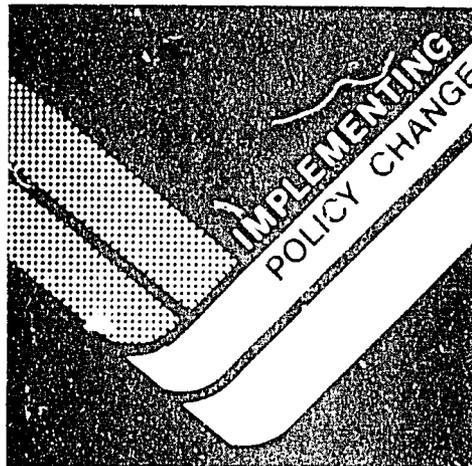


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CABINET PROFILE SERIES

February 1994

Prepared for:
Policy Analysis and Coordinating Division
Office of the Cabinet, Zambia



Contractor Team:

Management Systems International
(lead contractor)

Abt Associates Inc.

Development Alternatives, Inc.

United States Agency for International Development
Bureau for Research and Development
Project #936-5451

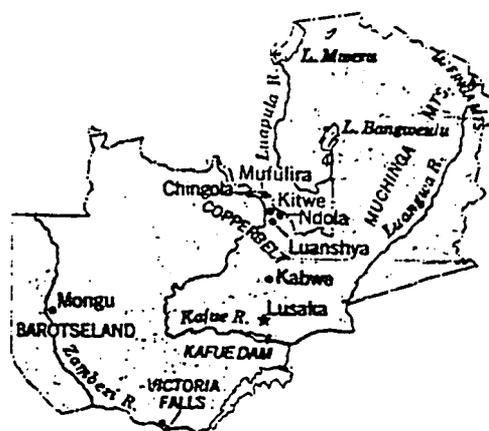
USAID Implementing Policy Change Project

CABINET PROFILE SERIES

Prepared for:

Policy Analysis and Coordinating Division

Office of the Cabinet, Zambia



Catherine Rielly, Ph.D.
Abt Associates

February 24, 1994

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This booklet contains a series of **Cabinet Profiles** prepared for the Policy Analysis and Coordination Division (PAC) of the Zambia Cabinet Office, under the auspices of the USAID Implementing Policy Change Project. The objective of these country profiles is to illuminate various options for Cabinet machinery used in different settings in order to generate lessons in cabinet administration that might apply to Zambia. This comparative research effort will also assist in the selection of the most appropriate countries for overseas study tours which PAC staff will take.

This research endeavor aims to focus on the most effective Cabinets in parliamentary governments, since the most useful lessons from the Zambian point of view can be drawn from the experiences of Commonwealth countries with successful Cabinet administration. Consequently, six examples of exceptional Cabinet administration in Commonwealth countries were chosen for this study: Canada, Botswana, Great Britain, Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia. This series highlights successful features of Cabinet administration in each country context (arrayed in Table 1) which enhanced the efficiency or the effectiveness of the Cabinet. Each profile discusses Cabinet size, meetings, committees, as well as PAC's four primary functions: review of Cabinet memoranda, preparation of Cabinet minutes, policy coordination, and implementation and monitoring of Cabinet decisions.

General Findings: Basic Cabinet Indicators

Table 2 summarizes six basic *Cabinet Indicators* for each country: size of Cabinet, size of agenda, number of Cabinet committees, role of Committees, and length of meetings.

Cabinet Size

Cabinets ranged in size from 26 in Great Britain and Malaysia to 14 in Singapore. With the exception of Malaysia, Cabinets in the industrialized countries¹ were larger than those in the developing countries examined here. The reason for this is quite clear: more ministers are often needed to represent the complex political systems found in countries like Britain, Canada, and Australia. In these three countries, it would be too cumbersome if all Ministers belonged to the Cabinet, so *Non-Cabinet Ministers* are designated.

Both the newly elected Prime Minister Chretien in Canada and Australian Prime Minister Hawke have recently streamlined their Cabinets, in an effort to increase efficiency. In 1993, Chretien reduced the Canadian Cabinet from 40 to 23, and eliminated the Policy and Priorities Board a committee which served as a powerful inner Cabinet with the authority to ratify policy decisions.

¹"Industrialized," countries, as it is used in this report, refers to Western highly developed economies such as Britain, Canada, and Australia, and excludes "newly industrialized countries" (NICs), such as Malaysia and Singapore.

Table 1

Successful Features of Cabinet Administration in Six Commonwealth Countries

	<u>Population</u>	<u>GNP/Cap</u>	<u>PAC-like Institution</u>	<u>Successful Features</u>
Great Britain	57.7 million	\$15,900	Cabinet Office Number 10 Policy Unit, alias "the thinktank"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cabinet Secretariat's loan system (all officials seconded from other depts.) · short duration of Cabinet Office posts · flexible staffing of Secretariats
Canada	27.3 million	\$19,400	Economic and Social Policy Secretariats, Privy Council (Cabinet) Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Small Size (Recently Streamlined) · Importance of Cabinet Committees · Economic & Social Pol Secretariats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Comments on Cabinet Memos · Cabinet Meeting Briefings · Policy Coordination
Australia	17.6 million	\$18,054	Cabinet Office, Dept. of Prime Minister & Cabinet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Small Size (16 portfolios) · <i>Coordination Comments</i> on Cabinet Submissions · 10-Day Rule on Cabinet papers · Cabinet Business forecasts
Malaysia	18.4 million	\$2,670	Cabinet Secretariat, MAMPU (Administrative Modernization and Manpower Planning Unit) Economic Planning Unit (EPU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Civil service incentives · Permanent Secretaries Meetings · Feedback papers · <i>Integrated Project Monitoring System</i> (computerised)
Singapore	2.8 million	\$13,900	Prime Minister's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Meritocratic civil service · Small size and cohesiveness of Cabinet · Ministers' commitment to long-term economic development over short-term political gain · well-educated, uncorrupt Ministers
Botswana	1.3 million	\$2530	Ministry for Presidential Affairs and Public Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Small Size · Economic Committee (broad, inclusive body) · <i>Information Note System</i> · Superb, well-paid civil service

Table 2
Basic Cabinet Indicators in Six Commonwealth Countries

FEATURE	<u>Size</u>	<u>Size of Agenda</u>	<u>Minutes</u>	<u>Number of Committee</u>	<u>Role of Committees</u>	<u>Length of Meetings</u>
Great Britain	26 · 29 Non-Cabinet Ministers · 33 Jr. Ministers	2-3 Main Items 10 short reports	Summary of Arguments, Actions to be taken.	26	Very Important	1.5 hrs.
Canada	23	4 Main Items 12 Annex	Record of Decision Only	4	Very Important	1-2 hrs.
Australia	19 · 13 Non-Cabinet Ministers	6-8 Submissions	Record of Outcome only	11	Very Important	2 hours maximum
Malaysia	26	3-4 Issues	Statement of Decision, Implementation Directive only	0	Not Important	4-5 hrs.
Singapore	14	Confidential	confidential	at least 6	Not Important	Confidential
Botswana	17	5-7 Memos	Summary of Discussion	2	not important	3.5 hrs.

¹ However, ad hoc Technical Committees headed by Ministers and comprised of government officials, private sector leaders, and academics are important in Singapore.

In Australia, the Hawke government reduced the number of departments from 28 to 18, organized in 16 Cabinet portfolios. In both Botswana and Singapore, officials emphasized that the small size of the cabinet contributed significantly to its effectiveness.

Cabinet Meetings: Frequency, Length and Size of Agenda

Cabinet met each week in all the countries studied, except for Canada, where the Cabinet meetings took place bi-weekly. Emergency meetings could be called at any time, as well. Cabinet meetings ranged in average length from an hour and a half in Britain to four or five hours in Malaysia. In all of the countries analysed. Cabinet meetings lasted much longer in special circumstances, such as the last meeting of the year in Australia, and British Prime Minister Major's special session called to discuss his "Back to Basics" crisis.

The leaders' ability to run meetings efficiently as well as their individual style and preferences also influence the length of Cabinet meetings. In Australia, for example, Prime Minister Keating's Cabinet meets for a maximum of two hours because he does not like long meetings.

Size of Agenda

The size of the main agenda items ranged from two to three in Great Britain to six to eight in Australia. Two types of items were usually on the agenda in the industrialized countries: "Main agenda items" and "annex items," also called "short reports" in Britain or "information notes," in Botswana. The Cabinet debates and deliberates over main agenda items, while annex items, often recommended by Cabinet committee, are usually ratified without discussion. These 2-part Cabinet meetings which have institutionalized a mechanism for part of the day's business to be considered swiftly shortens the length of Cabinet meetings. The information note system in Botswana also screens out issues before they become cabinet memoranda, thus saving more time and resources.

Cabinet Committees

There is a myth in the popular media that Cabinet decision-making everywhere in the world is concentrated entirely in a brief meeting once a week between ministers of the Crown. The meeting is, of course, the pinnacle of the Cabinet process, and the purpose for which it ultimately exists. But the bringing together of the disparate purposes of numerous government departments and agencies, let alone ministers of the Crown, cannot take place without a great deal of structured consultation and compromise behind the scenes.

Cabinet Committees in Great Britain, Canada, and Australia and ad hoc committees in Britain and Singapore play an important role in this process. The volume and complexity of the political systems in Canada, Great Britain, and Australia largely explains why the focus of policy development is concentrated in a number of powerful Cabinet committees, rather than the full Cabinet. Formally, Committees make recommendations to the full Cabinet, but do not make the final decisions on policy issues. In most cases, however, the role of the Cabinet has become one of ratifying the committees' decisions with a minimum of debate. This system where real

deliberation over policy issues takes place at the committee level enhances the efficiency of full Cabinet meetings.

Cabinet committees change frequently, reflecting that high priority areas change over time. Flexibility in the number, structure, and use of committees allows the government to adjust to the particular policy priorities of the day. The number of Cabinet Committees today ranges from zero in Singapore to 26 in Great Britain. Meetings of the most important committees are chaired and run by the Prime Minister, except for Prime Minister Keating of Australia whose deputy runs the meetings, since he prefers not to attend most of them.

Other non-Cabinet committees were important, such as statutory boards and ad hoc technical committees in Singapore comprised of government officials, private sector leaders, and academics; and the Economic Committee in Botswana, a broad inclusive body comprised of the Cabinet, the Governor of the Central Bank, all the PSs, and outside advisers.

Minutes

Minutes are kept of Cabinet meetings in all countries, but the content of the published minutes varies between a brief summary of decision, as in the case of Australia and Canada, to a longer summary of the arguments and discussion which took place, as in the case of Botswana and Great Britain. Malaysian minutes are closer to the Canadian model of a brief statement of decision, except that implementation directives are also included. In Canada, full minutes summarizing the essence of the discussion are also recorded, but they are not published until 20 years later.

Several Cabinet offices had strict time deadlines for preparation of minutes. In Britain, officials send a draft minute to the Secretary of the Cabinet by 5:00 p.m. the same day of the meeting which is edited and circulated to ministers the next morning. In Canada, "Records of Decision" are prepared within two days after each meeting, while more time is allowed for the preparation of the minutes. In Malaysia, minutes are sent out three days after Cabinet meetings. In Botswana, there is a 14 day waiting period before "Cabinet Directives," short statements of the agreed upon decision, can be issued, just in case a Minister discovers a problem that was not foreseen and the decision must be changed.

In all cases, the Secretary to the Cabinet is responsible for preparing the minutes, but he usually brings at least one scribe from the Cabinet Office or Secretariat with him to the meetings. In the case of Canada and Australia, the person from the secretariat who is responsible for the substantive area under discussion accompanies the Secretary to the Cabinet; thus, several civil servants with different specialties may take notes in any one Cabinet meeting. In the past, even though civil servants have assisted the Secretary to the Cabinet with minute preparation, he often personally vetted them carefully before they were submitted, as British Secretary to the Cabinet, Armstrong did under Thatcher.

Preparation of Cabinet Memoranda

In all cases, there were strict rules for preparation of Cabinet memoranda, including length restrictions. Nonetheless, failure to meet the page length restriction was a common problem which officials working in the Cabinet secretariats encountered in working with the Ministries. In Canada, the Economic and Social Development Policy Secretariats, like PAC-Zambia, assist staff in preparing their memoranda for submission by reviewing drafts and commenting extensively on how the first and second drafts can be improved. In Australia, *Coordination Comments* are made on behalf of the Australian Department of the Prime Minister, where the Cabinet Office resides. In Australia, officials in the Cabinet secretariat staff do not formally assist line ministries like PAC and the Canadian secretariats, but some informal dialogue takes place with the departments in the process of preparing memoranda. In Botswana, the Cabinet Business Committee comprised of the Secretary and Clerk to the Cabinet, the PS of Finance and the Attorney General approves Cabinet memos and sends them back if certain criteria have not been met, such as appropriate consultation with other ministries. In these cases, the submitting Ministry is expected to incorporate the Cabinet office's comments.

Officials in other Cabinet Offices, such as Singapore, were less involved than PAC-Zambia plans to be in assisting with memo preparation. In this small city-state where each line ministry has its own top-notch policy analytic capacity, a centralized secretariat is less necessary to assist with memo preparation. Furthermore, the process of policy analysis is more top-down with the PM first identifying policy problems and telling his Ministries to instruct his PS to investigate the issue.

Policy Coordination

In Malaysia, regular meetings of the permanent secretaries, called Secretary Generals, facilitate policy coordination. In countries where such meetings did not take place, such as Botswana, officials said that meetings of PSs would have helped to settle differences between ministries over Cabinet memoranda before they got to Cabinet. Inter-departmental consultation on policy memoranda was another important mechanism for policy coordination used in both Canada, Botswana, and Australia. In Australia, officials in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and other relevant departments, such as Treasury, write *Coordination Comments* on Cabinet submissions which explain inter-departmental differences of opinion on the issue, point out inconsistencies with other initiatives recently approved, and suggest further consultation which should take place. Similarly, in Botswana, ministries respond to proposals to Cabinet with written comments which are then integrated into the memoranda. In Canada, inter-departmental meetings are held to discuss submissions.

In Britain, the extent to which the Cabinet Office was involved in interdepartmental coordination varied. Under Thatcher, most matters were resolved by interdepartmental committees, often of just officials or on the telephone between officials, rather than at the behest of the Cabinet Office. In Malaysia, an electronic *Integrated Project Monitoring System* system coordinates the Monitoring System of the Implementation and Coordination Unit with the computerised information systems of three other central agencies: the Project Planning System of the Economic Planning Unit, the Computerised Information System of the Treasury, and the

Federal Accounting System of the Accountant General's office. By consolidating the information for planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects, the system has been of vital importance to decisions relating to the budgetary allocations for projects. It also eliminates the problem of overlap in the information needs of operating departments from the central agencies.

In Australia, a forecasting system requiring Minister to provide the Secretary to the Cabinet with forecasts of all submissions each quarter assists in the coordination of Cabinet business. Formal mechanisms for policy coordination were less necessary in Singapore, where the small size of the city-state enhances administrative coordination and promotes responsiveness on the part of officials.

Policy Monitoring and Implementation

Methods of monitoring ranged from Malaysia's high-tech computerized monitoring system to a less formal pattern in compact Singapore where Ministers can drive anywhere in the country in a short time (without traffic) to check on civil servants who are responsible for policy implementation. In Malaysia, ministers submit formal *Feedback Papers* to Cabinet Office officials who summarize the feedback for the Cabinet, and tell the relevant ministries of the Cabinet view of their follow-up action. The Cabinet Division uses a computerized monitoring system to chase ministries with outstanding feedback on Cabinet decisions and reports back to the Chief Secretary on the overall performance of each ministry, in terms of their speed of implementation. In Malaysia, a mid-term review process also monitored implementation of the 5-year plan and allowed the Prime Minister to alter policies, when needed.

Cabinet Secretariats and their Staff

The Cabinet secretariats in Great Britain in Australia and the Economic and Social Policy Secretariats in the Canadian Privy Council Office which perform similar functions to those of PAC, could serve as a model for Zambia in several ways. First, PAC may wish to consider conducting pre-Cabinet meeting briefings like those conducted by the Canadian Policy Secretariats for the Chairperson of the Policy Committees before discussion of each proposal to the full Cabinet. In the briefing, secretariat officials not only present what the policy hopes to achieve and clarify the central issues involved, but they also identify which Ministers are likely to raise what concerns and anticipate ways to reach consensus. Thus, these briefings are especially useful in ensuring against surprises which could delay the decisionmaking process. A second idea for PAC from the Canadian experience is that secretariat (or PAC) officials can try to harmonize differences between Ministries in the process of advising them on preparation of Cabinet memoranda, and in doing so encourage policy coordination.

In all of the countries studied, the quality of the civil service as a whole was high, and the staff serving the Cabinet Office were especially sharp. One of the mechanisms used in Britain to guarantee a steady supply of high quality appointees with fresh experience of the workings of the departments is the loan system of seconding all officials from other Whitehall departments. At one stage in their careers, the *creme de la creme* of the civil service rotate through the Cabinet Office, usually for two years. This "loan system" and relatively brief duration of Cabinet posts enabled a wide number of promising officials to gain experience at the

center and helped keep the Cabinet Office fully in touch with, and in the confidence of, the rest of Whitehall.

Another key feature of the British Secretariat which may be of interest to PAC is the remarkable flexibility it displayed in its staffing. Secretary to the Cabinet Armstrong (under Thatcher) encouraged crossovers between secretariats during both crisis periods and seasonal peaks of work. For example, during the miners' strike, staff from other secretariats joined the Economic Secretariat, which shouldered the bulk of the extra work. The Zambians may want to consider using PAC as a central coordinating body during crises, as well as flexible staffing of PAC.

In virtually all the countries studied, the Secretary to the Cabinet was an extremely powerful figure who usually served as Head of the Civil Service and was often the senior adviser to the Prime Minister or President, as well. These Secretaries to the Cabinet surrounded themselves with a top-notch staff. For instance, secretary to the Cabinet Armstrong (under Thatcher) who was described as the most powerful civil servant of his day, took pains to secure the very best deputy secretaries available in Whitehall. He looked less for creative qualities than for impartiality, the ability to work hard, to be able to command and hold the respect of officials in departments with which they were to be associated and the ability to brief clearly and to summarize arguments impartially. In Singapore and Malaysia, monetary awards are offered as incentives to civil servants to foster excellence in the job.

The British and Australian experiments with Policy Units, offers relevant lessons for PAC, in addition to those suggested by their Cabinet Secretariats. PAC can learn from the three factors which contributed to success of both the Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS, 1971-84) and the current Number 10 Policy Unit, alias the "think-tank:"

- 1) the wide range of experience and skills of staff members who were drawn from inside and outside government (i.e. from small business, industry, and law);
- 2) the staff's continued contact with the outside world through regular site visits (to factories, hospitals, schools etc.);
- 3) the units' strong leadership during certain periods.

The demise of the CPRS, as well, elucidates five problems that PAC may encounter:

- 1) the tendency to spread itself too thin;
- 2) lack of interest, on the part of Ministers;
- 3) lack of representation at Cabinet;
- 4) the threat of eclipsing the role of departments;
- 5) politicization, i.e. heavy reliance on the current political leader.

PAC could learn from this experience by devising strategies that minimize the potential for these problems to develop.

The case of the Australian Priorities Review Staff (PRS) modelled after the British CPRS suggests what such high-level policy units can and cannot do well. The Australian experience suggests that these units can be useful to a government in four ways. First, they can provide second opinions on important public policy matters and generate new policy options. Second, they can question departmental assumptions and can be mobilized as an independent third force to help resolve interdepartmental policy conflicts. Third, they can devise alternative means of fulfilling election pledges. Finally, they can encourage ministers to consider the longer-term and clarify their objectives.

Four Central Lessons

The varied experiences of these six Commonwealth countries with Cabinet administration suggest four central lessons for PAC:

- Cabinets function best when ministers have a clear understanding of the true meaning of Cabinet responsibility: that the Cabinet as a whole takes and stands by decisions collectively, and Ministers do not express in public differences of opinion within the Cabinet.
- Smaller Cabinets allow for greater policy cohesion, as well as more efficient meetings.
- Cabinet meetings are more efficient when real deliberation over most policy issues takes place at the committee level.
- Cabinet administration runs most efficiently when civil servants are well trained, well paid, and promoted on the basis of merit.

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USAID Implementing Policy Change Project

Cabinet Profile Series

Introduction

This booklet contains a series of **Cabinet Profiles** prepared for the Policy Analysis and Coordination Division (PAC) of the Zambia Cabinet Office, under the auspices of the USAID Implementing Policy Change Project. The objective of these country profiles is to illuminate various options for Cabinet machinery used in different settings in order to generate lessons in cabinet administration that might apply to Zambia. This comparative research effort will also assist in the selection of the most appropriate countries for overseas study tours which PAC staff will take.

The most useful lessons from the Zambian point of view can be drawn from the experiences of Commonwealth countries, where Cabinet organization is modelled after the British system. Furthermore, different insights can be gleaned from the case of Cabinet government in industrialized countries and developing countries. This research endeavor aims to focus on Cabinets in parliamentary governments that function the most effectively. With these considerations in mind, the following mix of countries was selected for the Cabinet Profiles series: Canada, Botswana, Great Britain, Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia.

The profiles are all organized in a similar fashion in order to facilitate comparison across countries. Each country profile will analyze how PAC's four primary functions — reviewing Cabinet memoranda, taking minutes, and assisting with implementation and monitoring of Cabinet decisions — are organized in each country context. The profiles will discuss the key institutional actors performing each of these functions, focusing, to the extent possible on the counterpart organization to PAC, such as the Cabinet Secretariat in Great Britain and Canada. In cases where a variety of different institutions perform functions similar to PAC's, each of these are discussed.

In addition to these operational details, the profiles will also analyze the most important political and social dimensions of Cabinet government. For instance, the Malaysian Cabinet profile examines the personality and style of different Prime Ministers, as well as the role of the ruling Party and the King, since these factors influence Cabinet operations. Furthermore, the profiles will try to capture each country's "Cabinet culture." The following types of questions will be addressed:

- What is the size of the Cabinet?
- How long are Cabinet meetings and how are they structured?
- What kind of educational background and experience do Cabinet members have?
- How important is the principle of Collective Ministerial Responsibility?

· What are the characteristics of the civil service?

Official secrecy meant that it was not easy to obtain the information presented here on the sensitive subject of the Cabinet Office. Therefore, it was necessary to rely on interviews, especially for Botswana, Singapore, and Malaysia, with all their imperfections as a source. The author's discussions with government officials involved in Cabinet government, and also with political scientists at Harvard and other universities and comparative government experts at other institutions provided the primary data for these profiles. (See attached list of persons interviewed.) In the case of Botswana, Singapore, and Malaysia, it was not possible to cross-check the accuracy of what was said in interviews due to the lack of written materials. Nonetheless the profiles, especially of Great Britain and Canada, do draw on secondary sources, including numerous books, journal articles, and government publications on Cabinet procedures worldwide, which were identified in a computerized literature search. (See attached list of References.)

Before beginning these profiles, it is necessary to point out a problem of perspective. While on one level, the Cabinet Office is a relatively discrete unit, susceptible to isolated description; on another it is the center of a highly complex web of interlocking policy networks. Its operation only becomes fully explicable when understood in conjunction with a wide variety of different institutions, of which the Treasury, the Prime Minister's Private Office, overseas governments and agencies, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (in the case of Great Britain) are just some of the more important. To focus solely on the work of the Cabinet Offices, as these profiles do, gives inevitably a partial account of the center of government in different settings.

Cabinet Profile: Canada

From some initial investigation, it appears that the Cabinet Office in Canada, called the Privy Council Office (PCO), could provide a very useful model for the Zambians to follow. Specifically, the Zambians could learn a lot from the organization and operation of Cabinet committees and the Economic and Social Policy Secretariats which assist them. In Canada, meetings of the full Cabinet run efficiently because most of the real deliberation over policy issues takes place at the committee level.

This Cabinet Profile will examine the organization of Canada's Cabinet Office, and focus in particular on the institutions responsible for policy formulation. Special attention will be paid to the Economic and Social Policy Secretariats which perform policy development and coordination functions similar to the Policy Analysis and Coordination Unit (PAC) in Zambia.

Privy Council Office (Cabinet Office)

The Privy Council Office (PCO) is equivalent to the Cabinet Office in Zambia or Britain. There are 300 staff members in the PCO, 50-60 of whom are professionals. Some of the most important policy functions of PCO are: to analyze submissions, brief Cabinet Committee chairpersons, prepare the agenda for each committee meeting, and prepare committee reports and recommendations to full Cabinet; to coordinate the Government's policy priorities process and large cross-Cabinet issues; and to provide staff support to the Policy Committees. The operations functions of PCO are: to arrange Cabinet and Cabinet committee meetings, to prepare agenda, record discussions and prepare and distribute minutes of meetings, to provide document service for Cabinet, and to research and retrieve information for ministries.

Clerk of the Privy Council (Secretary to the Cabinet)

The Clerk of the Privy Council plays the same role as the Zambian Secretary to the Cabinet. As Head of the Civil Service (of which he is the most senior member) and the Prime Minister's main adviser, he plays a very powerful role in the Canadian Government. As one Professor of Canadian Studies put it, the Clerk of the Privy Council under Trudeau "ran the government." Under Prime Minister William Davis, the Secretary to the Cabinet was "double-hatted" as Deputy Minister.

Creation of Cabinet Committees

In 1972, Cabinet was restructured and Cabinet committees (sub-committees) formed, when it became clear that the growing volume and complexity of policy issues was unmanageable for any single body of Ministers. The new system transferred the focus of policy development in Canada to a number of powerful Cabinet committees. Formally, Cabinet committees do not make final decisions on policy issues. Instead, they makes recommendations to full Cabinet. Nonetheless, the role of the full Cabinet has become, essentially, one of ratification of these recommendations with a minimum of debate, and with the occasional need to resolve disputes that cannot be settled at the committee level.

Cabinet Reorganization

The recently elected Prime Minister Chretien has just streamlined the Cabinet office to reduce its cost and increase its efficiency. First, the Cabinet was reduced in size from 40 (under the previous PM) to 23. Second, the number of major Cabinet Committees has been reduced from five to four. (See Figure 2 which arrays the committees under the old system.) With a smaller Cabinet, it was possible to eliminate the powerful Policy and Priorities Board (P&P), which was originally set up when it became difficult to deal with issues at meetings of such a large Cabinet. The P&P Board served as a powerful "inner Cabinet," with the authority to ratify policy decisions.² The Board, chaired by the Prime Minister, included the Deputy PM, the Chairman of Management Board of Cabinet, the Treasurer, and four or five other influential ministers. The four main Cabinet committees in the new government are Social Policy, Economic Policy, Treasury Board, and Special Counsel (which is responsible for nominations and treaties).

Economic and Social Policy Committees and their Secretariats

There are two major policy committees, Economic Policy and Social Development Policy. With the most recent changes in the Cabinet, the Justice Committee was combined with Social Policy. The Ministers represented on each committee are shown in Figure 2. The Economic and Social Policy Secretariats assist the policy committees with policy formulation and coordination, and play a similar role to that of PAC in Zambia, as follows. Their principle responsibilities include acting as an early liaison with line Ministries in the policy formulation process, checking that other Ministries are consulted, as appropriate, and making sure that policies are consistent with the overall direction of the Government. (Thus, there is quite a bit of overlap with the functions that PAC performs.)

The professional staffs of the Secretariats are small. There are 8 members of the Social Policy Secretariat, the Director, Assistant Director, and civil servants specializing in each of the following six substantive areas: justice and police; income support systems; immigration and public security; health; culture (broadcasting); and aboriginal issues. The Economic Policy Secretariat is about the same size.

Preparation of Cabinet Memoranda

Cabinet submissions normally originate within the staff of a ministry in response to a public concern or a policy initiative of the Government. After scrutiny and deliberation by the policy committees, the responsible minister places the memorandum before Cabinet.

²Members of the Policy Secretariat feel that their issues will receive more careful consideration now that the P & P Board has been abolished, because all ministers, including the one who initiated the policy, will be present when the issue is presented at Cabinet. Under the old system, there was a problem of "second-guessing" by Ministers on the P & P Board, who were sometimes neither genuinely interested in the subject matter, nor fully briefed on the issue.

Each Cabinet memorandum (CM) must have two parts: the main policy decision in brief (less than three pages), and the analysis, which contains a much more detailed rationale for the policy (less than 25 pages). All CMs must meet these length restrictions. Memos present background material, assess the main issues, and give a "bottom line" recommendation to the Committee Chairperson.

Like PAC-Zambia, the Economic and Social Development Policy Secretariats assist Ministry staff in preparing memoranda for submission to the Cabinet. While secretariat staff are discouraged from actually writing memoranda themselves, they comment extensively on how the CM can be improved. The usual practice is for the Secretariat staff to review two drafts of the CM, as follows. The Department submits a first draft to the Secretariat for comments. After incorporating the recommendations, and those of other Ministries received at an inter-departmental meeting where the policy is discussed, the department resubmits the draft memorandum to the Secretariat. There may be more "to-ing and fro-ing" between the Secretariat and the Ministry when the latter needs more assistance with a memo, such as when the staff is having difficulty meeting the page length restrictions. Once the memo is nearly finalized, it is submitted to the Social or Economic Policy Committee. When the memo is registered, it becomes a secret document. Before the Committee meets to discuss the CM, the Secretariat briefs the Chairperson of the Policy Committee.

Briefings to Policy Committee Chairperson

One of the most important tasks of the Policy Secretariats that the Zambian PAC may want to consider is briefing the Chairperson of the Policy Committees on each issue up for proposal to the full Cabinet. (In the past, the Minister under whose domain the policy in question fell was briefed, until it became clear that it was better to brief an independent Chairperson, who was more objective in that position.) The briefing presents what the policy hopes to achieve, clarifies the central issues involved, identifies which Ministers are likely to raise what concerns, and anticipates ways to reach consensus. Essentially, the briefing ensures that the Chairperson will not encounter any surprises, once the issue is up for discussion in Cabinet. (Canadians refer to the Policy Committee meetings as Cabinet.) The custom is for the secretariat staff to do briefings orally, in order to give the Chairperson the opportunity to ask questions about the policy issue. In addition, the staff prepare two to three pages of briefing notes. The notes are kept "pretty pithy," in the words of one staff member, otherwise the Chairperson would not read them. On occasion, some Chairpersons prefer to read the written brief only, and to skip the verbal presentation.

Cabinet Meetings

The Prime Minister chairs meetings of the full Cabinet which take place bi-weekly. Ministers attend, and Deputy Ministers may sometimes be allowed to sit in on the meetings as well, when their department is presenting a CM. The PM tries to focus on ratifying decisions, in order to keep the meeting brief. Meetings last one to two hours.

There are two types of business on the agenda, "main agenda" items which require real deliberation and debate before a decision is taken, and "annex items," which are usually ratified

without discussion. Usually, four or five issues which the policy committees could not resolve are placed on the "main agenda," as are contentious or sensitive matters, such as Canada's participation in "Operation Desert Storm."

The Economic and Social Policy Committee each give recommendations to the Cabinet on about six annex items, and these 12 issues are usually ratified quickly at each Cabinet meeting. The Economic and Social Policy secretariats provide the Chairperson of the meeting (the PM) with a single paragraphs brief on each annex item. Secretariat staff already gave a full briefing to the Chairperson of the policy committee when the longer Cabinet memorandum was circulated and discussed.

Like full Cabinet meetings, policy committee meetings take place bi-weekly, as well. In addition to the Ministers, Assistant Secretaries attend, as well as civil servants from the Policy Secretariats, when their items are on the agenda. There are usually five or six issues on the agenda, at each policy committee meeting. That means that the Economic and Social Policy Secretariats, taken together, process 20 to 24 memoranda per month, about the same as PAC in Zambia.

Minutes for Cabinet and Committee Meetings

The Clerk of the Privy Council (Secretary to the Cabinet) is responsible for preparing the minutes in meetings of full Cabinet. He usually brings one scribe with him to the meeting, as well. At policy committee meetings, the member of the Secretariat who is responsible for the policy under consideration takes the minutes. Two types of documents are prepared after each meeting of the full Cabinet and the policy committees, "Records of Decision," and "Cabinet Minutes." Records of decision must be done quickly after the policy meetings so they can be put on the agenda of the full Cabinet as an annex item. For example, when a policy committee takes place on a Tuesday morning, secretariat staff member must produce the record of decision that same afternoon so it can be put on the agenda of Thursday's Cabinet meeting. More time is allowed for the preparation of the minutes -- about two or three weeks.

The minutes summarize the essence of the discussion, rather than recount the entire meeting verbatim. The minutes record the primary issues raised by various Ministers, who are not named, but are referred to by their title, i.e. the Minister of Health argued this position. The minutes are not published, and there are mechanisms in place to ensure that they will not be leaked.³ Pages are numbered carefully, and minutes are not allowed to be photocopied. After 20 years, however, the Canadian Access to Information Act requires that minutes be made available to the public.

Relationship between Ministers and Permanent Secretaries

In Canada, tension between Ministers and Permanent Secretaries is not a problem, like it is in Zambia. Permanent secretaries in Canada, called Deputy Ministers, are the number two persons in the Ministry. As the top Civil Servant appointed on the basis of technical merit, the

³However, drafts of Cabinet memoranda are sometimes leaked to the press.

job of the Deputy Minister is to serve the Minister. If there were is tension between the Minister and his or her Deputy, the latter would quickly lose his/her job.

Doctrine of Collective Ministerial Responsibility

Ministerial responsibility is very strong in Canada. Decisions are taken on the basis of consensus, and differences of opinion within the Cabinet are rarely expressed to the public. Political insiders believe that one of the reasons that Ministers feel free to express their differences in Cabinet is that they are confident that their views will be kept secret.

Policy Coordination, Implementation and Monitoring

Before the recent restructuring of the Cabinet, the P & P Board was responsible for overseeing the coordination of government-wide issues and resolving issues that cross governmental, ministerial, or policy committee boundaries. Under the new system, the Department proposing the CM is responsible for inter-departmental coordination on the issue under consideration. The staff of the Secretariats also try to harmonize differences between Ministries in the process of advising them on preparation of CMs.

There is no formal mechanism in the Privy Council Office for facilitating implementation or monitoring of decisions taken by the Cabinet. At the political level, Ministers are accountable for implementation and at the technical level, the department which submitted the CM is responsible for implementation. Inter-departmental coordination on policy implementation is done on an ad hoc basis. For example, an inter-departmental committee was set up to monitor implementation of the Canadian environmental policy decisions which originated at the Rio Conference. However, the PCO may ask the technical department to report back on how the policy is being implemented, especially when the policy is particularly innovative.

Cabinet Profile: Botswana

This is the second of a series of **Cabinet Profiles** prepared for the Policy Analysis and Coordination Division (PAC) of the Zambia Cabinet Office. The objective of these country profiles is to generate lessons in cabinet administration that might apply to Zambia. This comparative research effort will focus on Cabinets in parliamentary governments that function effectively and efficiently. Each country profile will analyze how PAC's four primary functions — reviewing Cabinet memoranda, taking minutes, and assisting with implementation and monitoring of Cabinet decisions — are organized in each country context.

The experience of Cabinet administration in the neighboring African country of Botswana is in many ways the most relevant for PAC-Zambia. Two institutional features which contribute to the Botswana Cabinet's efficiency and effectiveness may be of particular interest to the Zambians. First, annual meetings of the Economic Committee of the Cabinet which include all the Permanent Secretaries (PSs) are important for clarifying policy options, informing the Cabinet about the realities of economic policy, and monitoring policy implementation. This is one option the Zambians may want to consider, if they decide to re-organize their Cabinet committees. Second, an *Information Note System* used in Botswana allows Ministries to circumvent the process of submitting Cabinet memoranda on issues of lesser importance, thus decreasing the volumes of CMs and shortening Cabinet meetings. Introduction of a similar system in Zambia could increase the Cabinet's efficiency there, as well.

While Botswana's Cabinet machinery offers some lessons for Zambia, it also shares several of the same problems that PAC-Zambia is tackling. First, memoranda submitted to the Botswana Cabinet are often too long, because preparing Ministries do not respect page length restrictions. Second, not enough inter-departmental differences on Cabinet memoranda are sorted out at the PS level, before CMs go to the Botswana Cabinet. Third, Cabinet meetings are too long, because decisions are truly decided by consensus, a tradition which dates back to the tribal *kgotla*, where the chief listened to advice and where each could have a voice.

Background: Combining Democratic Politics with Economic Growth

Botswana's impressive political and economic performance since its independence in 1966 make it an interesting model for other African countries trying to combine democratic politics with economic growth. At its independence, Botswana was listed as one of the world's poorest countries. Yet from 1965 to 1985, Botswana experienced the most rapid rate of growth of GNP per capita of any country in the world. In addition to its economic success, outside observers consider Botswana to be one of the few liberal democracies in Africa. Local councillors and members of parliament provided regular feedback to the government about the concern of individuals; and, political leaders are also important in explaining government programs to the people. Knowing that it must stand for election every five years made the government responsive to citizen opinion; the priorities of development programs were designed with this in mind (Harvey and Lewis 1990). Furthermore, Botswana's government was elected by the rural majority, and thus it avoided the problem of urban bias characteristic of many other African states after independence.

Cabinet Composition

The Botswana Cabinet is small: there are 17 members including the President. The Cabinet is comprised of the President, Vice President (who is also Minister of Finance and Development), 11 ministers, and four assistant ministers. According to foreign advisers, the small size of the Cabinet has made an enormous difference in the Cabinet's effectiveness. While the Constitution of Botswana limits the number of members in the Cabinet, the Parliament has the power to increase its size. The President, however, has been reluctant to add Ministers.

Cabinet Meetings

The full Cabinet, including Assistant Ministers, as well as the Secretary and Clerk to the Cabinet and the Attorney General, attend Cabinet meetings. The Permanent Secretary to the President (PSP) is also the Secretary to the Cabinet and the Head of the Civil Service. Needless-to-say, with these triple responsibilities, he is a very powerful person in the government. The Secretary to the Cabinet serves as a political adviser to the Cabinet, and the Attorney General serves as legal adviser. Both of them speak in Cabinet meetings. The Senior Private Secretary to the President is the Clerk of the Cabinet.

Outside advisers, including ex-patriates, attend Cabinet meetings, as well, if the policy in question is too technical for the presenting Minister to explain.⁴ In such cases, after the Minister is granted permission from the Cabinet, he will bring his officers in at the start of the meeting, they will present their views on the technical issue, and then they will leave.

Cabinet meetings take place every Wednesday and usually last from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Only in exceptional circumstances do they continue into the afternoon. There are three types of business on the agenda: cabinet memoranda, "information notes," and "other business." Usually, five to seven memoranda are considered at each meeting. The nature of the policy determines how much time the Cabinet will devote to each memorandum. For example, at the meeting which took place during the first week of December, the Cabinet discussed the ostrich policy memorandum extensively. A less critical memorandum, such as one asking for approval of Board membership of a parastatal, would receive much less attention.

What is remarkable about the Botswana Cabinet is that it really chews on issues before taking a decision. Indeed, real deliberation and debate takes place at meetings of both the full Cabinet and the Economic Committee of the Cabinet. Decisions are truly taken by consensus, and as a result, are not made quickly. This democratic tradition dates back to governance among the Batswana who emphasized the role of consultation in the tribal *kgotla*, where the chief listened to advice and where each could have a voice. In the context of Cabinet meetings, the result of this tradition is for Ministers to "talk everything to death," in the words of one American adviser who attended Cabinet meetings.

Information notes inform the Cabinet about an action a Minister would like to take that requires Cabinet responsibility, but does not usually need to be discussed formally. This system

⁴Expatriate advisers who attend Cabinet meetings must take the oath of secrecy.

enables the Ministries to circumvent the lengthy process of submitting a Cabinet memoranda. For example, a Minister may inform his colleagues that he wants to set up a crime squad, an action that is within his power, but should receive the assent of the Cabinet. Another matter that would be more appropriately presented as an information note than a CM is a Minister's report on an ILO meeting that he attended.

About three *Information notes* are submitted and read at each Cabinet meeting, but they are usually not discussed. However, if the note is controversial when presented in Cabinet, it is noted that the contents need be discussed later. Taking the above example, if Cabinet members disagree with the way the Minister proposes setting up the crime squad in the information note, they will express their opinions briefly and agree to take up the issue further after the meeting. If the matter cannot be easily resolved, it will be elevated above the line to a Cabinet memorandum and decided upon later in Cabinet.

This system of screening out issues before they become Cabinet memoranda shortens both the length of meetings as well as the total time the government machinery spends on processing memoranda. PAC Zambia may want to consider adopting a similar *Information Note System* as a mechanism for decreasing the volume of Cabinet memoranda, thus increasing the efficiency of Cabinet meetings.

Cabinet Minutes

The Clerk of the Cabinet takes the minutes which are vetted by the Secretary to the Cabinet before they are submitted. Two types of documents are prepared after each Cabinet meeting, "Cabinet Directives," and "Cabinet Minutes." Cabinet directives are short statements of the decision which was agreed upon in the meetings, on the basis of the recommendation of the Cabinet memoranda. Cabinet directives are not issued until 14 days after the meeting, just in case a Minister discovers a problem that was not foreseen and the decision must be changed. But this happens very rarely. In cases of urgent matters, special dispensation may be given, in order for the directive to be written sooner than 14 days.

Minutes of Cabinet meetings summarize the discussion and try to give a general impression of what arguments were made, rather than record the meeting verbatim. Ministers who expressed certain views are not named.

Secretary to the Cabinet and his Staff

The current Secretary to the Cabinet, called the PSP in Botswana, is an articulate, intelligent lawyer who has a degree from Harvard Law School. President Seretse's Secretary to the Cabinet, who also served Masire in his first year, has been described as "coming as close to a dictator as is possible in a democratic system." A man of action, he moved paper better than anyone else in the bureaucracy. Indeed, he was notorious for never writing a memos longer than one sentence.

Up until three years ago, the Secretary to the Cabinet had very little back-up in the Ministry of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration. At that time, three Permanent

Secretaries were added to his staff: a PS for Economic, Political, and Administrative Affairs. Each PS and his staff, a deputy and about four other officers, advise their Minister for Presidential Affairs and Public Administration on the Cabinet memoranda falling under their domain. They sit down with their Minister before Cabinet meetings and decide how to approach the issues on the agenda.

Other offices in the Presidency include the Directorate of Public Service Management (Personnel), Foreign Affairs, the Police, and the Army. The top leadership in the Presidency, including the PSP, his three PSs, the Secretary for Employment, and the Commission of Police meet the day before the Cabinet meeting to share their views with the President and advise him on the issues up for discussion. This practice has been a useful way to prepare the President for Cabinet meetings.

Cabinet under Seretse and Masire

The leadership of Botswana since independence has been of unusually high quality. Two remarkable, yet very different, men served as President. Sir Seretse Khama was the first President; he would have been the traditional chief of the largest sub-group of Batswana had he not renounced the position for modern politics. His political skills and vision were of immense importance, and his stature as a person added immeasurably to the ability of this party, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), to establish large majorities in the early elections. He also set the tone of government with common sense, good humor, honesty and a desire to learn lessons from other countries.

Quett Masire, who was the BDP party organizer from the beginning, was Vice President and Minister of Finance and Development Planning until 1980, when, after Sir Seretse's death, he became President. He developed and maintained a detailed knowledge of all aspects of the economy over the first fifteen years of independence and provided a key link between the technicians in the civil service and the Cabinet and Parliament.

The analytic capacity of the Cabinet has improved dramatically since Seretse's first Cabinet Ministers who, at best, were trained as secondary school teachers. The more recent Cabinets have been comprised of ministers who are much better educated, often abroad, and have real policy analytic capacity. Furthermore, Masire, who is a sophisticated thinker on economic matters, brought some of the best people from the civil service directly into the Cabinet.

As Vice President, Masire often presided at Cabinet meetings, since Seretse was often too ill to exercise his right as the chair. It was Masire who called on people at meetings and acted as the President's "hatchet man." Masire was called a "super general manager" when he occupied the triple post of Vice President, Minister of Finance, and General Secretary to the Party. While he really ran the show as Vice President, Masire is more distant now that he has become President, except on key issues of economic policy.

Civil Service and PS-Minister Relations

The civil service in Botswana has been described as the best in Africa. One reason for this is that Botswana did not lose key talent to international organizations or to other forms of political exile as happened in many African and Asian countries, in part because the country was open and democratic (Harvey and Lewis 1990). Another factor of crucial importance is that salaries in the public sector remain very high in relation to the rest of the economy. The highest ranking civil servant, the PSP, receives an annual salary of approximately \$60,000 per year (to which allowances and perks are added). In addition to the higher salaries for civil servants are fringe benefits such as car loans, cheap housing, and opportunities for training, travel abroad, and making money outside the civil service in cattle ownership, retail trade investment, or early retirement into the private sector.

Another important reason why the civil service is so good is that considerable attention has been paid, within both the civil service and the Cabinet, to putting able people into key positions and keeping them there for extended periods. One clear example is Baledzi Gaolathe, who was Permanent Secretary for Finance for over fifteen years (1976-92).⁵ His intelligence, longevity, and institutional memory made him a very effective PS with enormous influence over President Seretse. Apparently, the President used to say in Cabinet that he was considering taking such and such action but he did not know whether Baledzi would let him.⁶

There is often tension between the ministers and their PSs, and the Secretary to the Cabinet may need to intervene on the part of the PSs, like in Zambia. In Botswana, even the President may take the side of the PS in the dispute.

The Treasury

The Treasury plays the role of "first among equals" in the Botswana government like it does in Britain. The Minister of Finance and Development Planning, who is also the Vice President, is enormously powerful: he is clearly the most senior Minister in Cabinet. The current Minister, Festus Mogae, is first rate. Before assuming this position, he held the posts of PSP (and thus Secretary to the Cabinet), Governor of the Central Bank, Executive Director of the Anglophone group at the IMF, and first African President of the Oxford English-speaking Union.

The Finance Ministry recruited the most talented young people in the first generation of citizens. Since then, the Ministry has been a career path for elite civil servants, who are often sent abroad for training in the course of their tenure at Treasury. Planning officers are often seconded from Finance to other line ministries, where they assist with developing Cabinet papers.

⁵Baledzi now runs Botswana's diamond company which produces approximately 40 % of the nation's GDP and 80% of its exports.

⁶It is no wonder that junior officials called Baledzi "Paramount Chief," and "the PS," while other PSs were just called by their surnames, i.e. "Mr. so and so."

Preparation of Cabinet Memoranda

The process of preparing cabinet Memoranda (CM) works as follows. The relevant Ministry initiates action on a particular policy program by drafting a Cabinet memorandum. The next step is for the Ministry to circulate the memo to the PSs of the ministries directly affected by the policy. It is only necessary to circulate the memo to all Ministries when the issue is of national concern, such as Botswana's ostrich export policy.⁷ Ministries then respond to the proposal with written comments, including suggestions for how the memorandum could be improved. Civil servants at the initiating Ministry are then responsible for integrating the outside comments into the memorandum, whether or not they agree with them. If they disagree with the recommendations, the proposing Ministry must explain their differences in the memorandum.

The Secretary to the Cabinet tries to settle differences before the policy reaches the Cabinet by calling Ministers and occasionally holding meetings of Permanent Secretaries. (PSs do not meet as a group routinely to discuss CMs, as in other countries.) According to foreign advisers, these meetings are not held often enough, and thus not enough inter-departmental differences are sorted out at the PS level, before CMs go to Cabinet. Ultimately, policy conflicts are resolved at the Cabinet level. Outside advisers argue that too much power is concentrated in the executive office and not enough in the departments.

After memos have been circulated and revised, they are sent to the Cabinet Business Committee (CBC) for approval. This committee is comprised of the Secretary to the Cabinet, who chairs the committee, the Clerk of the Cabinet, who is the secretary, the PS of Finance, and the Attorney General. The Cabinet Business Committee approves memos on the basis of two principal criteria. First, CMs must be clearly written in simple language and, in principle, must follow the necessary format for submission. However, foreign advisers claim that strict page restrictions are no longer observed, and memos are getting longer and longer. Second, the Committee checks whether the appropriate Ministries have been given the opportunity to express their views on the memo.

When the initiating departments have not sufficiently consulted with other Ministries and incorporated their views, the memos are sent back. Unsatisfactory memos may be resubmitted, once they have met the requirements. Apparently, every Secretary to the Cabinet says when he comes in to office that there will be more consultation on memos before they go to the Cabinet. But in spite of this good intention, the CBC often gets busy and it ends up that memos are not always reviewed carefully enough. According to foreign advisers, the CBC could do a better job at settling differences on CMs before they are brought to Cabinet by calling inter-ministerial meetings of the PSs who disagree on the policy.

As a result of the failure of the CBC to adequately screen memos, the Cabinet sometimes decides to send them back, if consensus cannot be reached. For example, Ministries have tried

⁷A policy initiative on ostrich exports was the example given by a very high level civil servant in Botswana of a Cabinet memorandum which circulated to all the ministries. Ostrich skin, meat, and feathers are exported, and thus they are considered a national asset. Apparently, the President and the Minister of Commerce and Industry are involved in the ostrich trade.

recently to run around the Treasury to get approval before a price tag has been associated with the policy. In this case, if the Minister of Finance is unsatisfied with the financial implications of the policy, he may send it back. Apparently, this happens more frequently now that Baledzi (who would never have let such a policy go through to the Cabinet without careful consideration) is no longer the PS for Finance. If a memorandum provokes a brouhaha in the Cabinet, it is up to the Secretary to the Cabinet to send it back for further discussion.

Economic Committee of the Cabinet

The Economic Committee of the Cabinet in Botswana is a broad, inclusive body comprised of the Cabinet, the Governor of the Central Bank, all the PSs, and outside (often expatriate) advisers rather than a sub-set of Cabinet officers, like the Economic Committee of the Cabinet in Britain or Canada. The President chairs the Committee meetings.

This committee meets each January to decide on the year's development program (by February), as it fits into the current 5-year plan. Economic Committee meetings are called "talking shops," because they involve lengthy explanation and discussion of policy questions. These four hour sessions start with a "Key Issues Paper," and are followed by a Macroeconomic Paper and sessions on the most important issues. In Seretse's early Cabinets, PSs did most of the talking, while Ministers, who were less adept at explaining technical policies, played the role of quiet observers. Now that Ministers are more competent analytically — many are ex-civil servants — they participate more actively at Economic Committee meetings.

Advisers claim that Economic Committee meetings are very important in defining and clarifying policy options for all the political players involved; thus they serve as educational exercises in macro economics. For example, when the question of a currency change was debated, the Economic Committee served as a very useful instrument for informing the Cabinet and the civil service about the realities of macro economic policy. Furthermore, the meetings provide a forum for making quick and effective decisions on macroeconomic adjustments at times of crisis. For example, when the diamond market which provided 65% of the country's foreign exchange went south in 1981, the Economic Committee met and agreed to revise the budget immediately.

Furthermore, these January meetings act as a mechanism for monitoring implementation of the previous year's policies. When Ministries have not carried out the planned policy program, they are expected to explain to this large audience why not. If they failed to carry out the last year's program, they are given a deadline by which they must implement the policy or else they do not receive any additional resources from the next year's budget.

In addition to the major planning meeting at the beginning of the year, the Economic Committee meets whenever the Cabinet needs the advice of a wider body on a policy that was not discussed in adequate detail at the annual meeting. When more views are needed on a cabinet memorandum, an economic Committee meeting may be called, and on the basis of what was learned at the Economic Committee meeting, the Cabinet will then make a decision. The Committee meets a total of about four or five times per year (in contrast to the Economic Committees of Cabinet in Britain or Canada which meet weekly). A variation of the Economic

Committee is the "informal Cabinet," comprised of Cabinet together with experts and advisers on the issue.

"All Party Caucuses" in Parliament are another mechanism used in Botswana for increasing understanding of macro economic policy and mobilizing support. Staff from the Central Bank and the Treasury are brought in to these lengthy meetings (sometimes lasting four hours) to explain the economics behind the policy changes. This type of open forum for learning and discussion is enormously important in democratic governments such as Botswana.

The fact that the Parliament has very few professional staff members keeps it weak relative to the civil service. Civil service members are reported to think that the Parliament does not need to have any professional staff.

Cabinet Profile: Great Britain

This analysis of the British Cabinet system is the longest and most detailed of all the Cabinet Profiles, since most Commonwealth countries including Zambia look to Great Britain as a model. The British experience with Cabinet government provides a rich set of lessons, tactical and methodological, for PAC and future policy units to draw on. In particular, two features of the British Cabinet Secretariat may be of interest to PAC. First, the *loan system* of seconding all Cabinet Secretariat officials from other departments and *short duration* of Cabinet Office posts ensures the selection of a high caliber staff with fresh experience of the workings, personalities and problems of the departments. Second, the British secretariats practice *flexible staffing*: during national crises, non-Cabinet office staff from other departments are temporarily drafted in, and during peak work periods, staff crossed over from other secretariats. Drawing on the British experience, PAC may wish to consider seconding its staff from other departments as well as using its office as a coordinating mechanism during times of crisis.

Two other British institutions, as well, offer relevant lessons for PAC: the Policy Unit, currently also called the Number 10 Policy Unit, and the CPRS (Central Policy Review Staff), alias the "think-tank," established in 1971 by Heath and abolished twelve years later, under Margaret Thatcher's rule. PAC can learn from the positive factors which contributed to the success of both the CPRS and the Policy Unit: 1) the wide range of experience and skills of staff members who were drawn from inside and outside government (i.e. from small business, industry, law etc.); 2) the staff's continued contact with the outside world through regular site visits (to factories, hospitals, schools etc.); 3) the units' strong leadership during certain periods.⁸

Careful scrutiny of the demise of the CPRS elucidates five problems that PAC may encounter: 1) the tendency to spread itself too thin; 2) lack of interest, on the part of Ministers; 3) lack of representation at Cabinet; 4) the threat of eclipsing the role of departments; 5) politicization, i.e. heavy reliance on the current political leader. PAC could learn from this experience by devising strategies that minimize the potential for these problems to develop.

This profile, the longest of the set, is organized as follows. The first section focuses on the Cabinet Secretariat of the British Cabinet Office (CO) which also contains the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and a small Historical Section. Up until 1983, it also contained the CPRS, explained below. The role of the Secretary to the Cabinet, especially Mr. Armstrong, who served under Margaret Thatcher, is examined in detail. The next part discusses the importance of committees to the Cabinet government. The last and longest section analyses the policy units which supported the Cabinet Office until 1983, the Central Policy Review Staff and the No. 10 Policy Unit which currently supports the Prime Minister. These two organizations are then compared and, lastly, the similarities and differences between PAC and these units are described.

⁸During other periods, poor leadership weakened both the CPRS and the Policy Unit.

Composition of the Cabinet

There are currently 22 members of the Cabinet, including the Prime Minister. There are 29 non-Cabinet ministers and 33 Junior Ministers, as well.

Cabinet Secretariat

There are 70 staff members in the Cabinet Secretariat. An important feature that contributes to the quality of the Cabinet Secretariat is that all officials are on loan from other departments. Efforts are made to achieve a balance of secondments from a range of Whitehall departments. Most officials stayed in the CO for two years, with the exception of deputy secretaries who stayed for three years. This "loan system" and relatively brief duration of Cabinet posts enabled a wide number of promising officials to gain experience at the center. It also ensured a steady supply of appointees with fresh experience of the workings of the departments which helped keep the CO fully in touch with, and in the confidence of, the rest of Whitehall.

The Secretariat displayed remarkable flexibility in its staffing. Secretary to the Cabinet Armstrong encouraged crossovers between secretariats in either crisis periods or the seasonal peak of work. For example, during the Falklands War, two non-Cabinet Office staff were temporarily drafted in to the Overseas and Defense (OD) Secretariat (from the Foreign Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defense), and staff also joined OD from another secretariat. During the miners strike (1984-5), staff came over from other secretariats to join the Economic Secretariat, which shouldered the bulk of the extra work. This flexibility also helped to ensure that the CO was staffed to maintain the flow of work in peak periods (commonly June-July, and November-December). Similarly, the Zambians may wish to consider flexible staffing and using PAC as a central coordinating body during crises.

The Secretary to the Cabinet's Power

The current Secretary to the Cabinet is Sir Robin Butler, who is also Prime Minister Major's principal official adviser. The abolition of the Civil Service Department (CSD) in 1981 greatly increased the work and responsibilities of the Secretary to the Cabinet. The CSD's functions were divided between the Treasury and the CO. The Treasury took over the pay and numbers functions of the CSD; the CO took over responsibility for senior appointments. After the CSD's closure, the current Secretary to the Cabinet Armstrong had more responsibility than any of his predecessors (with the exception of Edward Bridges in 1945-46, who was at the same time Head of the Home Civil Service and Permanent Secretary of the Treasury). Armstrong as Secretary to the Cabinet has been described as the most powerful civil servant of his day (Seldon 1990).⁹

In what did this power consist? The main manifestation of Armstrong's power lay in his recommendations for appointment of top officials in Whitehall: he had the ability to make or

⁹Nonetheless, Armstrong's influence pales into insignificance when contrasted with Brook's under Churchill, especially in Churchill's last two years at No.10 when he was often ailing (1953-55), and subsequently under Eden (1955-7).

break careers. Although Margaret Thatcher exercised more personal say over top appointments than her predecessors, this still left Armstrong considerable freedom. In the great majority of cases, the PM had neither the will nor the inclination to interfere with Armstrong's recommendations.

It would be more correct to ascribe Armstrong's authority in his capacity as Secretary to the Cabinet as "influence." His potential would have been all the greater with a new, unenergetic or indecisive PM. Needless to say, Thatcher was none of these. Armstrong nevertheless had considerable potential for influence: Talking each day to the PM, sitting by her side in Cabinet and committees, counselling the PM and other senior ministers as to policy options and on the timing and form in which decisions should be taken. Armstrong was also able to call on his considerable knowledge of the way the machine operated, gleaned from a career of working close to senior ministers, and especially as Principal Private Secretary to the PM (1970-75).

As Secretary to the Cabinet, Armstrong was passionately concerned to do his job efficiently, to ensure that the PM and other ministers had all the information relevant to the taking of decisions. He saw it as of primary importance to ensure the orderly conduct of government, and to see that ministers were fully informed of all the implications of carrying out certain policies. He wanted to be certain that ministers would never round on him and say "why didn't you tell us?" (Seldon 1990). Imbued with a high sense of duty, Armstrong set the tone for other civil servants working in the Cabinet Office. Writes Seldon, ". . . for the great majority of CO officials in 1979-87, the rewards were knowing that they had done their work expeditiously, invited the right people to committee meetings, briefed the chairman correctly, ensured that papers were circulated in good time, that decisions were taken in the light of the fullest possible information available at the time, and that clear instructions following meetings were sent to the relevant people in Whitehall."

The task of Secretary to the Cabinet did not just revolve around Cabinet and committees. For instance, economic summits involved Armstrong in total for some 21 days per year, and preparation for them was very much a task relating to him in his capacity as PM's Personal Representative rather than a head of the Cabinet Office (Seldon 1990).¹⁰

Before the 1981 changes, the Secretary to the Cabinet himself dealt with, signed and sent forward the briefs and approved the minutes for all cabinet committees in which the PM was the chair. After the CSD was abolished, Armstrong continued this practice for Cabinet, but instituted a system where deputy secretaries, responsible for overseeing particular policy areas, briefed the PM directly and approved the minutes for those committees the PM chaired, except in those cases

¹⁰Commonwealth summits, in contrast, occurred biannually, and were less demanding of his time. After the creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965, the Secretary to the Cabinet retained responsibility for the preparation of the briefing for the British delegation to the Heads of Governments meeting, which he always attended as the PM's principal official adviser. Armstrong abandoned the practice of the Cabinet Secretary attending meetings for Commonwealth senior officials, held in the off-years (1980, 82, 84, and 86) in between Heads of Governments' meetings. The reasons were twofold: ad hoc domestic issues arose to make his attendance difficult, and attenders from other Commonwealth countries tended to be the official heads of their foreign or external ministries.

where Armstrong himself wanted to retain his former role. Armstrong saw this change not just as an essential relief to own workload but as a sensible devolution of responsibility in his own right, since it served to enhance the role, job satisfaction and status of the deputy secretaries. This change served to justify the selection of officials of the highest caliber to fill the posts concerned, and to make the appointments even more attractive to high-flying deputy secretaries from other departments.

At the time of the change in 1981, Armstrong had been keen to abolish the title "Head of the Home Civil Service;" he thought it would be sufficient for the Secretary to the Cabinet to take over the appointments task without the addition of the title of Head of the Home Civil Service. But he was persuaded of the case for not abolishing the title, and that there was a real role for someone to fill as Head of the Home Civil Service. This role existed in part to discipline matters concerning permanent and deputy secretaries, in part because the Head of the Home Civil Service could provide a natural "open door" on which other permanent secretaries could call in to discuss problems. His role was enhanced by the guidance he gave in 1985 to civil servants which gave them the right to appeal to the Head of the Home Civil Service on issues of conscience.¹¹

Armstrong took pains to secure the very best deputy secretaries available in Whitehall, as Hunt had done before him. He leant heavily on them, and they were very much his own appointments. The meaning he might have attached to the words "very best" had less to do with creative qualities than to impartiality, the ability to work hard, to be able to command and hold the respect of officials in departments with which they were to be associated, and to have the ability to brief clearly and to summarize arguments impartially in a way that assisted and impressed committee chairmen. Selections of under secretaries would be discussed much more with others, principally with the heads of secretariats and with permanent secretaries in the departments from which they came.

Armstrong had a regular meeting, usually each Thursday, to discuss Cabinet and cabinet committee business for the following three weeks, and in great detail for the coming week. On the basis of this discussion, Armstrong would go to PM Thatcher and tell her what issues were likely to be coming up.

Armstrong inherited a system of trying to plan business six months ahead, the longest period it was deemed valuable to think ahead. His staff rang around departments to ascertain what topics would be coming up which would require discussion and coordination at the center, so that there would be a semblance of logic and planning. The objective of the long-term look was to shape business ahead and to avoid log-jams.

Secretariats

In 1979, the work of the Cabinet Secretariat was divided into four main secretariats: Economic, Home, Overseas and Defense, and European. Science and Technology was added in

¹¹Armstrong's statements were remarkable for being the first by the Head of a Home Civil Service on the duties and responsibilities of staff since the headship of Edward Bridges (1945-56) (Seldon 1990).

1983. Economic, Home, and Overseas and Defense corresponded to the principal standing committees of Cabinet. The Economic Secretariat was responsible for economic, industrial and energy policy. When CPRS closed (see below), the Economic Secretariat took over the production of ad hoc studies and analysis that it had previously undertaken. The Home Secretariat oversaw social policy, education, law and order and environmental matters, and coordinated the government's legislative program. The Overseas and Defense Secretariat oversaw developments in the foreign and defense policy area.

Each secretariat initially had a deputy secretary in charge. Secretary Armstrong decided to put the Home Secretariat in the hands on an under secretary, who reported to him and (on certain matters) to the deputy secretary in charge of the Economic Secretariat. The change was a recognition of the fact that there was so much overlap between both economic and "home" areas that it was a sensible rationalization to combine the work of both secretariats. John Major's government recognized this overlap as well, and under his rule the Economic and Home Secretariats were consolidated into one Domestic Policy Secretariat.

Opportunities for Official Influence: Agenda Preparation, Briefing, Minutes

If Cabinet Secretariat officials possessed scope for exercising their own views and asserting their own priorities, it would come in their roles as preparers of agenda, briefing chairmen, and drawing up minutes and circulating conclusions. In particular, two principal sources almost invariably determined the agenda: either a ministerial committee wanted some matter to be looked at, or a departmental minister asked for some topic to be discussed. The fact that agenda in the Economic, Home and Overseas and Defense Secretariats appear almost to "decide themselves" reflected the well-established policy network world in which they operated. Officials also built up the agenda by reading all the main correspondence and by seeing the papers of all relevant committees.

Officials were responsible for circulating papers in advance of committee meetings: the aim was to do so at least 48 hours before meetings. There were complaints when the secretariats did not receive papers from ministers in time to circulate them that far in advance. Officials were also responsible for ensuring that the ministers who had an interest in matters being discussed attended the appropriate meetings. Ministers strongly resent not being informed of meetings of interest to them and their departments.

Another main task of secretariat officials is to brief chairmen, usually in writing, before meetings. This function provides perhaps the greatest potential for influence. Briefs consisted of three parts: technical advice on how to handle meetings, what paper to take in what order; where the line-up positions and views was, and who was likely to support/oppose; and finally how the meeting might be concluded, what the chance was of getting a decision, what that decisions might be, what action should be taken to influence the decisions, and what matters might be better to have decisions deferred. The concern of officials in this work appears to be less to promote their own personally favored courses than to ensure that the chairman had the information needed to handle the business most effectively. Officials had to rely very heavily on material submitted to the committee in identifying the options. Rarely did they have the opportunity to become "experts" themselves.

Minutes

On most items before Cabinet, the Secretary to the Cabinet and at least one member (usually the deputy secretary) of the secretariat most directly responsible would record a full record of the discussion in notebooks. From their notes, the officials compile a draft minute to send to the Secretary to the Cabinet's office later on the day of the meeting, 5:00 p.m. being the target time. (Under Thatcher, some matters would be minuted by Secretary Armstrong, himself, if he felt it necessary that he do so.) The minutes usually do not record which Ministers made which points as, in line with the doctrine of collective responsibility, decisions are taken by all Members of the Cabinet together.

The Secretary to the Cabinet then collates and edits the drafts sent in by the secretariats, and produces a final copy of the Cabinet's minutes. Armstrong would amend the drafts from his own notes which he made during the meetings, regardless or not of whether he was responsible for producing the first draft. His final record was never cleared with the PM or with the individual ministers concerned, contrary to the views of some. When completed, the minutes were sent off for reproduction and circulation.

In the first instance, the minutes would be circulated to ministers in duplicated form, an unwritten CO rule being that full cabinet minutes should be circulated to all concerned in the first internal delivery of the next day following the meeting. After a period, minutes are available in printed form on green paper. The Secretary to the Cabinet's own notes recorded during meetings, called the "Cabinet Secretary's notebook," were counted as part of the public record, and are preserved in the Public Records Office as an almost verbatim guide to what was said in Cabinet. However, Cabinet Secretaries' notebooks are not being released under the thirty-year rule, and the Lord Chancellor will decide sometime this decade whether the policy of exclusion will be continued. In contrast to the Secretaries to the Cabinet, the notebooks of the secretariats, containing notes made by them during meeting from which their draft minutes have been prepared, are all destroyed.

Minutes of committees are prepared in a similar way to full Cabinet, with the secretariat most directly responsible for drawing them up. The standard technique was for a senior and a junior member of the secretariat to attend the committee and subsequently to produce independent drafts from their own notes. These drafts are then exchanged, and differences are checked with accounts in the notebooks. The senior official would then approve a single correct account for circulation around Whitehall the following day, although there was less need for committee minutes to be in the first delivery.

The minutes always concluded by pointing out any action to be taken by individual ministers, preceded by the arguments. Some chairmen would spell out exactly what they wanted to do in the minutes in their summing up: at other times it was left to the secretariat to sum up. But this did not give officials much scope for independent thought. It was a point of some pride among the officials concerned that the minutes were accepted by attenders as a fair and accurate record of what passed in Cabinet. When chairpersons or ministers challenged the minutes (a rare event), the officials' notebook would be brought out to verify the record given.

Cabinet Meetings under Thatcher versus Major

The striking contrast between Cabinet meetings under Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Major reflects their different management styles. Mr. Major asks for the opinions of all the ministers around the table on all topics, and then states his view. For example, in the case of the Maastricht treaty, Mr. Major was reported to have gone around the table and asked each minister for his or her individual opinion. And most recently, at the extended Cabinet session on January 13, almost every member spoke to try to find a formula to try to extricate the government from the mess it had created for itself over "Back to Basics." It is highly unlikely that Mrs. Thatcher would have pursued a similar strategy of eliciting the opinion of all Cabinet members. Rather, her tendency was to take opinions only from the Minister in charge of the portfolio pertaining to the issue at hand, as if those holding other portfolios did not have the right to speak.

The recent (January, 1994) crisis over the Cabinet's "Back to Basics" policy has illustrated that the whole notion of collective responsibility has a new definition under Mr. Major. Under Mrs. Thatcher, if ministers were "out of sinc" with her policy agenda, she would simply sack them. In contrast, while Mr. Major tolerates division within his Cabinet between the Left and Right, he complains privately to journalists about those Ministers who do not back him. This occurred recently when he expressed dissatisfaction with ministers for having injected a morality angle into "Back to Basics." Thus the current system is driven by leaks and Mr. Major's has been perceived by many as weak.

Cabinet Memoranda

Preparation of cabinet memoranda is explained in detail in *Questions of Procedure for Ministers* which PAC has already reviewed. In brief, there are two types of memoranda that may be submitted to Cabinet: agenda memoranda which contain matters requiring discussion and decision by the Cabinet; and information memoranda which contain matters that do not require a collective decision, but about which the Prime Minister and other Ministers should be informed. This type of memoranda is useful for advising Cabinet about important action taken by a Minister in his or her Ministry. Sometimes, Cabinet may discuss issues that are contained in information memoranda.

Memoranda should be as concise and as clearly worded as possible. Both agenda and information memoranda should state briefly in the first paragraph the specific recommendation for action in dealing with the policy issue. All memoranda should contain in succeeding paragraphs the following:

- the Minister's specific recommendation for how to deal with the issue;
- the facts giving rise to the problem;
- the considerations upon which the recommendations have been based, including any specialist advice which supports the recommendations;
- the views and comments of other ministers;

- counter-arguments (if any) by the originating minister to any views of dissent by other ministers;
- an invitation to the Cabinet or Cabinet committee.

When a policy issue requires a lengthy and involving memorandum, ministers are advised to include a summary of the main points of the paper.

Cabinet Committees

Cabinet committees meet in several forms: the principal distinctions concern composition, whether they are peopled by ministers, officials, or a combination of the two; and whether they are standing or ad hoc. The four principal cabinet committees — the only standing committees whose existence were officially admitted — were Home and Social Affairs (H), Economic Affairs (EA), Overseas and Defense (OD), and Legislation. The first three are especially important. Under Mrs. Thatcher, Ministers were especially keen to sit on Economic Affairs or its principal subcommittees: if they did not, then they feared they might be considered to be not in the mainstream of political life. At times during the Thatcher ear, EA, which met at No. 10, became so large and unwieldy that the principal focus of action shifted to its subcommittees, e.g. on privatization, as EA grew too large to take effective decisions itself (Seldon 1990).

During Thatcher's rule, these four standing committees provided the critical nexus through which the major decisions of government were taken. Meetings were often highly rigid. Ministers in the know appreciated that, and in trying to win the key arguments, timing, the support of the appropriate chairman, the position of items on the agenda, and prior lobbying of attenders were critical. Clever ministers cultivated the important relationships, which could include the chief Cabinet Office civil servant responsible for the committee.

Mrs. Thatcher possessed the surest of grasps over whom she appointed as chairperson and selected to sit on those committees she considered key to her own priorities. She leant heavily on Secretary to the Cabinet Armstrong when it came to allocating which matters were to be decided in which committee, and which she would determine by discussion outside the formal committee structure.

Three of the four standing committees, H, EA, and OD, all made increasing use of subcommittees after 1979. The sub-committees varied considerably in authority, some being especially influential such as the South Atlantic sub-committee of Overseas and Defense, the so called "War Cabinet" during the Falklands War, chaired by Mrs. Thatcher.

The number of ad hoc committees, called miscellaneous (MISC) committees, had reached a total of about 200 by June 1987 since the beginning of Mrs. Thatcher's premiership. Only about 10-15 MISCs, however, were active at any one time. As of December, 1993, John Major's Cabinet had 26 committees. The rationale which explained why some tasks were given to subcommittees of standing committees, and others to ad hoc committees, was as follows: if a matter was considered essentially one-off and transient, it was given an ad hoc committee.

Differences between Cabinet and Non-cabinet Committee Meetings

When there was a particular sensitive issue, Margaret Thatcher liked to have a multilateral (non-cabinet committee) meeting with small groups of ministers (sometimes accompanied by senior officials) to allow her to clarify her mind. It also allowed her to prepare a caucus ahead of full Cabinet or cabinet committees. Another reason why she often favored discussing business in non-cabinet committee meetings undoubtedly was a fear of leaking. She felt that cabinet committee minutes had a very wide circulation throughout Whitehall, and although it was possible to restrict the circulation of minutes or parts of minutes of some committees, nevertheless she felt that meetings outside the cabinet committee system would be more secure.

A cabinet committee differed from any other Whitehall meeting in the following ways:

- it had a Cabinet Office reference number;
- it was serviced by the cabinet secretariat;
- the minutes were prepared in a certain form, for circulation by the CO.

A multi- or bilateral meeting with the PM would usually have an official from the CO in attendance, but No. 10 would take and circulate minutes in the form of a private secretary letter to the offices of the ministers present at the meeting. Another important difference was that collective responsibility was not so formally engaged by meetings other than official cabinet committees. The niceties of the British constitution come into play here. It is now fairly well established that cabinet committees, whose membership is chosen, at least in theory, to be representative of the government as a whole, take decisions with the same binding force of collective responsibility on members of the entire government as decision of full Cabinet. The position is much less clear as to whether in practice the PM could take a decisions with just one minister present and expect it to be generally accepted as binding of the entire government.

Interdepartmental Coordination

Under Thatcher, the vast bulk of decisions that required interdepartmental coordination were never taken up by the CO. Matters were resolved on the telephone between officials, by letter, or by interdepartmental committees, often of just officials. One insider hazarded a guess that only 5 per cent of Whitehall interdepartmental coordination took place at the behest of the Cabinet Office (Seldon 1990). In general, the CO tended to become involved at a fairly high level. The CO certainly liked, though, to send an observer to the more important interdepartmental committees, so it could be kept informed of developments and have information about what was going on in Whitehall.

Matters which were brought to cabinet committees or full Cabinet were done so at the request of either the PM, individual ministers or the CO. There were three reasons why matters were brought into the center: they were matters in which several departments were critically involved; they were of great intrinsic difficulty, even where only one department, or one department and the Treasury, was involved; or they were considered matters of great political sensitivity.

History of British Policy Units

This last and longest section examines the policy units which have historically supported the Cabinet Office and the Prime Minister. Since the First World War, British experiments with the creation of a unit of advisers have proven that a small expert group with access to departmental information could strengthen immensely the Prime Minister's hand. The great advantages of such a unit over single advisers is that it can encompass a variety of specialties and can cover a multitude of subjects, yet its size gives it the flexibility to concentrate effort on whatever preoccupies the premier at the time. Only two experiments with these units were attempted until the 1970s, both prompted by the atypical circumstances of war. In 1916, Lloyd George instituted a secretariat of six political sympathizers from outside Whitehall — called his *Garden Suburb* — to alert him to the developments in departments and generally advise and assist him (James 1992). Similarly, in the Second World War Winston Churchill instituted a Statistical Branch, a group of twenty statisticians, economists and scientists (James 1992). Both units had great influence in spotting and solving shortages and shipping problems. But, for no clear reason, both units waned when perpetuated into peacetime and were abolished.

The Creation and Functions of the Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS)

In 1971, Prime Minister Heath created the Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS) to advise the Cabinet on strategy and policy. Alias the "think-tank," CPRS was a small multidisciplinary unit based in the Cabinet Office. The unit was formed in response to Heath's desire to counteract the tendency of parties, once in power, to lose sight of the objectives set in their manifestos and a belief among some senior civil servants that a new analytical capability was needed at the heart of government.

These beliefs fused in the 1974 white paper, *The Reorganization of Central Government* which announced the formation of a "central capability unit" charged with assisting all Ministers to work out the implications of their basic strategy in terms of policies in specific areas; to establish relative priorities to be given to different sections of their program as a whole; to identify those areas of policy where new choices can be exercised; and to ensure that the underlying implications of alternative courses of actions are fully analysed and considered.

Thus the original charter overlapped with that of PAC-Zambia in several ways: they both were intended to assist Ministries with policy analysis and to check that policies were consistent with government policy. One difference was that the CPRS also checked whether the policy was consistent with the Party platform, a responsibility which PAC does not assume. However, over the years, the actual work of the CPRS has often departed from these intentions, according to the its leadership and the priority which Ministers and the Prime Minister have attached to the unit.

Composition of the CPRS Staff

Half the CPRS staff were "fast stream" civil servants, and half were outsiders from commerce, public corporations, universities and industry. Most were graduates in their late twenties or thirties, seen as high fliers in their fields, and most stayed for about two years. The mix proved surprisingly fertile: the outsiders encompassed a variety of professional specialties,

had extensive outside contacts and displayed a valuable impatience with over-cautious officialdom. The insiders knew the geography, language and customs of Whitehall but rediscovered in a brief stint of licensed free-thinking a creativity stifled by their civil service upbringing. There was little hierarchy. Teams of between two and six members were set up to handle specific projects, occasionally with help from outside consultants, and disbanded as soon as the project ended (James 1992).

Changing Roles of CPRS under Different Leaders

The civil servants wanted a low profile backroom research unit, but Heath's appointment of the ebullient Lord Rothschild as its first director presaged something more exciting. A gifted scientist, formerly head of research with Shell International, and a thoroughly independent personality, Rothschild was given to uncompromising analysis and outspoken conclusions. He imparted to his staff the "CPRS" style of investigation and reporting: independent, radical and terse, it was the deliberate opposite of Whitehall circumspection. This reflected the director's concept of policy analysis: political impartiality and intellectual honesty, analysing all evidence without concession to ministerial preconceptions, always reaching firm conclusions and never fudging a compromise. As Rothschild, put it, "You cannot have half a Channel tunnel."

Led until 1974 by Lord Rothschild, CPRS made a considerable impact on Whitehall and was much involved in developing government strategy; however under Rothschild's successor, the economist, Sir Kenneth Berrill, CPRS was pushed increasingly by economic difficulties and ministerial lack of interest into shorter-term reviews of more peripheral issues. Under Robin Ibbs, the next director, it operated principally as an industrial research unit, but became involved in several politically controversial exercises, and its last director, the merchant banker, John Sparrow was plagued with leaks. It was disbanded immediately after the 1983 general election. It is still considered by many to be one of the most instructive and original experiments in central government.

The Staff's work took four main forms. The first was strategy review, focused on meetings at Chequers (the PM's country estate) every six months attended by the Cabinet, and later by junior ministers, to consider the Staff's analysis of the government's overall performance. As Douglas Hurd (1979) recalls,

These were extraordinary occasions. Ministers would gather upstairs at Chequers round a long table. At one end sat Lord Rothschild [Head of the CPRS], flanked by the more articulate members of the team. Taking subjects in turn, they would expound, with charts and graphs, the likely consequences of government policy. Their analysis was elegant but ruthless. They made no allowance for political pressures. They assumed the highest standards of intellectual consistency. They rubbed ministers' noses in the future.

The Staff then followed up any conclusions from these meetings in detail, putting occasional papers on strategy to the Cabinet.

Second, the CPRS undertook research projects of varying length and complexity related to areas rarely examined by departments, such as the future of London as a financial center. When Rothschild was Head of the Unit, his scientific background also allowed the Staff to bring a distinctive technological perspective to economic and industrial problems: energy supplies, computers, nuclear waste, electric cars, government funding of scientific research, and so on.

Third, advice was provided on more immediate concerns, generally in the form of collective briefs to Cabinet or committees. More often, collective briefs tried to tackle ministers' lack of any briefing if their department had no stake in the discussions. CPRS briefs outlined the issues for these "unconcerned" ministers, highlighting side effects and drawbacks that the sponsoring minister might play down and relating the proposal to the government's main objectives. About fifty such briefs were prepared annually, generally circulated to ministers as a short note, or as a brief list of awkward questions worth asking. Sometimes, these were short-notice analyses of pressing problems, such as miners' pay. This role most resembled PAC's responsibilities, although PAC assists ministries in preparing memos for circulation to other departments, rather than prepares briefs independently.

The CPRS also gave constant economic advice during the 1970s and participated in the public expenditure survey, co-writing with the Treasury the economic survey preceding the annual cycle, and later sending further comments to Cabinet as it felt necessary.

The CPRS's Relations with the civil service

Relations with the civil service were surprisingly good, considering the *raison d'être* of the organization was to challenge Whitehall's policy recommendations, often considered to be inherently conservative. Although CPRS's style could be bruisingly critical, the Staff needed government officials to keep it abreast of developments and to check its facts. Its civil service members knew Whitehall thoroughly, and exploited their contacts in departments. These civil service members often provided the chairpersons for various interdepartmental committees (James 1992). The CPRS's leadership determined the tone of its relationship with the civil service. For example, Rothschild's successor, the economist Berrill, was as independent a spirit as Rothschild, but in his leadership from 1974-80 he preferred to work with the grain rather than against it. None the less, the CPRS continued to produce reports critical of departmental policy, notably on alcoholism, race relations and the cost of the diplomatic service.

Relations were always rather strained with the Treasury which saw it as "a challenge to its authority," as the Treasury's permanent secretary, Wass, put it. To take one example, the Head of CPRS crossed the Treasury by advising the Prime Minister during the IMF crisis and circulating papers calling for reflation. In contrast, the CPRS staff received valuable cooperation from the Cabinet Office, particularly in the 1970s from Hunt, who was keen to extend the Cabinet Office's policy role (James, 1992).

CPRS's Influence on Ministers

Like PAC, the CPRS's original charter was to assist all Cabinet Ministers. In its earlier years the CPRS took seriously its responsibility to the entire Cabinet. In theory, ministers were

to provide CPRS with its assignments. But in fact, ministerial interest in it was sporadic and half-hearted. The Cabinet committee established to devise its work program soon expired through lack of interest and, although ministerial meetings occasionally referred issues to it, the Staff largely chose its own work, subject to Prime Ministerial approval (Blackstone and Plowden 1988).

Although most ministers welcomed the Staff's work in theory, in practice they were easily distracted from sustained interest in its activities. Ministers' attention was at best occasional, given departments' first claim on their time and loyalty. This type of problem could occur in other contexts where ministers are chronically overworked, as well, such as with PAC in Zambia. However, PAC's systematic review of all incoming Cabinet memoranda should necessitate ministerial involvement. Another problem was that CPRS staff wrote collective briefs and long-term studies that advised Ministers to take politically controversial decisions. This would not be a problem in Zambia where PAC does not write independent reports on issues but rather works with departments in its formulation of policy advice.

Chequers reviews took ministers out of the protective cocoon of their departments and made them a captive audience to a critique of their overall performance. Some appreciated the chance to step back from day-to-day pressures and look at things in the round for once; others thought it a waste of time (James 1992).

Unlike departments, the CPRS suffered from the disadvantage that its work was not perceived as essential: improved planning and decisionmaking tended to be seen as optional extras to be squeezed in at the margin of a minister's concerns. Furthermore, unlike almost every other agency in Whitehall, the CPRS had no minister to speak for it in Cabinet. Members of the Staff might attend and speak at Cabinet committees, which helped, but being small the Staff could not always send a representative. Of course this is not a problem in Zambia, where several members of PAC regularly attend Cabinet meetings. Furthermore, the PS who heads PAC reports to the Zambian Secretary to the Cabinet, who attends Cabinet meetings, while the CPRS Director reported directly to the PM. Thus, the British Secretary to the Cabinet does not represent the CPRS in meetings.

The CPRS's relations with the Prime Minister

The CPRS was forced to depend on the Prime Minister more than it would have liked. The Premier controlled the machinery of government, and, as chief coordinator of the Cabinet, the CPRS's strategic and interdepartmental work concerned him/her most. The Premier determined the image and purpose of the government and could promote or smother new ideas more effectively than any colleague. The authority of the PM licensed the Staff to put papers to ministers, to attend meetings, and request information. All premiers drew on the Staff for personal advice. Above all, since the Staff attracted only occasional, even perfunctory interest from ministers, it fell back on the PM to induce the Cabinet to consider CPRS work or, failing this, to act him/herself as the Staff's audience.

The CPRS's forced reliance on one person had serious drawbacks. If the CPRS lost the PM's confidence, it had no audience at all— as happened in 1983. The PM's opinion of the

whole staff was heavily influenced by his personal relations with its Director: any deterioration could be seriously damaging. When Rothschild made a public speech, tactlessly (but accurately) prophesying national decline, he badly dented Heath's faith in the Staff, as shown by Heath's rejection of a CPRS formula for settling the miners' strike. Similarly, Ibbotson as director benefitted from Mrs. Thatcher's obvious confidence in him, while Sparrow's links with her were perilously weak. Heath's successors did not give the CPRS the support needed to make an impact on Cabinet thinking. If ministers would not use it, it relied on the Prime Minister. If, in turn, he or she lost interest, it became redundant. Some political analysts argue that Mrs. Thatcher in particular subjected it to "malign neglect" (Bancroft 1984).

The Demise of the CPRS

The CPRS survived for thirteen years in a difficult political climate.¹² Its size was inadequate to the tasks it set itself: its directors refused to expand it above twenty members, because size would induce hierarchy and erode the informality and cohesiveness that made it swift-moving and flexible.

CPRS overstretched itself by striving towards too many disparate goals, particularly its participation in official committees. This problem offers an important lesson for the Zambians. Policy units can minimize the risk of spreading themselves too thin by focussing on developing their strength in a few key areas.

A lot has been written about the abolition of the CPRS which was controversial under Mrs. Thatcher and remains so. Four years after the death of the unit, fresh from service as one of the Prime Minister's men in the No. 10 Policy Unit, David Willetts published what has been regarded as the definitive view of the demise of the unit. There were several "crucial reasons," writes Willetts. First, the CPRS had become more donnish and detached from hard day-to-day decisions, and thus was unable to ensure that the decisions coming before ministers fit in with Prime Minister Thatcher's strategic objectives. The latterday Tank had lost its earlier ability to put on the short, sharp and timely Cabinet paper and was, by the end, "more oriented towards providing a 100 page report within 3 months," work it did well but work which departments could do themselves (Willis 1987).

Second, the CPRS was a Cabinet Office body serving all of Cabinet. So any major review would get wide circulation. Thus, it was very likely that at least one minister would have such an interest in opposing the CPRS's recommendation that he would be sorely tempted to leak against them. Unfortunate episodes like this afflicted the CPRS in its later years.

The third reason was that the CPRS papers were diverting the conduct of Cabinet and Cabinet committee business in a way unwelcome to both the Prime Minister and other departments. Essentially, Mrs. Thatcher was unwilling to tolerate the independent role of the think tank, even though this role was enshrined in its charter. Departments circulating papers with

¹²A similar experiment in Australia was even more shortlived. The Australian Priorities Review Staff, created in 1973 in deliberate imitation of the CPRS, faced many of the same problems and was abolished after three years. See the *Cabinet Profile* for Australia (forthcoming).

a major policy proposal expected that their papers would form the centerpiece for ministerial discussion. But a CPRS paper, circulated to all ministers attending the meetings, could overshadow the original work and itself set the framework for the meeting. While the CPRS might seem to be a neutral central body setting the term of debate, in the long run it could undermine the department's morale and sense of lead responsibility for policy in their areas.

Under the leadership of Sir Robbin Ibbs, appointed to replace Berrill shortly after Mrs. Thatcher took office, the Staff was used increasingly as a research unit to the dominant No. 10-Treasury axis. In this role, it lost much of its independence and imagination. Its scope of interest was much narrower than under Rothschild: it was excluded from public spending and from giving economic advice and was made to stick to industry, technology, and issues linked to economic regeneration. The unit was plagued with problems under Mrs. Thatcher when Government became more personal: deep divisions within her Cabinet prompted her to circulate CPRS reports only to her small circle of closest advisers. For example, an alarming forewarning in 1981 that unemployment could pass three million was never shown to the full Cabinet.

By the time Mrs. Thatcher told her colleagues that she wanted to abolish it, none objected. As the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury remarked, "They [the staff of CPRS] had written it off. It had become more and more the creature of the Prime Minister (*The Times*, 8 November, 1983)."

David Willett's fourth reason is universally valid, when it comes to the fate of institutional antidotes to orthodoxy: "institutional innovations at the center may have an inherently short life. The grit in the machine is worn smooth."

Creation of the Prime Minister's Policy Unit

After the demise of CPRS, a new CPRS-cum-Policy Unit was constructed. Before discussing this unit, it is first necessary to look at the creation of the PM's Policy Unit. Perhaps drawing on the example of Lloyd George and Churchill, Harold Wilson instituted a Policy Unit in 1974 "to extend the range of policy options from which the Government — and particularly the Prime Minister as head of the Government — has to choose" and to "propose and pursue policies to further the government's political goals" (Wilson 1976, in James 1992). The history of the Policy Unit falls into three clear periods matching the Parliaments of 1974-79, 1979-83, and since 1983.

The Policy Unit occupies a set of rooms straddling 10 and 11 Downing Street. Location is of course crucial to the higher realms of administration. The Number 10 Policy Unit is not part of the Cabinet Office at 70 Whitehall. The locked door between Number 10 and the Cabinet Office serves a constitutional as well as a security function.

Margaret Thatcher made greater use of the Policy Unit than did any of her predecessors. Whereas under Heath and Callaghan, the academic Dr. Bernard Donoughue headed the Unit from 1974 until 1979, under Mrs. Thatcher there was a rapid turnover of heads of the Unit, as discussed below.

First Phase 1974-79

The first phase spans the 1974-79 Labor government. Mr. (now Lord) Bernard Donoghue, a political scientist and former journalist, was its head in that period. He led seven specialists in economic and domestic policy, all with Whitehall experience, but none of whom were government officials (James 1992). Both Wilson and Callaghan valued its work during this period and it gained acceptance as a permanent component of the government machine. Donoghue's account of the unit during this period suggests that it played a major role in economic policy, partly as neither Harold Wilson nor James Callaghan trusted the Treasury (Harold Wilson because he had not worked there and James Callaghan because he had) (Willets 1987).

Second Phase 1979-83

During this phase the Policy Unit was afflicted by a wider uncertainty about the best arrangements for serving the new PM. The Policy Unit itself appeared to be pulled in different directions. The first officials arrived from Whitehall and worked effectively with the Private Office while on the other hand the new outside members were closely identified with the radical new Thatcher program. The outsiders who worked in the Policy Unit during this period have subsequently displayed more fundamental hostility to Whitehall than either their predecessors or successors.

The Unit's leader during this period was John Hoskyns, an ex-soldier turned computer consultant, who had advised Mrs. Thatcher in opposition. Ill-prepared for government, she had not thought through what she wanted from her Policy Unit and with only two assistants, Hoskyns achieved little but superficial criticism. Encouraged by Norman Strauss, his creative but bombastic deputy, he produced memos rooted in computer systems analysis which rather bemused Mrs. Thatcher, and ferociously attacked Whitehall as opposed to change. Relations with officials deteriorated and Hoskyns failed in his attempt to become head of the Policy Unit. He left in delusion after three years, firing off virulent attacks on Mrs. Thatcher, her government and Whitehall (James 1992).

His successor, the journalist Ferdinand Mount, was recruited in 1982 mainly to prepare the manifest for the following year's election. When the CPRS was abolished, two of its most recent and most promising outside recruits were moved over to the Policy Unit, boosting its strength. Thus Mount increased the Unit's influence on day-to-day policy making by expanding it to six high-caliber staff who systematically commented on Whitehall proposals. When he left he had laid the foundations of the "new model" unit, stronger in structure and purpose, and advocating a radical philosophy. (James 1992).

New Policy Unit (1983- Present)

In 1983, after the demise of CPRS, a new bigger, more structured and institutionalized CPRS-cum-Policy Unit was constructed under the leadership of the energetic John Redwood. The new policy unit, in contrast to CPRS which briefed the entire Cabinet, briefs only the Prime Minister, leaving the relevant minister (and maybe Treasury with a counter proposal) much more

influence over the agenda. The new model continued under Professor Brian Griffiths, recruited from the City University Business School in 1985.

As a small, creative think tank, Unit members were on the lookout for new policy ideas and angles to put to the PM and to send in as free-standing think pieces. Like the Think Tank it superseded, the Unit was proud of its license to be heterodox. The Policy Unit, because it is directly subordinated to the most senior and astute politician of the lot, is not afraid of putting forward what might initially appear to be politically far fetched.

Composition of the Staff

The unit comprises a team of about eight advisers, each responsible for briefing the PM in a major area of policy. Mrs. Sarah Hogg, formerly a financial journalist, is currently the head of the unit and Mrs. Katherine Ramsay is her deputy.¹³

The quality of the Unit's staff is superb: all of its members have excelled in their professions, inside or outside government. The range of experience and skills of its members is crucial to the unit's success. A lawyer, an economist, a management consultant, an industrialist can all give their angle on a problem. In this respect the Policy Unit is very different from the civil service which recruits early and for life. A permanent secretary is a principal with 25 years of experience. He may be more wise and more experienced, but all members of the team below him are likely to have fundamentally similar backgrounds and experience. This relative homogeneity may be one of the main reasons that the civil service can be hierarchical and deferential — officials are only differentiated by age and rank. In contrast, the crucial distinctions in the Policy Unit are not vertical but horizontal — one individual may have the small businessman's perspective while another may take the "Treasury view."

Members of the unit were encouraged to stay in touch with valuable outside experience. Ideally, they spent one day a week outside the office visiting factories, hospitals, schools etc. It is refreshing and useful for the Prime Minister to have a direct report from someone visiting the real world, seen it unadorned and heard it uninhibited. So the Unit can help give a non-Whitehall perspective drawing on outside visits or contacts with outsiders.

The Policy Unit aims to cover most areas of domestic policy. Its style is collegiate and friendly — the whole unit will discuss any major issue before advice is sent to the Prime Minister. If necessary, a competent member of the Policy Unit should be able to produce a good clear piece of policy advice within an hour of a problem coming up. Peer review helps to keep the unit's advice sharp and purposeful.

¹³Mrs. Hogg has received a lot of publicity recently for her role in creating the controversial "Back to Basics" policy.

The Unit's Political Nature

The unit serves the Prime Minister alone and, like special advisers, its members last only as long as the PM does: he/she can restructure and restaff it at will; and a change of Prime Minister entails a complete change of staff and possibly style. For example, its personnel changed radically when John Major replaced Mrs. Thatcher's outside appointees with his own center-left Conservatives. Consequently, its history is episodic, showing variations in aims and modes of operation, induced either by a change of Prime Minister or of head of the Unit.

The Unit is — has to be — politically partisan: Wilson at the outset specified a "strong political commitment" in creating the institution. (Wilson 1976). All of Donoghue's staff had been involved with Labour in opposition. Under Mrs. Thatcher, several "outsiders" had been parliamentary candidates, including Griffiths, and had worked for her in elections. This inevitably strained the impartiality of the civil servants who served in the unit (James 1992). However, civil servants are unlikely to be seconded in the first place unless their minds are "in tune" with the government's philosophy.

The unit's mission was to serve the Prime Minister and, accordingly, its work pattern was determined by her upcoming papers and meetings. The customer-is-queen principle is put into practical effect by close cooperation with the No. 10 Private Office. Obviously, the relationship between the Head of the Unit and the PM is crucial.¹⁴ The Head of the Unit and the PM meet each Friday morning and the team members of the unit meet on Monday and Thursday mornings to review the Prime Minister's diary, discuss upcoming business, and allocate tasks. Members of the unit occasionally brief the PM personally before major meetings. The Private Office forwards to the Unit all papers covering domestic policy except those dealing with appointments and security matters, and this ensures that the Unit sends the PM work that is relevant to her immediate preoccupations.

The Policy Unit's reactive and proactive work

The Unit's work takes two forms. Most effort is spent responding to submissions from departments, which are copied to the Unit for comment, preferably before the PM sees them so that the Unit can attach a covering comment. What happens to these papers when they reach the Policy Unit shows how closely it functions as an extension of its boss's priorities and prejudices. When a department puts a paper to the Prime Minister, the relevant member of the Unit asks some basic questions such as: Is there a less interventionist solution which has not been properly considered or has been wrongly rejected? Is there a less expensive option? Are the arguments consistent? What is the evidence to back them up? Are there other relevant facts which the Prime Minister needs to know? The unit may also question the proposal's compatibility with the government's objectives (Willetts 1987).

¹⁴For example Donoghue was a personal political assistant to his premiers as well as Head of the Policy Unit, briefing them for parliamentary questions, drafting speeches and running their general election campaigns (James 1992).

After analysing the proposal, the unit offers advice which may question the proposal's premises, the consistency of its arguments, or its failure to consider broader implications. Here, the Unit's outside contacts and regular "site visits" to outside locations (such as factories and schools) and organizations provide useful ammunition.

Of course, if a department sends in a paper late in the day needing an urgent decision, there will be little time to prepare a properly considered appraisal. This is one reason why contacts with departments are essential to the smooth running of the machine; if a paper recommending a certain course of action is known to be on its way then advice can be prepared before it arrives. But members of the unit must be prepared to stay late and to brief at short notice, so that departments don't believe they can escape Policy Unit scrutiny simply by sending a paper in after 6 p.m. with a reply needed the following morning. Private Office are crucial allies here in ensuring that departments do not bring issues to the Prime Minister at short notice without good reason (Willetts 1987).

While members of the staff will occasionally brief the PM, communication in writing is probably more important than personal discussions. Members of the unit should develop a distinctive and lively prose style which attracts the PM's attention when confronted with an unappealing pile of papers on some tricky issue. Members of the unit should be masters of the classic civil service art of the crisp and fair precis.

Less common but equally important is the Unit's proactive role in putting up its own ideas. Sometimes, it suggests a completely new initiative, such as an idea picked up from an academic contact. However, launching a new idea is not easy. The Prime Minister, who has enough worries already, must be persuaded that the problem exists. Donoughue had the greatest trouble awakening Wilson to the problem of wage inflation and Mrs. Thatcher's Unit took years to convince her that environmental issues were important (James 1992). It helps if the Unit simultaneously provides the germ of a solution, although this need not be too long: some of the memos that launched Mrs. Thatcher's major reviews of social policy were no more than two pages long (James 1992). If the Prime Minister is persuaded, the Unit then provides her/him with the arguments to make the departmental minister take the problem seriously and produce a detailed answer to be discussed between the department, Policy Unit staff, and the PM.

Proactive work can appear as notes on a long-running problem; Donoughue sent a stream of economic briefs to Callaghan and Hoskyns repeatedly pressed Mrs. Thatcher on public sector pay restraint. Sometimes, the Prime Minister unexpectedly asks for a briefing. Callaghan often did this — for example, on the European Monetary System — asking the Policy Unit not to let the relevant department know what he was thinking about (James 1992).

No Policy Unit has had the resources to carry through its own research program. It can develop an idea a little and sell it to the PM, but ultimately the responsible department must do the spadework. Resistance may set in. For example, Prior at Employment doggedly resisted the radical reform of trade union immunities that Mrs. Thatcher urged, egged on by Hoskyns' Policy Unit. Such a wrangle may end up at Cabinet. However, in most cases, the PM will persuade the minister at least to look at the proposal and ideally, the Policy Unit will be invited to participate in this work.

Differences between CPRS and Policy Unit

Before comparing the two British policy units to PAC, this section will clarify the differences between the CPRS and the Number 10 Policy Unit. "The acutest and most important difference between the CPRS and the Policy Unit is that the Policy Unit was *hers* [Mrs. Thatcher's] to the last paperclip," Hennessey writes in *Whitehall*. Indeed, under Prime Minister Thatcher, there was no question of its serving other Cabinet ministers or some notion of the wider interest.

The Policy Unit is not strategic in an open-minded, free-ranging way, as the CPRS was in its happier days. It looks at specific proposals in an overall context, but is concerned with implementing strategic goals, not questioning or formulating them. Even after the abolition of CPRS, the Policy Unit stuck firmly to single-subject work. For instance, it did not attempt any synoptic overview in 1983-84, even though Mrs. Thatcher's administration was widely accused at the time of losing its way (James 1992). As Francis Pym observed, Mrs. Thatcher chose advisers to reinforce her point of view, not to challenge it (Pym 1984).

One major difference between the CPRS and the Policy Unit which mattered in the Thatcher era was running costs. The Think Tank was always twice as large as the Policy Unit, even in its larger marque. In its last year the CPRS cost just under one million pounds at 1983 prices while the Unit under Hoskyns was bargain basement at 66,147 pounds in 1981-82. Even the expanded Unit cost 344,490 pounds, only about one third of the cost of the CPRS in its final incarnation.

Similarities and Differences between PAC and the British Policy Units

PAC's similarities are greater with CPRS than the Policy Unit because they both are part of the Cabinet Office and thus serve the Cabinet as a whole, rather than the PM or President alone. The major difference between PAC and the British Policy Unit under Mr. Major and Mrs. Thatcher is that the latter is overtly political in character. British policy units provide the Prime Minister with his/her own policy analysis allowing him/her more effective and active intervention in other ministers' policies. Accordingly, the Number 10 Policy Unit only briefs the PM, while PAC serves all the Cabinet ministers. Thus the loyalty of the British policy unit is principally to the PM, while PAC has a more independent charter. While PAC ultimately serves President Chiluba, with a staff comprised of civil servants it is not overtly political.

Another difference is that while PAC's work is currently determined by the actions of departments, British policy units also write original free-standing think pieces on cutting edge issues. In this proactive work, the British Policy Unit strives to provide a "non-Whitehall" perspective on issues, in contrast to PAC which cooperates closely with the government departments on memo preparation. To attain this perspective, the British unit brings in outsiders to serve, as well as civil servants, while civil servants staff the PAC office. In future, PAC may want to write original papers independent of departments which represent the "national interest" on an issue, such as maize marketing. In become more proactive, PAC could move closer to sharing the British Policy Unit's license to be heterodox.

Despite these differences, there are some important similarities between British policy units (including CPRS) and PAC. First, they both comment on incoming input from departments to the Cabinet. Both PAC analysts and the Number 10 Policy Unit staff ask similar types of questions about cabinet memoranda such as: Is there a strong argument for the policy? Is there evidence to support the recommendation? Is the policy consistent with Government policy?

In contrast to the British model, PAC staff ask these questions in cooperation with the line ministries and in order to improve the quality of the submissions, rather than to serve the President separately from his departments. While PAC's principle objective in analyzing cabinet papers is to *assist* line ministries, the British policy units offer analysis independent of — and often in competition with — the departments in order to best serve the PM.

Another function that the current British Policy Unit shares with PAC, is what Hennessey calls "progress-chasing." The unit's role of monitoring is an important one in a system where incentives are not built in for civil servants to pay attention to maintenance and implementation. As Willetts, who has a Treasury background shrewdly observed, "Departmental ministers are so enormously busy that once one policy problem has been resolved, they then move on the next one. Civil servants may encourage them in this — much higher status is accorded to conceiving fresh new policy advice than to ensuring that an existing agreed policy stays healthy and vigorous."

Cabinet Profile: Singapore

Singapore has been widely recognized as having the best run Cabinet in Southeast Asia. For this reason, the Singapore case offers some interesting and potentially useful insights to the Policy Analysis and Coordination Unit of Zambia's Cabinet Office. However, it may not be possible to replicate several features that have contributed to Singapore's success, in other contexts, such as its small size geographically, its high degree of urbanization, and its extreme social control.

At least four factors explain why the Singaporean Cabinet functions so effectively and efficiently. First, Singapore's long-term development, more than short term political gains, motivates the policy choices of Cabinet Ministers, who often act more like technocrats than politicians. Singapore's single party dominated political system largely insulates Ministers from concerns about political popularity, an advantage not afforded by true Western-style democracies. Second, Cabinet members are honest. Indeed, Singaporean government officials have a reputation for being the least corrupt in Southeast Asia. Third, Cabinet Ministers are highly educated, often at Western universities, and technically competent. Fourth, the Cabinet is supported by a highly competent, well-trained Civil Service. These factors are reflected in the efficient operation of the Cabinet.

Before further discussion of Singapore as an exemplary model of Cabinet government, an important caveat is in order. While Singapore stands out as an unusually successful case of good governance in the Third World, it is *not* a model of Western-style democracy.¹⁵ To Singapore's leaders, responsible government is more important than representative government. The Singaporean political system has been criticized for its extreme social control, authoritarianism, and restriction of civil liberties.

Background: Political Control and Rapid Economic Development

Since 1959 when Singapore gained independence from Britain, the ideas, policies, methods, and style of the ruling party, the People's Action Party (PAP), have dominated — although not completely controlled — the political process. Singapore's founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, proclaimed, "I make no apologies that the PAP is the Government and the Government is the PAP." Mr. Lee was Prime Minister from independence until 1990 when Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong took over as P.M.¹⁶ Lee Kuan Yew still plays an influential role in the Cabinet, as Senior Minister.

¹⁵Good governance is used here to mean transparent and incorrupt policy making, as it is (quite narrowly) defined by World Bank staff.

¹⁶In 1963, Singapore and Malaya, together with two British colonies in Borneo -- Sarawak and North Borneo - formed the federation of Malaysia. In the first years of the expanded federation, a political contest developed between the federal authorities and the state government in Singapore; the dispute was finally resolved in 1965 by the forced exit of Singapore from the union.

The PAP has been able to forge its dominance over the Singapore electoral scene primarily through effective governmental performance, significant economic growth, political stability, and incorruptibility. To do this, the PAP has regimented Singapore into a tightly knit society and meritocracy with strong laws to deter deviants. Electors are pragmatic and will back the government as long as it delivers the goods. Hitherto, most citizens have accepted the government's contention that restrictions on civil liberties are necessary in order to provide the stability essential for high economic performance. Hence, some political analysts contend that Singapore has a "spectator political culture," where most Singaporeans are reluctant to participate in politics.

Singapore has attracted attention from policy makers seeking models of economic development to guide developing economies in other parts of Asia, as well as Africa. The city-state has grown at an almost steady 7 % per year since splitting from Malaysia in 1965, to become the richest of the Asian "dragons." It has the highest gross national product per capita in the region (\$14,210 in 1991), except for Japan and Brunei. Singapore had become the most competitive newly industrializing country (NIC) in 1989, as measured on the basis of socio-political stability, economic dynamism, industrial efficiency, financial dynamism, human resources and outward orientation.¹⁷ Singapore's "official" foreign financial reserves are greater than those of Australia and one-third of those of Japan (which has about forty-five times as many people).

Cabinet Selection and Composition

The Cabinet is small — it currently has 14 members, including the Prime Minister. With such a small number of ministers, responsibilities are "doubled hatted;" i.e. a Cabinet member is a full minister of one department and a sub-Minister of another. The Cabinet is formed on party lines like in other Commonwealth countries, therefore high rank in one tends to be associated with high rank in the other. Cabinet members are highly educated, often at Western universities. In addition, many Ministers have been recruited from the private sector, and thus they have earned credibility in the eyes of the business community, whose members influence the outcome of economic policy decisions.

The ruling party employs an unusual practice of recruiting prospective Cabinet officers. In order to ensure that Singapore's best people serve in the Cabinet, the Prime Minister coopts the most talented members of both the civil service and the private sector to run for Parliament. These potential ministerial candidates are subjected to a rigorous internal party selection process, before they are chosen to stand on the Party ticket. Once elected to Parliament, a new party representative may be appointed junior minister immediately. Approximately 30 % of Cabinet Ministers have been selected this way over the past decade, rather than rising to power through the party apparatus as activists or workers. The links for MPs at the grassroots level are provided mainly by government agencies and institutions, rather than by party channels.

¹⁷See *World Competitiveness Report 1989*, produced by the International Management Institute and the World Economic Forum.

Secretary to the Cabinet and Prime Minister's Office

There is no separate Cabinet Office; the Prime Minister's Office handles all Cabinet matters. The staff of the PM's office is small: there are 43 members.

Under Lee Kuan Yew, the Secretary to the Cabinet, who is always a very senior civil servant, was also the Personal Secretary to the Prime Minister. However, Singapore's current Secretary to the is not as powerful as the Secretary to the Cabinet in Zambia or other Commonwealth countries, such as Canada. The Secretary to the Cabinet is not the head of the Civil service. The Head of the Civil Service, who is also a Permanent Secretary in the Finance Ministry, plays a more powerful role in policy coordination. For example, he is the chairman of the National Teamwork Sub-Committee of the Economic Planning Committee, organized to prepare Singapore's Strategic Economic Plan.

The Secretary to the Cabinet is responsible for organizing meetings and preparing the minutes. No information was available on what is recorded in the Cabinet minutes, since a shroud of secrecy surrounds all Cabinet matters. However, several political observers speculated that it is likely that the minutes would be very detailed and contain more than just the decisions taken. Cabinet minutes are never leaked to the press, as would be expected in a system such as Singapore's, where the ruling party controls the press.

Cabinet Meetings

Regular Cabinet meetings are held at least once a week, while "pre-Cabinet" meetings are held monthly (see below). Ministers attend meetings, as well as the Secretary to the Cabinet and the Head of the Civil Service (PS-Finance).

The Prime Minister runs the meetings. PM Lee Kuan Yew was the dominant figure in full Cabinet meetings, as well as smaller meetings of his "inner Cabinet."¹⁸ He set the policy agenda and formulated most of the ideas as the following description of his role in the Cabinet suggests:

Mr. Lee . . . is the prime mover — the man with the mind and personality of an advanced systems computer. He sets the pace for the PAP [the party] in anticipating today the problems of tomorrow, of next year, and of the next decade" (Quah 1984).

Lee, himself, explained that he did not waste time in Cabinet seeking opinions before proffering his own ideas about what the government ought to do, and about half the time "everyone more or less agrees with me" (Mauzy and Milne 1990). But, despite the dominance of Lee Kuan Yew, the Singapore record of achievement under his rule was as much the product of a small, highly intelligent, like-minded and cohesive cabinet team as the work of a single man. Lee listened to

¹⁸In 1975, the "inner circle" of the cabinet and "inner clique" of the PAP (dominating party) was identified as Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng See, Toh Chin Chye and S. Rajaratnam. Since 1980, after a general election, Toh Chin Chye has not been a member.

his colleagues, and on occasion he was outvoted. His Cabinet ministers contributed to the formulation of ideas and plans and could persuade Lee to change his mind.¹⁹

Mr. Lee's first Cabinet, formed in 1959, was young and action-oriented, with tendencies toward zeal and puritanism and a relentless impatience to achieve results. The average age of Minister was 37, and eight of the nine were English-educated university graduates; the ninth was Chinese-educated but bilingual. They were bright, energetic, restless, eager, and determined. Many members of the more recent Cabinets have advanced degrees in technical areas from western universities. For example, the Minister of Trade and Industry in the 1980s had a Master's degree in operations research from MIT and a Ph.D. in applied math from the University of Adelaide.

Apparently, the new PM Dr. Goh is much more consultative than his predecessor, Mr. Lee, and thus allows for more open debate in Cabinet meetings. Nonetheless, there is probably not as much real deliberation as in Zambian Cabinet meetings.

Singapore's current "successor generation" Cabinet (which Lee nurtured) has begun an interesting tradition of holding brainstorming sessions, called "pre-Cabinet" meetings, once a month. These sessions, attended by all Ministers except Sr. Minister Lee, serve as a forum for stimulating enquiry and eliciting original ideas by departing from conventional methods of analysis. The most valuable ideas are followed up in a discussion of how they fit in with other relevant issues at the next month's pre-Cabinet meeting — not at the regular Cabinet meeting.

With such a small group of Ministers, sub-committees of the Cabinet are not as important as they are in larger Western-style Cabinets. With power centralized in the Cabinet, it is there that policies are debated and discussed — not in Economic or Social Committees, as in the case of other Commonwealth countries.

Principle of Collective Responsibility and Minister-PS Relations

The Cabinet honors the principle of collective responsibility very strongly in Singapore, where consensus and team work are highly valued. Even the nation's "Strategic Economic Plan-1991" calls on civil servants to sustain a high level of teamwork through "practicing the consensus principle" and "establishing procedures and systems which facilitate effective consensus building, such as the use of high level negotiating groups." The small size of the Cabinet facilitates cohesiveness. In contrast to larger Western Cabinets where each member represents particular interests, all Singaporean Ministers follow essentially the same ideological line.²⁰ No Minister would ever make a policy statement countering the views of his colleagues in the Cabinet.

¹⁹As longtime Minister E.W.Barker explained in a 1983 BBC interview, Lee Kuan Yew was "not a dictator. When we are against him, in the end he's with us" (Mauzy and Milne 1990).

²⁰In Singapore, there is a tremendous feeling against "American-style" political interest groups.

Nor would a Minister write on a memo from a PS that he agrees with a policy and then take the opposite position in Cabinet (like in Zambia). Permanent secretaries, who are very carefully selected in Singapore, would lose their highly paid, prestigious positions if they disagreed with their Minister with whom they are in daily contact.²¹ Furthermore, the kind of political maneuvering found in more open systems is kept to a minimum in such a cohesive, tightly controlled political system as Singapore's. The importance attached to teamwork in Singapore leads me to believe that it is highly unlikely that the Secretary to the Cabinet would need to intervene on behalf of Permanent Secretaries, as in the Zambia case.

Policy Formulation and Preparation of Cabinet Memoranda

The policy formulation process has been top down: most public policies are formulated by the Cabinet. The usual process of initiating Cabinet memoranda (CM) works as follows. When the PM first identifies a policy problem, he tells the appropriate Minister to instruct his Permanent Secretary to investigate the issue. The PS then delegates the task of drafting a CM on the subject to his professional staff.

Highly qualified technocrats who serve in the elite wing of Singapore's Civil Service, called Administrative Service Officers (ASOs), conduct the policy analysis and prepare the CM for submission to the Cabinet. Each Ministry is staffed with 25 to 40 of these well-trained ASOs, who are supported by "Executive Officers," who collect data and assist with analysis. ASOs in each line ministry conduct the kind of analysis that the PAC staff in Zambia will do for all the ministries. A centralized Policy Analysis Unit such as PAC is not necessary in Singapore, where each line ministry has its own top-notch policy analytic capacity. By the time memoranda are submitted to the Cabinet, thorough policy and statistic analysis has already been done by the staff of the line ministry proposing the policy.

Ad hoc technical committees, appointed by the PM to study the most important policy issues of the day, also provide data, analysis, and policy recommendations to line Ministries for use in drafting CMs. For example, when Singapore experienced recession in 1985, PM Lee appointed an ad hoc Economic Committee (EC) headed by his son who was Minister of Trade and Industry to study the reasons for the nation's first economic downturn since 1963. The powerful committee was comprised of 1000 members of the strategic elite from both the public and private sectors.

In 1989, the Economic Planning Committee (EPC) headed by another Cabinet Minister was appointed to continue the work of the EC and chart an economic course for Singapore. Working through 8 sub-committees, each of which comprised representatives of the private and public sectors, as well as academics, it undertook two major surveys and three research studies. The data was supplemented by over 100 roundtable discussions and 13 sectoral workshops. The result was a comprehensive report with recommendations including eight "strategic thrusts" for the Minister of Trade and Industry's consideration and endorsement. This example illustrates the

²¹ According to the Head of the Political Science Department at the University of Singapore, Prof. John Quah, the highest level Permanent Secretaries are paid \$300,000 per year! Even the lowest level (Grade B) PSs earn \$116,000 per year. Prof. Quah's source was the Public Service Division, Singapore.

tremendous national resources deployed to analyze policy issues before they are formulated by line ministries and submitted to Cabinet.

Once a policy initiated in a CM goes to Parliament and results in a policy change, the Minister in charge is responsible for preparing a White Paper. White Papers, which are published, explain the history of the policy's development in Cabinet, but do not reveal which Ministers took what positions.

Policy Coordination, Implementation and Monitoring

Formal mechanisms for coordinating policies, facilitating implementation or monitoring decisions are not necessary in Singapore for several reasons. First, Singapore's smallness enhances administrative coordination and integration and promotes responsiveness on the part of public officials. Second, a concern with policy implementation is built in to the ruling party's way of governing. When a policy is brought up in Cabinet, Singapore's leaders will automatically ask whether or not it is realistic. Political scholars argue that this explains Singapore's efficiency, "In the last analysis, however, Singapore's efficiency is rooted in the PAP's [the ruling party's] appreciation of the importance of implementation (a rarity in the Third World) and in the PAP's determination to achieve it." And consequently, the decisionmaking and problem-solving approach of Singapore's leaders was to set out goals and priorities, plan strategies, chart and evaluate alternatives, and anticipate problems. They also appreciated the role of fate in sometimes confounding the best-laid plans, and so an important guiding principle was policy flexibility.

Third, Singapore's social discipline, encouragement of merit, and repression of corruption enhance the probability of obedience to the government. Fourth, the high quality of the Singaporean civil service facilitates policy implementation. As Southeast Asian scholars, Milne and Mauzy (1990) write, "Singapore is probably one of the few countries in the world where a civil servant can say "yes minister," and, especially, "yes, Prime Minister"— and the minister can be sure that his instructions will be carried out.

Fifth, Singapore's compactness facilitates monitoring of policy implementation.²² A Minister can drive almost anywhere on the island in 25 minutes (if there is no traffic) to monitor civil servants who are responsible for policy implementation. The fact that the public bureaucracy is not plagued by the logistical and communications problems encountered in larger countries makes the case of Singapore somewhat exceptional.

The staff in the Ministry or statutory board that formulated the policy, rather than a centralized institution, monitors its implementation. The Cabinet works through two main elements of the public bureaucracy to implement its policies: the civil service and a number of statutory boards. Singapore has approximately eighty statutory boards which are useful for performing social, economic, and developmental functions because they are not covered by the same rigid regulations on budgeting and personnel that apply to the ordinary civil service. Furthermore, decentralization, by allowing some autonomy to such bodies, lightens the load on

²²Singapore's total land area, including its surrounding tiny islands, is only 240 square miles.

the civil service. The appropriate member of the Cabinet appoints members of a particular board, usually with the approval of the PM. Members of statutory boards include some high-level civil servants.

Cabinet Culture

The efficiency of Cabinet government in Singapore must be understood in the context of the culture and values of its leaders. The values that Singapore's leaders, especially Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, wish to instill in the population are "modern" in the sense that they are geared toward promoting success and efficiency in today's world. But they are tougher and stricter than contemporary Western values. Indeed, Singapore's leaders regard Western values as soft and decadent. Rather, Singapore's values reflect those of the West in the late nineteenth century and include discipline, hard work, honesty, cleanliness, abstention from drugs, and observance of family obligations, especially taking care of aged parents (which is linked with the teachings of Confucius). The style of the party — which can be described as morally upright, elitist, resolute, tough, truthful, and paternalistic — has been consistent with these guiding values.

Out of these values emerged a tone of governance that did not tolerate corruption. The first Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, sent a strong message that corrupt officials would be harshly sanctioned and prosecuted. This intolerance of corruption is now deeply rooted in the culture of Singapore's work force — and is especially strong among public officials. Currently, the main anticorruption agency is directly under the Prime Minister's office, indicating the high priority attached to it. It is widely acknowledged that Singapore is not just the least corrupt country in Asia; it is also less corrupt than some Western countries (Milne and Mauzy 1990).

Education and Social Mobility

The emphasis on education as a vehicle for achievement and social mobility is another important factor influencing the quality of government service in Singapore. Elitism is pivotal to Confucian political philosophy, which holds that people are not born equal but are born possessing different capabilities, a few being born to rule and the rest to be ruled. In order to qualify to be an ASO, Singaporeans must either receive a second upper or better degree from the university or have been recruited under a government scholarship when they were still in high school. Many civil servants and Ministers are Western educated. In fact, Singapore has more graduate students, per capita, studying in the United States than any other country.

Civil Service

Singapore's meritocracy has produced a highly educated civil service. The government has been ruthless in stressing achievement criteria in the civil service, both for hiring and promotion. It encouraged merit, as opposed to seniority, and there was no personal favoritism. What is remarkable about the Civil Service is its ability to identify (through the educational system), recruit and *retain* the best and the brightest people, in spite of the attractiveness of Singapore's private sector. Like in Britain, participation in the civil service is highly prestigious. Job satisfaction has been cited as the chief factor motivating bureaucrats to stay in public service

where wages are lower than the private sector, in spite of government efforts to raise civil service salaries.

The Singapore's civil service has recently adopted a management approach that embodies a particular concern to raise and maintain the quality of services provided by government. Specifically, Singapore was the first civil service to introduce *Work Improvement Teams*, developed from the Quality Control Circles employed in successful and innovative private sector companies to allow groups of staff from varying levels to discuss obstacles to quality openly and honestly. This strategy encouraged civil servants to create practical solutions for service improvement.

Parliament

The Parliament plays a restricted role in the system, partly because the cabinet is so powerful and believes that its policies -- without much alteration -- are likely to be the best for Singapore. Given the strict discipline in the party, parliamentary debate tends to be limited. There are 81 seats in Parliament, 77 held by the ruling party and four held by the opposition. The Singaporean Parliament is extremely well-educated with many of its members holding advanced degrees from Western universities.

Cabinet Profile: Malaysia

After Singapore, which has its small size working in its favor, Malaysia has the best tradition of government administration in Southeast Asia. Accordingly, the well-organized and structured nature of Cabinet government in Malaysia offers some useful insights for the Zambians. Specifically, three institutional features of Malaysian Cabinet operations may be of particular interest to PAC: weekly meetings of Permanent Secretaries, where disagreements over Cabinet papers are thrashed out; and the requirement that Ministries submit **Feedback Papers** to Cabinet, once a policy has been implemented, and the computerized monitoring system.

However, it must be kept in mind that the Malaysia case may have served as an even better model of Cabinet government before the current PM Mahater came to power in 1981 than during his tenure. In order to centralize his own power, Prime Minister Mahater has tampered with the structures set up to ensure effective Cabinet government. While many of the traditional rules of government administration still exist, Prime Minister Mahater does not always "play by the rules."

Background: The Roles of the King, the Prime Minister, and the Civil Service

The Supreme Head of the Federation of Malaysia is the King, who is elected for five years from among the state Rulers. He is, constitutionally, the source of all authority, whether legislative, executive, or judicial. Bills passed by Parliament become law only after he has assented to them. Formally, the Cabinet acts in his name and by his authority. He appoints judges, and the law courts are "his" courts.

In practice, however, the King may not exercise these wide powers as he likes, any more than the British Queen can behave as an absolute monarch. The Constitution binds the King very strictly. In nearly every sphere he must act on the advice of the Ministers who form his Cabinet, which must have the support of the House of Representatives, elected by the people. The King is therefore a constitutional monarch, and does not actually govern the country. He is consulted by the Cabinet before important decisions are taken; he may give advice to them; and he is informed of what is eventually decided. That is the limit of his powers.²³

The Malaysian King is remarkable in being an *elected* monarch, although the election is very restricted. The electors are the nine Rulers of the states and their choice is limited to one of themselves.²⁴

²³One illustration of the King's "figurehead" role is the Prime Minister's response to the first King's death. The PM paid tribute to him by saying that "never once had he tried to interfere with the running of the Government." (*Malay Mail*, April 2, 1960 in Milne and Mauzy 1980).

²⁴There are nine royal families in Malaysia, one per state.

The Role of the Prime Minister

The Prime Minister is the President of the one party that has unquestioned domination in Malaysia, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). The Deputy Prime Minister is the Deputy President of UMNO.

The Prime Minister holds a dominating position in the Cabinet. He has the power to hire and fire its members; he presides at its meetings; he is the chief negotiator with representatives of foreign powers, even if he does not himself hold the Portfolio of Foreign Affairs. However, all his power may not be attributed to his constitutional position. Rather, a good deal depends on his personality, national reputation, and his position as President of the dominating Party (UMNO) and of the National Front. The Government represents a wide coalition of parties called the "National Front." The Prime Minister has the power to choose whether or not to dismiss Ministers and to select the Deputy Prime Minister.

Cabinet Government from Independence to the Present

Cabinet government worked well under Malaysia's first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, who preferred to not get involved in the details of policy making. And Cabinet government was also much more consultative under Prime Minister Hussein An (1976-81), than under Mahater who preceded him. Under An, power was much less centralized than under Mahater. For example, there was careful consultation with the Economic Planning Unit on a number of issues, including poverty alleviation, an important component of the new economic policy (NEP).

While Malaysia is formally a Parliamentary system, it has become less democratic since the strong-minded Prime Minister, Mahater, took power. Since then, the government has been more centralized and politicized, and less professional and multi-racial. Mahater, who has taken more and more power to himself, holds two portfolios in addition to Prime Minister, Law, and the Home Ministry (responsible for internal security).

According to foreign advisers, his Deputy Prime Minister resigned because he felt he was not being listened to. Furthermore, Mahater has centralized power in his own hands by making agencies that would normally be accountable to a line Ministry directly responsible to him. For example, he made the Training Institute for Diplomats which would normally be under the auspices of the Foreign Minister, answerable to him personally. He did so in an effort to marginalize his rival, the Foreign Minister, whom he was obliged to include in the Cabinet, because of support for him in the Party.

Civil Service

Since independence, Malaysia has been reputed to have a well-qualified, competent civil service. Recent Mahater's tendency to ignore advice conflicting with his own opinions has alienated him from the Civil Service. He has discouraged initiation from below from members of the civil service, who had traditionally played a strong and active role, inherited from the

British legacy. Nowadays his tendency to simply discard long reports filled with statistical analysis has frustrated members of the Civil Service who prepared them carefully.

Some academics argue that in the last decade, there has been a "running down" of the bureaucracy in several ways which have diminished the quality of government administration in Malaysia. First, after recruitment was suspended in 1982, the quality of recruitment has gone down, resulting in an aging of the bureaucracy. Second, many of the most talented Malay bureaucrats have been encouraged to leave the civil service and enter the Chinese-dominated private sector, which is under pressure from the government to recruit more Malays. Third, many public enterprises are being privatized and are attracting the most able bureaucrats.

In response, recent government reforms have tried to raise the quality of the civil service. Specifically, the Malaysian civil service offers a structured program of incentives to cultivate a *quality culture*, including *The Prime Minister's Quality Award* which gives a cash prize of \$30,000 to the winning agency and three other quality awards amounting to cash prizes of \$10,000, \$8,000, and \$5,000, respectively. In addition to the cash prize, the winner of the *Prime Minister's Quality Award* wins national prestige: the winning agency is allowed to print *Winner of the Prime Minister's Quality Award* on its letterheads. While these four awards focus on overall quality management practices, special awards are also given for specific management practices, including financial management and management of information technology.

Cabinet Composition and Procedures

The government of Malaysia is modelled after the British Cabinet. The membership of the Malaysian Cabinet is drawn from the majority party in Parliament, mostly from the elected House, although one or two members may be from the Senate. The size of the Cabinet has risen from 13 in 1957 to 26 members today, including the PM. While early Cabinet members were substantially drawn from the bureaucracy (50 % in 1964), the proportion of new Cabinet members who come from the public service is decreasing. The Cabinet is collectively responsible to Parliament, which in practice means the House of Representatives.

The Prime Minister (or, in his absence, the Deputy Prime Minister) presides at Cabinet meetings. There is no Cabinet office; rather, the Prime Minister's Office is in charge of the sort of business handled by the Cabinet Office in Zambia. The Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister's Department, as head of the Cabinet Secretariat, is responsible for summoning meetings of the Cabinet, arranging the agenda, distributing papers for discussion, passing on the decisions of the Cabinet to government bodies required to implement them, and keeping minutes.

Cabinet Meetings

Only Ministers and the Secretary to the Cabinet attend Cabinet meetings. Deputy Ministers are not invited. When a Minister is on leave, his deputy cannot attend; instead he designates a Cabinet colleague to represent his interests.

Cabinet Meetings which take place on Wednesdays last four or five hours between 9:00 am and 1:00 or 2:00 p.m., including lunch. Three or four Cabinet papers are discussed at each

meeting, allowing approximately an hour for each issue. The Secretary to the Cabinet is careful not to allow too many issues on the agenda, and tables papers until the next meeting, when there are too many. Meetings are informal in the sense that votes are seldom taken.

Observers speculate that the current PM Mahater does not tolerate a good deal of deliberation over issues at Cabinet meetings today. In fact, according to Malaysianist scholars, Mahater's policies are often presented as *faits accomplis* to the rest of the Cabinet. For example, when Mahater became Prime Minister, he quickly pushed through his heavy industrialization policy (which he had initiated under the previous regime as Minister of Trade and Industry), in spite of opposition by many members of his newly-appointed Cabinet. In this case, Mahater overrode the counsel of his Ministers. Furthermore, he ignored the objections of all of the government economists in the National Development Planning Committee (NDPC) who opposed his proposal to build steel mills and car factories in Malaysia, on the grounds of inefficiency. By overriding their advice, Mahater alienated himself from the Civil Service. This is one example of the erosion of institutional mechanisms for ensuring sound policy analysis before issues reach the Cabinet. The result is the morale of civil servants working in the EPU and other agencies involved in policy making is low under Mahater.

Real problems and policy differences are thrashed out in weekly meetings of the Permanent Secretaries, called Secretary Generals, before the Cabinet meetings take place.

Weekly Meetings of Secretary Generals

The Secretary Generals (Permanent Secretaries) would already have sorted out any wrangling between ministries with differing points of view on a Cabinet paper before the Cabinet meeting takes place. Each Wednesday there is a meeting of the Secretary Generals (or Permanent Secretaries) of each Ministry. This core of civil servants controls the administrative machinery of the government and thus plays a critical role in policy analysis and coordination. It is in these meetings that cabinet memos are debated and differences are resolved. Decisions taken in these meetings are then filtered back to the Ministries. The Secretary to the Cabinet, who is the most senior civil servant, chairs the meetings and in doing so, tracks the progress of cabinet papers.

There is not a problem of Ministers telling their PSs that they agree with a policy and then taking the opposite position in Cabinet, like there is in Zambia. Secretary generals, who earn approximately \$150,000 per year, would lose their highly paid, prestigious positions, if they disagreed with their Ministers. According to Malaysian civil servants, the 35-year old tradition of close Minister/Secretary General cooperation has been tested over time and works smoothly.

Power Centers in the Cabinet

The Prime Minister's critics claim that the real power in his government is concentrated in his "kitchen Cabinet." A small "inner group" of Malay Ministers, as well as informal advisers

including Malaysian Chinese and Japanese who are close, personal friends, comprise his kitchen Cabinet.²⁵

The one other center of power in the Cabinet other than the PM is the Minister of Finance, who is also Deputy Leader of the Party. The Finance Minister's power to veto implementation of any policy gives him a significant amount of leverage. While Finance Ministers in the past have not exercised this power, the recent Finance Minister has stymied his rivals in the Cabinet by slowing down disbursements to their departments. Furthermore, he has expanded his power by taking policy initiatives from the Treasury which would normally rest in the domain of other departments, such as Agriculture.

Policy Formulation and Preparation of Cabinet Papers

The usual process of preparing Cabinet memoranda (CM) works as follows. Civil servants staffing the Ministries first draft Cabinet papers. Before submission to the Cabinet, the Ministry of Finance, as well as any other departments involved in the proposed policy, review and comment on the draft. The initiating Ministry then takes into account the input from other departments and submits a final draft at least one week before Cabinet meets to discuss the issue. Cabinet papers are sent to ministers on the Saturday before the Wednesday meeting.²⁶

Any Cabinet papers dealing directly with two different departments must be jointly presented by both Ministries. Policies are coordinated and differences between ministries over cabinet papers are resolved at the regular meetings of the Secretary Generals (see above). It usually only necessary to resolve problems at this level in cases of very complicated policies involving five or six ministries.

Ministers are briefed immediately before the Cabinet meetings begin. If a Minister is slacking and is not keeping up with the issues, the Secretary to the Cabinet will take notice and act accordingly.

During Cabinet meetings, a "beehive" of civil servants is on call in the room next door, prepared to provide information and copies of documents to their respective Ministers, as the need arises. However, it is rare that Ministers presenting Cabinet papers will send out a note during the meeting asking assistance from their resource persons, who hover around outside during the Cabinet meeting.

Minutes

Records of full Cabinet discussions are not kept. Minutes are sent out to all Cabinet members by the Saturday after the Wednesday meetings. Abstracts of minutes indicating

²⁵Malaysia is a multi-ethnic society where the Malays are hegemonic. Accordingly, Malay Ministers carry the most important portfolios in the Cabinet dealing with such matters as security, defense, and investment, while Chinese - who are considered non-Malays - are appointed to less important posts, such as Minister of Sport.

²⁶On rare occasions, late papers are sent on Tuesdays.

responsibilities for action go to all Ministries by Monday. The minutes are merely a statement of what has been decided and a direction to the Ministers concerned to implement the decisions. These minutes are not made public, and therefore, knowledge of what Cabinet meetings are like is very limited.

Cabinet Responsibility

Malaysians claim that they have maintained a strong tradition of Cabinet responsibility inherited from the British. Recently, the policy of the government "speaking with one voice" has been strengthened, in an effort to promote unification. If any member is "out of step" with his colleagues, he is expected to resign. If he does not do so, the Prime Minister can advise the King to revoke his appointment. The power of the government to reward or punish creates hard incentives for Ministers to act in accordance with the principle of Cabinet responsibility.²⁷

In practice, under Malaysia's first PM, Tunku Abdul Rahman, collective responsibility meant that a colleague who did not agree with *him*, as distinct from the rest of the Cabinet, would have to leave. Under the current regime, as well, collective responsibility seems to mean the same thing. Ministers who disagree with the PM get cut off from access to the top political leaders. Critics of the Mahater government argue that collective responsibility is invoked only when it is convenient for the PM to do so. For example, the PM never informed the Cabinet when he agreed to sign a military treaty with the Reagan administration in 1984, the nation's first bi-lateral military agreement. Despite the fact that Malaysia had prided itself in being non-aligned, PM Mahater did not give his Cabinet the opportunity to reach consensus on this critical issue.

Secrecy is strictly observed by the Cabinet. For example, the important Cabinet decision taken on the separation of Singapore in 1967 was kept secret (Milne and Mauzy 1980). In response to leaks to the press by members of the opposition, the current regime has toughened up the "Official Secrets Act" to include "economic secrets," as well as security matters. Since its passage, there have been no further disclosures by the opposition. The press and the mass media are tightly controlled, with the ruling party owning the most important newspaper.

Policy Monitoring Coordination, and Implementation

After Cabinet meetings, Ministers debrief their senior officers on what transpired and instruct them to take the appropriate actions. Once a policy proposed in a Cabinet paper has been implemented, the initiating Minister must inform the Cabinet in another formal memo to Cabinet, called a **Feedback Paper**. All ministers must report back on action taken within two

²⁷ The case of the Minister of Agriculture in 1962 provides a good example of the collective responsibility concept in the Malaysian context. There were several points of difference, centered mainly on economic policy in rural areas, between him and the rest of the Cabinet. Originally, the Prime Minister did not dismiss him, but moved him to another Cabinet post, because he was believed to have some popular support among fisherman and rice planters. However, in the end the PM stated unequivocally the constitutional position on collective responsibility. The Minister was forced to resign from his post, and from the party, as well.

months. The Cabinet divisions takes primary responsibility for monitoring feedback: they chase Ministries with outstanding feedback, using a computerized monitoring system, and they summarize the feedback for the Cabinet. Relevant ministries are then told of the Cabinet view of their follow-up action. The Cabinet Division also monitors at an aggregate level and reports to the Chief Secretary on the overall performance of each ministry concerning their speed of implementation of Cabinet decisions.

Malaysia's success with its *Integrated Project Monitoring System* (SETIA) has attracted attention from a variety of developing countries as a potential model and may be of particular interest to PAC, as well. This innovative system coordinates the Monitoring System of the Implementation and Coordination Unit with the computerised information systems of three other central agencies: the Project Planning System of the Economic Planning Unit, the Computerised Information System of the Treasury, and the Federal Accounting System of the Accountant General's office. By consolidating the information for planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects, the system has proven to be of vital importance to decisions relating to the budgetary allocations for projects. It also eliminates the problem of overlap in the information needs of operating departments from the central agencies.

In addition to SETIA, another management information system for Chief Executive (SMPKE) has been installed for the use of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and heads of departments. Zambia may wish to consider creating a similar computerized management information system for its chief executives.

In the late 1970s, the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Manpower Planning Unit (MAMPU), located in the Prime Minister's Office replaced the Implementation, Coordination and Development Administration Unit (ICDAU) as the responsible agency for the coordination and implementation functions of all departments and agencies. When it was created, MAMPU was given responsibility for studying and proposing measures on major problems in administrative development. Today, MAMPU continues to spearhead administrative improvements and modernisation efforts in the government service.

The Economic Planning Unit (EPU) located in the Prime Minister's Office plays an important role in policy analysis and coordination. Some of the most highly trained and well qualified members of the Civil Service staff the EPU. The minimum qualification is a master's degree and many members have Ph.D.s. Economic issues were first discussed at meetings of the EPU before being presented to the Economic Committee of the Cabinet or the full Cabinet. The Economic Committee of the Cabinet was responsible for policy coordination at the highest level.

EPU facilitates policy coordination through interagency planning groups comprised of representatives of different bureaucratic agencies and ministries working on overlapping issues. The EPU is the secretariat to the National Development Planning Committee (NDPC), which is comprised of senior officials representing the important economic policy making and implementing agencies, including the EPU, the Treasury, the Central Bank, and the Trade and Industry Ministry. The Chief Secretariat of the government, who was the head of the civil service, chaired the NDPC.

MAMPU'S predecessor, the ICDAU, was responsible for supervising the implementation of the Second Malaysia 5-Year plan. 5-year plans were very important in Malaysia during the 1970s. The ICDAU developed a useful procedure for checking on implementation of the policies presented in the plan. In the past, agencies' performances had been examined at "briefings," but in effect these were rather general and unfocussed accounts of what the organization was doing. In response, the ICDAU developed a new system requiring each agency to submit a paper three months in advance, on what it was doing to implement economic policy. The ICDAU responded to the paper with written comments on the paper, and at a weekly meeting of the National Action Council, both the paper and the ICDAU response were discussed.

Furthermore, a mid-term review process monitored implementation of the plan and allowed the Prime Minister to alter policies when needed. However, in 1988 PM Mahater wouldn't publish a mid-term review, probably because he had shifted policy dramatically from the plan's original intentions. Shortly after the elections, Mahater suspended the expansionary plan, and launched an austerity campaign, involving budget cuts of one third. This example illustrates how one of the most important institutional mechanism for monitoring policy making, the mid-term review process, was tampered with for political reasons. The power of the ICU has diminished over the years. According to one foreign adviser who worked in Malaysia during the 1970s and 1980s, the "grand vision" of the ICU as a coordinating and implementing organization was never fully realized; rather, it serves more as a trouble-shooting body.

The institutional mechanism for implementation and coordination that received the greatest acclaim and publicity in Malaysia is the "Operation Room Red Book System," of project planning, scheduling, and monitoring. Much has been written on the success of this system in galvanising the entire bureaucracy towards a common development goal. Under this system, an operations room was installed at each level of government — district, state and federal — where a development committee met regularly to plan and review the progress of development projects. These projects were charted in large red books and on maps so that members of the committee could determine whether a project was on schedule or was lagging and should be corrected. This system served as a yardstick for monitoring and comparing progress.

To ensure its success, the Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, made many surprise visits to district operations rooms as well as on-the-spot visits to project sites to check on actual implementations. This visit and briefing technique soon became the standard practice for other ministers and bureaucratic heads of departments. This system worked well as long as there was a powerful politician at the top behind it, but it faltered in the 1980s when it lost its political backing.

Cabinet Profile: Australia

The Zambians may glean some useful insights from several features of the Australian Cabinet machinery which contribute to its efficiency and effectiveness. Most importantly, in 1987 the government amalgamated 28 departments into 16 large portfolios and created two tiers of ministers, ensuring that all portfolio interests are represented in a manageably sized Cabinet of 16 "Portfolio Ministers." This streamlining ensured a whole-of-Government focus in Cabinet, thus creating the conditions for an unprecedented level of policy integration.

Second, only the decisions arising from Cabinet meetings are recorded, ensuring that minutes are kept to one to two pages. Third, civil servants in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet prepare analytical *Coordination Comments* on all Cabinet submissions. Fourth, a *10 Day Rule* on Cabinet papers encourages inter-departmental discussion and compromise before issues are taken up in Cabinet. Fifth, departments forecast their Cabinet business, coordinated through Cabinet Liaison Officers. In addition, the Australian experiment with a Policy Unit, the Priorities Review Staff, offers some lessons about how a long-term think tank can be designed in order to be effective and influence policy outcomes.

History of Australia's Democratic Tradition

Before focussing on the Cabinet Office, it is useful to look more broadly at the foundations of democratic government in Australia. Both the British and American democratic traditions contributed to the Australian system of government. The first British settlement in Australia was established in 1788. During the 19th century six separate colonies grew to maturity and were granted governments of their own based on the Westminster model. In 1901, these six governments opted for a system of federalism similar to that of the United States.

The Westminster model persists in the national and state system of parliamentary legislatures, executives and judiciaries. Following the British tradition, the party with a majority in the House of Representatives provides a ministry (of Cabinet and non-Cabinet ministers) drawn from its members in the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Prime Minister traditionally comes from the House of Representatives. If the Government fails to command a majority in the House of Representatives on a matter of importance, it is obliged either to ask the Governor-General to authorize an election, or to resign. It need not, however, command a majority in the Senate, where minority parties have held the balance of power from most of the past twenty years.

The American tradition is followed in the system of dual federalism, expressed in a written constitution which defines fields of activity for the national government and establishes the Senate as a "States' House." The Senate is referred to as such because, like the American system, each state has equal representation in the Senate, regardless of population.²⁸

²⁸Twelve senators represent each state in Australia, while two represent each American state.

Under the Australian Constitution the Federal Parliament consists of the Queen as represented by the Governor-General, the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Governor-General is appointed by the British sovereign on the advice of the Australian Governments, and has the power to nominate the times for parliamentary sessions, dissolve parliament, appoint the ministry (Cabinet and non-Cabinet ministers) and assent to Acts of Parliament. In exercising all these powers the Governor-General has traditionally acted on the advice of the elected government.

Australia's *Organizational Revolution*: Streamlining the Machinery of Government

In 1987, the Australian government made major changes in the structure of Commonwealth government administration — reducing the number of departments from 28 to 18, organized in 16 Cabinet portfolios, and creating a 2-tier Ministry.²⁹ The Ministry is the policy-making instrument of the federal Government and the Cabinet is its major policy forum and decision-making body. At the time, the proponents of this "organizational revolution" believed that it would greatly enhance the efficiency and rationality of Australia's political and administrative life (Keating 1992). In particular, it was expected that by bringing together interrelated functions and activities, there would be better coordination and greater coherence in policy advice, and improved program development with clearer lines of responsibility. As Prime Minister Hawke stressed in the 1988 Garran Oration, the government intended, through the reorganization:

to ensure that the public service is not a stumbling block for broader, economy-wide change; Indeed, that the public service becomes where possible an effective instrument for the achievement of that change (Hawke, in Keating 1992).

It was the Government's desire for greater clarity of policy purpose and interrelationships that was the essence of the machinery of government changes (Keating 1992).

Objectives and Results of the 1987 Changes

The objective of the government restructuring was to produce seven important benefits:

- an enhanced emphasis on the Government's policy priorities;
- broader perspectives and greater coherence in policy advice, program development and program delivery;
- an improved Cabinet structure;

²⁹A complete list of the structure and functions of the portfolios is attached in Appendix A. One example of consolidation is that the three departments with major infrastructure responsibilities — Transport, Aviation and Communications — were brought under one Cabinet minister. Another example is that the related elements of the existing departments of Arts, Heritage and Environment, Sport, Recreation and Tourism and Territories were amalgamated in one portfolio of Arts, Sport, Environment, and Tourism.

- enhanced ministerial control of departments;
- greater flexibility in portfolio operations and potential stability in the machinery of government;
- improved decision-making and budget processes by enhancing departmental coordination and providing the institutional framework for portfolio budgeting.
- significant financial savings, as a result of the removal of overlap and duplication of functions between departments.

Impact Of Restructuring on Cabinet

The changes in government machinery eliminated the structural inefficiencies of the pre-1987 cabinet arrangements, including the need to adopt one of two equally inefficient Cabinet models. Either there was an unwieldy Cabinet of the full ministry or there was an "inner" Cabinet of manageable size but which contained an arbitrarily selected group of portfolios. The latter case resulted in unequal representation of interests at the Cabinet table, with the possibility that some important portfolios were not represented. The departmental consolidation created the conditions for ensuring a whole-of-Government focus, resulting in a Cabinet better informed of all viewpoints.

Balance between Ministerial Government and Cabinet Government

According to the architect of the changes, there has been a major shift from Cabinet government to Ministerial government, since 1987 (Codd 1990). He argues that the new structure enhanced the capacity of ministers to deal with matters within their own portfolios or with relatively easy consultation with a few interested colleagues in other portfolios; consequently, fewer matters are brought to the attention of the full Cabinet.

Statistics indicate that there has been a substantial reduction in the volume of business coming into the Cabinet system since the introduction of 16 large portfolios in 1987.³⁰ The volume of business handled in Cabinet — whether measured by the number of meetings, the number of Cabinet papers lodged, or the number of decisions or minutes — has fallen significantly since 1987, as indicated in Appendix B. For example, 300 more Cabinet papers were lodged in 1985-86 before the changes than in 1991-92, the year for which the most recent statistics are available. There were nearly three times as many budget decisions/minutes in 1987 and there were in 1991, and there were 44 fewer Cabinet meetings in 1991 than there were in 1987.

There appears to be a shift to the point where, the volume of business being handled in the Cabinet and its committees is broadly comparable with that handled by the Menzies Cabinets between 1950 and 1970. This is quite remarkable, considering that the government has grown considerably in its responsibilities and its complexity since then.

³⁰Cabinet business is measured in terms of the number of meetings, decisions, submissions, memoranda.

Achievements of the New System

The Secretary to the Cabinet, Dr. Michael Keating,³¹ argued in a paper he wrote in 1992 that five years experience with the new system showed that these expectations have been largely achieved. He believes that since 1987, Commonwealth government departments have moved away from the narrow perspectives which led to the representation of the administration as "a collection of petty baronies protected by impenetrable castle walls" (Keating 1992). He argues that departmental consolidation helped Ministers and officials to improve the determination of departmental priorities, resource allocation and program development, thereby reducing the risk — ever present in the past — of conflicting impacts of related programs managed by separate portfolios. For example, the former Permanent Secretary to the former Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) observed that the amalgamation of DFAT "allowed the consistent, focussed and integrated pursuit of Australian interest overseas" by ending the artificial and costly separation of "trade issues" from "foreign affairs" issues (Keating 1992).

Indeed, before the restructuring, departments and their minister exhibited the old "bunker mentality" — a tendency to operate behind a protective wall and to reveal as little as possible of their policy development work to colleagues, even where there were close policy relationships. Secretary to the Cabinet Keating argues that the changes have broken down these barriers. According to Keating, the experience has been that the common goal and corporate planning processes of a single department have facilitated the resolution of policy differences, and these are now much less likely to be exacerbated by extraneous factors such as officials urging Ministers on, in order to protect their territory (Keating 1992).

In addition, Secretary to the Cabinet Keating points out from his own experience that the smaller pool of Secretaries created by the 1987 reorganization has improved communication and relationships at the highest levels. In particular, the smaller numbers at Portfolio Secretaries' meetings and at the associated Management Advisory Board, has transformed them into valuable arenas for debate and discussion on issues of policy, administration and industrial relations. Consequently, Secretary Keating argues, there is now "a better sense of corporate spirit, with a shared loyalty to the good of the service and the government as a whole" (Keating 1992).

Another important accomplishment of the restructuring is that it has radically changed the relationship of departments with the center, and particularly with the Department of Finance. Larger portfolio departments with larger budgets offered ministers and departmental managers more flexibility in financial management, with much greater scope to consider expenditure and policy trade-offs. This enhanced scope for financial responsibility, in turn, meant that there was a willingness to give portfolios the authority to resolve issues internally which had previously required ministerial or Cabinet attention. The greater authority and challenge of functional portfolios has made them much more interesting places to work, with improved capacity for policy advice and more successful in attracting good quality staff. As a result, the central

³¹Secretary to the Cabinet, Dr. Michael Keating happens to have the same surname as the Prime Minister, Mr. Paul Keating but is unrelated, causing great confusion in the Cabinet Office, according to officials working there.

agencies are no longer paid more, and the mobility of staff between departments improves understanding and cooperation.

Some analysts predicted that the size of the new portfolios would be unwieldy and problematic. The Secretary to the Department of Primary Industries and Energy, Geoff Miller, disagreed with this view:

Whereas some were concerned three years ago that the size of the new departments may have been a problem, in fact, the balance has been the other way in DPIE; the synergies from bringing together related areas and the economies from operating larger units, have outweighed the costs in our case (Miller, in Keating 1992).

Dr. Keating, agrees that the enlarged size of portfolios after restructuring is not a problem, and strongly objects to the description of the new departments as "super" or "mega" departments. He argues that none of the new entities compared with the size of the two largest departments, Defense and Social Security — neither of which was directly affected by the 1987 changes. He objected strongly to the notion that there is anything gargantuan about the new organizations created in 1987 which are, on average, smaller than Australia's largest private sector companies and smaller than their equivalents overseas.

Changes since 1987

Despite these achievements, the ideal vision of a lean, streamlined Cabinet has eroded slightly since 1987. The size of the Cabinet has expanded from 16 to 19. While all Cabinet members are considered *portfolio ministers*, two important portfolios are represented in Cabinet by two Ministers. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade share one portfolio, as do the Minister for Health and the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Community Services.

Furthermore, the number of portfolios was expanded to 17, after a recent Cabinet reshuffle in December, 1993 following the resignation of the Treasurer, when eight Ministers changed posts. At this time, the Transport and Communications portfolio, formerly held by one Minister, was split in two; thus increasing the size of the Cabinet to nineteen and elevating the Minister for Communications to Cabinet Minister status. Another change was that responsibility for the Status of Women was given from a non-Cabinet to a Cabinet Minister, reflecting PM Keating's commitment to the direct representation of women's issues in the Cabinet.

In addition to these portfolio ministers there are thirteen *Non-Cabinet Ministers* in Prime Minister Keating's ministry, totalling 32 members. However, in spite of their title, they are entitled to attend Cabinet when issues they have submitted are being discussed.

Principle of Collective Responsibility

Collective responsibility may have been easier to understand and accept in the early days of the Australian Federation when the number of ministers was small and all were included in

the Cabinet. The concept of collective responsibility is less natural in the current system where ministers are divided into Cabinet and non-Cabinet ministers and decisions are taken either in Cabinet or in committees of the Cabinet when not all ministers are present.

Yet in various procedural ways, every effort is made to encourage all ministers to feel they are part of the collective decision-making system, as follows. The principles of collective responsibility continue to apply to non-Cabinet Ministers who attend Cabinet meetings, in respect to matters dealt with while they are present. All Ministers must give their support in public debate to decisions of the Government. However, under the Labor Party government, non-Cabinet Ministers, are not prevented from debating Cabinet decisions in areas apart from their portfolios in their party Caucus. Furthermore, decisions in the policy-related committees are not final until endorsed by the Cabinet, with some exceptions (for example, where a committee calls for further work to be done). This policy provides a further opportunity for any minister who has a view or an interest in the question to bring that to notice. Once again, when the minister is not in the Cabinet, co-option for the Cabinet discussion of the committee decisions will be arranged wherever appropriate.

The Role of the Prime Minister

The role of the prime minister in the Australian Cabinet system is an extremely complex one. First, the prime minister must foster the spirit of collective responsibility among his ministers. The difficult task is judging the balance between encouraging them to use the Cabinet as a forum for discussing their problems and sensible delegation of authority to ministers. Second, like any person chairing any committee, the prime minister faces the challenge of managing the Cabinet meeting in such a way that business is expedited. The PM's role in determining the structure of the Cabinet system, as well as in determining what business should come to Cabinet and its disposition between Cabinet and committees, is also crucial.

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, which includes the Cabinet Office, supports the PM in these areas of responsibility. There are twelve offices in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMAC), in addition to the Central Office and Cabinet Office, including the Economic Division, the Government Division, the Industries, Resources and Environment Division, and the Social Policy Division. (The organizational chart in Appendix C shows all twelve divisions.)

The Secretary to PMAC is also the Secretary to the Cabinet. He is not Head of the Civil Service in the formal sense, like in the British or Zambian systems, but he is the highest ranking civil servant. As mentioned above, the current Secretary is Dr. Michael Keating.

Cabinet documents, including business lists and programs, are provided to all ministers, with limited exceptions. When an item is programmed for Cabinet or a committee, and a minister not in Cabinet or on that committee carries responsibilities related to that item, the Minister will be "co-opted" automatically for the discussion of that item. Beyond that, ministers

who have an interest in a particular matter, but are not in the Cabinet or on the committee concerned, may seek the PM's agreement that they attend the discussion of that item.

Briefing Notes

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet provides a briefing note for the PM on each matter coming before the Cabinet or a committee which the PM is chairing. Usually, the staff in the division dealing with the substantive area of the submission, such as Economic or Social Policy will prepare the brief. Sometimes, the Prime Minister's Office, which is **not** part of the Department of the Prime Minister calls for an oral briefing on the issue, as well.³²

When other ministers chair committee meeting, the department will also prepare a briefing note for them. These briefs are designed to assist the PM — or whoever is in the chair — in managing the meeting and in ensuring that all relevant views are considered. The brief focuses on the subject matter of the meeting, and does not offer advice on the handling of the meeting, like the briefs prepared by the Canadian Economic and Social Policy Secretariats do. Briefs are three to four pages long.

Occasionally, the department may put forward a particular view on the desirable outcome of the meeting. If the department is contemplating presenting to the PM a view which differs from that proposed by the minister concerned, the view is first discussed and debated with the minister's department. The minister's department is then advised of the final view which will be put to the PM so that their minister is fully briefed as necessary.

The Cabinet Office

The Cabinet Office provides advice to departments on the **process** of handling Cabinet matters, but does not advise them on policy. The Cabinet Office, also called the Cabinet Secretariat, is comprised of five senior civil servants, as well as support staff.

The Cabinet Office is responsible for drawing together proposed business and seeking the prime minister's approval of programs and agendas on a regular basis. In that process, the Cabinet Office tries to ensure that ministers with an interest in the issue are proposed for "cooption," the term used for calling non-Cabinet ministers in to Cabinet meetings, and that they are available at the time of the meeting. It is responsible also for ensuring that the circulation of Cabinet documents is in accordance with the procedures laid down and thus consistent with the principle of collective responsibility.

Cabinet staff seek to ensure that appropriate consultation has taken place before a submission is lodged by farming out drafts to the relevant departments for comment. In this way, the prime minister can be more confident that the relevant ministers have been briefed on the issues, and have been given the chance to raise any substantial concerns before the proposal is submitted to the Cabinet Office.

³²The Prime Minister's Office is located in Parliament House, a different building from the Prime Minister's department.

Minutes

One of the Cabinet Office's most important functions is to service the meeting of Cabinet and its committees including providing notetakers and recording and circulating decisions, in conjunction with officers from the rest of the department. There are three notetakers for each meeting. The "Number 1 Notetaker" is the Secretary to the Cabinet, who sits in all Cabinet meetings and is responsible for signing the minutes. The First Assistant Secretary of the Cabinet Secretary, as "Number 2 Notetaker," is responsible for organizing the movement in and out of the room of non-Cabinet ministers who are co-opted into meetings for discussion of issues pertaining to their portfolio. The "Number 3 Notetaker" is the civil servant in PMAC who knows the most about the subject under discussion, usually from one of the line areas, rather than the Cabinet office.

Cabinet minutes are comprised of a *Record of Outcome* only. This record simply states in one to two pages what the Cabinet agreed to do. While detailed notes are taken in the "Cabinet Notebook," no record of either who said what or what policy options were discussed is circulated. The Zambian may want to consider adopting a similar system, in order to simplify the process of preparing minutes.

In all of this, the Secretary to the Cabinet has the ultimate responsibility, and will be present at, and authorize decisions arising from, all Cabinet meetings and, most often, all committees which the PM chairs.

Coordination Comment on Cabinet Submissions

The requirement that the Department of the Prime Minister and all relevant departments, such as Treasury, provide a *Coordination Comment* ensures automatic consultation on each Cabinet submission before it is lodged. The PMAC office which deals with the issue in question, such as the Economic or Social Policy Division, writes the analytical comment after the submission has been finalized by the department. The *Coordination Comment* points out issues that may have been overlooked or inconsistencies with other initiatives recently approved, explains inter-departmental differences of opinions on the question, and suggests further analysis or action which should take place. If the analysts writing the comment anticipate that the issue will be contentious, they will consent with the department in question beforehand. Usually, the initiating department does not make major changes, unless they receive a very negative *Coordination Comment* from PMAC or the Treasury.

One senior analyst in the Cabinet Office described the *Coordination Comment* as a "strange animal," because it represents the views of the department, but not necessarily those of the Minister — and in the case of PMAC, of the Prime Minister. For example, the Minister may disavow a *Coordination Comment* written by his or her department if it is especially critical of a policy he or she needs to support for political reasons. Furthermore, one Minister may pick up a point from another Ministry's *Coordination Comment* and use it to argue his or her case. PAC may wish to consider writing *Coordination Comments* independent of departments on Cabinet memoranda as well, representing the "PAC view" of the national interest.

Other offices in PMAC, such as the Office of the Status of Women, also systematically give their opinion on Cabinet submissions from the perspective of the groups they represent.

PMAC does not formally assist line ministries in preparing submissions, like PAC-Zambia and the Economic and Social Policy Secretariats in Canada, where a good deal of "to-ing and fro-ing" takes place with the departments in the process of preparing memoranda. Nonetheless, some informal dialogue may take place between PMAC and the initiating departments at the early stages of development of the proposal.

Cabinet Meetings

The Cabinet meets weekly. The length of Cabinet meetings depends on the personal style of the Prime Minister. Prime Minister Keating's Cabinet usually meets for a maximum of two hours, because he does not like long meetings. According to Senior Cabinet staff, meetings about "particularly thorny issues" may last all night, although this is fairly unusual under the current Prime Minister.

In Cabinet meetings, Prime Minister Keating opens up the floor for any Minister to speak, but does not systematically ask for the views of all the Ministers around the table, as Prime Minister Major does in Britain.

The Cabinet discusses six to eight submissions at each meeting, except the last meeting of the year, when a huge volume of business is submitted at the last minute. The Cabinet meets in secret. Apart from announcements of decisions by the Prime Minister or other authorized ministers, there is no public record of its proceedings.

Role of Officials in Cabinet Meetings

Officials are rarely called in to Cabinet meetings. If they are, it is generally to provide additional factual information and then retire. Officials are more commonly invited to Cabinet committee meetings. For example, they have traditionally been present for meetings of the Legislation Committee, especially so as to be able to respond to legal questions, questions of drafting and questions of interpretation. More often than not, officials are present at meetings of the Expenditure Review Committee — and have traditionally been so. Officials also participate in meetings of the policy development committees. In such cases, the primary role of officials is to provide background information of a factual or technical kind rather than enter the debate on the policy judgment that is required. The ministers, themselves, make the decisions.

Decisions about what is Cabinet Business

Almost all matters which are brought before Cabinet or its committees are in the form of proposals by ministers. Occasionally, the PM may have some matter to raise or report to make to the Cabinet. Ministers are urged to consider very carefully whether it is essential to bring any particular matter to Cabinet or whether consultation and agreement with interested colleagues would suffice. The *Cabinet Handbook* asks ministers to bear in mind the need to keep the

volume of Cabinet business contained. The kinds of matters which might normally be expected to come before Cabinet are:

- new policy proposals and proposed significant variations to existing policies;
- proposals likely to have a significant effect on employment in either the public or private sector;
- expenditure proposals, including proposals for major capital works and computer acquisitions;
- proposals requiring legislation, other than minor proposals which the PM has agreed need not be raised in Cabinet;
- proposals likely to have a considerable impact upon relations between the Commonwealth and foreign, State, or local governments; and
- proposed responses to recommendations made in Parliamentary Committee reports, except for responses which the PM agrees raise no significant policy questions.

Forecasting of Cabinet Business

To assist in the programming and coordination of Cabinet business, Ministers provide the Secretary to Cabinet each quarter with forecasts of all Submissions or memoranda they intend to lodge for consideration by Cabinet during the next six months. Departmental Cabinet Liaison Officers update these forecasts each Tuesday morning by fax to the Cabinet Office. If there is no change a "no change to forecast" fax is sent. When a submission or memorandum is required as a result of a Cabinet decision, a forecast concerning that item is included in the next weekly telex to be sent following receipt of the decision by the department concerned. Forecasts must be specific, in order to facilitate efficient management of Cabinet business; indeterminate forecasts such as ASAP, TBA, or forecasts with a two-month range — for example, December-January — are unacceptable. However, one former Cabinet Office official pointed out that half of the papers submitted have not appeared on the list of forthcoming business.

Forecasting Records

The Cabinet Office maintains a schedule of forward forecasts of Cabinet business which shows:

- forecast submitted each week;
- Submissions and Memorandums required by Cabinet but not yet lodged; and
- the relation between a department's forecasts and actual performance (showing when a Submission was first forecast, whether the forecast date slipped forward — and, if so, how often and by how much — and when the Submission or Memorandum was lodged).

Copies of these records as they relate to any department are provided regularly to that department's Cabinet Liaison Officer as an aid to comprehensive and accurate forecasting and as a management aid.

PAC Zambia may wish to consider instituting a similar forecasting system. For instance, Zambian Cabinet Liaison Officers could update forecasts regularly using an electronic mail ("e-mail") system to communicate with PAC.³³

While on paper the Cabinet system appears to be extremely orderly, one academic, Patrick Weller, who has written a book on Prime Minister Fraser, suggests that Cabinet decision making is far more hectic and far less neat than the way it is depicted in formal descriptions. An interesting example of Australian-Zambian relations illustrates that all Cabinet decisions are not made in meetings of the Cabinet. When PM Fraser was in Lusaka in 1979, he discovered the Australian High Commission had only a temporary status there; he wanted to make it permanent

³³While the Australian Cabinet Office is hooked up to an electronic mail system, it is not used for forecasting; in fact, staff rarely use e-mail.

as an indication of Australia's interest. So he telephoned the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and asked him to ring around all the members of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee to ask if they would approve the establishment of a permanent High Commission in Lusaka. A couple objected; they thought this was not really the way to make decisions. But eventually they all agreed. It was duly recorded as a Cabinet decision although there was no meeting. When Mr. Fraser returned, he was advised by his department that he might like to tell Cabinet the decision was made (Weller 1990).

Cabinet Liaison Officers in Departments

Each Department Secretary, the term the Australians use for Permanent Secretary,³⁴ nominates a senior officer to be the Cabinet Liaison Officer for his/her department and to act as his representative in day-to-day dealings with the Cabinet Office. The functions of the Cabinet Liaison Officer are:

- to provide the central point of contact between the department and the Cabinet Office;
- to ensure that Submissions and Memorandums prepared by the department conform with the *Cabinet Handbook* requirements, and to lodge those documents with the Cabinet Office;
- to monitor all forthcoming Cabinet business of the department, including Submissions and Memorandums, and to advise the Cabinet Office accordingly;
- to coordinate the Minister's and department's forecasts of Cabinet business and to keep the Cabinet Office informed of changes and developments, by weekly telex;
- to ensure that the Cabinet Office is informed of any special circumstances affecting Submissions and Memorandums coming forward, for example, any reasons for listing them for urgent consideration;
- to ensure that the Cabinet Office is notified twenty-four hours in advance of any Submission or Memorandum;
- to monitor follow-up of decisions requiring action by the department, particularly the preparation of further material for Cabinet, against any deadlines set;
- with respect to matters dealt with by Cabinet and requiring legislation, to ensure that work on the subsequent processes meets the deadlines set by Cabinet;

³⁴Permanent secretaries used to be called "Permanent Heads," until very recently when their title was changed to "Department Secretary," because "they are *not* permanent, in the words of one senior Cabinet officer.

- to ensure that the Cabinet Office is advised immediately of *any* actual or proposed request for access to Cabinet documents made by persons outside the department, especially where the request may involve court proceedings.

The Zambians may want to consider using its Cabinet Liaison Officers, as well, to help fulfill PAC's monitoring role, as well as to facilitate the review of Cabinet memoranda.

Preparation of Cabinet Submissions

What are called "Cabinet memoranda" in other Commonwealth countries are referred to as "Cabinet submissions" in Australia. "Cabinet memoranda" in Australia are prepared in response to Cabinet or by committees for the development of options and unlike Cabinet memoranda elsewhere, they do not contain recommendations. In response to ministers' significant workload, the format of Cabinet Submissions has been standardized to meet four objectives:

- presentation in a format that facilitates consideration and, through its familiarity, enables Ministers to turn readily to particular sections during discussions;
- agreement on a set of facts upon which discussion can proceed;
- succinct and clear identification of the essential issues;
- indication of realistic policy options and their implications.

Submissions do not exceed seven pages, including the pro forma pages 1 and 2 (A sample is included in Appendix D). They do not include extensive argument on matters that are agreed; nor, in order to remain within the limit, do they rely unduly on attachments. As much information as possible should be included on the pro forma pages so that the remaining pages can be used to develop the case for the proposal and outline any options available and the Minister's recommendations. In particular, full use of the "Purpose/Issues," "Relation to existing policy," and "Urgency" sections can obviate any need for extensive background and explanation in the text. For each submission, the departments must complete the "Implications of proposals" section which includes consideration of the following matters:

- **Economic** Submissions involving proposals affecting the Consumer Price Index (CPI) must include CPI impact assessments.
- **Women** Impact of proposals on women should be noted. Proposals are to be consistent with government policy that the rights of women be recognized and protected and the move towards equality and independence for women be encouraged.
- **Administrative** Proposals must note any staffing implications or proposed new administrative procedures.

- **Other** The implications for those groups not listed, but which may be affected including the disabled, Aboriginals, migrants, youth, the aged, etc. should be noted.

The body of the submission is organized in ten parts, as follows:

Background: Previous consideration of the subject by Cabinet or Cabinet committees must be referred to;

Options: Principle practicable options open to the Government are set out.

Consideration of the issues: Presentation should be logical and concise, enabling ministers to focus immediately upon the issues they have to consider. The text need not set out all minute details of the proposal but should concentrate on the areas crucial to reaching a decision.

Financial considerations: Submissions which make proposals involving expenditure must show:

- 1) the estimated cost of the options (determined in consultation with Department of Finance);
- 2) the period over which the expenditure would take place;
- 3) the estimated cost in each of the next three financial years;
- 4) proposed expenditure which has already been incorporated in the Budget and expenditure which is additional to that announced in the Budget; and
- 5) possible savings, including offsetting savings (determined in consultation with Finance).

Employment considerations

State and local government relations (See below.)

Public information considerations

Consultation (See below.)

Legislation The Attorney General's department must be consulted on matters involving legislation and the outcome of that consultation recorded on the first page of the submission.

Recommendations A comprehensive but concise statement of all recommendations for which approval is sought must appear at the end of the submission.

Recommendations must stand on their own and not state merely that approval is sought for proposals outlined in the submission.

Consultation

The Australian **Cabinet Handbook** emphasizes the importance of inter-departmental consultation in the development of proposals to Cabinet. The objective of consultation is to try to either resolve differences in advance of Cabinet consideration or identify them in a way that will facilitate decision-making. Ministers are responsible for ensuring that consultation takes place at ministerial and official levels on all matters where more than one portfolio interest is involved. Memoranda involving matters of joint responsibility are supposed to be presented jointly by the ministers concerned.

It is particularly important that there is agreement regarding factual matters — matters which are not open to interpretation or differences of opinion — on the basis of which decisions are to be made. The Cabinet Office returns submissions when there is disagreement as to facts.

Consultation entails more than mere circulation of a draft Cabinet proposal for information or an already finalized submission for the addition of a "consultation comment." Consultation is an integral part of the development of a policy proposal. Rather, consultation is supposed to be an integral part of the development of a policy proposal from the outset through to clearance of a final draft. Ministers and officers in departments with an interest should have ample opportunity to contribute to the development of the proposal and resolve any differences before its submission.

Initiating departments should build adequate time for other departments to express their views into the overall timetable for developing a proposal. The general rule is that departments which are involved should be allowed at least two full working days to comment on the final draft of a submission. On the instruction of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Office returns memoranda submitted before adequate time has been allowed for receipt of consultation comments. If the draft memorandum is changed significantly after departments have been given an opportunity to comment, the revised document is again circulated for comment.

When the department being consulted agrees with all points in the Cabinet memorandum, they simply type "Yes" in the appropriate place on the first pro forma page of the document (See Appendix D). Where agreement has not been reached or there are qualifications or complications, the position is outlined in the body of the submission under the heading "consultation."

Initiating ministers must amend their drafts to adequately reflect the suggestions of the department consulted; to simply record a difference of view as a "Consultation Comment" should be the last resort. However, it is appropriate to use the "Consultation Section" to record concisely the recommendations when they do *not* represent a consensus of the views of those consulted.

In preparing memoranda, ministers need to consider whether consultation with State Premiers and ministers is appropriate.

The Ten Day Rule

A *Ten Day Rule* that memoranda are not normally listed for consideration by a functional committee less than ten calendar days after their submission to the Cabinet Office was introduced in order to encourage inter-departmental consultation, as well. The rule aims to replace the long-standing bureaucratic practice of departments arming their respective ministers for a Cabinet fight with consensus decision-making and compromise. This rule gives more advance time for staff to consult with other departments, find out what they will brief their Ministers, and resolve differences before Cabinet meets.

In other countries, such as Canada, where there is a *Forty-Eight Hour Rule*, there is much less of an opportunity for departments to sort out their differences in advance. However, in Australia there is no formal interdepartmental meeting at the Assistant Secretary Level like there is in Canada, where officials exchange information about what positions their departments will take.

The department also briefs other Ministers whose portfolios will have particular responsibilities in relation to proposals coming before the Cabinet, such as the Attorney General and the Minister of Finance. For other portfolios, in cases where there is a clear-cut interest, the minister's own department would normally brief him. In case of matters which are unrelated (directly) to their portfolio, it is up to the minister to determine whether to seek advice from his/her department.

Handling of Cabinet Business without Submission

Ministers may seek the Prime Minister's permission to raise particular matters in Cabinet without lodging a formal submissions in three circumstances:

- when procedural (not policy) matters are urgent;
- when urgent policy matters are sufficiently straightforward not to require a Cabinet Submission and which cannot be resolved in another way;
- when appointments are being made.

Cabinet Committees

In theory, issues must be discussed at Cabinet committee before going to full Cabinet. But as one senior adviser in the Cabinet Office put it, "Routine matters are dealt with in committees and go to Cabinet for endorsement, while the sexy stuff goes straight to the Cabinet."

In casting an eye over the history of Cabinet committee structures in Australia, the characteristic that is most apparent is the degree to which the structures change not only when

governments change but also within the term of governments. This pattern reflects that areas for priority attention by any government have changed over time. However, the five functional and coordinating committees which operate presently have operated in one form or another, throughout the period of the present government and indeed through much of the period of the previous government. As of October, 1993, there were eleven Cabinet committees. Six of these committees are considered functional or coordinating committees:

- General Administrative Committee
- Security Committee
- Expenditure Review Committee
- Parliamentary Business Committee
- Legislation Committee
- Revenue Committee

There are also five policy development committees: Structural Adjustment and Trade, Republic, Native Title, White Paper (an ad hoc Committee on Employment), and Social Policy. Decisions of these committees go to Cabinet for endorsement or result in the preparation of a submission which is then considered and settled by Cabinet. Both the Structural Adjustment Committee and the Social and Family Policy Committee set forward their own work programs. Policy committees decide on their own work program after considering a memorandum which the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet coordinates, proposing issues which the committee may wish to consider together with a timetable for development of the resulting papers. A great deal of interdepartmental consultation and ministerial involvement contributes to the settlement of a work program.

While the Prime Minister is the chair of all of the Committees except for Legislation Strategy, he very rarely attends meetings. This practice of the PM choosing not to participate in Cabinet Committees is highly unusual, according to senior Cabinet office officials, and is a function of Prime Minister Keating's personal style. In the Prime Minister's absence, the Deputy Chair runs most of the Committee meetings.

Structural Adjustment Committee

The Structural Adjustment Committee has played an especially active role in the area of reform of government business enterprises. The government first determined general principles — principles directed at providing government business enterprises with greater commercial flexibility and freedom and, in that context, a clearer definition of the government's role and relationship to them. Based upon these principles, the committee then progressively worked up reform packages for each government-business enterprise, subject to Cabinet endorsement. "Task groups" of officials, generally convened by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, supported much of the committee's work, especially in other areas of micro reform.

Cabinet and the Budget

The budget is one of the most important issues with which Cabinet must deal in any year. The pattern in recent years — in both the Fraser and Hawke government periods — has often been to have a major economic statement in the first half of the year addressed particularly to expenditure, as well as a budget in August. This, together with the government's major priority given to expenditure reduction, has led to unusually heavy demands on the Cabinet and more particularly on the Expenditure Review Committee. In 1988-89, the present government replaced the system of comprehensive budget review with an agreed target figure. This change has allowed the Expenditure Review Committee to concentrate on larger issues and options.

Australian Experiment with a Policy Unit: The Priorities Review Staff

The Australian experience with the creation of a policy unit, the Priorities Review Staff (PRS), based on the British Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS) model, offers some useful lessons for PAC-Zambia. The origins of the PRS lie in the activity of a small group of public servants prior to the 1972 general election. This group was comprised of mainly young, middle level public servants, some of whom were active members of the Labor party. Their chief concern was to ensure that the Commonwealth bureaucracy responded satisfactorily to the demands placed upon it by a reformist government. Suspicious of the bureaucratic elite which had loyally served a conservative ministry for over two decades, the group debated a variety of proposals for restructuring the public service.

One such idea was the creation of a policy analysis and advisory body similar to the British CPRS (1971-83). Peter Wilenski, in particular, who became Prime Minister Whitlam's principal private secretary in 1972, was impressed with this recent British innovation and was convinced of the need in Australia for some kind of unit at the center of government to conduct strategic reviews of government priorities and investigate important longer-term issues that cut across departmental boundaries. In the view of Wilenski and other members of the group, the modern system of cabinet governments was biased *against* rational decision-making. Cabinet ministers, and especially the prime minister, did not have the necessary resources or time to give sufficient attention to longer-term questions and issues of strategic importance. Consequently, ministers tended to become immersed in and overburdened by day-to-day problems. Decisions were often taken in isolation and in the absence of a full understanding of their implications (Boston 1980).

In particular, they believed that it was crucial to provide ministers with some sort of advisory machinery to help focus their minds on the problems of tomorrow, to assist them in fashioning and applying a corporate strategy and to ensure that they were not deflected from their chosen course by either the pressure of events or the advice of senior officials.

To satisfy this need, Wilenski proposed that Australia establish a CPRS-type unit. It would be given a multiplicity of roles. In the first place it would be responsible for undertaking in-depth policy studies and providing a Labor government with independent advice. Second, it would have a priorities and strategic review function. This would entail analysing the Labor Party's platform, distilling it, sorting out priorities and resolving possible inconsistencies. It

would not, of course, set priorities itself, this being the function of cabinet. Rather, it would supply the administrative back-up so that cabinet could better perform this task. Third, the group would provide a rapid economically rational "second opinion" on those issues on which cabinet considered it did not have the complete picture. Finally Wilenski foresaw a group of this nature playing a role in the evaluation and review of the forward estimates prepared annually by the Treasury. This would enable the government to be kept informed of significant expenditure trends and longer-term projections. As a result, policy-making would be given greater coherence and consistency with short-term policies designed and implemented in such a way as to harmonize with intended longer-term programs and developments (Boston 1990).

Conditions for Success: Support of the Prime Minister and High-Quality Staff

The architects of this policy unit recognized that a group of this nature could only succeed in fulfilling such difficult and sensitive tasks if certain preconditions relating to its staff, location, and political support were met. Conceptually it called for a body with strong coordinating powers and the explicit backing of the prime minister. Indeed, it seemed logical, in light of the important functions of such a group, to place it under the direct supervision and control of the prime minister. In this way, the PM would have the unit directly at his disposal. Furthermore, it would furnish the group with the necessary high level political support to operate effectively and have its recommendations taken seriously. The prime minister's authority would protect the group, guarantee its entree into the bureaucracy, and gain it access to the information and resources required for its advisory functions.

The second condition for the unit's success was a high quality staff. Clearly, if the group was to carry political weight it would need a director of high ability and national standing who could attract a top-notch staff. To fulfill its functions of policy research and analysis, the unit would need people similar to those who served in the British CPRS — young, highly educated and multidisciplinary.

Translating this ideal vision of the unit into reality proved to be a far more arduous and controversial task than had been anticipated. Many of the problems encountered were political. Senior public servants — who did not welcome the idea of having another stream of competing advice — opposed the venture. The difficulties were compounded by Prime Minister Whitlam's lack of wholehearted support. While he was prepared to back the initiative of his private office staff to a limited extent, he was unwilling to support them against strong bureaucratic opposition. As a result, it took Wilenski and his colleagues in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) over six months to get the new group operational. During this period there was considerable bureaucratic wrangling and in-fighting and the PMO was defeated on several crucial occasions. The net result was that the group which eventually came into existence in 1973 was quite different in form and structure from that originally conceived.

There was great disagreement over the location of the group, how it would be staffed, and exactly what it would do. Logically, the place for a CPRS-type unit within the Canberra bureaucracy was the department of PM and Cabinet. However during the short period during which the Labor party had been the government, PM & C. had proved to be a major thorn in the

flesh of the PMO. The PMO feared that the sort of unit envisaged could become stifled if situated in PM & C. It might lose its independence and find its access to Whitlam restricted.

As a result, it was seemed desirable to find a more welcoming environment. The department of the Special Minister of State where the group served as a secretariat to a forward estimates committee, established under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, was chosen. Location of the unit here removed from Treasury its monopoly over the forward estimates process and enabled ministers to receive advice from another source.

There was a delay once the location was chosen before the group actually came into being because of an intense internal debate which developed over the appointment of the group's director. Senior bureaucrats preferred Austin Homes, chief manager of the Research Department at the Reserve Bank in Sydney, an insider who was believed to be politically independent and was thought likely to adopt a low profile. In other words, he could be trusted not to cause too much disruption to existing patterns of decision-making. In contrast, the Prime Minister's office wanted a prestigious and gifted "irregular," who enjoyed a high public profile and who was generally sympathetic to Labor's political aims. One such person was Professor Peter Karmel, a highly respected economist and educationalist who was thought to have more empathy with the interventionist economic philosophy of the Whitlam administration. When it was Austin Holmes who was eventually appointed, the Prime Minister's Office at first attempted to overturn the appointment, but then backed down after it provoked an uproar among several leading public servants. Prime Minister Whitlam was not prepared to support his staff when it was, in his view, a matter of no great consequence (Boston 1980).

A second political battle erupted over the composition of the unit's staff. The PMO wanted a non-hierarchical group of general supporters of the Labor Party representing a wide range of professional skills. Holmes preferred a two-tiered structure strongly weighted towards economics. Moreover, he was concerned that the staff should be selected on the basis of intellectual talent alone rather than political motivation. Holmes' vision won out. The result was that the group was less political and high-powered than had been intended, and the PMO had little success in securing positions for its candidates.

The lack of bureaucratic and political support for the PRS concept, which became evident during the events of the group's establishment, did not augur well for the new unit, however well it was constructed. It is not surprising, therefore, that the group encountered significant difficulties in meeting the demands of its founding charter. Without question the least successful area of the group's operations concerned its responsibilities for assisting ministers with their analysis of the forward estimates. One of the problems was that there was considerable scepticism within Treasury regarding the utility and efficacy of the new procedures. Furthermore, the group lacked the resources necessary to undertake the sort of review and analytical work intended. In the view of some officials, to comment on the forward estimates in detail would have demanded about fifty people, the total cooperation of Treasury and the assistance of department to cost alternative proposals. The PRS enjoyed none of these.

A second task which the PRS undertook with relatively little success was that of encouraging cabinet to take a longer-term view and fashion a corporate strategy. The group

conducted a "strategy review" assessing the government's first year in office which examined the government's programs in relation to its ultimate goals. Not unexpectedly, the PRS uncovered certain inconsistencies and areas where government policies would detract from, rather than further the pursuit of Labor's vision. For political reasons, the group never again undertook a similar venture. From early 1974 the Labor government encountered increasing economic and political problems. There was the oil crisis, opposition in the Liberal controlled Senate to certain Labor policies, and deep rifts within cabinet. With a rapidly deteriorating domestic situation and an equally gloomy international forecast the PRS considered it unwise to commission another review. The news could only be bad and Labor ministers would hardly thank the group for reminding them, not only of their current mistakes but also of their impending disasters. More significantly, as the political crisis deepened, ministers became less and less interested in the long term (Boston 1980).

Evidence from PRS suggests that it may be impossible to carry out the strategy review function effectively. There are inherent difficulties in presenting the material to ministers and provoking constructive debate, particularly given the time constraints. Furthermore, there could be sociological and psychological pressures on the group, especially if it feels insecure, for it to pander to the known prejudices and interests of ministers. Finally, and most importantly, if there is a lack of political commitment the whole overview and strategy function will be no more than an exercise in futility. If the cabinet fails to take heed of the warnings given, if delicate issues are sidestepped or if the government refuses to come to grips with its priorities and objectives, the group is simply wasting its time (Boston 1980).

In summary, the PRS suffered from two general weaknesses: inadequate political support and insufficient bargaining resources for dealing with their bureaucratic neighbors. As a direct result of these two underlying problems, high level advisory boards like the PRS can be neutralized by organizational pressures and thereby rendered ineffective. None of the ministers which it served were unequivocally committed to the PRS concept. Even Prime Minister Whitlam, to whom the group was primarily responsible, did not give it his wholehearted support. Relations with the prime minister deteriorated when the group opposed PM Whitlam's accident compensation scheme. Thus, unlike the British CPRS, the Australian group never acquired stability in regard to its political relations and failed to achieve the bi-partisan commitment which the CPRS retained for almost a decade.

Some of the group's problems with the bureaucracy were inevitable. The PRS was expected to be, as with the CPRS, "grit in the machine." It was expected to ask officials awkward questions, challenge vested interests, investigate sensitive issues and put forward views which departments had preferred to ignore. If nothing else, the PRS was not established to make the lives of Canberra bureaucrats any easier. Indeed, the reverse was intended (Boston 1980).

Reacting to this, departments resorted to a variety of tactics for reducing the potential threat which the PRS represented to their interests. Typically, for example, whenever the group investigated a specific area of policy the department responsible would adopt a defensive strategy. This might lead to a protracted dispute of the term of reference of the PRS study. Another option open to a department or minister who felt unjustifiably condemned in a PRS report was to try to prevent its publication. Finally, if departments considered they had been unreasonably

harmful by the PRS they would feed their ministers counter-briefs and seek to neutralise the impact of the group. Such tactics were made more effective in the case of the PRS by the group's limited political backing.

The case of the Australian PRS elucidates what such high-level policy units can and cannot do well. In brief, the Australian experience suggests that these units can be useful to a government in four ways. First, they can provide second opinions on important public policy matters and generate new policy options. Second, they can question departmental assumptions and can be mobilized as an independent third force to help resolve interdepartmental policy conflicts. Third, they can devise alternative means of fulfilling election pledges. Finally, they can encourage ministers to consider the longer-term and clarify their objectives.

While they may perform these functions well, the Australian case suggests that one should not overestimate the prospects of policy units. By their very nature, thinktanks like the CPRS in Britain and PRS in Australia are difficult to accommodate within existing political and administrative structures. What they **cannot** do is effect a major shift in bureaucratic power: they cannot act as a "counter-bureaucracy." The Australian experience also suggests that they are unlikely to bring about many fundamental policy changes.

State Government

Australia's six states have governments that are similar in their formal institutions to their federal counterpart. Their constitutions originated in the colonial period and reflect British tradition more closely than the federal constitution; power to change the constitution lies in the legislature alone. All states operate on the British system of cabinet government. With the exception of Queensland, each has a lower and an upper House of Parliament. Heads of government in the states are known as premiers. Each has its own Governor with powers similar to the Governor-General's, also exercised on the advice of the government.

In the years since federation, increasing powers have been transferred to the federal Government or shared by the states with the federal Government. For the past 50 years, the federal Government has levied income tax on companies and individuals and distributed part of the revenue to the states through consultation with the state premiers.

The Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory have governments of their own, though their powers are not the same as those of state governments. The territories' heads of governments are known as chief ministers.

State Cabinets: The Case of New South Wales

The Cabinet of New South Wales will be discussed here in an effort to shed some light on the Australian experience with state Cabinet government. The Cabinet Office of New South Wales consists of the Cabinet Secretariat, a legal Branch, and four policy branches which mirror the principal committees of Cabinet (Justice and Consumer Affairs, Social Development, Natural Resources and Industrial Resources).

The Premier now has three central agencies reporting to him directly and working closely together — the Cabinet Office, which manages the Cabinet process and provides the Premier with an independent source of policy advice; the Premier's Department, which has overriding responsibility for the effectiveness and efficiency with which government policy is implemented; and the Treasury, which retains its primary responsibility for questions of economy.

In 1988, following the change of government, the Premier removed the Cabinet Division out of the old Premier's Department and established it as a department in its own right. One of the consequences of establishing The Cabinet Office as a department in its own right has been to focus its attention much more closely on the development of policy and on the efficient management of the Cabinet process. For example, a much greater emphasis has been placed on resolving disagreements between agencies prior to listing matters on the Cabinet agenda.

Policy Unit: Office of Strategic Planning

In 1989/90, the Cabinet Office of New South Wales created an Office of Strategic Planning (OSP) modelled loosely on the Australian Priorities Review Staff, discussed above, and the British Central Policy Review Staff (1971-83), discussed in the *Cabinet Profile-Great Britain*.

The OSP is concerned with developing a strategic capability at the center of government in order to assist the Premier and the Cabinet to think in a structured way about the future development of policy. The objectives of the OSP are:

- to reinforce and extend the capacity of the Cabinet Office to provide strategic policy advice to government;
- to provide a process through which government may agree on and commit to medium to long term policies and the strategies necessary to achieve those policies.

Its activities in 1992-3 included:

- providing planning and research input and advice on various matters to the Premier and Cabinet, Director-General, other Cabinet Office branches, central agencies, other departments and agencies;
- contributing to a major environmental policy development program designed to explore the application of innovative incentive-based systems to a number of specific air and water quality challenges;
- designing and editing the Third Edition of the *Strategic Information Base* which provides trend and comparative information on resources consumed by agencies, results produced, and the social, demographic and economic context;
- advising agencies on Corporate Plans;

managing the Fundamental Review of Inner Budget Programs aimed at refocussing program objectives and structure away from consumption of resources and description of activities towards identification of beneficiaries and delivery of results. OSP's role included developing methodology and process, promoting the Review to departments and agencies, acting as a facilitator, suggesting strategic issues, and quality control.

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List of Persons Interviewed

Great Britain

Alan Bookbinder, Producer, BBC

Kenneth Hogg, Private Secretary to Secretary to the Cabinet

Nick Manning, Commonwealth Secretariat, Management Specialist, Management Training Division (currently conducting survey on "Good Practices in Public Service Management").

Diana Reynolds, Information Officer, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Research Associate, Economic Policy, Parliament

Australia

Patrick Buechner, Public Affairs Office, Australian Embassy.

James Hines, Public Affairs Office, Australian Embassy.

Carol Summerhayes, Senior Adviser, Cabinet Office

Susan Williams, Assistant Secretary, Social Policy Office, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

Sub-Saharan Africa

Prof. John Cohen, Harvard Institute for International Development.

Prof. Paul Collier, Harvard and Oxford.

Dr. David Gordon, Senior Adviser for Africa, U.S. House of Representatives.

Prof. Robert Rotberg, World Peace Foundation.

Prof. Jennifer Widener, Harvard.

Botswana

Mr. Legwaile, Permanent Secretary to the President (Secretary to the Cabinet), Gaborone.

Mr. Simon Tau, Botswana Embassy.

Prof. Stephen Lewis, President, Carleton College (former Adviser to the Ministry of Finance resident in Botswana 1977-78 and 1980-82.

Mr. Clark Leith, Director of Research, Bank of Botswana.
Prof. John Holme, Cleveland State

Prof. Pauline Peters, Harvard Institute for International Development.

Malaysia and Singapore

Mr. Mokhdar, Malaysia Counsel General in New York (He was enthusiastic about the prospects of the Zambians visiting Malaysia. He mentioned that they train civil servants from other developing countries in economic planning through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Program at their Training Institute, INTAN, located in the Prime Minister's Office.)

Mohammed Sani Adam, Deputy Secretary, Cabinet Division, Prime Minister's Dept., Kuala Lumpur (agreed in principle to share details about the his office with the Zambians).

Mr. Chan Heng-wing, Prime Minister's Office, Singapore.

Mr. Yip Seng Cheong, Singapore Police Force, Mason Fellow, Harvard University.

Mr. Choi Shing Kwok, Minister of Defense, Singapore, Mason Fellow, Harvard University.

Prof. Diane Mauzy, University of British Columbia.

Prof. R.S. Milne, Univ. of British Columbia.

Prof. John Montgomery, Harvard.

Prof. John Quah, Head of Political Science Dept., Singapore Univ., Visiting Professor, Harvard.

Prof. Jomo Kwame Sundarara, University of Malaysia, Visiting Professor, Cornell University.

Canada

Mr. Robert Mayne, Analyst, Economic Policy Secretariat, Privy Council Office, Ottawa.

Ms. Catherine Latimer, Social Policy Secretariat, Privy Council Office, Ottawa.

Mr. Francois Arsenaud, Adviser, Privy Council, Ottawa

Prof. Hellywill, Prof. of Canadian Studies, Harvard.

Prof. Allen Henrickson, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

Dr. Tom Axeworthy, Bronfman Foundation, former assistant to P.M. Trudeau (not yet interviewed).

Mr. Ivan Head, former assistant to P.M. Trudeau (not yet interviewed).

Senator Michael Pittfield, former Privy Council, Trudeau government (not yet interviewed).

United States

Dr. John Rielly, President, Chicago Council of Foreign Relations



**IMPLEMENTING
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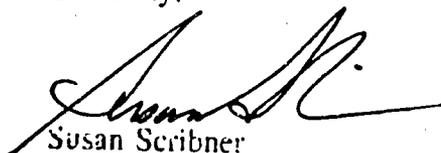
January 4, 1995.

S. Wade DeWitt
Document Acquisitions
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Dear Mr. DeWitt,

I am submitting to CDIE the enclosed documents of Project #936-5451, the Implementing Policy Change (IPC) Project (Contract #DHR-5451-Q-00-0110-00). A list of these documents is enclosed for your reference.

Sincerely,



Susan Scribner
Deputy Research Director

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of Maryland
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