

*Committees of the Privy Council,*  
1688-1760\*

CABINET and privy council in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are as perplexing and as hard to delineate as the council of the king in the middle ages. It has for a long while been obvious that the privy council increased in size and diminished in importance, was divided into committees, and presently yielded its power to the cabinet, which in some way arose in connexion with it; but the further task of the student here consists in searching out and examining an immense number of little fragments of information which singly seem unintelligible, to establish definitions and discover originals, until out of a chaos of details are seen the outlines of forms which developed gradually and during a long time. No part of this subject is more difficult to understand or has been less understood than certain committees of the council, which were for a great while passed by as things vague and trivial, or misinterpreted and hastily described. The problem is an intricate one, and the result may be thought barren and not worthy of much labour; but inasmuch as the student of council and cabinet stumbles upon it at every turn, I propose to examine it minutely and in detail.

During the earlier Stuart period and also after the Restoration the privy council was divided into committees, some of which became all-powerful and engrossed all important business, and were, indeed, the ancestors of the later cabinet. The committees of this period were parts of the privy council, made up of certain councillors named by the king for the superintendence of particular business; that is to say, they were temporary or standing committees of limited membership. In the years after 1660 a great number of temporary committees were formed, and from time to time important standing committees were instituted, particularly in 1668 and 1679, when the council was re-formed.<sup>1</sup> But while considerable success was achieved with this system, it

\* [It may be desirable to state that this article was received before the publication of Mr. Temperley's Note on Inner and Outer Cabinets in our April number.—*Ed. E. H. R.*]

<sup>1</sup> State Papers, Dom., Charles II, cclxxvi. 374-83; Privy Council Register, lx, 12 February 1667/8; lxviii, 22 April 1679.

was frequently difficult to get work accomplished. Many of the tasks were arduous and uninspiring, so that members would not attend.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, there were certain officials particularly trusted by the king, while it was natural that some members because of their activity and their interest in affairs should appear evidently more fitted for the transaction of business than their colleagues. The result was that even in the early years after Charles returned to England the numerous committees of his council were largely manned by a few of his select councillors,<sup>3</sup> and this was notably the case when several standing committees were constituted at the same time. Some members were put upon so many committees that their council duties occupied them almost entirely.<sup>4</sup>

Concentration of committee work in the hands of a few members was brought about more thoroughly still. Some councillors were not only put on several committees, but permitted to be on all of them. When the committee of foreign affairs was formed in 1668 the members named were in addition to 'his Royall Highness who is understood to be of all Committees where he pleases to be'; and the regulation adds: 'His Majestys further meaning is . . . that his Two Principall Secretaries, of State, be ever understood to be of all Committees.'<sup>5</sup> By 1679 it seems to have been recognized that certain important officials were by virtue of their position on all committees,<sup>6</sup> and that others were so by the king's special command.<sup>7</sup> In 1690, when Godolphin was sworn of the council, the entry which follows in the Register is: 'The Right Honourable the Lord Godolphin added to all Committees.'<sup>8</sup> Sometimes the members of one committee were all together put upon another one also.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Pepys, *Diary*, 27 February 1664/5; Privy Council Register, lv, 15 November 1661. 'His Majesty was pleased to Direct the Lords of the Council that now in his absence the Committees be better attended then of late, particularly the Committee of Trade & Plantations': *ibid.*, lxxiii, 30 May 1690.

<sup>3</sup> State Papers, Dom., Charles II, civ. 139-48.

<sup>4</sup> Diary of the Earl of Anglesey, Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 18730, January 1679 and following; also State Papers, Dom., Charles II, cccxxiv, 12 June 1683.

<sup>5</sup> Privy Council Register, lx, 12 February 1667/8.

<sup>6</sup> A correspondent, after naming some of the members of the new committee of intelligence, adds, 'And of course the Lord Chancellor, Lord President and two Secretaries, who are of this as well as of all other Committees': Sir Robert Southwell to the Duke of Ormonde, 22 April 1679, *Hist. MSS. Commission Reports, Ormonde MSS.*, new series, iv. 504. The order establishing the committee of intelligence names the lord chancellor and the lord president, 'who with the two Secretaries may be present at all Committees, as often as they see fit': Privy Council Register, lxxviii, 22 April 1679.

<sup>7</sup> 'His Majesty was pleased this day to command That Sir Robert Carr Chancellor of the Dutchy be of all Committees of this Boord': *ibid.*, lxix, 20 October 1680.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxiv, 20 November 1690.

<sup>9</sup> Ordered that 'the Committee of this Boord appointed for Trade and plantations, be likewise a Committee for the affaires of Jersey and Guernsey': *ibid.*, lxxviii, 7 May 1679; also lxxiii, 26 February 1688/9.

What was apparently the reverse of this process of concentration was the appointing of all the members of the council to be on a committee. Most probably this was done because it was difficult to get many members to come, and also because it was very certain that no great number besides the important, dependable members would attend. In 1668 a large committee of trade and plantations and a large committee of grievances were appointed, but 'his Majestys further meaneing' was 'That to these Two last Committees any of the Councill may have liberty to come and Vote'.<sup>10</sup> The first instance of all the council being appointed a committee occurred in 1679 :<sup>11</sup>

His Majesty was this day pleased in Councill to order, That there be a Committee of Examinations appointed, to meet for inquiring into all Things relating to the Plot. That all the Lords of the Councill be of the said Committee, and that their Lordships meet on Saturday morning next, and so from time to tyme, as their Lordships shall see cause, and appoint, and that their Lordships do omit nothing, That may expresse their Care and Zeale in the Vigorous Prosecution of the Plot.

Next year Charles ordained that 'the Lords of his Majestys most Honourable Privy Councill or any three or more of them bee . . . a Committee of this Board to take care for the redemption of Captives now in Slavery att Algiers, Sally & other places on the Coast of Africa'.<sup>12</sup> A few years later the Earl of Moray writes : 'This afternoon the wholl Councill was turned into a Committy for consideringe of the time and maner of the King's Coronatione',<sup>13</sup> this being, apparently, the first explicit reference to a committee of the whole council. In 1688 the whole council was appointed a standing committee for trade and plantations.<sup>14</sup> A little later the lords of the council were appointed to examine the accounts of money collected for the poor : 'The Councill to be a Committee' is the note which the clerk makes in the margin of the Register.<sup>15</sup>

It has been said that the year 1688 marks a definite change in the character of committees of the privy council, to the extent that while before this time they were separate, limited committees of definite membership, afterwards they were all committees of the whole council, and therefore all of them virtually one and the same.<sup>16</sup> The transition was, however, much more gradual, as might be expected ; for just as the committee of the whole council makes its appearance in the reign of Charles II, so his limited

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, lx, 12 February 1667/8.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxviii, 28 May 1679.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxix, 15 September 1680.

<sup>13</sup> *Hist. MSS. Comm. Rep., Buccleuch MSS. (Drumlanrig)*, ii. 44.

<sup>14</sup> Privy Council Register, lxxii, 27 January 1687/8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxii, 27 April 1688.

<sup>16</sup> C. M. Andrews in *American Historical Review*, xvi. 120.

standing committees were reappointed by James II,<sup>17</sup> and such committees were appointed by William III; and were appointed for a long time after. In 1689 certain councillors were chosen a 'Committee for the Affaires of Ireland'. At the same time certain others were instructed to consider methods of giving notice to foreign princes of his majesty's accession, while twelve became 'a Committee of this Boord for Trade & Forrain Plantations'; and many such instances occur.<sup>18</sup> In 1694 another standing committee for the affairs of Ireland was appointed.<sup>19</sup> Anne in her first council caused certain members to be 'a Committee to take Care of the Disposall of the late Kings Body', and a few days later she chose eighteen councillors for 'a Committee of this Board, to consider of the manner of the Coronation'.<sup>20</sup> Subsequent occasions of coronation or funeral saw groups of this kind,<sup>21</sup> but otherwise few limited committees were constituted now;<sup>22</sup> the principal exceptions being those appointed to deal with bills transmitted from the parliament of Ireland. In 1709 Anne appointed thirteen members to consider an Irish bill and report their opinion in council.<sup>23</sup> A month later she ordered that eleven of the members just named and three others should be a committee for the consideration of several bills from Ireland.<sup>24</sup> As time went on it became customary to appoint a committee of limited membership to examine the bills prepared in each session of the Irish parliament.<sup>25</sup>

It is none the less true that after the Revolution the council committees become, nearly all of them, committees of the whole council. Almost always when they are appointed they are specially constituted to include all the council members, while committees which seem at first to have been limited in the number who composed them, acquire the character of the prevailing type. In 1693, the queen being in council with twelve members, it was 'this day Ordered by Her Majesty in Councill, that the Lords of the Councill now present, be . . . a Committee, to examine the

<sup>17</sup> Privy Council Register, lxxi, 20 February 1684/5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxiii, 14, 16, 26 February 1688/9, 6 June, 1 July 1689; lxxiv, 19 February 1690/1, 30 July, 3 November 1691; lxxv, 29 March 1694; lxxvi, 30 December 1694.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxv, 29 November 1694.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxix, 8 March 1701/2, 26 March 1702.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxii, 30 October 1708; lxxxv, 30 August 1714.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxvi, 22 March 1719/20; c, 6 March 1746/7.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxii, 9 June 1709.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 July 1709.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxiii, 10 July 1710; lxxxv, 6 January 1715/16; lxxxvi, 17 October 1717; lxxxviii, 14 November 1723; xc, 29 July 1727, 15 February 1727/8; xci, 25 November 1729, 25 November 1731; xcii, 27 November 1733; xciii, 6 November 1735; xciv, 22 November 1739; xcvi, 3 December 1741; xcvi, 19 November 1743; xcix, 7 November 1745; c, 4 November 1747; ci, 23 November 1749; cii, 31 October 1751; ciii, 14 November 1753; civ, 11 November 1755; cv, 28 October 1757; cvii, 9 November 1759.

Business of Proving Great Guns'.<sup>26</sup> There were during the first years of William and Mary several standing committees of limited membership, such as the committee of trade and the committee for Ireland, but few, if any, new ones were formed. In 1693 occurs what is probably the first formal designation of a committee of the whole council. Upon reading a memorial about the ship *Fortune*:<sup>27</sup>

It is Ordered by His Majesty in Councill; That the Consideration of that whole matter, bee, and it is hereby referred to a Committee of the whole Councill who are to meet on Munday morning next at Nine a Clock, and having heard the matter, Report the State thereof . . . to his Majestie in Councill.

A few days after a proposal of the lords commissioners of the admiralty brought before the king in council is also 'Referred to a Committee of the whole Councill'.<sup>28</sup> In 1695 the lords justices order that the councillors be a committee for determining a claim, and the clerk's note thereupon is: 'Councill appointed a Committee to hear the Claims of the Heralds, &c.'<sup>29</sup> On numerous occasions now matters which arise in council, and which would in the days of Charles II have been referred to temporary committees composed of a few members, are referred for further consideration to 'a Committee of the whole Councill', 'the Lords of the Committee of the whole Councill', or 'all the Lords of the Councill'.<sup>30</sup> In 1700 the councillors are appointed a committee to inspect the lists of justices of the peace.<sup>31</sup> During the last years of William apparently no more limited committees were appointed, and particular business was now referred as a matter of course to all the lords to act as a committee, or to committees which in origin were limited in membership but which were fast becoming also committees of the whole council.<sup>32</sup>

Anne continued to deal with business in this manner. In 1702 she referred a report of the attorney-general to 'the Committee of the whole Councill'. In the year following she ordered 'That the Lords of the whole Councill be, and are hereby appointed a Committee' to examine certain proceedings; and about the same time she referred to such a group a bill from Ireland.<sup>33</sup> In 1704 a communication about the colliers of Newcastle combining to keep up the price of coals was referred by the queen to 'a Committee of the whole Councill'.<sup>34</sup> In 1707 the lords were thus ordered to consider various matters relating to the Act of Union.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxv, 14 September 1693.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 December 1693.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 January 1693/4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxvi, 11 July 1695.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 January 1695/6, 19 November, 10 December 1696.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxviii, 25 April 1700.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxiii-lxxviii.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxix, 2 July 1702, 25 November, 17 December 1703.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxx, 25 May, 1704.

About this time a dispute between the earl marshal and the lord great chamberlain is referred to 'a Committee of Her Majestys most Honourable Privy Councill', without naming any members to compose it.<sup>35</sup> In 1710 the regulation of the coal trade is referred to 'a Committee of the whole Council', later on the case of the Canary merchants, and afterwards complaints against the late governor of Barbados.<sup>36</sup> In 1714 a report concerning Pennsylvanian laws is made 'By the Lords of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council in a Committee of the whole Council'.<sup>37</sup>

Immediately after the death of Anne the drafts of her wills were referred to 'a Committee' to which the lords justices appointed thirteen members by name, 'and any other Lords of the Councill that will be present,' and at the first meeting of which the attendance was fifteen. A few days later a committee was appointed in the same manner to consider plans for the coronation.<sup>38</sup> More important, however, it was that very shortly after George I arrived in England a standing committee of the whole council was formally established for several kinds of business:<sup>39</sup>

That the whole Privy Council or any Three or more of them be, and hereby are appointed a Committee for the Affairs of Jersey and Guernzey, Hearing of Appeals from the Plantations, & other Matters that shalbe referred to them, And that they proceed to hear and examine such Causes as have been Referred to Committees of the Council by Her late Majesty.

A little while after the lords of the council 'in a Committee of the whole Council' prepare a report about the quartering of his majesty's arms.<sup>40</sup> In 1715 it was ordered that all reports, petitions, and other papers depending before the council be referred to 'the Lords of the Committee of the Whole Councill' to examine them and give such directions as their lordships should judge proper.<sup>41</sup> It would be useless to multiply examples of what now came to be the usual, indeed the regular, procedure.

How strong the tendency was towards making committees of the privy council, which had originally been parts of the council composed of particular members, gatherings which might be attended by any councillors who chose to come, is shown by the gradual change of standing committees formerly limited in membership into committees of the whole council. The standing committees appointed after the reorganization of the privy

<sup>35</sup> Privy Council Register, lxxxi, 13 March 1706/7, 29 April 1707.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxiii, 16 July, 2, 30 November 1710.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxiv, 20 March 1713/14. This is spoken of as 'a Committee of the whole Council' in Journals of the Committee of Trade and Plantations, Colonial Office, 391, xxiv, 9 June 1714.

<sup>38</sup> Privy Council Register, lxxxv, 3, 5, 30 August 1714.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 October 1714.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 November 1714.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 September 1715.

council in 1679 were the committee of intelligence, the committee for Ireland, the committee for Tangier, and the committee for trade and plantations. The committee for Tangier lapsed when that possession was abandoned to the Moors, but the others were by general order continued by James at the beginning of his reign, the committee for trade and plantations becoming a committee of the whole council in his last year. After the Revolution the work of the committee of intelligence was done by the cabinet and by 'the lords of the committee' hereafter to be described. By special orders William constituted a committee for Irish affairs and a committee for trade and plantations. Both these committees tend to lose their character of limited membership, though select committees continued for a long while to be appointed for the consideration of bills sent to Whitehall from Ireland. By 1694 the committee of trade was getting to be a committee of the whole council, and a memorandum in the journal of its meetings declares that 'Upon Summoning Committees all the Lords of the Council are to have notice'.<sup>42</sup> The committee for Jersey and Guernsey was coming also to be merely an aspect of the committee of council, for in 1695 the clerk, writing an account of council routine, says, 'Any Jersey affair or complaint to ease the whole Council Re[ferred] to the Comm. of Jersey or of the whole Council'.<sup>43</sup> In 1696 the king ordered that 'all the Lords of the Council or any Three or more of them, be Appointed a Committee' for the hearing of appeals from the plantations.<sup>44</sup> In 1697 a complaint from Jersey is considered 'At a Committee of the whole Council'. Three years later an act of assembly passed in Nevis is by the king in council referred to 'a Committee of the whole Council, who are to Report to His Majesty what their Lordships Conceive fitt to be done thereupon'.<sup>45</sup>

How little of individuality or of limitation now pertains to what at first glance might seem to be various council committees, is shown by the merging of one committee into another, until, as has been well said, there is only one committee of the privy council.<sup>46</sup> Various names still persist, but they serve only to remind the student of what had once been true. In 1694 the Privy Council Register contains minutes of one meeting of the

<sup>42</sup> Journals of the Committee of Trade and Plantations, Colonial Office, 391, vii, 1 August 1694.

<sup>43</sup> Edward Southwell, Privy Council Routine, Add. MS. 34349, fo. 19. He mentions no other committees, though of course he alludes to the council of trade, which had recently been established.

<sup>44</sup> Privy Council Register, lxxvi, 10 December 1696.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxviii, 22 October, 1700.

<sup>46</sup> Andrews, *American Historical Review*, xvi. 120; J. Munro in *Acts of the Privy Council of England, Colonial Series*, ii, intro., pp. vi-xi; iii, intro., pp. viii, ix. In these writings may be found the most important accounts of the committee of the whole council hitherto published.

committee of trade and plantations, two of the committee for Ireland, and nine of the committee for Jersey and Guernsey.<sup>47</sup> After the establishment of the board of trade in 1696 much colonial business is referred from the privy council to the committee for hearing appeals from the plantations, while the committee of Jersey and Guernsey long continues to hold numerous meetings.<sup>48</sup> There are also meetings of 'the Lords of the Committee for Plantation Affairs', of 'a Committee of the Lords of the Privy Council for Plantation Affairs', and of 'the Lords of the Committee of Council for Plantation Affairs';<sup>49</sup> but these committees are far from confining themselves to the business which their titles ascribe to them. In 1713 a 'Committee for hearing of Appeals from the Plantations' attended to business concerning Guernsey as well as Barbados and Pennsylvania; and in 1734 such a committee dealt not only with business of Rhode Island and Antigua, but with the Isle of Man, and with disorder in Hertfordshire and Cornwall.<sup>50</sup>

Sometimes these varied interests are recognized in a more inclusive general title,<sup>51</sup> but they are more clearly to be perceived in titles which show that contemporaries saw little distinction between various committees, and understood well that they were all of them committees of the whole council, practically a single great committee, directing its attention now to business of one kind, now to another, and frequently to several different kinds on the same occasion. In 1698 there is a meeting of 'the Committee for heareing Appeales from the Plantations, For the Affaires of Jersey and Guernzey And for the Redemption of Captives'.<sup>52</sup> There are numerous meetings of committees for Jersey and Guernsey and for hearing appeals from the plantations.<sup>53</sup> In 1705 there are minutes of 'the Committee for Examining into the Bills Transmitted from Ireland, And for the Affaires of Jersey & Guernsey'.<sup>54</sup> There is a great variety of such titles: 'the

<sup>47</sup> Privy Council Register, lxxv, lxxvi.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxvi, 15 April 1697; lxxvii, 4 July, 2 September, 21 October, 25 November 1698, 29 June, 16 August, 9, 13 December 1699; lxxviii, 3 May 1700; lxxix, 18 March 1701/2; lxxxiv, 14 October 1713; lxxxvi, 29 January, 5 March 1717/18, 3 May, 10, 25 July, 15, 16 August, 19 November, 15, 17 December 1718; lxxxvii, 8 June, 16 November 1721; lxxxviii, 1, 22 February 1722/3, 26 July 1723, 12, 21 May 1724; xc, 5 July, 16 December 1727.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxvii, 14 December 1721; lxxxviii, 27 August 1723; xc, 20 September 1727; xcii, 8 January 1733/4.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxiv, 14 October 1713; xcii, 16 July 1734.

<sup>51</sup> 'By the Right Honourable the Lords of the Committee of Council for hearing Appeales from the Plantations and other Business': *ibid.*, xcvi, 11 November 1740.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxvii, 2 September 1698.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxvii, 2 August 1699; lxxviii, 22 May, 28 June 1700; lxxix, 8 December 1702, 8 January 1702/3; lxxxii, 6, 15 December 1709; lxxxvi, 17 March 1717/18, 29 April 1718; and *passim*.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxx, 30 April 1705.



Committee for Examining Witnesses, about the Dispute between Ld. Great Chamberlain &c And for considering the Irish Bills'; 'the Committee, touching the Ship Cathrine Condemned in Scotland, & for Jersey & Guernsey'; 'the Lords of the Committee for the Irish Bills, And for Hearing Appeals from the Plantations, Jersey and Guernzey'; 'the Committee for their Majestys Coronation, as also for Plantation Affairs'; 'a Committee . . . for the Irish Bills and for the Affairs of Carolina'; 'the Lords of the Committee of Council for Foreign Affairs'.<sup>55</sup> And the character of these committees, which is known in so many ways, is also revealed specifically in such titles as 'the Committee of the whole Councill to Consider of Barbado's Lawes, And for the Affaires of Jersey and Guernsey'; 'the Committee of the Whole Councill and for the Affaires of Jersey and Guernsey'; 'the Committee of the whole Councill to consider of the Irish Bill against Popery'; and 'a Committee of the whole Councill for Enquireing into the Ill Practices for Raising the Price of Coales, and to consider the Draught of a Charter for Importing Navall Stores from the Plantations'.<sup>56</sup> In another way that which had come to be is well exhibited in the title, as when 'the Rt. Honourable the Lord's of the Committee of the whole Councill' attend to matters relating to the pensioners of Chelsea College, Alderney, Jamaica, and Guernsey; or when 'A Committee of the Lords' attends to matters concerning the Isle of Man, Minorca, and the Bahama Islands.<sup>57</sup> By 1723 council business is very largely referred to 'a Committee of the Lords of His Majestys Most Honourable Privy Councill', most of the minutes are headed 'a Committee of the Lords', and these committees deal with matters relating to the colonies and to the Channel Islands just as do the committee of appeals and the committee for Jersey and Guernsey.<sup>58</sup>

The development of all committees, whatever name they may have, into one committee of the whole council is formally recognized again in the council order issued at the beginning of the reign of George II: <sup>59</sup>

It is this day ordered by His Majesty in Council, That the whole Privy Council, or any three or more of them, Be, and they are hereby appointed a Committee for the Affairs of Jersey and Guernsey for hearing Appeals from the Plantations and for other . . . Matters that shall be Referred to them.—And that they proceed to hear and Determine such Causes as have been referred to Committees of the Councill by His late Majesty, and Report the same with their Opinion thereupon to His Majesty at this Board.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxi, 14 May 1707; lxxxii, 13 May 1710; lxxxix, 20 November 1725; xc, 21 September 1727, 19 March 1727/8; xcvi, 23 April 1741.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxix, 6, 9 July 1702, 5 January 1703/4; lxxx, 17 June 1704.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxiv, 27 July 1713; lxxxviii, 15 February 1722/3.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxviii.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, xc, 5 July 1727.

And when a few months later the privy council was dissolved and a new one named, these regulations were at once renewed.<sup>60</sup> After 1714, indeed, the name of a committee signifies little, for most of the committees deal with business of different kinds. Apparently their titles denote merely what was first considered, or chiefly considered, or what was beforehand specially intended to be considered.

Although select, temporary committees of limited membership continued to be appointed, often now committees of the whole council were appointed instead, or else limited committees came in practice to be committees of the whole council, and as time went on were formally acknowledged to be such, and attended to business other than that for which they were supposed to be appointed. Previously limited committees had sometimes been appointed to attend to funerals or coronations, but George II ordered 'That all the Lords and others who have been Sworn of His Majestys Most Honourable Privy Councill or any three of them, Be . . . a Committee to Consider of the preparations necessary to be made for the Coronation of their Majestys'.<sup>61</sup> In 1751 in a privy council of thirty-two it was ordered that 'the Lords of the Council Present together with such others of His Majestys most Honourable Privy Council as shall attend or any three of them be appointed a Committee for His late Royal Highness the Prince of Wales's Funeral'.<sup>62</sup> Irish Bills continued to be referred ostensibly to limited committees, but this in the end was merely a matter of form. In 1716 a committee of eleven was appointed, and the clerk summarizes the order: 'Ireland Publick Bills referred to a Select Committee of the Councill.' Shortly after they met as 'the Lords of the Committee appointed to Consider the Bills transmitted from Ireland'. A week later they were 'the Lords of the Committee for the Irish Bills: And for the Affairs of Jersey & Guernsey'; a month after, 'the Lords of the Committee for the Irish Bills, and other Affairs'. A few days more and they are again 'the Rt. Honourable the Lords of the Committee for the Irish Bills', though they deal not merely with Ireland, but with Jersey and Guernsey. At these meetings are present some who were not in the beginning on the 'Select Committee'.<sup>63</sup> In 1721 following the appointment of a committee of nineteen are the minutes of 'the Lords of the Committee for the Irish Bills', which show that they reported on three Irish bills, and continue: 'Their Lordships afterwards Sate as a Committee for the Affairs of Jersey and Guernzey.'<sup>64</sup> In 1725 for the examination of Irish

<sup>60</sup> Privy Council Register, xc, 20 September 1727.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 August 1727.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, cii, 22 March 1750/1.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxv, 6, 17, 25 April, 27, 31 May 1716.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxvii, 11, 23 November 1721.

bills a committee of thirteen is appointed by name 'together with such other of the Lords of the Council as are in Town, or any three of them'.<sup>65</sup> Two years later, immediately after the appointment of a committee of the whole council for the coronation, it holds a meeting as 'the Lords of the Committee for their Majestys Coronation, and for the Irish Bills'.<sup>66</sup> In 1728 'the Committee of His Majestys Most Honourable Privy Council for the Irish Bills, and for Plantation Affairs' deals with Irish bills, a new charter for the York Buildings Company, and with business concerning Barbados and Carolina.<sup>67</sup>

Committees of the whole council met usually in the council chamber in the Cockpit in Whitehall.<sup>68</sup> Meetings of the privy council were held not infrequently at Hampton Court, Kensington, or St. James's, and as time went on some committee meetings also. They were held frequently, so that faithful attendance must have been an onerous duty. In 1694 there were fifty-five meetings of the committee of trade and plantations.<sup>69</sup> For 1718 the Privy Council Register contains minutes of twenty-two committees of the whole council.<sup>70</sup> There may have been many more, for it is certain that all-committees are not recorded in the Registers. In 1723 there are records of twenty-one meetings; in 1728, thirty-two; in 1731, forty; in 1753, twenty-five.<sup>71</sup> The increasing importance of these committees as compared with the council is shown by the fact that as time goes on the minutes of the committees have nearly as much space in the record as the minutes of the councils themselves.<sup>72</sup> They are recorded as meetings of the committee of trade and plantations, of appeals from the plantations, for Jersey and Guernsey, for Irish bills, and very frequently of 'the Committee'. The king was hardly ever at such a gathering; but it was very rare that the lord president did not preside. The attendance varied considerably. There were many meetings of seven, nine, ten, or twelve; there were some which had only three or four, and others which were attended by eighteen, twenty, or twenty-five.<sup>73</sup> The meetings of the privy council were usually larger, but not very much so, ranging from six or eight to twenty or twenty-five, with sometimes twice as many.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxix, 18 November 1725.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, xc, 8 August 1727.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 March 1727/8.

<sup>68</sup> Journals of the Committee of Trade and Plantations, Colonial Office, 391, and Privy Council Registers, *passim*.

<sup>69</sup> Colonial Office, 391, vii.

<sup>70</sup> Privy Council Register, lxxxvi.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxviii, xc, xci, ciii.

<sup>72</sup> In the ninety-fifth volume of the Register, for 1739, 1740, minutes of committees have far more space than those of the council itself.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxix, 23 February 1725/6; xc, 14, 18 September, 2 October 1727.

<sup>74</sup> For a meeting at which the king was present with forty-eight councillors, see Privy Council Register, civ, 26 April 1755.

If the attendance fluctuated, the personnel varied much more. At committees of the whole council any or all of the members might be present, but I know of no instance where they all assembled together, and it was not often that more than one-fifth of the councillors made up a committee. But if only a small number of councillors attended a particular meeting, a large number attended the different meetings in the course of any period. Thirty-one different members were present at the meetings of the committee of trade and plantations in 1694. Usually, however, there was a nucleus of powerful leaders or members specially interested or fitted for the work, which accounted for the activity of these committees. The twenty-one committees of the whole council recorded in 1723 were attended by thirty-three different members, but the lord president, the master of the rolls, the bishop of London, and two others were the frequent attenders, while twenty-one members came three times or less.<sup>75</sup> In 1728 thirty-five members came to the thirty-two committees, but nineteen attended less than six times, six was the average attendance, and eleven was the largest number that ever assembled. In 1731 thirty-six members came to the forty committees: the lord president was absent only once, Horatio Walpole came twenty-seven times, Lord Chief Justice Raymond twenty-two, the master of the rolls seventeen, and several others almost as frequently; but only eleven members attended as many as one-fourth of the meetings. In 1733, when there were sixty-five members of the privy council, only twenty-two attended the various committees of the whole council, and never more than ten at one meeting.<sup>76</sup> It may be said that for the most part the conspicuous members of the council who made up the cabinet were not present.<sup>77</sup> The time of meeting was sometimes arranged in council when a matter was referred to committee, sometimes appointed by the lord president, and sometimes arranged in committee itself.<sup>78</sup> When necessary, members were notified by the messengers attending the privy council.<sup>79</sup>

In short, then, various committees of the whole council under different names, or frequently with no other name than 'the Committee', meet sometimes on the days when privy council meetings are held, sometimes on different days, usually in the privy council

<sup>75</sup> Privy Council Register, lxxviii.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, xc, xci, xcii.

<sup>77</sup> In 1731 Walpole and Newcastle were present only seven times, and Townshend not once: *ibid.*, xci.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxv, 4 December 1716; lxxxviii, 4 July 1724; Treasury Board Papers, T 1, cccxxv, fo. 97.

<sup>79</sup> 'Waite on the Lords of His Majestys Most Honourable Privy Councill with Notice that a Committee of their Lordships is appointed to meet in the Council Chamber at the Cockpit Whitehall on Saturday the fourth of this Instant July 1730 at Eleven of the Clock in the forenoon': State Papers, Dom., Various, i, 4 July 1730.

chamber in Whitehall. A large number of members attend the different meetings, but most of the committees are small. There is a little nucleus which tends to make up these committees, and certain well-defined groups to some extent make the nuclei of committees which attend to particular kinds of work, as, for example, the committee of Jersey and Guernsey and the committee of appeals from the plantations.

Many different kinds of work were passed in review. Often the committees attended principally to the work which their titles indicate. Usually it will be found that a committee of trade and plantations will deal mostly with colonial matters, a committee for Jersey and Guernsey principally with the Channel Islands, and an Irish committee largely with Irish affairs, while committees designated merely as committees of the whole council frequently meet for the consideration of business which the king in council has referred directly to them ; but while this is true for the entire period, it becomes constantly less so as time goes on. Almost from the first such committees deal with business which might seem to be more properly within the purview of committees having other names, and by the middle of the eighteenth century they deal indiscriminately with all sorts of matters, and much of the council business which is referred is given simply to 'the committee' or to 'the lords of the committee of council'.

The business dealt with is very largely colonial, Irish, domestic, or concerns such outlying places as Jersey and the Isle of Man. There is much consideration of treaties in their bearing upon commerce and plantations, but foreign affairs are ordinarily never dealt with. Petitions are considered and reports made upon them in council. Matters relating to the customs, the navigation laws, the recommendation of colonial officials and the drawing up of their instructions are dealt with first by the committee of trade and afterwards by the board of trade along with the committee of council.

Colonial boundaries, complaints about colonial officials, appeals from decisions rendered in colonial courts, acts of assembly passed in colonial legislatures, are considered in the committee of trade, in the board of trade, the committee of appeals from the plantations, or 'the committee'.<sup>80</sup> The procedure as regards the privy council in its relations with the committees of the whole council on the one hand and the board of trade on the other is not entirely clear. Usually during this period, and entirely in the latter part of it, colonial matters brought before the privy council

<sup>80</sup> Colonial Office, 391, vii, 3 August 1694 ; xv, 11 August 1702 ; xlviii, 27 March 1740 ; lvii, 15 March 1749/50 ; Privy Council Register, lxxxiii, 13 December 1710 ; lxxxiv, 24 November 1712 ; lxxxvi, 15 December 1718 ; lxxxviii, 17 April 1724 ; xc, 6 June 1728 ; xci, 23 July 1731 ; xcix, 12 June 1746.

were not considered there, but referred either to one of the committees of the whole council, such as the committee for plantation affairs, or the committee of appeals, or 'the committee', or to the board of trade. As a rule the procedure was for the king in council to refer such matters to the committee, after which the committee would refer them to the lords commissioners of trade; these would presently report to the committee, and this would afterwards report to the council, which almost invariably acted upon the report delivered by the committee.<sup>81</sup> In 1732 eight acts passed in Massachusetts were laid before the queen in council. 'Her Majesty was thereupon pleased with the Advice of His Majestys Privy Council to Order that the same Be . . . Referred to the Right Honourable the Lords of the Committee of Council for Plantation Affairs.' A few days later 'a Committee of the Lords' considered them and referred them to the board of trade for examination and report back to the committee.<sup>82</sup> In 1752 the lords justices in council dealt with thirty-three acts of Massachusetts, 'Which said Laws having been under the Consideration of the Lord's Commissioner's for Trade and Plantations and also of a Committee of the Lord's of His Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council, The said Lords of the Committee this day presented the said Laws to their Excellency's at this Board, with their Opinion that the same were proper to be approved'; and they were approved accordingly.<sup>83</sup> In this case the report of the lords of the committee to the council was exactly as the report of the lords commissioners had been to them. During this period the privy council exercises a great deal of supervision over the board of trade, but its supervision consists largely in referring the representations of the lords commissioners to a committee of the whole council. Formally the council, which has lost so much of its old authority, superintends a great deal of colonial business, but its method is invariably to refer this business to the board or the committee. Sometimes matters are referred directly to the board of trade, but very often reference is made to the committee, which in turn, if it sees fit, refers to the board. More and more plantation business comes to be almost entirely under the control of the committee of the whole council, which reviews and supervises the work of the board of trade.<sup>84</sup> Occasionally the board of

<sup>81</sup> Privy Council Register, xcii, 2 August 1733; cii, 11 March 1752. It may be remarked that there is considerable fluctuation in the activity and importance of the board of trade, and that any decrease in its authority or its industry may usually be measured in a corresponding increase in the activity of the committee of the whole council dealing with colonial and commercial matters. There does not seem at times to be any explanation of this, other than might arise from the personality of the members of the respective groups.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, xcii, 21, 25 July 1732.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, ciii, 30 June 1752.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi. In 1740, for example, the Journals of the Committee of Trade and

trade reports directly to the council, and its representations are sanctioned without further reference, but this is not the usual procedure. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century it may be said that the privy council seems to exist largely for the purpose of dealing with colonial business, colonial acts, appeals and petitions from the plantations, orders, instructions, and appointments; but this means that for the most part it merely ratifies what the committee decides is best to be done.

The Irish business dealt with concerns, the bills proposed in Dublin and sent to the privy council in London for review. These bills are referred to select committees, which as time goes on become committees of the whole council. The business from Jersey and Guernsey has to do mostly with the settlement of disputes and the consideration of doleances or complaints.

Finally, a great variety of business petty and important is referred from the council either to 'the Lords of the Committee' or to some committee of the whole council with particular title. Divers petitions are dealt with in this fashion. In 1715 it was ordered by the king in council 'That all Petitions Presented and Depending before this Board be . . . referr'd to the Right Honourable the Lords of the Committee of the whole Council to Examine the Same and Give Such Directions thereupon as their Lordships Shall judge Proper'.<sup>85</sup> Perhaps this was nearly equivalent to asking such lords as would to attend to them. The miscellaneous matters which were referred were such as a petition from one who had been cheated, the names of the deputy lieutenants and justices of the peace for the several counties, examining the conduct of Vice-Admiral Graydon in his passage to the West Indies, the report of the lord mayor of London about a combination of traders to raise the price of coals, petitions for discharge from quarantine, the granting of a patent to make malleable iron with pit coal, the papers relating to Wood's halfpence, drafts of town and borough charters, hearing of appeals from the courts of admiralty about prizes, the dispute about the boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania, the demolition of a turnpike in Hertfordshire.

The relation between the privy council and the committee of the whole council during this period is that, with the exception of certain old, formal routine, gradually nothing remains to the council but the referring and the perfunctory approbation of business, and that all council activity is centred in the committee. The summoning and dissolving of parliament and convocation, orders, declarations, proclamations, the appointment of officers,

Plantations are scanty, and small meetings are attended by unimportant people: Colonial Office, 391, xlviii.

<sup>85</sup> Privy Council Register, lxxxv, 23 February 1714/15.

discharge of ships from quarantine, are always formally decided in council, but otherwise it does little but refer to the committee of council and sanction what the committee decides. By the beginning of the reign of George II this has come to be entirely so, and it continues to be the case afterwards.<sup>86</sup>

That the committee of council has become the essence and active part of the council, and the council practically the committee meeting in formal fashion to give official sanction, is shown by the facility with which one changes into the other. In 1672 a committee of foreign affairs was ordered to be a privy council.<sup>87</sup> One of Shrewsbury's notes is to the effect that 'The Committee being turned into a Council' certain things were done.<sup>88</sup> In 1721 there are minutes of a meeting of 'the Right Honourable the Lords of the Committee for the Affairs of Jersey, Guernsey, and the Plantations, &c.', beneath which is written: 'Their Lordships Sitting afterward as a Council, Dispatht the following Business.'<sup>89</sup> About the same time a committee recommends that a report be confirmed in council, and thereupon sits as a council and confirms the report accordingly.<sup>90</sup> There is now an increasing number of instances where certain lords sitting as a committee transact business, and afterwards sit as a council and transact other business, usually the formal sanctioning of mere routine. In 1740 the lords of the committee appointed to consider the Irish bills, after considering one of them, sat as a council and issued an order.<sup>91</sup> Sometimes the reverse takes place. In 1681 a council after doing some business turned itself into a 'Committee for the Affaires of Ireland'.<sup>92</sup> In 1746 certain members in council attended to various matters, and 'Afterward their Lordships sat as a Committee and dispatht the following Business'.<sup>93</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century this interchange of function has become so frequent as no longer to be exceptional.

Such was the development of the committee system of the privy council in the period 1688-1760. There were at first a few standing committees of limited membership appointed for particular purposes, and, indeed, this practice was continued in exceptional cases for a long while. Gradually, however, all the

<sup>86</sup> In 1729, in the margin of a paper entitled 'List of Business for the Council', it is noted that several reports are to be approved: 'State Papers, Dom., Various, i, 19 August 1729. In 1730 the clerk writing the minutes of 'a Committee of the Lords' enters a memorandum in the margin, 'This Report was never approved of'; but such instances are rare: Privy Council Register, xci, 15 April 1730. See *ibid.*, lxxxvi, 27 August 1718; xcii, 21 July 1732.

<sup>87</sup> State Papers, Foreign, Entry Books, clxxvii, 13 April 1672.

<sup>88</sup> *Hist. MSS. Comm. Rep.*, *Buteleuch MSS. (Montagu House)*, II. i. 324.

<sup>89</sup> Privy Council Register, lxxxvii, 20 February 1720/1.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 April 1721.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, xcvi, 4 March 1739/40.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxix, 28 February 1680/1.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, xcix, 6 January 1745/6.



committees of the council seemed to become committees of the whole council, whatever their titles and whatever the business with which they dealt, and were then, apparently all of them, the one committee of the whole council in different guises or attended by different members. This committee in the end absorbed all the activity of the privy council, and finally became more important than the council itself. It dealt, however, with nothing but council business, and never concerned itself with important matters of state. But there was a committee of a very different kind which did do this, and which became of the greatest importance in the government of England. With respect to this committee arise the most baffling problems connected with the development of the cabinet.

If the ordinary committees of the whole council, of which there are such numerous minutes in the council registers, never meddle with affairs of state, if they seldom meet in the presence of the king, if their membership fluctuates widely, one becomes aware, particularly in the time of William and of Anne, that there is another, more elusive body, which constantly attends to the most important matters, which frequently assembles with the king, and is attended largely by the same group of important leaders, and that this body, which at first sight might well be taken for the cabinet council, is constantly alluded to as 'the Committee', and its members as 'the Lords of the Committee'. In the letter books of the secretaries of state this body appears to be more important than any other.

There are various vague allusions to small gatherings in the time of Charles II,<sup>94</sup> and after the Revolution the allusions become clearer and much more frequent.<sup>95</sup> Soon there are found scattered at random through the state papers, which are the papers of the secretaries of state, minutes of meetings which were attended by the leading statesmen and often by the king, and which are endorsed 'Committee of Council';<sup>96</sup> and among the private papers of Shrewsbury may be found a great number of minutes which he himself wrote while he was secretary, recording the activity of a small group of powerful leaders usually with the king, some of whose gatherings he describes as 'Committees.'<sup>97</sup> It is apparent at once that these meetings are different from the committees which are recorded in the registers, and they can hardly ever be identified with the ordinary committees of this period of which the minutes are extant.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>94</sup> State Papers, Dom., Charles II, ccccxv, 15 June 1683; State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, lxiv, 7 March 1683/4, 14 April 1684.

<sup>95</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, xcviii, 20 September 1689, 10, 11 June 1690.

<sup>96</sup> State Papers, Dom., William and Mary, v.

<sup>97</sup> *Hist. MSS. Comm. Rep.*, *Buccleuch MSS. (Montagu House)*, II, i, ii.

<sup>98</sup> Compare, for example, State Papers, Dom., William and Mary, v, 12 February

The importance of this body is shown by the frequent presence of the sovereign and also by the lists of the members who attended. 'I have represented to the Queen at the Committee what you writt to me,' says Nottingham in 1690.<sup>99</sup> In 1693 'the Queen at the Committee' hears of matters relating to a court martial.<sup>100</sup> Shrewsbury's notes usually mention the king as present. 'Their Lordships went to attend Her Majesty at the Committee of the Council,' say the minutes of the board of trade in 1702, following an order of the queen to attend her at the committee at St. James's.<sup>101</sup> 'I am commanded to acquaint Your Lordship, that the Lords of the Committee of Council attend Her Majesty to morrow at Six a Clock in the evening in the Council Chamber at St. James's,' writes Secretary Hedges to Lord Chief Justice Holt.<sup>102</sup> Mary attended the committee sometimes, and William frequently, and Anne also in the earlier years of her reign. After the coming of the Hanoverians the presence of the sovereign at the committee is more exceptional even than at meetings of the cabinet.<sup>103</sup>

The membership of this committee is also strikingly different from those which are recorded in the journals of the committee of trade or the privy council registers, which are attended during any considerable period by a large number of different members. This body is composed almost entirely of the same members, most of them the powerful leaders who are governing England. Thirteen meetings reported by Secretary Trenchard in February, March, and April, 1694, at which the average attendance was eight, were attended by fourteen different members. Actually a group of twelve composed these committees, along with the

1693/4, with Privy Council Register, lxxv, 5, 8 February 1693/4, and Colonial Office, 391, vii, 2, 12 February 1693/4; State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, xcvi, 16 March 1692/3, with Privy Council Register, lxxv; State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, xcix, 2 May 1693, with Privy Council Register, lxxv, and Colonial Office, 391, vii; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Rep., Buccleuch MSS. (Montagu House)*, II. i. 61, and State Papers, Dom., William and Mary, v, 8 April 1694, with Privy Council Register, lxxv, and Colonial Office, 391, vii; *Buccleuch MSS.*, II. i. 141, with Privy Council Register, lxxv, 27 September 1694; State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, civ, 7 May 1702, with Privy Council Register, lxxix; State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cx, 12 October 1710, with Privy Council Register, lxxxiii; Colonial Office, 391, xxii, 19 March 1710/11, with Privy Council Register, lxxxiii; *Bolingbroke's Letters and Correspondence* (London, 1798), i. 279 (13 July 1711), with Privy Council Register, lxxxiii; *ibid.* ii. 69 (15 December 1711), with Privy Council Register, lxxxiii; and numerous other instances. But Privy Council Register, lxxv, 22 April 1694, may have reference to State Papers, Dom., William and Mary, v, 22 April 1694; and compare *Buccleuch MSS.* II. i. 109, with Colonial Office, 391, vii, 1 August 1694.

<sup>99</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, xcvi, 8 July 1690.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 October 1693.

<sup>101</sup> Colonial Office, 391, xv, 2 July 1702.

<sup>102</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cv, 29 April 1704.

<sup>103</sup> For a possible instance in 1717, see State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cclxvii, 9 January 1716/17. On one occasion, in 1729, Queen Caroline was present at 'the Committee of Council': State Papers, Dom., George II, xiv, August 1729.

king, who was present nine times.<sup>104</sup> Practically the same members meet again and again in the committees of council of which Shrewsbury took minutes.<sup>105</sup> There is, in short, about the membership of these various meetings, so far as the names of those who attended are given, about as much sameness as there is in the case of meetings of the cabinet. It is obvious that a select group composes them, dominates them, and attends them, largely to the exclusion of others.

Another difference is the kind of work with which this powerful committee deals. It does not confine itself to Irish, plantation, or Jersey business, or to such minor matters as the privy council usually refers to committees of the whole council, but deals with any or all of these things as it sees fit, along with a great number of those important affairs of state which by the end of the reign of Charles II had passed from the privy council entirely. It is, indeed, not like the committees of the whole council, which do their business in subordination to the council, but strikingly like the committee of foreign affairs before 1679, or the committee of intelligence afterwards, and even more like the cabinet, from which at times it is virtually indistinguishable.<sup>106</sup> In addition to the superintendence of a vast number of miscellaneous minor matters which relate to Ireland, the colonies, the admiralty, the treasury, the regulation of local officials, and the maintenance of local order,<sup>107</sup> this committee conferred with foreign represen-

<sup>104</sup> State Papers, Dom., William and Mary, v, 4, 8, 12, 13, 18, 25 February, 4, 18, 25 March, 1, 8, 21, 22 April 1694. Twelve meetings of committees of the council are recorded in the Register for 1694, attended by twenty-two different members, fifteen of them attending three times or less: Privy Council Register, lxxv, lxxvi.

<sup>105</sup> For 1694 he gives minutes of twenty-one meetings, at which eighteen different members were present, of whom eleven attended four times or less, at which the largest attendance was twelve, and the average less than seven. Most of these meetings are not specifically described, but seven of them are either named committees or alluded to as such. At these latter meetings fifteen members were present at different times; nine attended four times or less; and the average attendance was seven. For 1695 he gives record of seventeen meetings, attended by thirteen different members, the largest number at one time being eleven, and the average less than eight. Practically these meetings were composed of a group of nine. For the next year he records nineteen meetings attended by eleven members besides the king. Only one member was present so few times as eleven, and the average number at a meeting was nearly nine. In reality here was a compact body of the same members. For 1697 he records only three meetings, attended by fourteen different members, of whom the average number present was nine. See *Hist. MSS. Comm. Rep.*, *Buccleuch MSS. (Montagu House)*, II, i, ii. It may be observed that these most important minutes are throughout designated by the editor as 'Privy Council Minutes', notwithstanding that they are sometimes headed by Shrewsbury himself 'Committee of Council' or 'Committee' (*Buccleuch MSS.*, II, i. 61); while Dr. W. Michael considers them to be meetings of the cabinet (*Zeitschrift für Politik*, v. 556). A few meetings are certainly of the cabinet, and more of them may be, but there are numerous allusions to the contrary (*Buccleuch MSS.*, II, i. 107, 116, 122, 125, 141, 266, 287, 313).

<sup>106</sup> See my paper on 'The Development of the Cabinet, 1688-1760', part i, *American Historical Review*, xviii. 762-5.

<sup>107</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 761, 762.

tatives, prepared treaties, and dealt with matters of policy and government. And while it seemed only to undertake preparations and preliminary consideration, and presented only recommendations, as did the other committees, yet there is an air of decisiveness about what it does which is far more noticeable than in the representations alluded to in the council registers.

In 1692 the king communicated the design on Brest to the committee.<sup>108</sup> In 1702 the lords commissioners of trade are informed that 'The Dutch Ambassadors pressing for a Dispatch of the Treatys sent to your Lordships for your Consideration, the Lords of the Committee of Council doe desire that you will let your Opinion thereupon be ready to be laid before them to Morrow'.<sup>109</sup> At the same time they 'think it necessary for her Majestys Service that the State of the Fleet at home be laid before them every week'.<sup>110</sup> 'I suppose your Lordship has heard the Lords of the Committee are preparing to send Recruits to the Duke of Ormonde,' writes Secretary Hedges to the lord treasurer.<sup>111</sup> Their lordships receive, consider, and refer numerous memorials and petitions, and direct all sorts of things military, naval, and local, so that it might almost seem as though the principal executive and administrative work in England was carried on by them. Sometimes important matters are arranged by them to be done in council. Nottingham writes to the lord keeper and asks him for suggestions as to what should be said to the judges about to go on circuit and as to what should be put in the queen's speech. He adds: 'if your Lordship . . . can be at leisure to Come to the Committe att my office to morrow morning these things may be adjusted preparatory to the meeting of the great Council'.<sup>112</sup> 'Attended in Morn[ing] Committee of Council at the Secretary's, where the Foreign Letters read, and Answers directed, & Minutes taken by the Secretary, in order to write Answers accordingly,' says a diarist.<sup>113</sup> On one occasion St. John receives a command to attend 'next Sunday night the Committee of Council at Windsor, and bring with you an account of the Troops which are designed to be embarkt for Portugal and Spain this Summer'.<sup>114</sup> At another time the queen in committee deliberates whether or not papers requested by the House of Lords shall be submitted by the secretary of state.<sup>115</sup> It was in the committee of council that the treaty of Utrecht was considered.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *Lords' Journals*, xv. 165.

<sup>109</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, ci, 24 June 1702.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, civ, 30 June 1702.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, ci, 1 October 1702.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, civ, 6 July 1702. See also cv, 22 February 1704/5.

<sup>113</sup> *Diary of Earl Cowper* (Roxburghe Club, 1833), p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cvi, 22 July 1707.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 January 1707-8.

<sup>116</sup> 'The whole event of our treaty turning on this article of the reunion, I should not think our affairs in a very good situation, had I not reason to believe that the

It is very difficult to determine the nature of this committee. So closely does it resemble the cabinet in structure and activity that the two have often been confused with each other. How easily such confusion arises may be seen from three communications which follow each other in the same letter-book. The under-secretary writing to the postmaster-general says : <sup>117</sup>

I am commanded by the Lords of the Committee of Council in the absence of my Lord the Earle of Nottingham to acquaint you, that they would have you publish the designe of Mr Dummer's Vessel to the West Indies, in such manner as is usuall and you shall judge best, that the Merchants and persons concerned may have due notice of it.

On the same day he writes to the prince's council :

The Lords of the Committee of Council having thought it fit that Mr Dummer's Vessel which pursuant to his Contract is now to saile to the West Indies should be praised by the Navy Board, and also the other Vessells to be employed in that Service, I am commanded in the Absence of my Lord the Earle of Nottingham to acquaint you with it, that you may send the necessary Orders to that purpose.

And at the same time he writes to Mr. Dummer :

I am commanded by the Lords of the Cabinet Council in the absence of my Lord the Earle of Nottingham to acquaint you, that their Lordships would have you order their Vessel to saile to Portsmouth as soon as ready, there to expect sailing Orders.

It would almost seem at times as though the members themselves regarded the committee and the cabinet as the same. But that there was a distinction is not to be doubted.<sup>118</sup>

Constantly the lords who make up this group are referred to as 'the Committee of Council', 'the Committee of Lords', or 'some Lords of the Council', and there can be no doubt that the body was regarded as a committee of the privy council by the officials who composed it or had dealings with it. In 1690 Nottingham writes : 'There having lately been some tumults in Cornwall . . . and the Lords of the Committee of Council' being informed of it, they desire that in the future care be taken to prevent such riotous meetings.<sup>119</sup> 'The Committee of Council will meet at my

Treasurer knows, that this expedient, or something very near to it, will be closed with by the French Court. I may tell you, in the utmost confidence, that the first hint was given by him, in the Committee of Council, and, by several expressions which dropped from him, when alterations were started, I could plainly find, that he knew what would be most, and what least agreeable at Versailles' : Bolingbroke to the Earl of Strafford, *Letters*, ii. 299, 300. For an account of the work of the committee in connexion with the preliminaries of the Treaty of Utrecht, see St. John to Queen Anne, *State Papers, Dom.*, Anne, xvi, 20 September 1711.

<sup>117</sup> *State Papers, Dom.*, Entry Books, cxlvi, 16 September 1702.

<sup>118</sup> See *American Historical Review*, xviii. 765.

<sup>119</sup> *State Papers, Dom.*, Entry Books, xcvi, 10 June 1690.

Office to morrow at 4. a Clock,' he informs the governor of the East India Company somewhat later.<sup>120</sup> Evidently such a committee was coming to be well recognized, for in 1693 the House of Lords petitions the king, 'That He will please to order, That such Proceedings as were lately in Council, or the Committee of Council, relating to the Admirals, or Sir *George Rooke*, may be laid before this House'.<sup>121</sup> 'His Majesty has directed I should lay your Excellency's letter of the 16th before him,' writes Shrewsbury to the lord deputy of Ireland, 'the first time a Committee of Council waits upon him, which I think will be in a day or two.' And in the minutes of a meeting which he records the next day, he says: 'My Lord Deputy's letter of Nov. 16th, read.'<sup>122</sup> In 1702 the Board of Trade Journals record that:<sup>123</sup>

Mr. Penns Charge against Col. Quarry . . . together with Colonel Quarrys said Answer . . . were laid before the Board: And whilst their Lordships were reading the same a Message from the Lords of a Committee of Council met at the Earl of Nottinghams Office, requiring their Attendance in relation to some matters laid before them by Mr. Penn, the Board attended accordingly: . . . Their Lordships acquainted the Lords of the Committee with the many delays made by Mr. Penn. . . .

In 1704 Nottingham asserts that the fact that he first received the confession of Sir John McLean 'is very evident in the Narrative of that Plott given into the House of Lords by her Majesty order and approbation of the Committee of Council'.<sup>124</sup>

Undoubtedly, then, it was a committee of the privy council. Throughout this period there was a constant tendency for all council committees to become committees of the whole council; and it is possible that this committee was sometimes regarded as such. One may not say this with absolute certainty, but there are very many indications which point to its being so. Frequently this body is called by names which are also constantly used to designate committees of the whole council: 'committee,' 'the committee', 'a committee of council', and 'the lords of the committee'. A thing which becomes more and more common as council committees come to be committees of the whole council, is the metamorphosis of committee into council in a single meeting. In 1696 one set of Shrewsbury's minutes state that 'The committee being turned into a Council, the embargo was taken off, and notice ordered to be given to the merchants that with the first fair wind their convoys should be ready'.<sup>125</sup> Somewhat

<sup>120</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, 16 March 1692/3. See cxlvi, 2 May 1693.

<sup>121</sup> *Lords' Journals*, xv. 319.

<sup>122</sup> *Hist. MSS. Comm. Rep., Buccleuch MSS. (Montagu House)*, II. i. 265, 266, 267. See also pp. 286, 287.

<sup>123</sup> Colonial Office, 391, xv, 26 June 1702.

<sup>124</sup> Hatton-Finch Papers, Add. MS. 29587, fo. 128.

<sup>125</sup> *Buccleuch MSS.*, II. i. 324.

before this time Shrewsbury, recounting the work of a 'Committee', says that the admiralty was directed to make full report concerning the commissioners of the sick and wounded; and three weeks later in the minutes of a meeting at Kensington, at which were present the king and twelve others, he says: 'The Lords of the Ad[miralty] delivered their report upon the Com[missioners] of Sick and Wounded, and upon the petition of the Com[missioners] they are ordered to be heard at a Committee, when the whole Council are to be summoned.'<sup>126</sup> In 1711 St. John writes to the lords commissioners of trade: 'In the absence of My Lord Dartmouth I have . . . acquainted the Lords of the Committee that the African Company & other Persons concern'd are appointed to attend at Eleven of the Clock on Thursday next, at which time such of the Lords of the Council as can possibly attend will not fail to be at Your Office.' The lord president, the lord treasurer, and Secretary St. John attended.<sup>127</sup> In this year also he records that 'The Lords of the Committee of Council met this morning at the Cockpit, and directed the Earl of Dartmouth and myself to confer with Monsieur Mesnager'.<sup>128</sup> On this very day there was a meeting of fourteen in the council chamber at Whitehall headed: 'The Right Honourable the Lords of the Council Meet in a Committee to Consider Mr Attorneys Reports on Irish Bills.'<sup>129</sup> In 1713 he referred to certain persons who were to meet the board of trade on 18 December, as 'the Lords of the Council who are to meet on Fryday at my Office'. Three days after 'The Lord Bolingbroke acquainted the Board, That Mr. Prior had signify'd that the French Commissaries were ready to come over so soon as ours should be ready to treat with them. . . . That Her Majesty therefore expected that such Matters as may be proper for Her Commissaries, should be immediately dispatch'd, and that during the Negotiation the Lords of the Cabinet-Council should be assistant to the Board in their Consultation upon those Matters.' Next day, the 18th, 'The Board being sent for to the Lords of the Committee of Council at the Lord Bolingbroke's Office: They went accordingly', and advised about the treaty of commerce with France.<sup>130</sup> In 1716 Townshend wrote to George I about business relating to Mardyke. In the English draft of his letter he spoke of 'the committee of Council'; but when this was translated into French for the king it became 'les seigneurs du conseil'.<sup>131</sup>

Evidently, however, there is some difference in this case inas-

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, II. i. 61, 62.

<sup>127</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cxi, 17 July 1711; Colonial Office, 391, xxii, 19 July 1711.

<sup>128</sup> *Bolingbroke's Letters*, i. 367.

<sup>129</sup> Privy Council Register, lxxxiii, 20 September 1711.

<sup>130</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cxiv, 14 December 1713; Colonial Office, 391, xxiv, 17, 18 December 1713.

<sup>131</sup> Coxe, *Walpole*, II. 130.

much as in the beginning no committee of the whole council was ever formally appointed by the privy council to have general preliminary supervision of important affairs, and also because in practice the membership does not seem to have included any large number of the council members. Rather, in its origin this must have been an informal committee of the council, something like Clarendon's foreign committee before 1667;<sup>132</sup> and although, at least in theory, it seems to have become a committee of the whole council, in practice at first the membership was certainly much restricted.

After the reorganization of the privy council in 1679 the king carried on the government with a small group of confidential advisers who, when the king was present, are frequently alluded to as the cabinet council, but who at other times appear as a powerful body of which the nature is not entirely clear. In 1689 a certain one testifying in the House of Lords about incidents several years before, declared that he knew the lord privy seal then, 'as he had seen his Lordship, both in the Privy Council, and in that which sat at the Secretaries Office'.<sup>133</sup> About this very time the secretary of state speaks of 'My Lords that use to meet here at my Office'.<sup>134</sup> There are numerous allusions such as:<sup>135</sup>

His Majesty haveing directed that the Lords who Use to meet at the Secretaries Office, should some time this weeke have a particular meeting about the Citty Charter, & that My Lord Chief Justice and Yourself should be desired to be present, when the meeting is to be You shall have a Particular Notice from Mr Secretary Godolphin.

It was at meetings of this kind that the regulating of corporations was planned in 1687.<sup>136</sup>

That these gatherings were of a select few is seen from the fact that they are often described as meetings of 'certain Lords of his Majestys Privy Councill' who come to the secretary's office in Whitehall.<sup>137</sup> Mary, writing of her experiences in 1690, says that when William was about to depart for Ireland, 'he made choice of 9 persons who should sit as a Committee during his absence; which were the Lord President, Lord Stuart, Lord Chamberlain, Lord Pembroke, the two Secretaries of State, Lord Chief Justice Holt, Mr. Comptroller and Mr. Vice Chamberlain'.<sup>138</sup> This appointment does not seem to have been made by the king in council, and by this committee was undoubtedly meant no more, than the small group of intimate advisers to whom the king

<sup>132</sup> *American Historical Review*, xix. 784.

<sup>133</sup> *Lords' Journals*, xiv. 385.

<sup>134</sup> *State Papers, Dom.*, Entry Books, lxiv, 7 March 1683/4.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 April 1684.

<sup>136</sup> *Lords' Journals*, xiv. 388.

<sup>137</sup> *State Papers, Dom.*, Entry Books, xoviii, 20 September 1689.

<sup>138</sup> R. Doebner, *Memoirs of Mary* (Leipzig, 1886), pp. 23, 24.



committed his affairs during his absence. On some occasions, apparently, certain councillors were given to understand that their presence was desired, or else they were specially summoned.<sup>139</sup> In 1711 the secretary writing to the Duke of Argyle says: 'I am to acquaint Your Grace that some Lords of the Council are to meet to morrow at the Duke of Queensberrys Office, and that You are desired to be there at one a clock'; and in the margin of his letter-book is the note: 'to be at the Committee of Council.'<sup>140</sup> In 1718, when it was thought desirable to have more regular meetings, every Wednesday, notice was sent to twelve of the great officials.<sup>141</sup>

Sometimes this committee of lords was evidently the group put in charge of the king's affairs during his absence, those who were often alluded to as the cabinet when they did their work in his presence; but the notes of Shrewsbury and of Trenchard show that they were also called 'the committee' when the king was with them. Sometimes assembling in the presence of the king they are the cabinet, at other times either with the king or without they are the committee of the council. There are virtually the same members in both, and they do nearly the same kind of work, except that frequently the cabinet sanctions or completes what the committee begins. Usually the committee meets in the office of the secretary of state in Whitehall, the cabinet more often at the residence of the king. But the principal distinction, which appears to be vaguely but almost always in some manner recognized, is that if their function of privy councillors seemed the more important part of their work, they met as the committee of council; if they regarded themselves rather as the confidential advisers of the king, they assembled as his cabinet; but often between the two ideas there seems to be slight boundary.

In the reign of Anne this committee of council continues in great activity, and seems often to be more active than the cabinet itself. Early in her reign the queen recognized its importance: <sup>142</sup>

Her Majesty thinks it for her Service that my Lords of the Committee of Council will be pleased to meet at the E[arl] of Nottingham's Office as often

<sup>139</sup> 'Mr. Recorder of London sent the enclosed list of persons convict for his Majesty's determination upon them, but it being impossible for the King at this distance to be informed of the circumstance of their cases, is pleased to direct that you summon the Archbishop, Lord Keeper, Lord Privy Seal, Lord Steward, Lord Chamberlain, Lord Godolphin to meet with yourself' for consultation about it: Shrewsbury to Secretary Trumbull, 27 October 1695, *Buckeuch MSS.*, II. i. 247. At the seventeen meetings of which Shrewsbury gives minutes in this year these persons attended, respectively, 14, 16, 16, 10, 12, 16, and 12 times; that is, they practically made up the meetings which were apparently committees of council, and of which one is spoken of as such. <sup>140</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cx, 9 February 1710/11.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, cxix, 14 April 1718.

<sup>142</sup> Secretary of state to the lord privy seal, State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, ci, 6 September 1702.

as they think fitt, and as there shall be Occasion and tho' they cannot be attended with a Secretary of State, the Intelligences from abroad and particularly from the Fleet, will be laid before your Lordships for your Consideration' . . .

Frequently the queen or the secretaries of state referred matters to the committee, or summoned 'a Committee of Lords' to attend her.<sup>143</sup> Occasional minutes of meetings show that it was still made up of the important officials of the realm.<sup>144</sup> By the end of the reign its importance was probably on the wane;<sup>145</sup> or, in other words, the business was coming to be done in another manner, though this was not always to be seen.

After the accession of George I the change was not apparent for some time. A committee of council continues, as previously, to be active and important.<sup>146</sup> 'I went to *Court*, my Lord being gone to a Committee at the *Cockpit*,' says Lady Cowper in 1716.<sup>147</sup> During the first few years of the Hanoverian period the lords of the committee seem as active as under Anne, and are apparently the principal executive council of the nation. They consider matters before the privy council, which usually decides as they have resolved beforehand.<sup>148</sup> They are referred to constantly as 'the Lords of the Committee' or 'the Lords of the Committee of Council'.<sup>149</sup> On not a few occasions there can still be found minutes of their meetings.<sup>150</sup> The committee continues to deal with important business which is dealt with further and decided in meetings of the cabinet.<sup>151</sup> At this time, indeed, an attempt is made to systematize the work of the committee and hold regular meetings: 'The Lords of the Committee of Council having found a great Arrear of business depending, and being desirous to bring their meetings into a Regular Method, I take

<sup>143</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cv, 7 February 1704/5.

<sup>144</sup> *Dartmouth MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm. Rep.* 13, iv. 496.

<sup>145</sup> St. John to Marlborough, 8 June 1711, *Letters*, i. 238.

<sup>146</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cxlvii, 5 October 1714, 14 July, 29 November 1715, 22 February 1715/16, 1 October 1716; cxviii, 28 July 1716; cclxvii, 21, 27 November, 14 December 1716; cxix, 5 February 1716/17; cxx, 19 August 1717, 16 January 1717/18; cxliii, 19 October 1722; State Papers, Dom., George I, vi, 14 December 1716; ix, 31 May, 9 June 1717; xv, 13 March 1718/19; liv, December 1724; State Papers, Dom., George II, xxvii, 12 June 1732.

<sup>147</sup> *Diary of Lady Cowper*, 20 February 1716.

<sup>148</sup> State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cxvi, cxvii, cxviii, cxix.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, cxix, 31 December 1716.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, George I, ix, 9 June, 4, 18 September 1717; x, 16 October 1717. 'You will receive enclosed the Minutes of the Committee of Council upon Opening Thompsons Papers:' State Papers, Dom., Various, i, 14 September 1732.

<sup>151</sup> 'The same day the Lords of the Committee met at the Cockpit, and the Answer to Mr. d'Iberville's Objections, which we had agreed to give him in writing, was framed and settled by the Lords. The next Day being Thursday it was laid before the Prince, and read to the Cabinet Council, where it was approved by H. R. H. & we have this Day sent it to Mr. d'Iberville': Methuen to Stanhope, State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cclxvii, 8 September 1716.

leave to give Your Grace notice, that they have agreed there shall be a Committee at the Cockpit every Wednesday at Eleven in the Morning.'<sup>152</sup> In 1722, when the bishop of Rochester was seized on suspicion of treason, 'He was carried straight to a Committee of Council at the Cockpit', as Guiscard had been years before.<sup>153</sup> About the same time a certain Christopher Laver was examined before 'a Committee of the Lords of the Council'.<sup>154</sup>

But as time goes on there is accumulating evidence that the great committee at the Cockpit is less and less the partner or other self of the cabinet, and is coming more and more to be like other committees of the privy council, simply one phase, perhaps the most important one, of the committee of the whole council, from the ordinary aspects of which it can now less readily be distinguished. In 1729, 'Six Reports from the Lords of the Committee of Council' have to do with colonial matters and the charter of incorporation of a company to work mines in Scotland.<sup>155</sup> A 'List of Business for the Committee', about 1730, is entirely colonial business, of the kind referred to those committees of the whole council whose activities are recorded in the council Registers.<sup>156</sup> A meeting of 'a Committee of Counsell' at the Duke of Newcastle's office in 1741 was attended by the members of the cabinet, but was occupied partly with ordinary business for the privy council, and met the same day as the privy council itself.<sup>157</sup> The manner in which allusions are made now cause it to be less easy to draw any distinction between various committees of the council. 'On Monday there was a Committee of Council at the Cockpit, on some Complaints relating to the Government of New-York,' says a newspaper notice in 1719.<sup>158</sup> This might seem to refer to one of the committees of the whole council for plantation affairs. In the same year another notice records: 'To Day there was a Committee of Council at the Cockpit; after which, there was a Cabinet-Council at St. James's,' which would seem to refer to the select group of powerful lords who determined the destinies of the kingdom.<sup>159</sup> After a while it is no longer possible to determine which is meant or whether there is any difference: 'Yesterday Morning a Committee of his Majesty's most Hon. Privy Council was held at the Cockpit, Whitehall; at

<sup>152</sup> Craggs to the Archbishop of Canterbury, *ibid.*, cxix, 14 April 1718.

<sup>153</sup> *Hist. MSS. Comm. Rep., Portland MSS.*, vii. 332; State Papers, Dom., Entry Books, cxxiii, 25 August 1722.

<sup>154</sup> State Papers, Dom., George I, xxxvi, 21 September 1722.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, Various, i, 19 August 1729.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 1733.

<sup>157</sup> Add. MSS. 28133, fo. 76; 32993, fo. 136; 33004, fo. 47; Privy Council Register, xcvi, 3 March 1740/1.

<sup>158</sup> *The Weekly Journal*, 28 February 1719.

<sup>159</sup> *The St. James's Evening Post*, 21 November 1719.

which the Right Hon. Sir Robert Walpole, and several of the Lords, assisted.' <sup>160</sup>

That is to say, as time goes on a change becomes evident. The cabinet diverges more and more from the important committee of council, the cabinet increasing in importance and the committee declining. The explanation is probably to be sought in the circumstances of cabinet development under the first Hanoverians. So long as the sovereign, actually directing the government, as William did and as Anne did to a considerable extent, presided at cabinet councils, the lords of the cabinet, who were also privy councillors, did a great deal of business apart as a committee of the council, sometimes with the sovereign, but usually without him, and perhaps preferred to do it so. After the death of Anne, however, a great change occurred. George I soon ceased to attend cabinet meetings, and the cabinet councillors, meeting now in cabinets or in smaller private meetings, came gradually to do there a great deal of what they had formerly done in committees of the council. On the other hand, the committees which had been wont to meet in the secretary's office in the Cockpit, which may perhaps for some time in theory have been committees of the whole council, but which in practice were limited in membership and greater in power, now lost much of their power and became less exclusive, perhaps, in membership, and either disappeared or seemed to become actually what all committees of the council were, committees of the whole council.

I have attempted to trace the development of the privy council in the period 1688-1760, during which time its work was given almost entirely to committees, which became as time went on, apparently all of them, committees of the whole privy council; how in the earlier stages of the development cabinet councillors, because of old precedents and for the sake of convenience, did much of their work in a committee of the council, which for a long time seemed equal in importance and parallel in activity with the cabinet itself; and how finally, after 1714, the cabinet increased in importance, and the powerful committee, becoming more and more only the doer of such less important work as was performed by the effective part of the council, enlarged its membership, declined in importance, and, so far as it continued to exist, followed the trend of all other committees, until in the end it was merely one of the manifestations of the one committee of the whole privy council.

EDWARD RAYMOND TURNER.

<sup>160</sup> *The Daily Courant*, 7 October 1732.