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CONFIDENTIAL FILING

The 70th Anniversary of the  
Cabinet Office

GOVERNMENT  
MACHINERY

October 1986

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<del>22.10.86</del>							
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<p>Material used by official Historian DO NOT DESTROY</p> <p>PREM 19/1776</p>							





*Prime Minister<sup>2</sup>*

Ref. A086/3380

MR WICKS

*ms*

cc Mr Ingham  
Mr J B Wright

The Cabinet Office 1916-86

I amended the proposed article as suggested by the Prime Minister, and I also made one or two other minor changes, before offering it to The Times.

2. The Times have decided that they do not want to take it. I have therefore offered it to the Daily Telegraph who, with a fine sense of topicality, have accepted it with alacrity.

3. I enclose a copy of the article as it has gone forward to the Daily Telegraph.

*RA*

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

5 December 1986

## THE CABINET OFFICE 1916 TO 1986

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Seventy years ago, on 9 December 1916, Sir Maurice Hankey took his place at the Cabinet table beside the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon David Lloyd George, as the first holder of the newly created post of Secretary of the Cabinet. Hankey served for 22 years, until 1938; he was followed by Edward Bridges (1938-46), Norman Brook (1947-62), Burke Trend (1963-73) and John Hunt (1973-79).

2. Until 1916 the Cabinet had met without a formal agenda, without minutes and without a Secretary. The only written record of the discussion was a letter sent by the Prime Minister to the Sovereign after each meeting and Ministers took executive action on the basis of their recollection or understanding of what had been decided. Lloyd George, on his appointment as Prime Minister in December 1916,



decided that the War Cabinet needed a Secretariat to prepare business for consideration and to record and notify decisions.

3. The Secretariat which supported Hankey was formed from the Secretariat of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID), set up in 1904, of which Hankey was the Secretary. After the War, in 1919, it was organised into a branch for home affairs and a branch for imperial, external and defence affairs. When the CID was revived in 1922, the branch for imperial, external and defence affairs became the staff of the CID; this arrangement persisted until the functions of the CID were taken over by the War Cabinet in 1939. Hankey was the Secretary of the CID during this period; he was also Clerk of the Privy Council from 1923 to 1938.

4. The need for continuing with a separate Cabinet Office was queried after the First World War. Despite this, and an attempt by the Treasury (led by Sir Warren Fisher) to take over the function of providing the Cabinet Secretariat, the Cabinet Office retained its



independence, thanks to Hankey's determination and personal standing, and developed as a permanent part of the machinery of government at the centre.

5. The Secretariat has grown in range, to cope with the increased use of standing and ad hoc Cabinet Committees. There are branches for home affairs, economic affairs and defence and foreign affairs, to which have been added more recently a European Secretariat and a Science and Technology Secretariat. The size of the Secretariat has fluctuated, growing larger particularly in time of war; but it remains relatively small with some 55 staff (under 20 in 1916), excluding secretarial and clerical support staff. This makes for effectiveness and flexibility in adapting to varying requirements and responding to changes in pressures. All the members of the Secretariat save the Secretary himself are seconded in from other Departments for periods of two to three years: this ensures the maintenance of good contacts and exchanges of information with Departments, and provides valuable career development opportunities at the centre of



government for promising civil servants from other Departments.

6. The Cabinet Office has provided (or contributed to) the Secretariat for the United Kingdom delegation for important international meetings. It provided the Secretariat for meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers until the Commonwealth Secretariat was instituted. In 1970 a team of officials was brought together in the Cabinet Office to support the Minister responsible for conducting the negotiations for British entry into the European Community; after the negotiations were completed the team was continued as a European Secretariat to co-ordinate the British Government's business with and in the Community.

7. The Cabinet Office has taken on other additional functions over the years. The Central Economic Information Service, created in 1939, was divided in 1941 into an Economic Section (which was transferred to the Treasury in 1953) and a Central Statistical Office which continues as part of the Cabinet Office to this



day. From 1970 to 1983 there was a Central Policy Review Staff to provide Ministers with a central service of policy analysis and advice. When the CPRS was disbanded, its Chief Scientist remained as Chief Scientific Adviser, Cabinet Office, thus reviving (with a slight difference of nomenclature) a post which had existed in the 1960s and early 1970s. He now heads a Science and Technology Secretariat and a Science and Technology Assessment Office which together constitute a significant strengthening in the central co-ordination of the Government's domestic and international policies on science and technology.

8. The work of all the Secretariats is supported and indeed depends upon the skilful, efficient and devoted services of all those who organise meetings and manage the production and flow of the large number of documents which the office generates.



9. Edward Bridges held the post of Cabinet Secretary concurrently with that of Permanent Secretary to the Treasury and Head of the Home Civil Service from February 1945 to the end of 1946; and his successor, Norman Brook, did likewise from 1956 until his retirement in 1962. In 1981 the Secretary of the Cabinet once again became Head of the Home Civil Service (until April 1983 jointly with the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury), and the personnel and management efficiency functions of the Civil Service Department went to a Management and Personnel Office under the Cabinet Secretary which became part of the Cabinet Office in June 1983. This arrangement was queried by the Treasury and Civil Service Committee in its Seventh Report; they suggested the reconstitution of a Department for the Civil Service whose Permanent Secretary would be the Head of the Civil Service. In its response to the Committee's report, however, the Government said that it saw no reason to change the existing organisation at the present time.



10. The Cabinet Office has evolved, and will no doubt continue to evolve, in response to the requirements of the time and the priorities of particular Governments. Throughout its history, however, there has been a clear thread: the Cabinet Office has seen itself and has been seen as the servant of the Cabinet and of the Government collectively, its purpose being to promote and assist the discussion and resolution of issues that transcend departmental boundaries and the reaching and disseminating of conclusions and decisions commanding the collective assent of Ministers. It is not a "Prime Minister's Department". But the Prime Minister is of course primus inter pares among those whom it serves, and the Minister responsible for it.

11. The Cabinet Office was based in 1-4 Whitehall Gardens from 1916 to 1938, when Whitehall Gardens was demolished to make room for what is now the Ministry of Defence; in Richmond Terrace from July 1938 to December 1940; and in the Storey's Gate section of the "New Public Offices" in Great George Street from 1940 to 1964. In 1964 the Cabinet Office



moved to the old Treasury building, newly restored, in Whitehall, which communicates directly with 10 Downing Street (a propinquity which has a more than geographical significance), and it resides there to this day, as J M Keynes once said of the Treasury, "midway between Heaven and the Scottish Education Department".

December 1986



RESTRICTED



*file*  
*BR2AZK*

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

MR. WOOLLEY  
CABINET OFFICE

**"TIMES" ARTICLE ON THE CABINET OFFICE**

I have shown the Prime Minister the draft of Sir Robert Armstrong's "Times" article on the Cabinet Office, which you submitted with your minute of 1 December.

The Prime Minister has read the draft and she believes that certain phrases and passages in the text would be very unfortunate at the present time. They might, for example, be quoted out of context with a view to damaging the Cabinet Secretary, the Cabinet Office and the Government generally. She would, therefore, like Sir Robert to re-examine the draft text with this point in mind. She herself has suggested that the following omissions should be made from the text:

Paragraph 2:

Omit the third sentence beginning "This made for .....".

Paragraph 4:

The Prime Minister believes that the quotation in paragraph 4 is an unfortunate one. I suggest, therefore, that the quotation and the sentence beginning "One commentator in 1922 ....." should be omitted.

Paragraph 7:

Omit the last sentence which could be interpreted as an expression of regret that the CPRS has been abolished.

Paragraph 11:

The Prime Minister has suggested that the last sentence beginning "Over the years ....." should be omitted.

Paragraph 12:

The whole of this paragraph, in her view, should be omitted too.

*N.L.W.*

N.L. WICKS  
2 December 1986

RESTRICTED

*BC*



do

There are other  
pages which I think  
would be very  
important



Prime Minister  
Content, subject to

Ref. A086/3328

MR WICKS

at the present  
time

the 2 small deletions I  
have suggested?

NLU

"Times" Article on the Cabinet Office

1.12

I attach the draft of Sir Robert Armstrong's article on the  
Cabinet Office which I propose to submit to "The Times" for  
publication. It has altered only in detail from that which I  
circulated on 26 November.

2. I wonder whether you could seek the Prime Minister's  
clearance of the draft? I should like to be able to send it to  
"The Times" in the next couple of days to permit time for  
Sir Robert Armstrong to amend it if it emerges that the Editor  
requires it to be shortened.

*Trevor Woolley*

T A WOOLLEY

1 December 1986

RTAAEK



Draft of 1 December 1986

THE CABINET OFFICE 1916 TO 1986

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Seventy years ago, on 9 December 1916, Sir Maurice Hankey took his place at the Cabinet table beside the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon David Lloyd George, as the first holder of the newly created post of Secretary of the Cabinet. Hankey served for 22 years, until 1938; he was followed by Edward Bridges (1938-46), Norman Brook (1947-62), Burke Trend (1963-73), John Hunt (1973-79) and Robert Armstrong (1979- ).

2. Until 1916 the Cabinet had met without a formal agenda, without minutes and without a Secretary. The only written record of the discussion was a letter sent by the Prime Minister to the Sovereign after each meeting and Ministers took executive action on the basis of their recollection or understanding of what had been decided. [ This made for occasional uncertainty and confusion. ] Lloyd George, on his appointment as Prime Minister in

Omit ?  
Might occasion  
side comment ✓  
Omit  
ms



December 1916, decided that the War Cabinet needed a Secretariat to prepare business for consideration and to record and notify decisions.

3. The Secretariat which supported Hankey was formed from the Secretariat of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID), set up in 1904, of which Hankey was the Secretary. After the War, in 1919, it was organised into a branch for home affairs and a branch for imperial, external and defence affairs. When the CID was revived in 1922, the branch for imperial, external and defence affairs became the staff of the CID; this arrangement persisted until the functions of the CID were taken over by the War Cabinet in 1939. Hankey was the Secretary of the CID during this period; he was also Clerk of the Privy Council from 1923 to 1938.

4. The need for continuing with a separate Cabinet Office was queried after the First World War. One commentator in 1922, describing the changes required to restore "honest government", wrote:



An important  
note.  
ms

"Another evil is the swollen Cabinet Secretariat interfering with the process of old Departments and destroying the responsibility of Ministers. The new system leads directly to revolution".

Despite this, and an attempt by the Treasury (led by Sir Warren Fisher) to take over the function of providing the Cabinet Secretariat, the Cabinet Office retained its independence, thanks to Hankey's determination and personal standing, and developed as a permanent part of the machinery of government at the centre.

5. The Secretariat has grown in range, to cope with the increased use of standing and ad hoc Cabinet Committees. There are branches for home affairs, economic affairs and defence and foreign affairs, to which have been added more recently a European Secretariat and a Science and Technology Secretariat. The size of the Secretariat has fluctuated, growing larger in time of war; but it remains relatively small with some 55 staff (under 20 in 1916), excluding secretarial and clerical support staff. This makes for effectiveness and



flexibility in adapting to varying requirements and responding to changes in pressures. All the members of the Secretariat save the Secretary himself are seconded in from other Departments for periods of two to three years: this ensures the maintenance of good contacts and exchanges of information with Departments, and provides valuable career development opportunities at the centre of government for promising civil servants from other Departments.

6. The Cabinet Office has provided (or contributed to) the Secretariat for the United Kingdom delegation for important international meetings. It provided the Secretariat for meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers until the Commonwealth Secretariat was instituted. In 1970 a team of officials was brought together in the Cabinet Office to support the Minister responsible for conducting the negotiations for British entry into the European Community; after the negotiations were completed the team was continued as a European



Secretariat to co-ordinate the British Government's business with and in the Community.

7. The Cabinet Office has taken on other additional functions over the years. The Central Economic Information Service, created in 1939, was divided in 1941 into an Economic Section (which was transferred to the Treasury in 1953) and a Central Statistical Office which continues as part of the Cabinet Office to this day. From 1970 to 1983 there was a Central Policy Review Staff to provide Ministers with a central service of policy analysis and advice.

[ It has been argued by some commentators that the greater use of Cabinet Office officials to lead interdepartmental working groups and the development of Prime Ministerial and departmental policy units has not wholly compensated for the loss of this central capability. ]

8. When the CPRS was disbanded, its Chief Scientist remained as Chief Scientific Adviser, Cabinet Office, thus reviving (with a slight difference of nomenclature) a post which had

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existed in the 1960s and early 1970s. He now heads a Science and Technology Secretariat and a Science and Technology Assessment Office which together constitute a significant strengthening in the central co-ordination of the Government's domestic and international policies on science and technology.

9. The work of all the Secretariats is supported and indeed depends upon the skilful, efficient and devoted services of all those who organise meetings and manage the production and flow of the large number of documents which the office generates.

10. Edward Bridges held the post of Cabinet Secretary concurrently with that of Permanent Secretary to the Treasury and Head of the Home Civil Service from February 1945 to the end of 1946; and his successor, Norman Brook, from 1957 until his retirement in 1962. In 1981 the Secretary of the Cabinet once again became Head of the Home Civil Service (until April 1983 jointly with the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury), and the personnel and management efficiency functions of the Civil Service



Department went to a Management and Personnel Office under the Cabinet Secretary which became part of the Cabinet Office in June 1983. This arrangement was queried by the Treasury and Civil Service Committee in its Seventh Report; they suggested the reconstitution of a Department for the Civil Service whose Permanent Secretary would be the Head of the Civil Service. In its response to the Committee's report, however, the Government said that it saw no reason to change the existing organisation at the present time.

11. The Cabinet Office has evolved, and will no doubt continue to evolve, in response to the requirements of the time and the priorities of particular Governments. Throughout its history, however, there has been a clear thread: the Cabinet Office has seen itself and has been seen as the servant of the Cabinet and of the Government collectively, its purpose being to promote and assist the discussion and resolution of issues that transcend departmental boundaries and the reaching and disseminating of conclusions and decisions commanding the collective assent of Ministers.



It is not a "Prime Minister's Department". But the Prime Minister is of course primus inter pares among those whom it serves, and the Minister responsible for it. [Over the years it has acquired a corpus of knowledge and experience which equips the Cabinet Secretary to provide advice to the Prime Minister on such matters as the conduct of Ministers, security and intelligence matters, and relations of the Cabinet with the Sovereign.]

Suggest deletion

12. The Cabinet Office has always gone to some lengths to ensure that there should be no unauthorised disclosures of Cabinet and Cabinet Committee deliberations. That there is nothing new about this is demonstrated by the fact that in 1931 Sir Maurice Hankey, with the then Prime Minister's authority, circulated to the Cabinet a note of quotations on the subject, including:

"Men are very porous, weighty secrets oozing out of them, like quicksilver through clay jars".

(Thomas Carlyle)

"As for cabinet counsels, it may be their

Delete



motto 'Plenus rimarum sum' (I am full of leaks): one futile person, that maketh it his glory to tell, will do more hurt than many, that know it their duty to conceal".  
(Francis Bacon)

A copy of this note was sent to King George V who, with devastating prescience, wrote upon it:

"Very amusing, but will it have any effect? GRI".

13. The Cabinet Office was based in 1-4 Whitehall Gardens from 1916 to 1938, when Whitehall Gardens was demolished to make room for what is now the Ministry of Defence; in Richmond Terrace from July 1938 to December 1940; and in the Storey's Gate section of the "New Public Offices" in Great George Street from 1940 to 1964. In 1964 the Cabinet Office moved to the old Treasury building, newly restored, in Whitehall, which communicates directly with 10 Downing Street (a propinquity which has a more than geographical significance), and it resides there to this



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December 1986





Feb  
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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

MR. WOOLLEY,  
CABINET OFFICE.

TIMES ARTICLE ON THE CABINET OFFICE

Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of 26 November in which you circulate a draft of the Times article on the Cabinet Office. I have no comments at all save that I hope you find a different word, in the 7th line of paragraph 5, than "effective". I know the Cabinet Office would not be "effective" if it were just staffed with those 50 people, and I think the use of the word "effective" is somewhat slighting to the rest of the staff.

I see from Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 21 October that he will show the Prime Minister the proposed article in draft. Could you please let me have a final version so that I can show it to her next week.

N. L. WICKS

28 November 1986



Ref. A086/3307

MR MALLABY  
MR UNWIN  
MR WILLIAMSON  
MR WICKS ✓  
MR J W STEVENS  
MR HEWES

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Times Article on the Cabinet Office

I attach a draft prepared by Sir Robert Armstrong in Sydney of a proposed article for The Times marking the 70th Anniversary of the Cabinet Office. I should be most grateful for your comments and where necessary corrections by the end of this week so that Sir Robert Armstrong can finalise the piece on his return. Sir Robert Armstrong has particularly asked if Mr Stevens could check the staff numbers quoted and the regnal dates of Lord Normanbrook and Lord Trend.

*T A Woolley*

T A WOOLLEY

26 November 1986



DRAFT BEGINS

(DRAFT OF 25 NOVEMBER 1986)

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(Thomas Carlyle)

"As for cabinet counsels, it may be their motto

'Plenus rimarum sum' (I am full of leaks): one futile person, that maketh it his glory to tell, will do

more harm than many, that know it their duty to conceal."

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December 1986



GOVT MACH Cabana Office Anniversary Oct 66





10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

**Sir Robert Armstrong**

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute of 21 October in which you seek her approval to write to Mr. Michael Evans of the Times in the terms of the draft attached to your minute.

The Prime Minister agrees that you should respond to Mr. Evans' request as you suggest and that you should write as you propose. She has noted that you will show her the proposed article on the Cabinet Office in draft.

I am copying this minute to Mr. Ingham and Mr. J.B. Wright.

(N. L. WICKS)  
22 October 1986

ECU





Prime Minister  
Agree h TA should  
write as he progresses  
over?

Ref. A086/2978

MR WICKS

cc Mr Ingham  
Mr J B Wright

*Yes*

N.C.U  
21-10.

The Cabinet Office will be celebrating its 70th Anniversary on 9 December 1986. That is (I think to the day) the 70th Anniversary of the first time Sir Maurice Hankey took his place beside Mr Lloyd-George at a meeting of the Cabinet in 1916.

2. It has been suggested that the occasion should be marked with a signed article in The Times, to be published on that day, giving a brief account of the development of the Cabinet Office since 1916.

3. I have now been asked by the new "Whitehall correspondent" of The Times to give an interview for a feature article in The Times on the history of the Cabinet Office to the present day, in connection with the Anniversary. I should like to reply, --- refusing the interview but offering the signed article. I attach a draft of the letter which I would propose to send.

4. I should much prefer not to give an interview. As you know, I have made it a rule not to give interviews to the media; and it has been convenient to rely on that rule on a number of occasions: I do not want to spoil it by breaking it.

5. If the Prime Minister is content, I shall of course show her the proposed article in draft.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

21 October 1986





DRAFT LETTER FROM SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG TO

Michael Evans Esq  
The Times  
PO Box 481  
Virginia Street  
London  
E1 9BD

Thank you for your letter of 9 October.

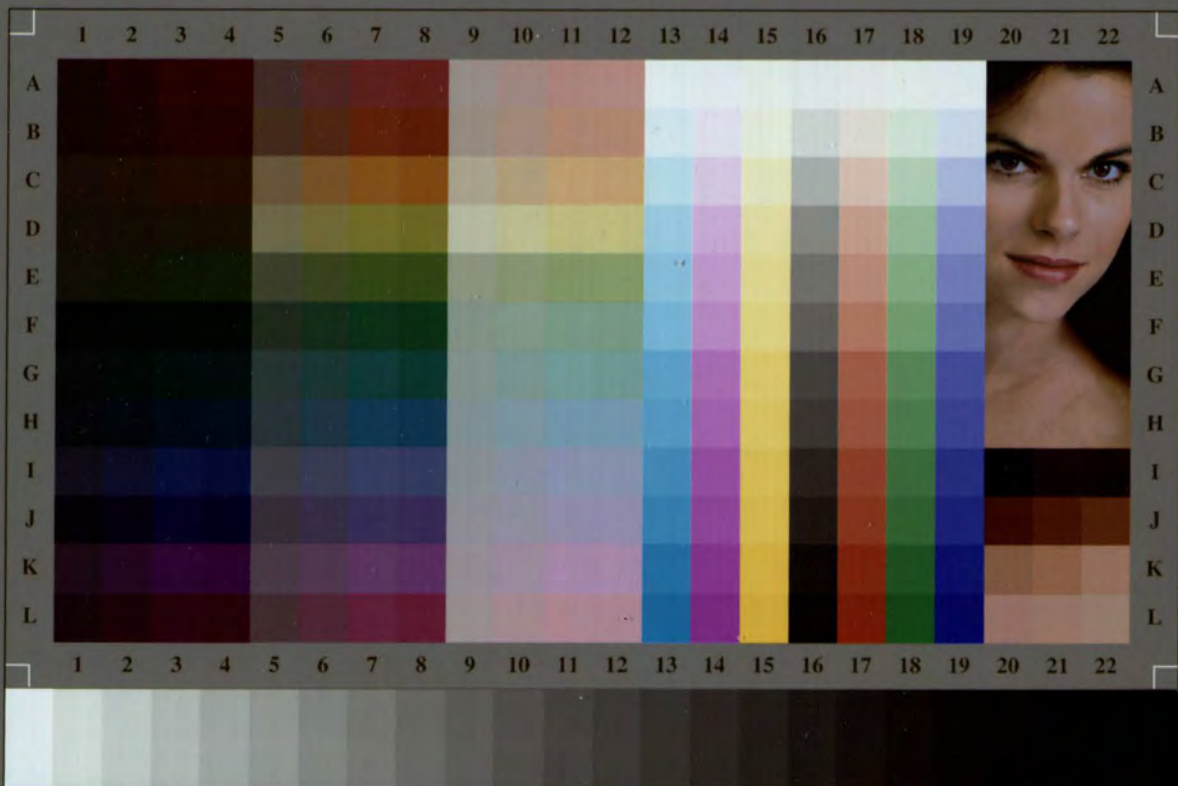
I have made it a general rule since I took up my present appointment not to give interviews to the press and broadcasting media, and I do not think that I should depart from that rule now.

I should, however, be willing to contribute a signed article on the Cabinet Office to The Times for publication on 9 December 1986, which is the day on which the Cabinet Office will be celebrating its 70th Anniversary.



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