secretary of the navy for awhile. Bancroft afterward was one of President Johnson's closest advisers and wrote his messages, thus giving the least educated of all the presidents some of the finest state papers the White House has ever turned out.

In Tyler's administration the president and congress had a great quarrel and congress sought to take the right of appointing the secretary of the treasury out of the president's hands, and also to limit his veto power. When Polk made his cabinet he notified all the appointees that if any one of them should hear the buzzing of the presidential bee in his bonnet, that minute his resignation would be welcomed by the president.

When Lincoln made up his cabinet it had seven members. Four of the positions were filled by democrats and three by republicans. Seward complained of this and said it would give the democratic secretary of the treasury an advantage over the republican secretary of state. He told Lincoln he thought that under the circumstances he would withdraw. Lincoln as much as told him to withdraw if he wanted to, saying that when that slate broke it would break at the top, and that at any rate he considered himself and three cabinet members a majority.

Seward prepared a memorandum for Lincoln in which he said he thought a premier was needed, a cabinet official who could have supervision over all executive matters. Lincoln replied that he wished and supposed that he was entitled to the advice of all the members of the cabinet, and could look after the premier business himself.

When Johnson came into power his quarrel with congress resulted in a law being passed which took away from him the right to choose his own cabinet, and his impeachment was based upon his ignoring this law in the case of Secretary Stanton. He claimed that the law was unconstitutional, and that even if it were not it did not apply to Stanton.

When Grant nominated A. T. Stewart, the

merchant prince, for secretary of the treasury, the senate ratified the nomination without discovering that Stewart was ineligible because of his business connections with the government. He wanted to transfer his property and Grant wanted to amend the law, but neither was done and Stewart resigned. This case was in many respects like the Knox case, when Knox was confirmed as secretary of state without the senate's discovering he was ineligible because he had helped pass the law raising the salary of cabinet officers. A newspaper correspondent made the discovery, so Secretary Knox receives less pay than the other members of the cabinet. When Grant sent the nomination of Adolph E. Borie as secretary of the navy, only one senator had ever heard of him.

Garfield broke with Conkling over the appointment of Blaine as secretary of state. Garfield wanted a southern republican for the cabinet, but had trouble finding one. He wrote to Blaine: "The southern member still eludes me as Creusa's image eluded Aeneas. One by one the southern roses fade. Do you know of a magnolia blossom that will stand our northern climate?"

A DEMOCRATIC SIXTY-THIRD CONGRESS

The sixty-third congress will be democratic in both branches: The Washington correspondent for the Associated Press says: Control of the senate in the sixty-third congress is now practically assured to the democrats. Conceding to the republicans the legislatures of all states still in the doubtful column, the democrats will have a vote of forty-eight or just one-half of the entire membership of the senate, with a democratic vice president in the chair to cast the deciding ballot in case of a tie. Seven states are yet to be heard from definitely. A senator from one of those would give the democrats a clear majority, and it is possible that their strength will be even greater by winning in several.

Kansas has been added to the democratic column in the last twenty-four hours. The states in which the complexion of the legislatures is yet to be decided are: Illinois, Michigan, New Hampshire, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee and Wyoming.

Ordinarily Tennessee could be relied upon to help the democratic party, but the factional fight there may prevent in this crisis.

In Illinois there are complications growing out of the multiplicity of parties, rendering it uncertain whether there will be a senatorial election. In that state there should be elected a successor to the deposed Lorimer, as well as Senator Cullom, whose term expires on the fourth of next March. If there should be no election, the effect would favor the democrats by reducing the membership of the senate to ninety-four of which number the forty-eight already chosen democrats would be a working majority.

In New Hampshire, the dispatches indicate a possible combination of democrats and republicans and in that event predictions as to the course of the man selected would be mere guesswork.

Whatever the outcome in any of the states mentioned, there can be no doubt as to democratic control of the senate. In addition to the aid of the vice president, in an emergency, they will find willing co-operation among the progressive senators. Three or four of the progressives are almost as liberal in their tariff views and on other questions as the democrats themselves. Senators Clapp, La Follette, Cummins, Gronna, Bristow and Poindexter are all avowed tariff reformers. They also favor advanced legislation on other subjects.

Senator Works announced his intention of voting for the democratic presidential candidate some time before the election. This determination was due, however, to a peculiar combination of circumstances and the California senator would not wish to have it construed as binding him to a democratic legislative policy. He is classed as a protectionist.

Of the thirty-one hold-over republicans eight have been classed as progressives in the past. They are Senators Bristow of Kansas, Crawford of South Dakota, Cummins of Iowa, Gronna of North Dakota, Clapp of Minnesota, La Follette of Wisconsin, Poindexter of Washington and Works of California.

Mr. Norris, probable senator-elect from Nebraska, has been one of the leaders of the progressive element in the house and will continue to co-operate with the element in the senate, as it is expected Senator Kenyon of Iowa will, and possibly Senator Borah of Idaho, in such measures as may appeal to them.

Much interest is manifested in the political affiliation of the progressives. Heretofore they